

Analysis of the Composition of Traditional Village Image from the Perspective of Cultural Landscape - A Case Study of Villages in Huanghe Valley in Western Henan Region, China

Sai Yin¹, Pisit Puntien², Kanyanee Phuangsua³

¹Henan University, China, E-mail: 76316191@qq.com

^{2,3}Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

E-mail: pisit.pu@ssru.ac.th, kanyanee.ph@ssru.ac.th

Received: December 1, 2024; Revised: December 29, 2024; Accepted: December 29, 2024

ABSTRACT

At present, the image protection and renewal of traditional Chinese villages often remain at the level of architectural preservation, which has led to the phenomenon of constructive and protective destruction. The main problem lies in the fact that only material protection is carried out, while the overall correlation of village space and the cultural and social behaviors behind the space are lacking in value recognition. The purpose of this study are: 1) To study the characteristics of cultural landscape elements that are related to the traditional rural image. 2) To analyze the characteristics of the elements and problems of the cultural landscape image, in order to protect and develop the ancient village image. 3) To create new spatial design innovations and produce a guide for relevant departments in the conservation and development of the cultural landscape image. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative research method to analyze the composition of traditional village images in Huanghe valley in western Henan region from the perspective of cultural landscape. There are three stages :1) To explore the problem of traditional villages at the national and provincial levels; 2) Literature review, field literature, and data collection in various aspects; 3) Data analysis to find out the overall elements of the village and formulate guidelines to innovate the rural space design. The results show that the image composition of traditional villages in Huanghe valley in western Henan region can be understood as a composite system composed of layout space image, street place image and landmark node image. The images of the three spatial carriers are independent of each other and convey different immaterial meanings through different spatial representations. At the same time, the three spatial carriers are linked to each other when forming the overall image of the village. This kind of cognition can be used as the basic premise for the protection and renewal of traditional village images.

Keywords: Cultural landscape, Huanghe valley, Traditional village in western Henan region, Composition of image

Introduction

Traditional villages, also known as historical villages, have become important objects in the international heritage protection system. In China, "traditional villages" is a specific term. Since 2012, the Chinese government has announced five batches of 6,819 villages that have been included in the "List of Traditional Villages" and have been protected as objects. The essence of the protection of traditional villages is to protect the image of traditional villages, and to retain the local genes and regional culture of the villages by continuing the image of traditional villages. At present, around the protection of traditional village imagery, there are methods such as the delineation of the protected area, the overall protection of the environment, the continuation of the pattern and texture, the renovation of buildings in key areas, and the protection of intangible cultural heritage. But existing methods remain on the surface of "visible objects", ignoring the cultural mechanisms that actually lead to these sights. In recent years,

many traditional village images have been protected and updated without clarifying the meaning and positioning of the protection objects, and they have rushed to put forward "strategies" for protection, which has actually resulted in constructive and protective damage (Xiao, 2012). In particular, the blind pursuit of "historical features" and "cultural characteristics" has caused many traditional village images to gradually lose their historical authenticity and cultural seriousness. Therefore, this paper hopes to introduce the theoretical perspective of cultural landscape, and take the traditional villages in Huanghe valley in western Henan region as the research object to re-examine and sort out the composition of traditional village images and the corresponding relationship between image carriers and "spatial representations". It provides new ideas for the cognition and protection of traditional villages in Huanghe valley.

Literature Review

1. Traditional Village Image Elements

Image is the unity of subjective spiritual perception and objective external image, and is the result of the two-way process (Liu, 2021). The reason why people can remember and recognize the environment is because the recognizable features of the surrounding environment can be reproduced in the human mind, and the reproduced image is called "image" (Li, 2007). According to Kevin Lynch (2001), image is composed of personality, structure and connotation, that is, landscape imagery has identifiability, connection with material space and implicit connotation. At present, the research on the composition of village image mainly focuses on the extraction of types and classification features of village image elements. According to the division principle of "material-connotation", the composition of traditional village image elements can be summarized as material image elements, behavioral cultural elements (Wu, 2015). Through the combination of different image elements, the overall image of the traditional village is finally constructed.

