

HOW TO CONSERVE THE OLD TOWN OF LIJIANG AND ITS SETTINGS

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Introduction

The Old Town of Lijiang, the World Cultural Heritage, is located in Yunan province, 570 km north-west of Kunming, Southwest China, and has become a popular international tourist destination over the past years. The Old Town of Lijiang, is located the southeast part of the city, with about 15,000 inhabitants. Now, the conservation area of the Old Town of Lijiang, is about 90 hectares, outside the conservation area is the development control area of about 279 hectares.

The Old Town of Lijiang, possibly the best preserved old town in China, is one of the few last places in this country where a visitor can witness and experience a historic, traditional urban culture. Remarkably, the old houses with stone foundations, plastered whitewashed brick walls, red wooden doors, shutters and balconies, and sloping tiled roofs, survived a recent earthquake without much damage, while the new concrete buildings were flattened. Adding to the charm of the narrow, winding, mostly pedestrian cobblestone streets is a network of canals. They are fast flowing from the Black Dragon Pool, a nice park with some interesting temples and a great view of the nearby Jade Dragon Snow Mountains.

In 1997, The Old Town of Lijiang applied for inclusion in the List of World Heritage, N26 52 E100 14.

Following is a brief description:

The Old Town of Lijiang, which is perfectly adapted to the uneven topography of this key commercial and strategic site, has retained a historic townscape of high quality and authenticity. Its architecture is noteworthy for the blending of elements from several cultures that have come together over many centuries. Lijiang also possesses an ancient water-supply system of great complexity and ingenuity that still functions effectively today.

Justification for Inscription:

The Committee decided to inscribe this site on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iv) and (v). Lijiang is an exceptional ancient town set in a dramatic landscape which represents the harmonious fusion of different cultural traditions to

produce an urban landscape of outstanding quality.

Elements and Characteristics of the Old Town's Setting

Dayan town, located beside the main road from Sichuan province to Tibet, is a significant commercial town in the north-west Yunnan province. During the period of the Republic of China and the Second World War, it formed part of an important route of Sino-India trade and business communication line.

Developing along the river, the centre of Lijiang city transferred from north to south gradually: originating at Yulong, moved later to Baisha and Longquan, and was finally built up at the Dayan town .

In the course of the development of Lijiang city, there are three centres playing a vital role: Sifang Street, Prefectural city of ruler in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) and Rest Officer Courtyard in Qing Dynasty(1644-1911A.D.)

Shape characteristic of the ancient city could be generalized as 'Surrounded by mountains at the west and north, divided by rivers'. The whole city was built near the mountain while the streets were laid out along rivers. The city is surrounded by Lion hill at west and Xiangshan hill and Jinhong hill at north, with wide fertile land to the south. This kind of landform is helpful for the city to avoid the attacks of northwest cold winds and enjoy the ample sunshine, and moreover, in summer the virtue of the south winds' cooling function .The climate of Lijiang city is of great amenity in summer as well as in winter.

Water is the vigor of the Lijiang city. The river runs across the city, along the streets, surrounds the buildings, as such creating a beautiful picture about Plateau waterside town.

Lijiang's traits

Farmland is one of the important traits of Lijiang city. There are plenty of farmlands and springs in the city, which not only are organic parts of the city but also integrate the city with the natural environment harmoniously. All these and the free layout of streets formed a unique feature that city is the village with town streets while village is the city

separated as diverse communities.

“Hazy mountains and tangible water” is the visual trait of Lijiang city. Hazy Mountain is referred to Yulong Mountain at a longer distance, with a height above sea level of 5596 metres and snow-covered perennially, which is the background of the ancient city. To the fore, there lie three hills and wandering brooks of small bridges.

The obvious ecological pattern is the environmental trait of Lijiang city, which can be summarized as mountain-water-farmland-city model. Especially, the rural scenery in the east should be paid more attention to as is the inalienable part of ancient city setting.

In the development plans of Lijiang city, the new city is to be located to the west of Lion hill, which means the new development direction is to the west and the north. This choice avails to the preservation of the ancient city as well as its setting.

