

# Study on Planning Design for the Driven Development of Cultural Gene Attributes of Exhibition Halls in Village Museums

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## ABSTRACT

Under the current background of rural revitalization, it is crucial to revitalize rural culture. Due to the inner attributes of museums, it conforms to the requirements of this era to construct village museums. However, some problems have occurred during the development of village museums. For example, among the museums already built, some are obviously imitating city museums while look just like their low versions and have even lost their own features. Improper opinions about our own traditional culture and the lack of cultural confidence are the primary causes. The core of cultural confidence lies in cultural gene. As the carrier of history and culture, museums are the places where history and culture are spread. Today, museums are viewed as the symbols of local culture. Since cultural genes are the basic units within a cultural system to spread culture, the performance characteristics of museums are also affected by cultural genes. In this paper, cultural genes were activated and materialized through the stability and variability of genes to explore the way to promote the exhibition of village museums and make people in rural areas more confident in their own cultures.

**Keywords:** Cultural gene, Village museum, Symbol cultural gene, Cultural confidence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As emphasized by comrade Jinping Xi, culture is the pillar for the the prosperity of any country and nation<sup>[1]</sup>. Besides, he has also pointed out that the comprehensive strength of the core and top level of a country can always be reflected through this soft power which is closely related to the spirit of a nation<sup>[2]</sup>. In addition, he has repeatedly stressed the importance of cultural genes for the inheritance and development of China's culture, and countryside is the birthplace of China's traditional civilization. As the space field carrying the genes of Chinese traditional culture, village museums can better spread and inherit the excellent traditional culture of villages and improve rural areas' confidence in their own cultures. At the same time, the village museums are playing an active role in the rural revitalization and development strategy. A village museum is the cultural origin of that village. Therefore, its every move influences not only the museum itself but also all levels, industries and related fields of rural development, and helps the village to obtain its identity.

## 2. VALUE EMBODIMENT OF CULTURAL GENES IN VILLAGE MUSEUM

### 2.1 Cultural genes

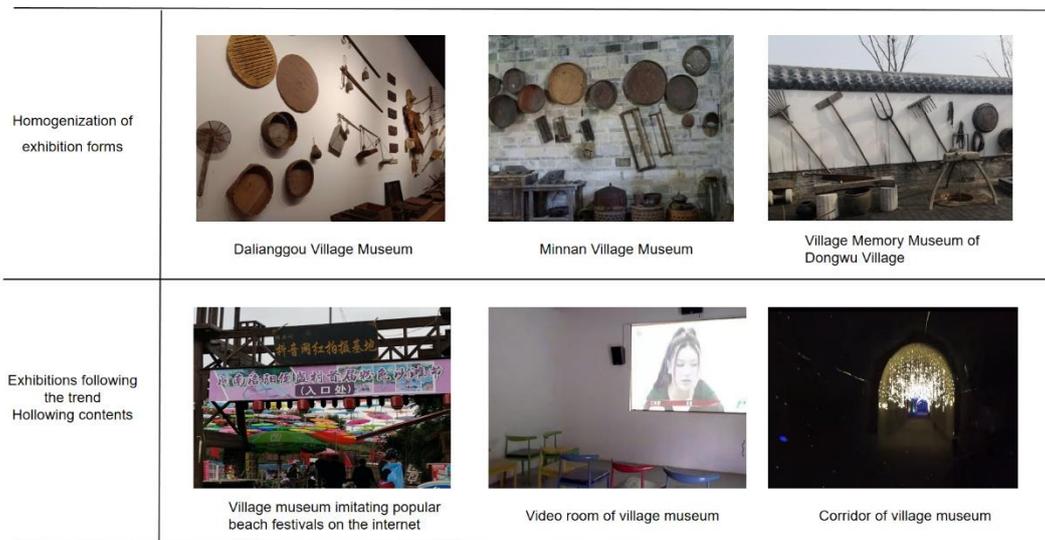
Gene was originally a concept of biological genetics, first proposed by Austrian biologist Mendel, and generally refers to the basic genetic unit that controls biological traits. Since the middle of the 20th century, as structural anthropology and biogenetics began to gain momentum and substantial achievements were made, some cultural scholars have tried to investigate human cultural phenomena from the perspective of gene<sup>[3]</sup>. As a result of historical accumulation and development, the cultural phenomena of human have certain long-standing cultural characteristics, which determine the identity of a group. In contemporary society, what really differs human groups from each other is culture, and culture is rather diverse. Therefore, we can extract the long-standing stable structures in culture, which are called cultural genes<sup>[4]</sup>.