2. The Composition of Traditional Village Image from the Perspective of Cultural Landscape

The concept of cultural landscape comes from cultural geography, and its essence is a scene that presents people and objective nature, landscape thought and practice. As a methodology, the core idea of cultural landscape is to analyze and interpret the meaning of landscape formation from a cultural perspective, so as to bridge the traditional binary contradictions between nature and man-made, material and value, history and modernity (Xiao, 2015). From the perspective of cultural landscape, the composition of traditional villages is a complex relationship between landscape and culture, and is a landscape object formed by the arrangement and combination of visible landscape elements in the corresponding spatial carrier level according to invisible cultural relations (Xiao, 2014). Based on this understanding, traditional village image can also be seen as a combination of material imagery elements (environment, architecture, streets & square) and non-material imagery elements (traditional culture, social behavior, environmental perception) in space carriers (layout space, street place, landmark node) (Figure 1). Through the analysis of the carrier image of the village space, it is possible to reveal the "form-meaning" correspondence between the material image elements and the non-material image elements at different spatial levels, and then have a new understanding of the composition of the village's overall image.

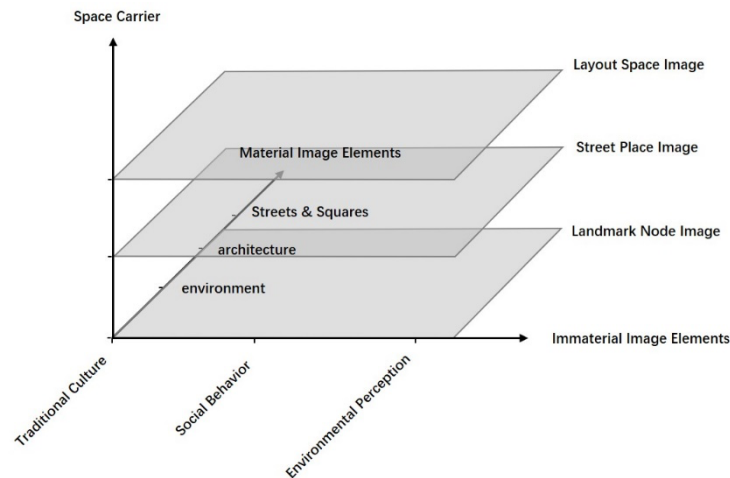


Figure 1. Image element model of traditional villages from the perspective of cultural landscape
Source: Sai Yin

Research objectives

1. To study the characteristics of cultural landscape elements that are related to the traditional rural image.
2. To analyze the characteristics of the elements and problems of the cultural landscape image, in order to protect and develop the ancient village image.
3. To create new spatial design innovations and produce a guide for relevant departments in the conservation and development of the cultural landscape image.

Research methodology

This research is a qualitative research, based on the theory of "material-connotation" integration of cultural landscape, to analyze the composition of traditional village images in Huanghe valley in western Henan region. It can be divided into the following three steps:

1. Take the typical villages in the existing national and provincial traditional village lists in western Henan as the research object, and fully consider the different administrative regions and landform types of the villages. Finally, 9 villages including Dajindian Laojie Village, Jinmenzhai Village, Houshangzhuang Village, Dawangmiao Village, Youfang Village, Baisha Village, Ganquan Village, Weipo Village and Siposhan Village were selected as research samples.
2. Through field inspections, literature review, interviews and other forms, collect basic data such as natural conditions, social history, village plane maps, streets and building layout information in the village samples.
3. Analyze the data, extract the material image elements and intangible image elements of the village image, analyze the "space surface signs" and intangible connotation of the element combination in the space carrier image, and finally summarize the overall imagery composition of the village.
4. Summarize the innovations in the protection and renewal of traditional village images from the perspective of cultural landscape.

Findings

1. Extraction of Image Elements of Traditional Villages

According to the classification method of traditional village image elements mentioned above, the material image elements of the village can be divided into environment, architecture, street & place space, and the immaterial image elements can be divided into traditional culture, social behavior, and environmental perception. By summarizing and summarizing the data of the nine traditional village sample surveys according to this classification, more detailed sub-categories of traditional village image elements in Huanghe valley of Western Henan region can be extracted, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Extraction of sub-categories of traditional village image elements in Huang He valley of Western Henan region

	Image Element Categories	Image Element Subcategory
Material Image Elements (Visible)	environment	the external environment of the village, the internal environment of the village
	architecture	buildings, structures, courtyards
	streets & squares	street, square
Immaterial Image Elements (Invisible)	traditional culture	history culture, habitat culture, functional culture, spiritual culture
	social behavior	neighborhood life, folk activities, ritual activities
	environmental awareness	atmosphere perception, folk customs

Source: Sai Yin

2. The Image Composition of Different Spatial Carriers of Traditional Villages

The extracted subcategories of different image elements were combined in three spatial carriers, namely layout space, street place and landmark node, and the "form-meaning" relationship of the combination of material image elements and immaterial image elements in each spatial carrier was analyzed.