Cultural trait: as the only one settlement place mainly constituted by the Naxi nationality, Lijiang is home to the Naxi, a minority matriarchal culture originating from Tibet. The Dongba, Naxi shamans of a religion which is an amalgam of Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism, created more than a thousand years ago a writing language consisting of more than 1300 pictographs. It is the only hieroglyphic language still in use.

The Old Town of Lijiang and Its Setting are Facing a Serious Threat

1 Economy development of whole region are very slowly, which give the city and its setting much pressure

Yunnan province belongs to the area which its economy development is not upgrowth. Moreover Lijiang is not upgrowth in Yunnan province. The population of Yunnan province ranks 12th, in the whole nation, the GDP of Yunnan province ranks 27th, and the farmer’s net Per capita income is also 27th.

Lijiang city comprises one district and four counties. The area of Lijiang city is 20,603 sq.km. The population is 1.1million (2001). The average Per capita GDP is 3026yuan/per, which is 62% of the province’s average level. The Per capita of pure farmer’s income is 907yuan/per, which is 59% of province average level. The Per capita of finance income is 223 yuan/per, which is 50% of province average level. The pressure of development is huge.

At the same time, Lijiang city is the only net immigration place, with people of all around the country. The whole external population in Lijiang is 60,000, and in the old-town district 30,000. The increasing population in the old-city district and the resulting employment pressure has a great impact on the living conditions of Lijiang city.

2 The Old Town of Lijiang has an excessive commercial activity in the tourism sector

Tourism is the primary industry in Lijiang city. In 1996, when the city suffered from the earthquake, the number of tourists exceeded one million. In 1997, when the city succeeded in its application for the World Cultural Heritage, the following year, the tourist influx exceeded two millions. In 2001, the tourist arrivals exceeded three million, and presently, the number exceeded four million already. The tourists are mainly concentrate on the Old Town of Lijiang .

During the development of tourism, some phenomena such as destroying the city and its settings appeared. There are nearly 2000 souvenir shops, but only a little of the merchandise can exhibit traditional characteristics. Most of the merchants come from outside of Lijiang city, and their behavior is not corresponding with local culture.

The habitation and commercial function as it served the Naxi common residents before in the Old Town of Lijiang, is wearing off. Simple and unsophisticated inhabitanacy has been replaced by advanced hotels and hostels.

Living conditions have been much influenced. Prices of daily goods and costs of maintenance have been elevated, and there is a lack of public space and community facilities. The private and semi-private space has been destroyed. This castoff depraves the environment, whilst the objectivity request of heritage conservation limited the local people in pursuing the modern life.

The influx of people from outside of Lijiang city increases very fast, and has greatly destroyed the social system of the local inhabitants. And the people come from outside have hold the opportunity of obtain local employment, which can bring them more benefit.

Concluding, the atmosphere of the Old Town of Lijiang becomes worn off. Excessive commercial acitivity makes the old people move outside of city. Traditional handicrafts dramatically decreased. Without the local people, traditional culture would weaken affecting the culture connotation of the old city. This all made many international tourists go instead to Zhongdian and another farther away places to taste the traditional culture.

3 The new directions of the city development destroy the Old Town of Lijiang and its setting

The original city development direction is mainly towards west, and also they can develop in north. This can bring benefit to conservation. And now, local government plans a new town in the southern part within a range of 10 km from Lijiang city, which is doable in theory. But the new town is likely to grow toward Lijiang city, if the construction of the new town is not under firm control. In the end, the two parts would connect, and the visage and settings would have been destroyed.

In fact, in order to accelerate the development, many buildings have been built in north, west and east of Old Town of Lijiang, and it is even considered to build an industry district. This is not a good way, especially the construction of new buildings in the east of the Old Town of Lijiang, which make the the Old Town of Lijiang surrounded by modern buildings.

The natural scene is the foundation of the Old Town of Lijiang. The settings include mountain, river, brook, old trees. This foundation and the old city coexist and complement each other. If the setting were destroyed, this would seriously affect the old city scene as well.

4 The construction of new industry projects.

The development of the Old Town of Lijiang is not only dependent on tourism. Local government is planning some industry projects. For developers, the preferred location is near the Old Town of Lijiang. At present, some polluting factories are moving to other places, however, the pollution is still serious. Building new (polluting) factories around the old city would further affect the settings.