In biology, the smallest functional unit of genetic material is gene, which is stable and variable. Gene is stable for it is able to reduplicate itself, distribute the original genetic information to daughter cells, or pass it on to offspring through sex cells, thus ensuring the stability of inheritance and the transmission of biological traits from generation to generation; gene is variable as it is subject to internal and external influences during the self-replication process, and then certain changes will occur. Such changes will be retained in the genetic code or biological traits, thereby increasing biodiversity. Like biological genes, cultural genes are stable and variable as well and they have similar properties. In this way, the unity of stability and variability is realized in the process of cultural development and evolution in a region. Cultural gene is an effective unit which controls the cultural evolution and affects the inheritance and development of regional culture. Based on the stability and variability of cultural genes, a new path for the exhibition design of village museums was explored. In addition, the driven development with museums being the cultural origins was discussed to well inherit excellent rural culture and make people in rural areas more confident in their own cultures.

**2.2 Development Status of Village Museums in China**

Village museums originated from the concept of ecomuseums and were used to promote the inheritance and development of special cultures. As a great agricultural country, China boasts a rich history and splendid culture, and more than half of the excellent cultural heritage is distributed in rural areas. To protect and inherit the excellent traditional culture, local governments strongly advocate the construction of rural museum culture. However, numerous village museums are built by obviously imitating city museums while look

just like their low versions. During the construction and development of rural urbanization, while the construction and development of rural economy as well as the connection between the countryside and the outside world are improved, the precious native culture has been swallowed up under the influence of foreign cultures. Business decision makers regard museums as a bargaining chip to grow local economy. So they create the business cards for museums mainly for economic purpose. This goes against the fundamental attributes of village museums and the original intention to build them. It is undeniable that the existence and development of museums do have a positive impact on local economy. But essentially, culture is the very thing a museum should rely on to survive and thrive. A museum without culture itself is like an empty shell without a soul. Currently, there exists an epistemological bias which is audience-centered. Besides, it is time-consuming and labor-intensive to carry out pluralistic interpretation on the basis of objects and researches on them. As a result, some museums have chosen an improper or even wrong direction in information dissemination<sup>[5]</sup>. That is to say, these museums do not focus on exhibiting the objects and the information they carry. Some village museums blindly follow the trend, or collage cultural symbols in a far-fetched manner. No matter how good the publicity campaign of the museums was in the early days of their establishment, they could only become the focus temporarily but not for long. Thus, there is no way these museums can complete their fundamental mission to maintain the original characteristics of rural culture and the connotation of regional traditional culture. Village museums are hollowing, homogenized, culturally fragmented, and have poor cultural identity. Improper opinions about our own traditional culture and the lack of cultural confidence are the primary causes. Cultural genes are the core of national cultural confidence (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Current problems in the exhibition of village museums

### 2.3 The Relationship between Cultural Gene and Village Museum and Its Value Embodiment

Biological genes transmit genetic information in the process of self-replication which is stable and variable. The same is true of cultural genes. Excellent historical culture of China has been continued and inherited this way, and it has kept innovating with the changes of the times in this process. The essential attribute of a museum means that it should serve as the carrier of cultural heritage and the field of exhibition. A museum gathers the historical, spiritual and material civilization of a region, demonstrates and spreads local traditional culture and historical development, and highlights the identity and charm of the region. It can be said that the village museum itself is the product of explicit expression by cultural genes and the cultural origin of a place. Then, it is worth studying how to accurately describe and effectively express the cultural origins to enable people in rural areas to feel more confident in their own cultures. Identifying and sorting out cultural genes will have a positive effect on the current situation of village museums. From the perspective of the museum itself, by identifying its cultural genes, it is actually determining what the museum is to exhibit, the cognitive situation and exhibition vision and confirming how to make the visit more attractive to tourists. In turn, the ontology image of a village museum gets clearer, and homogenization can be avoided fundamentally. From the perspective of the radiating function of village museum, identifying its cultural genes helps to standardize rural planning and development, unify rural architectural forms, influence rural cultural derivatives and promote rural industrial economy.