2.1 Image Composition of Layout Space

On the layout space carrier, the combination of image elements forms the environment layout and functional layout of the village. The environment layout reflects the spatial relationship between the village and the external environment, and is the response of the ancient ancestors to the natural environment when they chose their place of residence. The site selection of traditional villages in western Henan is carried out under the traditional Feng Shui concept of "Back against the mountain, holding the water, and facing the screen". According to the survey of village samples, there are three common types of landscape layout in traditional villages in western Henan, namely river-side type, mountain-backed water type, and mountain-surrounded type, all of which are in line with the concept of Feng Shui. Among them, Baisha Village is the river-side type layout, Houshangzhuang Village is the mountain-backed water type layout, and Siposhan Village is the mountain-surrounded type layout (Figure 2).



River-side Type
(Baisha Village)



Mountain-backed Water Type
(Houshangzhuang Village)



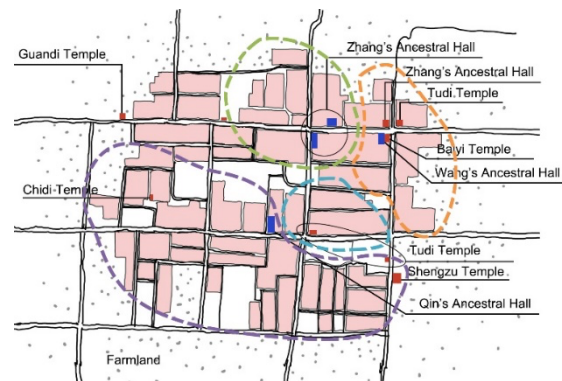
Mountain-surrounded Type
(Siposhan Village)

Figure 2 The composition of the environment layout of the village
Source: Sai Yin

The functional layout is composed of the external environment of the village, the internal environment of the village, buildings and streets, which reflects the dominant influence of functional culture on the formation of the internal structure of the village. According to the sample survey, the vast majority of villages in western Henan are farming-type villages that mainly live in farming, and a small number are commercial-type villages developed for commerce. Farming-type villages were formed on the basis of blood-based village nuclei in the early stage. In the later period, with the increase of population and the immigration of foreign groups, a pattern of multiple nuclei was usually formed, so the functional layout was a cluster-type layout; Commercial-type village is a village developed along a commercial road, with a strip-shaped commercial street as the main development axis, so the commercial-type villages are mostly linear in functional layout. In this survey sample, Dajindianlajie Village has a linear layout, with shops, residential areas, and guild halls distributed on the strip-shaped commercial street and its sides. Youfang Village has a cluster-type layout, with multiple ethnic groups forming different residential clusters, surrounded by farmland, and ancestral halls and temples embedded in different clusters (Figure 3).



Linear Layout (Dajindianlaojie Village)



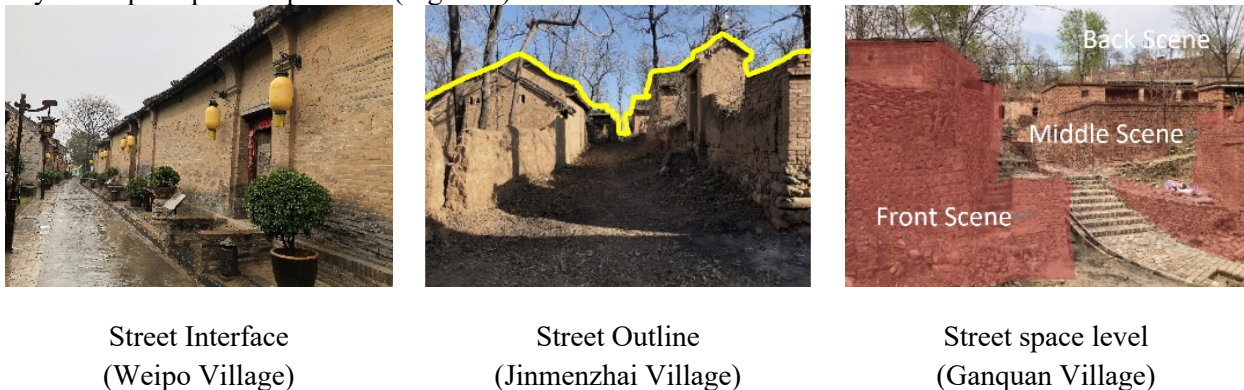
Cluster-type Layout (Youfang Village)

