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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Ethnic Minority Characteristic Villages from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization Inheritance and Innovation of Architectural Culture: A Case Study of Oroqen Nationality

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| ABSTRACT

Architectural culture is an important carrier of rural regional culture and plays an important role in the inheritance and development of rural culture. How to complete the inheritance and innovation of architectural culture while promoting the orderly development of rural areas is a practical problem faced by researchers and designers. Combining actual cases, this study extracts the essence of traditional dwellings from the analysis and excavation of traditional architectural culture and architectural elements and applies the new dwellings to the regional characteristic culture of the Oroqen people.

| KEYWORDS

Rural revitalization; traditional villages of ethnic minorities; architectural culture; cultural heritage and innovation; Oroqen ethnic

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### 1. Introduction

From ancient times to the present, architecture has run through the development of human materials and spiritual civilization. It carries excellent human wisdom and reflects diverse cultural types. The regional buildings created by the people of all ethnic groups in China have formed their own distinctive architectural culture. Among the traditional villages in Yunnan, there are a large number of regional buildings with diverse forms, rich cultural connotations, and distinctive landscape characteristics. They are the crystallization of the architectural culture of the Oroqen people, the portrayal of the life of a certain era, and the record of a certain social history. The folk craft and technical characteristics of the regionally characteristic buildings in Yunnan minority villages are enough to constitute a development history of architectural technology and art [1]. Its rich and diverse architectural space patterns are cultural heritage treasures created by the complex and diverse natural environment. They show us the Oroqen people's ecological and natural outlook of adapting to nature, loving nature, and making rational use of nature.

In recent years, while the wave of urban-rural integration and the strategy of Rural Revitalization has promoted the rapid development of China's rural areas, they have also had a huge impact on China's rural architectural culture. In the construction of ethnic minority villages, the government advocates large-scale demolition and construction, and the villagers spontaneously transform at will. They all blindly advance in the direction of modernization, pay no attention to the development and innovation of traditional architectural culture, and "one side of a thousand villages" and other phenomena make the architectural culture of traditional villages lose its original regional characteristics [2]. Therefore, how to inherit and innovate ethnic minority village culture should be put in the first place in rural construction and architectural creation. It is necessary to dig deeply into the connotation of architectural culture accumulated behind it and apply the technology and aesthetics of modern architecture to develop and innovate on this basis, rather than just stay in the traditional village architectural form Imitation.

## 2. The significance of architectural culture inheritance and innovation from the perspective of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

A series of new concepts and ideas contained in the Rural Revitalization Strategy outline a grand blueprint for the development of traditional ethnic minority villages in the new era. The opinions of China on the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy point out that "based on rural civilization, we should absorb the excellent achievements of urban civilization and foreign culture, creatively transform and develop on the basis of protection and inheritance, and constantly endow the era with connotation and rich forms of expression" [3]. With the change in modern production and lifestyle, the architectural culture of traditional ethnic minority villages has moved from protection and inheritance to a new situation of inheritance and innovation. In this new situation, the inheritance and innovation of architectural culture play an important role in inheriting the traditional village culture of ethnic minorities, building rural characteristics, and promoting rural economic development.



**Figure 1.** The picturesque Shibadong Village in China: Wuyuan-style rural architecture  
Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1235313.shtml>

(1) The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture is conducive to the cultural inheritance of Ethnic Minority Traditional Villages: the cultural accumulation of ethnic minority traditional villages mainly comes from the two main aspects of material culture and non-material culture, and the material culture is mainly reflected by the unique architectural culture. In the traditional villages of Oroqen nationality, many traditional buildings with regional characteristics are still preserved. They are influenced by the terrain, climate, internal national culture, customs, and aesthetic concepts and retain their cultural genetic genes.

(2) The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture is conducive to the construction of rural characteristics of Ethnic Minority Traditional Villages: contemporary rural settlements in China have rural characteristics composed of mountains, waters, forests, fields, lakes, people, and buildings. However, with the advancement of the new rural construction, the government blindly demolished and built in order to pursue the development of the rural economy, ignoring the internal texture, resulting in the invasion of modernist architectural style into its architectural culture and losing its own characteristics. Rural characteristics are the best expression of the village's sense of history and existence. Only by introducing classics and introducing the old, and bringing forth the new inheritance and innovation of architectural culture can we continue its national, contemporary, and cultural characteristics [4].