Through the establishment of the image of village museum, the rural areas can develop in a faster manner, making people living there more proud of rural cultures. Therefore, more people would be willing to accept the identity of villages and the cultures there (Figure 2).

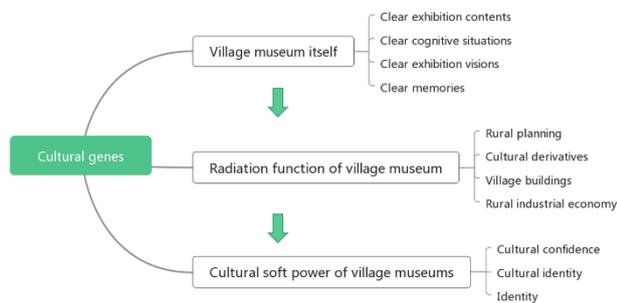


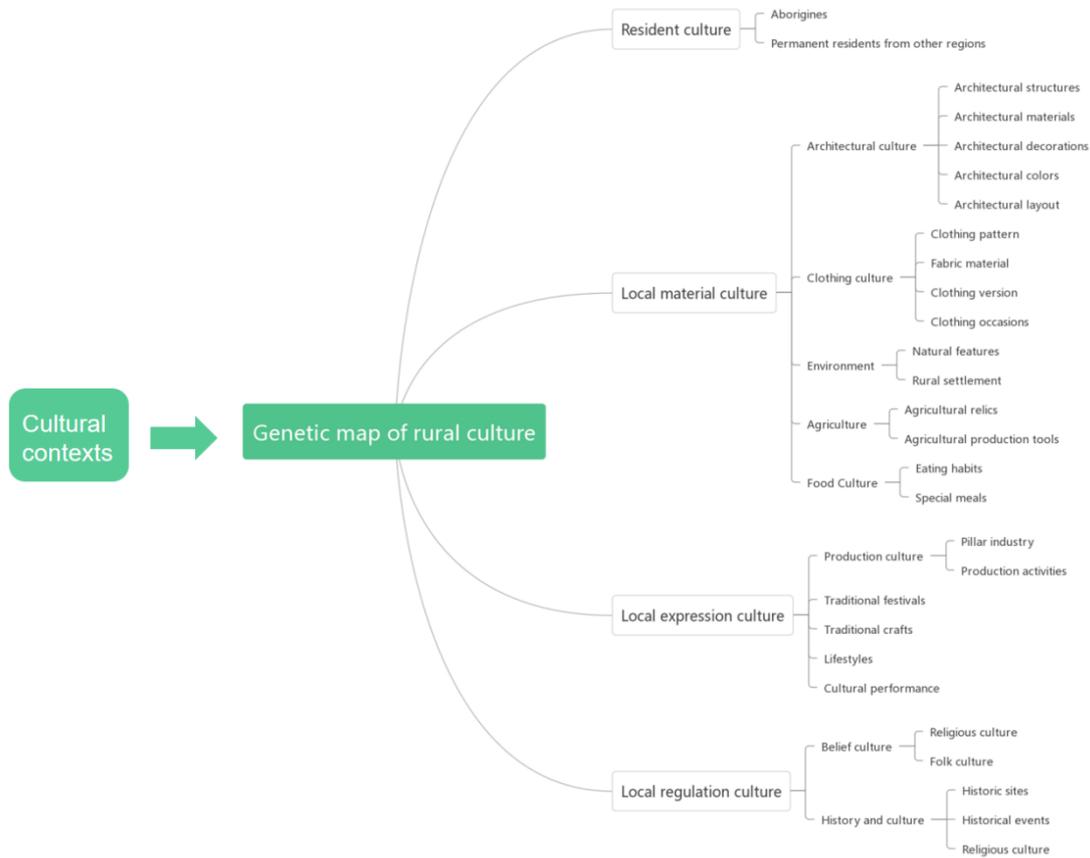
Figure 2 The relationship between cultural gene and village museum and its value embodiment