Also there are regional developments affecting the area. the country's policy is to develop water energy and electricity, such as "give electric power from the west to the east". Lijiang city and its commutative region is located middle range of the of Jinsha River. Lijiang area has a stretch of 615 km Jinsha River, at which 8 level water and electricity power plants are planned. And recently plans include also the development of the Jinanqiao and Hutiaoxia power plants The total capacity will be 17-20 million Kw. Some experts point out that if multilevel water and electricity power plants are built, this would have a negatively impact on Lijiang's environment.

How to Conserve the Old Town of Lijiang and Its Settings

We think that these aspects (such as policy, regional development, layout, management etc.) should be further thought through and effective measures adopted. This way, the ambience of the Old Town of Lijiang could still be conserved well and stay the carrier of the Lijiang City culture. At the same time, it could accelerate the development of the regional economy from the view of sustainable development.

1 From a scientific standpoint, development, realizing the value of The Old Town of Lijiang and ambience, should place conservation the first

From the viewpoint of innovation and opening up, every city regarded developing the economy as the most important aspect. And economy was the factor to check the pilot's achievement in one's post. Now the era that regarded the economic target as the only target is past. Recognition for conserving culture and heritage become one of the pilot's achievements in one's post. It is hoped that this will come true step by step.

Beijing People's Government put forward guidelines of function orientation and estimation in boroughs and counties in May 2005. These guidelines departed Beijing into four parts as a whole, including core centre of capital function, expanded district of city function, new area of city development and development district of preserving the zoology self-restraint.

Core centre of capital function is the main range of old city in Beijing, including Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chongwen, Xuanwu. As the political and cultural centre, this region shows the characteristic of the old city and is the most important carrier of capital function and "four services". This city-region's main task is to strength the city's management, conserve the features of old city, improve the residential environment, develop the modern servicing industry vigorously and make the contribution for realizing the property and function of Beijing. Concrete task include four parts, and one of these parts is to conserve the feature of old Beijing, accelerate the reconstruction of old or dangerous buildings, evacuate population, adjust functions of the old city and promote the sustainable development of the old city.

'Four functions area enactment' different estimation guideline in terms of different characteristics, and not GDP, is now the check target in borough and county.

2 Establishing the logical layout and developing the regional economy

The area of Lijiang City can be departed into three parts, including conserving and strictly controlling area,

developing limited area and stimulating developing area. Conserving and strictly controlling area include the historic and cultural district, world heritage site, landscape and showplace, nature protection site, momentous foundation establishment, and protecting area of water resource.

Developing limited area should define its proper scale and concrete control target, such as the old district of city.

Stimulating developing area should confirm the important industries that need developing in terms of the local master plan and arrange no pollution industry project logically. Stimulating developing area includes two county seats and nine important towns. By developing the industries in phase between nine towns, we can advance the interregional economic developments in Lijiang.

3 Confirming the development direction of the city

The main direction development of Lijiang City is the west and southwest. The northern part should be controlled, and the isolated district between southern part on the city zone and Yulong county seat should be conserved strictly. The southern, eastern and southeast district is the background conserving area of historic environments, and in this area the construction must be prohibited.

The eastern and southeast district is the landscape area like a garden, and this is the important part of Lijiang ambience. If the city will develop the area of eastern and southern part, especially the southern part which will encircle the old city, this will keep out the alleyways of the view lines between the Lionhill, old city, garden city and background hill. Along with the expanding of the city, the artistic conception of the old city and background will be lost.

So we must strictly control the ambience of old city and building height and scale. At same time, we should pay more attention to the protection of the landscape and alleyways of the view lines. The lowest command is to protect the existent rurality of the southeast part in the Old Town of Lijiang.

4 Suggestions for the tourism industry

The tourism industry should connect with the rework, zoological protection and the construction and culture industry. The Old Town of Lijiang is the jacket collar of the tourism industry, and we should excavate the culture connotation and bring forward the upper limit of the tourism population in terms of the environment's carrying capacity. We should attract the tourist to the nearby scenery spots such as two hills (Yulong hill, Laojun hill), one city (The Old Town of Lijiang), one lake (Lugu lake), one culture (Dongba Culture) and one amorous feelings (Mosuo

amorous feelings). And then the regional tour theme will enlarge the tourism capacity of the Old Town of Lijiang.