(3) The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture is conducive to promoting the economic development of Ethnic Minority Traditional Villages: villages are complex with regional characteristics, which have multiple functions such as production, life,

ecology, and culture. It is a relationship between mutual promotion, coexistence, and coexistence with cities and towns. At the present stage, the contradiction between the growing needs of Chinese people for a better life and the unbalanced and insufficient development is particularly prominent in the countryside. In the process of implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy, only by promoting the inheritance and innovation of the architectural culture of traditional ethnic minority villages and building villages with cultural heritage and rural characteristics can we consolidate its profound cultural foundation, explore its maximum potential and stamina to develop the distinctive rural cultural tourism industry, and thus promote its continuous economic development.

### **3. The internal requirements of the Rural Revitalization Strategy in the new era for the inheritance and innovation of Architectural Culture**

(1) China put forward the major historical task of implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy. Under this background, China issued the strategic plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022), which proposed to effectively promote the continuous development of China's Rural Revitalization in accordance with the general requirements of prosperous industry, ecological livability, rural civilization, effective governance and rich life [5]. Therefore, the development and construction of Yunnan Ethnic Minority Traditional Villages in the new era should be guided by the strategic planning of rural revitalization and promote the development of their architectural culture.



**Figure 2.** Wending village in Yunnan, China

Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215635.shtml>

(2) The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture need to be rooted in the rural civilization that has been formed in traditional villages. The inheritance and innovation of traditional village architectural culture should absorb and learn from the excellent achievements of urban civilization and foreign culture, creatively transform and develop on the basis of protection and inheritance, and constantly endow traditional village architecture with rich forms of expression and new connotations of the times, so as to provide high-quality carriers for enhancing the cultural confidence of traditional villages.

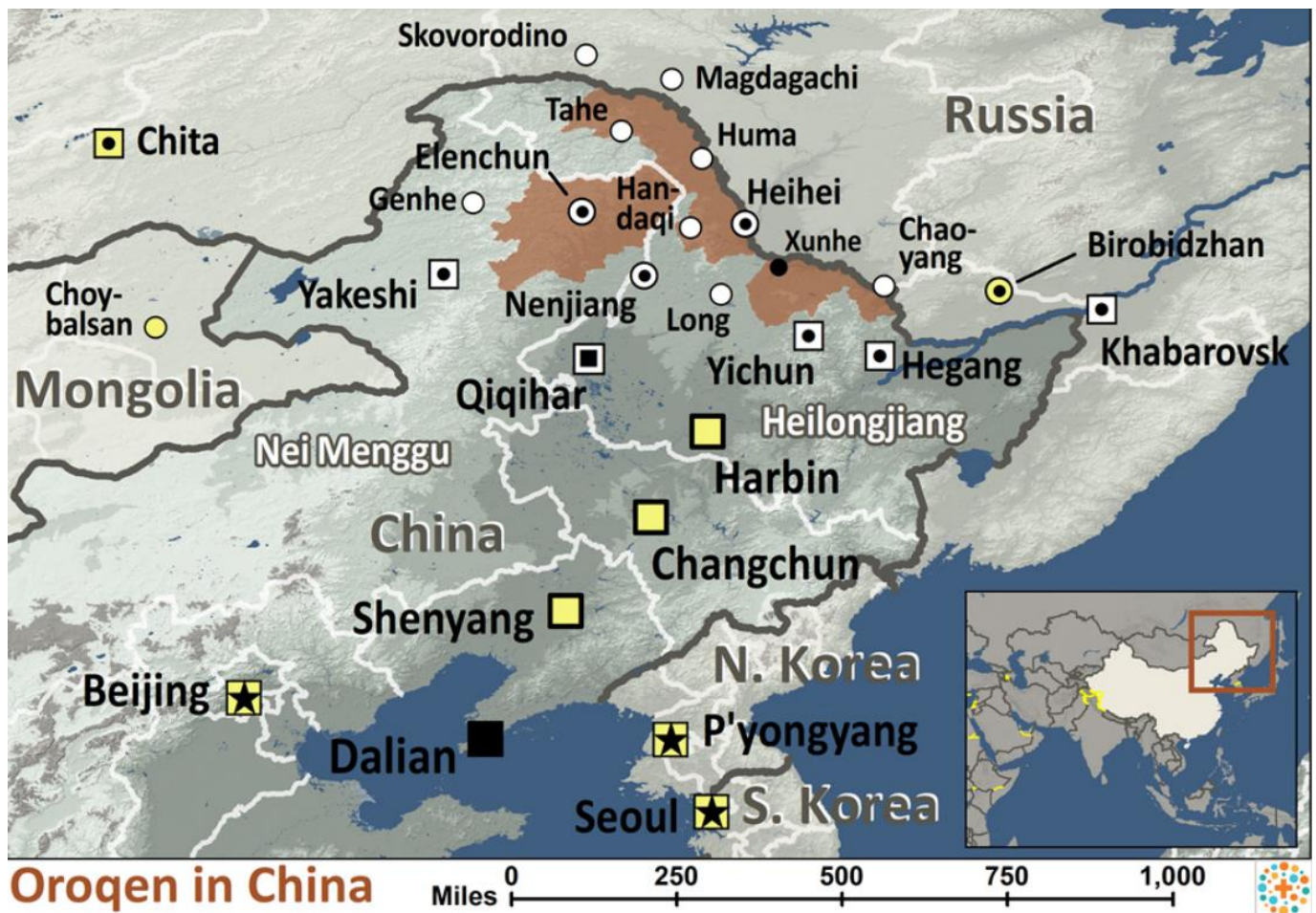
(3) The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture need to take the protection and utilization of rural traditional culture as the premise. Traditional ethnic minority villages should be included in the red line of historical and cultural protection of rural construction, integrate traditional architectural culture with agricultural culture and ethnic minority culture, deeply tap the excellent ideas and humanistic spirit contained in rural culture, and integrate historical memory, regional characteristics and ethnic characteristics into rural construction and maintenance.