### 3. STABILITY AND VARIABILITY OF CULTURAL GENES IN VILLAGE MUSEUMS

#### 3.1 Extraction of Cultural Symbols of Village Museums Based on the Stability of Cultural Genes

The stability of genes ensures the stable inheritance and biological transmission from generation to generation. And the stability of cultural genes is represented by cultural contexts linking the past and future, through which culture is inherited and developed. However, since natural environment, folk culture and economic development condition vary from place to place, as a region develops, some unique cultural symbols and arrangements will come into being. This is how the unique culture and style of a region are formed and it also makes the image of the region special. The current homogenization of village museums can be attributed to the lack of cultural confidence. However, the root of cultural confidence lies in the cultural contexts, which are relatively stable.

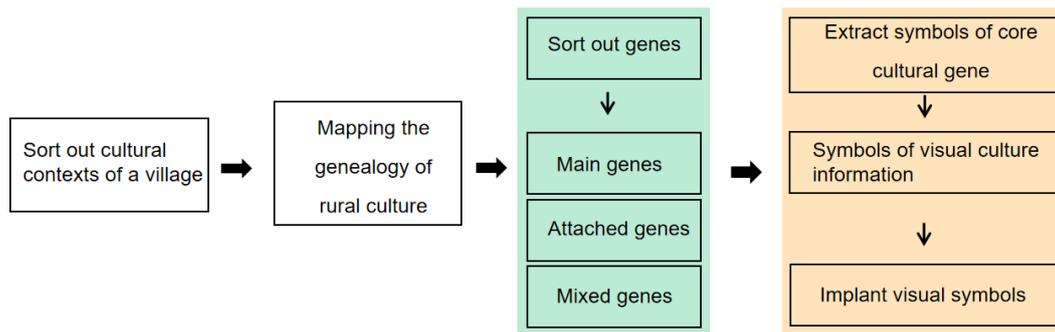
The cultural context of local culture is mainly represented by the resident culture, local material culture, local expression culture and local regulation culture. Resident culture is related to aborigines and permanent residents from other regions. Aborigines live in a certain region for generations, and take part in production activities together with permanent population from other regions. Aborigines are the creator of rural culture and an important inheritor of rural cultural genes. Local material culture refers to the material carriers of culture, including architectural culture, clothing culture peculiar to rural areas, rural humanistic environment, agricultural culture, food culture, etc. These material forms can well reflect the historical culture and cultural connotation of a village. The local expression culture can be felt through the dynamic culture, including the production and lifestyle of rural residents, traditional festivals, traditional cultural performances, etc. Local expression culture is vivid and infectious, and is the most active cultural gene of rural culture. Local regulation culture mainly includes belief culture and historical culture which consist of religious culture, clan culture and rural customs. As the spiritual core of rural culture, local regulation culture maintains social order and builds rural spiritual civilization. To protect, inherit and develop a rural culture, it is necessary to sort out its cultural contexts, identify the cultural genes rooted in the rural area, and then summarize the characteristics of local cultural genes, and draw the genetic map of rural culture (Figure 3).