The government should come up with a favourable policy for tourism industry and set up relations between the tourism industry and deviating poverty.

5 Conserve the Humankind Setting of the Old Town of Lijiang

Presently, there are about 15,000 people local residents live in the Old Town of Lijiang, among them 88% belongs to Naxi nationality. They are the successors of the local cultures and they themselves are the marks of the cultures. Some older people are leaving the Old Town of Lijiang. At the same time, tourism activity makes losses in the cultural characteristics. Therefore, we need to improve the living conditions for the local residents and encourage them - especial the younger people - to live there, and also encouraging them to take part in the conservation and cultural activity in the Town. Simultaneously, we should do something to let the polluting industries and some administrative units to resettle outside the Town.

Second is to carry out the system which permits the workman and businessman from other places to settle in the old city. This can guarantee the balance of local population and immigration. At same time, we should advance the respect of the immigrants for the local people's culture.

Unfortunately, we so far didn't succeed to convince the local authorities, and the Old Town of Lijiang and its setting are still in danger. Lijiang became a hot topic last year. We think that it is an issue not only for us planners, but for everybody, including you and me, officers and residents, visitors and developers, scientists and so on. We also need to consider the Old Town of Lijiang as heritage of human, to do our best to let it keep peaceful and harmoniously with nature and humankind. We hope therefore that the conservation of the Old Town of Lijiang can become an successful example.

Abstract

Lijiang city, the World Cultural Heritage, is located in Yunan province, Southeast China. Having become a popular international tourist destination over the past years, Lijiang is now facing the serious threat of losing local characteristics such as the local customs, languages, dresses and cultural atmosphere, due to over-commercialism and too much trade mainly by people from outside the Lijiang region.

Lijiang has a beautiful natural setting of hills, lakes, rivers, trees and green belts of agricultural fields and forests. However, due to the rapid urbanization and large-scale construction in the north, west and south parts of the city, many new buildings are being constructed, which are not in harmony with the old buildings and therefore it seriously destroyed the settings.

More potential danger is to expect from plans of the local authorities to develop the local economy faster by means of transforming the fringe of Lijiang city in industrial zones and residential areas as well to build a new city just in the south.

As urban planners, in charge of preparing the Lijiang master plan, we suggested the following:

- 1) To consider Lijiang city in a regional perspective: no polluting industry projects in the small and middle-sized towns in the northern part within a range of 20-30km from Lijiang city, so that we can both develop the local economy and conserve Lijiang city and its settings.
- 2) In Lijiang city, we encourage the local residents to develop their handicrafts, family hotels and other special activities showing their typical local products and characteristics to visitors, while limiting people from outside the area to undertake such activities.
- 3) As to the setting of the Lijiang city, we propose measures to preserve and enhance the natural scenery, and stop the construction of new buildings in it. Through architectural rehabilitation, new buildings should be brought into harmony with the Lijiangs cityscape and surrounding landscape. As to the green belts, at least the southeastern part -as the only part where the city is still in its original rural setting - no any construction should be allowed.

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References

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3. Peng ZHAO Master plan for Lijiang City (2003-2020), Caption, China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, (in Chinese)
4. Peng ZHAO Master plan for Lijiang City (2003-2020), Text, China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, (in Chinese)

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Fig.1 Location of the Lijiang in Yunnan Province