The inheritance and innovation of architectural culture should aim at reshaping rural cultural ecology. With the inheritance and innovation of traditional village architectural culture, the village resources containing characteristic cultural symbols make the traditional villages of ethnic minorities full of culture and vitality and take a characteristic and differentiated development path [6]. At the same time, it is necessary to protect the original architectural style and village pattern of the countryside, integrate national cultural elements into the rural construction, dig deep into the historical charm, promote the beauty of humanity, reshape the poetic and leisure human environment and the green and green living environment, reproduce the original pastoral scenery and the original homesickness, and enrich the rural cultural formats of traditional villages.

**4. Inheritance and innovation of Oroqen architectural culture**

The Oroqen people originated from the Northern Dynasty, meaning "people who use reindeer" or "people on mountains". In their early years, they hunted in the extremely cold areas of Northeast China south of the outer Xing'an Mountains and east of the Wusuli River. Until the mid-17th century, they moved south to the big and small Xing'an Mountains. At present, there are only more than 8000 people in the whole ethnic group, which is listed in the "four small ethnic groups in Heilongjiang Province" and the "ethnic groups with a small population in China". In 1953, 14 Oroqen tribesmen living in the Xiaoxing'an Mountains went down to settle down, built settlements at the intersection of the Cibun River and the Colligan River, and began a new life, hence the name "Xinsheng village". Xinsheng village is distributed along the Galligan River in the Northeast southwest direction. It has a good natural environment, rich in wild animal and plant resources, and a forest coverage rate of 60.8%. In August 2013, Xinsheng village was included in the "second batch of Chinese traditional villages".



**Figure 2.** Oroqen people in China  
 Source: [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/18650/CH](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/18650/CH)

**4.1 Representative building of Oroqen nationality — zuoluzi**

The hunting life of the Oroqen people is not boundless swimming in vast forests but has a fixed range and certain laws, generally within the basin of one or several rivers. In winter, the residence is relatively fixed, and in spring, summer and autumn, it migrates with the different habitats of the main hunting objects. Therefore, for the Oroqen people, the residence is like a leather coat or a birch trunk. It is an object that can be rolled up and carried on horseback, not an ancestral property handed down from generation

to generation. In daily life, the Oroqen people take "Wuling" as their basic unit of living. "Wuling" means "descendants" and is a large paternal family. This is not only their "village" but also their common hunting production organization, which is the most basic social organization in Oroqen society. People in "Wuling" work together and distribute equally. They constantly move with the seasons and hunting needs and choose new hunting grounds. With the increase in population, a new "Wuling" was separated from the original "Wuling".