**Figure 3** Genetic map of rural culture

The core of a cultural context is symbol which increases the cultural value of a culture through inheritance and development. Genetic map of rural culture is determined according to the cultural context. Later, the unique cultural gene symbols of a village are extracted, coded and used. For genetic map of a culture, its image is a DNA strand that carries the genetic information of a cultural system. Through exchange, recombination and even mutation, the genetic information on the strand completes the dissemination and inheritance of cultural genes<sup>[6]</sup>. Inheritance path of each cultural gene in the map varies with the function and type<sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the genetic map of a culture and sort out the genes it contains. The main gene can be confirmed according to the dominant factor of a village. As the main gene is the parent of other factors, it has played a guiding role in the rural culture of a region. If it blurs or disappears, the character of a village will be bound to vanish. Attached gene is identified in accordance with the context of rural development. The existence of attached gene depends on the main gene, and it is the external manifestation of rural culture. It contains local material culture and expression culture. Besides, it is highly extensible and forms the

basis of variable genes. The extraction of such genetic symbols helps to better show the cultural core of a village museum. Based on the integrity of the rural cultural context, mixed gene can be determined. This kind of gene isn't exclusive to a certain village while it has left traces in the historical development. It has also become part of the cultural gene of a region. It is the existence of mixed gene that ensures the diversity of rural cultural development. Each mixed gene bears the characteristics of the times and the cultural inheritance and development can be shown through it. By drawing the genetic map of culture and sorting out cultural genes, the path for the extraction of symbols of rural cultural genes was obtained (Figure 4). It is necessary to present the core cultural genes in visual mode and implant them into the construction of museums. By doing so, the homogenization of village museums can be avoided fundamentally. In this way, the charm of regional culture is highlighted, and the village museum can be turned into a rural space with its own characteristic, thus improving people's sense of identify and belonging. These unique cultural gene symbols help to grow cultural capital and promote people's confidence in their own culture by increasing the spiritual value of a cultural space.



**Figure 4** Path for the extraction of symbols of rural cultural gene

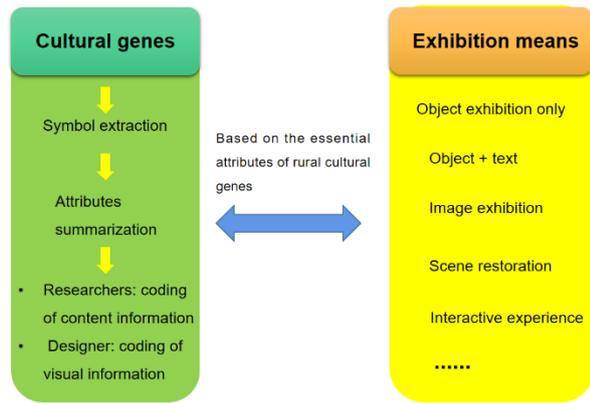
### 3.2 Exhibition Forms of Village Museums Based on the Variability of Cultural Genes

The variability of cultural genes promotes the development and innovation of rural culture. With the development of the times, cultural genes will change due to various environmental factors, thus forming new cultural genes. As a platform for cultural development and dissemination, museums act as the visual embodiment of cultural information symbols. It is required to implant the visual symbols derived from cultural genes into the content planning and the exhibition form which changes with cultural genes.

As museums move forward, they have also changed. Nowadays, museums no longer focus on the exhibition of objects only. Instead, they begin to decode and reconstruct current cultural genes. More attention is paid to the transmission and feedback of exhibition information. Museums try to design information dissemination according to the demands of visitors. They even attempt to incorporate people into genetic innovation and give them the chance to participate in the process of information coding. At present, a great many village museums choose to exhibit objects with the main purpose to show visitors the cultural and historical process and farming culture. For aborigines or groups of people who have experienced a some era, this helps to inspire their empathy to a certain degree. However, when local people are unaware of the history and culture of their village and visitors from other places know little about the village's culture, they'll just watch the items exhibited and would not be impressed. They will receive superficial information only, and deeper information will be hidden and cannot continue to spread. Objects exhibited are the explicit factor of cultural genes, and they'll generate new social attributes and values as time goes by. When the objects exhibited are separated from their original social environment and cultural context, it'll be necessary for museum designers and researchers to disassemble and encode their cultural genes during the exhibition. Museum visitors are whom the information is meant to deliver to while most of them are from other

places beyond that village. Under the objective stimulation of museum images, they perceive the culture and judge space culture information with their own experience. However, with the development of science and technology and innovation of technology, the exhibition forms of museum have been qualitatively developed. The role of visitors has changed. In the past, they receive information passively while they start to experience and participate actively now. This group of people has exerted multiple influences on the transmission of cultural genes. Museums spread cultural information through the contact between visitors and the space environment. As the object, they encode the original cultural genes through the output of visual symbols to obtain new cultural genes. The topic spirit that a museum plans to demonstrate will change accordingly when the social environment and spirit of the times change. If a cultural gene is refined and summarized into a cultural symbol and included in the museum collection, a new gene attribute will be given to the cultural gene when it is exhibited through a variety of methods. It will become a propaganda medium that spreads the spirit of the times or reflects the social environment and culture.