Figure 3. Functional layout of villages
Source: Sai Yin

2.2 Image Composition of Street Places

On the street place carrier, the combination of image elements forms the street functional space and street visual space of the village. The street functional space reflects the combination of streets, squares, buildings and structures. Through the series function of the streets in the village, it can form the stage of daily life such as street space, street-side space and street gathered space (Moughtin, 1978). According to the survey of sample villages, the street space of traditional villages in the Yellow River Basin of Western Henan has different scales and uses. The main street of commercial villages or large villages can reach 5-9 meters, which can meet the needs of a large number of people, trade activities, temple fairs and festivals. The secondary street is 2-4 meters, suitable for neighborhood activities such as walking and talking; the street-side space is often located on the side of the street, mostly the well or idle land in the village, providing the best place for the villagers to rest and chat; There are many forms of street gathered space, in some villages, buildings or structures are set up in the middle or above the street to form a small gathered space, and there are also small squares in front of public buildings to meet crowd gathered.

The street visual space is composed of the external environment of the village, the internal environment of the village, buildings, structures, streets and squares, it mobilizes almost all the material image elements and is the most important channel for the formation of the “sense of atmosphere” in the village. The street visual space of traditional villages in western Henan includes street interface, street outline and street space level. The interface of the street is the ground, facade and sky that affect the visual perception of people when walking on the street. The impression of the street interface is mainly through the style and shape of the gate, the decoration of the eaves, the facade material, the ground pavement, the ground height difference and to express. The street outline and street space level are the product of the combination of the street's interface and the village environment, which is a dynamic image perception. The street outline is formed by the building outline, walls, trees, and mountain views, the street space level is the relationship between the distance and volume of various landscapes. When people walk in the village, buildings and sites of different proportions expand and contract in the flowing path, and the outline and level of the street also continuously change with the perspective, forming a dynamic perception experience (Figure 4).



Street Interface
(Weipo Village)

Street Outline
(Jinmenzhai Village)

Street space level
(Ganquan Village)

Figure 4. The visual space composition of the street in the village
Source: Sai Yin

2.3 Image Composition of Landmark Nodes

On the landmark node carrier, the combination of image elements forms the landmark space and node space of the village. The landmark space reflects the spatial combination of important buildings and squares in the village in a comprehensive environment, it is the focal point of the landscape sight in the village, and it is also a place to demonstrate functions, social relations and value beliefs. Landmark

spaces show existence through location, scale and form. The location of the landmarks reflects the importance of the landmarks, the landmark spaces (temples, Taoist temples, guild halls, shops, ancestral halls, etc.) of traditional villages in western Henan are often distributed in the center of the village space or at the heights of the terrain on the edge of the village. The scale and form of a landmark are the external visual features of the landmark space, generally speaking, the scale of the landmark space is larger, and its physical features and decorative elements are more abundant than ordinary dwellings, which highlights the status of the landmark as a spiritual symbol.

The node space is a combination of buildings, streets and squares in a comprehensive environment, unlike the landmark space, the node space is more for identifying the location of the space rather than showing individuality. The node space of traditional villages in western Henan is mainly the wells, bridges, pavilions and other structures in the village, and also includes the square nodes under the big trees in the village. In terms of location, the node space is often distributed at the intersection of important spatial structures such as the entrance and exit of the village, the official road, and the riverside. The form is not deliberately exaggerated, but shows a simple rural construction method.

In the spatial distribution of landmarks and nodes in Dawangmiao Village, it can be seen that the Dawangmiao Theater is located in the center of the northern terrace of the village as a landmark, it is different from other dwellings in both scale and shape. There are two stone bridges and two wells with pleasant scales and different shapes. These landmarks and nodes together demonstrate the local temperament and spiritual pursuit of the farming-type village (Figure 5).