Fig.2 Administrative map of Lijiang Region

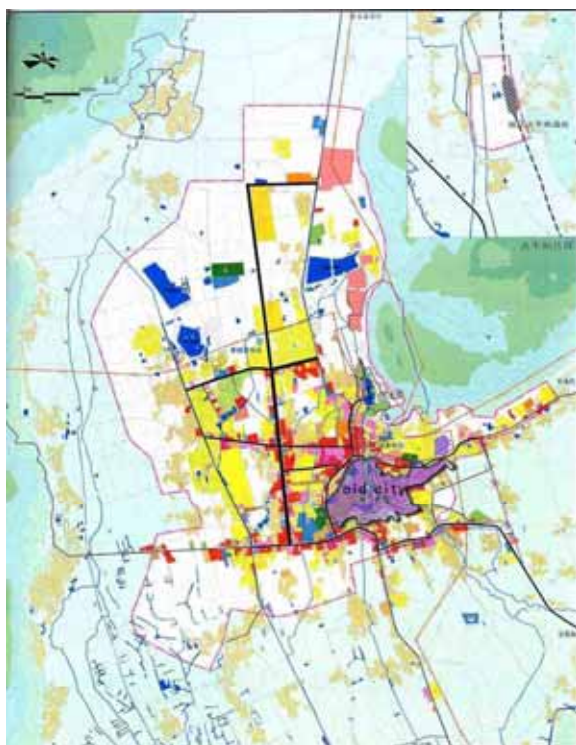


Fig.3 Existing Landuse

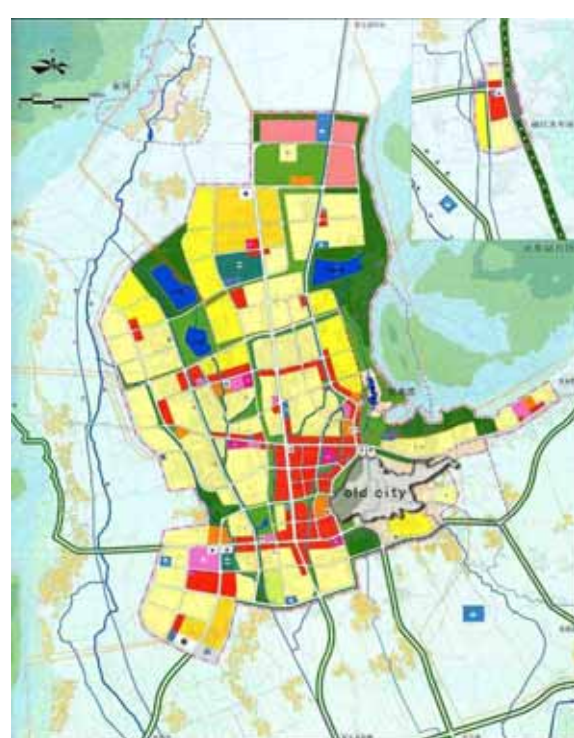


Fig.4 Planning Landuse

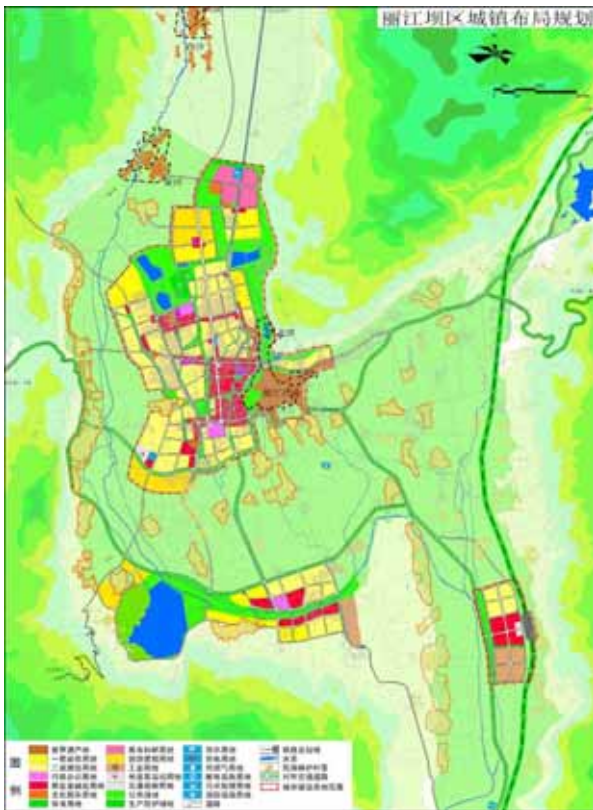


Fig.9 Master Plan of Lijiang



Fig.10 Bird view of the Old Town of Lijiang



Fig.11 Field Landscape of Lijiang



Fig.12 Townscape of Lijiang