Therefore, to determine the exhibition form of a museum, it is important to sort out the cultural contexts and extract the symbols of cultural gene. Then the gene symbols will undergo visual processing. However, in the design of the exhibition means, two-dimensional gene symbols are exhibited in the three-dimensional space. To demonstrate the unique rural culture more accurately and make sure the culture is spread and inherited, it is vital not to follow the trend blindly. On the contrary, the exhibition method ought to be selected properly to match the essential attributes of the cultural genes of a village. This helps to highlight the original simplicity and profound cultural heritage of the village, and to reflect the pronounced homesickness (Figure 5).



**Figure 5** Path used to determine the exhibition forms based on cultural genes in village museums

### 3.3 Driven Development with Village Museums Being the Cultural Origins

The origin of cultural gene (also known as the base point or the protogenesis point) is the origin point of the cultural structure<sup>[8]</sup>. According to the essential attribute of museum, it is the carrier to inherit and the field to exhibit culture. So, a museum records the cultural, spiritual and material development of a region, and demonstrates and disseminates local traditional culture and historical development. Therefore, as a carrier which gathers cultural genes, a village museum can also be called the origin of cultural genes. According to relevant statistics, there are 14 major categories in the cluster aggregation of keywords related to rural development, which are rural revitalization, township and village enterprises, new rural construction, industrialization, agricultural product processing, rural urbanization, rural construction land, rural landscape, export-oriented economy, Liang Shuming, income distribution, practice paths, villager autonomy and country clubs. The contents of the studies cover topics like rural industrial development and rural landscape<sup>[9]</sup>. Cultural genes are the core for both the development of rural industries and rural landscapes. Based on the origin of cultural genes, a lot of nodes will be generated in rural planning and development, which can also be called cultural derivation points. Rural landscape planning, new rural construction, and industrialization are all nodes of rural cultural genes. Various problems have arisen in the process of rural development, such as chaotic rural planning; in the process of urbanization, some villages have lost their own characteristics gradually; it is always difficult to draw the attention of outsiders to the development of rural industries and leave a deep impression on them. All these problems are resulted by the lack of cultural genes. Then, to promote every aspect of a village, it is essential to identify its unique cultural genes. How to hold cultural genes together? How to refine cultural gene symbols, make rural stories heard to further guide rural construction and development? As the origins of cultural

genes for regions, village museums have become active players in the rural revitalization and development strategy. Assume that a village museum is at the center of a circle, then every single move of it will radiate outward to each level, all industries and related fields of rural development. So, it controls and guides the inheritance and development of each node of cultural genes. The guidance and assistance is useful for village museums to develop. At the same time, attention should be paid to aspects like community, public services, related industries and talent development to promote the development of museum clusters and drive rural industries forward.

## 4. CONCLUSION

As the origins of cultural genes of regions, village museums control and guide the development and innovation of rural areas while inheriting and spreading rural culture. The construction of village museums has become an important way to protect rural culture, preserve and inherit excellent traditional Chinese culture, retain rural memory, and keep watch on the rural civilization. To build a museum with the characteristics of a rural area, it is vital to sort out the cultural contexts of a village, draw the genetic map of its culture, and extract the symbols of cultural genes, which are then coded and rooted in the space exhibition of the museum. In addition, a suitable cultural exhibition method is essential. Village museums should be the center of the circle to provide a new development path for rural culture, region and industry, solving the problems of blurred rural images and serious homogenization. Only in this way can rural revitalization be realized and rural culture win identity from people.

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