1 Dawang Temple Stage 2 Wawa Bridge 3 Wenqu Bridge 4 Well 1 5 Well 2

Figure 5. The landmark space and node space of Dawangmiao Village

Source: Sai Yin

3. The Overall Image Composition of Traditional Villages

In the above, the traditional village image is graded and analyzed from the three spatial carrier images of layout space, street place, and landmark node, in order to clarify the corresponding relationship between the combination of elements and the immaterial connotation in different spatial carrier images. But in fact, each carrier image does not exist in isolation in the overall village image, but intersperses, transforms and influences each other. Therefore, the images of traditional villages in Huanghe valley in western Henan region can be understood as a complex system. On the one hand, the three spatial carrier images are independent, and convey different immaterial meanings through their different spatial representations. On the other hand, the three spatial carrier images are related, and different image elements echo and reinforce each other in different spaces, forming the overall image of the village (Figure 6).

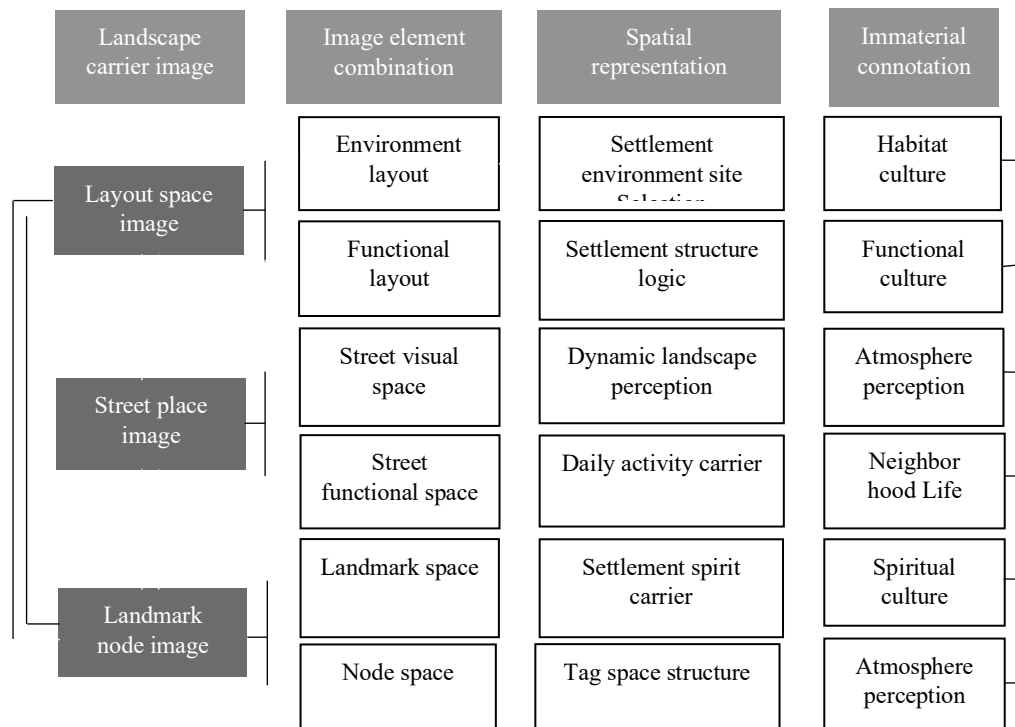


Figure 6. Frame of the overall image of traditional villages in Huanghe valley in western Henan region

Source: Sai Yin

4. The Innovation of Traditional Villages Under the Perspective of Cultural Landscapes

The perspective of cultural landscapes provides us with a new perspective for us to re-understand the traditional village imagery, and it also provides new ideas for the protection and update of traditional villages. Although there is no new breakthrough in the protection technology, as a systematic idea, the cultural landscape perspective can provide a complete theoretical solution for traditional villages' image protection and updates from the cognitive level and method level (Table 2).

Table 2. Cultural landscape perspective below the village image protection and update innovation

	Theoretical cognitive level	Update design method level
Old village image protection and update perspective	- Pay attention to key buildings and ignore the environment	- Rigid delineation layout space protection scope
	- Pay attention to "visual harmony"	- The streets are repaired and transformed to the same standard of regularity
	- The village as an object of curiosity for tourists	- Landmark node carried out travel development alone
	- Concentrated protection for intangible cultural culture	

	Theoretical cognitive level	Update design method level
Cultural landscape village image protection and update perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint protection of architecture and space environment - Pay attention to the internal logic and regional characteristics of space - Both indigenous life and tourism development - The inheritance of intangible culture should be carried out with the space carrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The protection of layout space should be comprehensive in terms of historical functions, environmental characteristics, and internal order - The streets are not undergoing large -scale demolition, and "historical symbols" are not set, to protect the "authenticity" of the atmosphere - The reuse of landmark nodes should be combined with the original function and spiritual connotation

Source: Sai Yin

Conclusions and Discussion

According to the perspective of cultural landscape, the images of traditional villages in the Yellow River Basin of Western Henan have the characteristics of unity of material and connotation, that is, each space carrier image has a specific spatial representation and corresponding immaterial image connotation:

1. The image of layout space is mainly reflected in the level of environment layout and functional layout. At the level of environment layout, the environmental location of the settlement under the concept of Feng Shui is used as the spatial representation form, and the connotation mainly reflects the habitat culture; at the level of functional layout, the generation logic of the settlement structure guided by the cultural mechanism is used as the spatial representation form, it mainly reflects the functional culture.

2. The image of street place is mainly reflected in the level of street visual space and street functional space. At the level of street visual space, the dynamic landscape perception of the street interface, street outline and street space level is used as the spatial representation form, and the connotation mainly reflects the perception of atmosphere; at the level of the street functional space, the daily life content connected by the street is used as the spatial representation form, mainly reflects the neighborhood life.

3. The image of landmark nodes is mainly reflected in the level of landmark space and the node space. At the level of landmark space, the symbolic meaning of the settlement spirit conveyed by landmarks is used as the spatial representation form, and the connotation mainly reflects the spiritual culture; at the level of node space, the marking of the spatial structure by nodes is used as the spatial representation form, and the connotation mainly reflects the atmosphere perception.

In the overall image of a traditional village, the image of the layout space, the image of the street place and the image of the landmark node are linked to each other. If a certain carrier image element changes, other parts of the landscape image will have a corresponding positive or negative impact.

Compared with the old view of village protection, the research on the image of traditional villages in the Yellow River Basin of Western Henan Province from the perspective of cultural landscape puts forward new ideas from the level of theoretical cognition and the level of updated design methods. To do in-depth study of village image formation, extracted from the vector space representation must be followed in landscape connotation as a development context, then based on the connotation of the value of the image updates, rather than stay in the "history" and "culture" the blind pursuit of, should be gradually put an end to "a constructive and protective destruction" phenomenon. At the same time, the

idea of cultural landscape should be implemented in the village protection plan formulated by the government, and design guidelines should be formulated to systematically guide the design innovation of traditional space.

References

- Kevin, L. (2001). *The Image of the City*. Beijing: Huaxia Press.
- Liu, Y. (2021). *A Study on the Protection and Renewal of Jimo Phoenix Village from the Perspective of Spatial Image* (Master's thesis, Dalian University of Technology).
- Li, J. (2007). *A Study on the Images and Ideas of the School Emblem of University* (Master's thesis, Central South University).
- Moughtin, J. C. (1978). *The Plansters Vision*. Nottingham: The University of Nottingham Press, 5.
- Wu, Y. (2015). *The Deconstruction of the Space Image Elements of the Traditional Village of Hydrographic Net Region in Southern Jiangsu* (Master's thesis, Suzhou University of Science and Technology).
- Xiao, J. (2014). *The composition and Connotation Study Between Landscape Media and Cultural Mechanisms in China's Historic Settlement from the Perspective of "Cultural Landscape":Case Studies on Historical Settlements in the Southwest Area*. *Architectural journal* (02), 89-97.
- Xiao, J. (2015). *Evolution Process and Dynamic Mechanism Analysis of Historic Town Cultural Landscape in Southwest Mountainous Area* (Doctoral dissertation, Chongqing University).
- Xiao, J., & Cao, k. (2012). *Study on the Building Layout and Ritual Space Creation of Local Confucian Temples in Ming and Qing Dynasties*. *Architectural journal* (08), 119.