**Figure 3.** Oroqen Ethnic Folk House in China

Source: [https://www.tripchinaguide.com/photo-p747-8069-oroqen-ethnic-folk-house.html#photo\\_title](https://www.tripchinaguide.com/photo-p747-8069-oroqen-ethnic-folk-house.html#photo_title)



**Figure 4.** Oroqen Ethnic Folk House in China

Source: [https://www.tripchinaguide.com/photo-p747-8069-oroqen-ethnic-folk-house.html#photo\\_title](https://www.tripchinaguide.com/photo-p747-8069-oroqen-ethnic-folk-house.html#photo_title)

"Zuoluzi", also known as "xierenzhu" or "zuoluongku", is a conical "house" of the hunting and nomadic ethnic groups in the Northeast such as Oroqen, Ewenki, and Hezhen. "Zuolo" is "Jian," and "Angku" is "shack", which is the name of the Hezhen people; "Xie Ren" is "wooden pole," and "Zhu" is "house", which is the name of Oroqen and Ewenki people. Combining the meaning of the two names, it is "a pointed house built with wooden poles", which is the main feature of "Zuozhi".

The site selection of Zuozhi is in a flat place with high terrain, sunlight, and water and firewood nearby. The method of covering is to use three or five wooden poles with branches about the thickness of the mouth of the bowl to overlap with each other to form a skeleton that is gathered at the top and opened at the bottom, and then use about 30 wooden poles to tie and in between the skeleton, leaving the door in the South (or East), which is basically formed. The wooden pole is only a "roof truss", and it needs to be covered outside to protect it from wind and rain. According to the different seasons, birch bark, grass curtain, and animal skins such as ox and roe deer are respectively used to make a layer-by-layer enclosure from top to bottom, which is bound to wooden poles. The door curtain is made of grass or tree strips in summer and roe deer skin in winter.

The space inside the Zuozhi is about ten feet high, and the diameter of the ground is from one hundred twenty-three feet to one hundred sixty-seven feet. If the door opens to the south, banks for people's living, sitting, and sleeping will be set up on the north, East, and west sides of the room. Some are directly paved on the ground with hay and bark, while more are paved with wooden poles and boards on a forest shelf about one foot high, and straw mats or skins are paved on it, which can better prevent cold and moisture. The central open space between the shop and the door is a place for heating and cooking. According to the customs of these ethnic groups, there are different levels of orientation in Zuozhi. The North (front) is the place where God's throne is placed, which is the most noble. Usually, only the male host and male guests can sit and lie in the North shop. If they provide for people's daily living, they can only be the elders of the family. Some ethnic groups even stipulate that only widowed male elderly people can sleep in Beipu. If both the husband and wife are alive or the husband and wife are dead, they can only sleep in the right berth. In addition, housewives and unmarried girls in the family are allowed to go to the northern shrine, while other married women are not allowed because the fire seat is in the center of the room, and they can't cross it. The positions on both sides of the fire position are on the right. When the son lives with his parents after marriage, the young couple can only live on the left berth, and when sleeping, the male should be in the north and the female in the south. It can be seen from this that the basic principle of these Provisions is to respect the north and man.



There is also a special custom, that is, when a woman gives birth, she must move to another "delivery room" built near zuoluozhi, where she originally lived. This "delivery room" is also the style of Zuozhi, but it is short and simple. Some even build a crossbar to do the handle during delivery. There are two left and right beds in the delivery room. The maternal lives on the right, and the mother-in-law or midwife's family lives on the left. After the newborn is full-term, the maternal can return to zuoluozhi, and the delivery room will be demolished. The intention of this practice is not to take special care of mothers but to think that giving birth to children is "unclean" and should avoid the place in the home where God and men live. It can be seen that the style of Zuozhi is not only very primitive but also its usage customs have many ancient ideas.



**Figure 5.** The representative building of the Oroqen ethnic group, the oblique benevolence column  
Source: brief history of Oroqen nationality

#### **4.2 development status of Oroqen architectural culture**

After the establishment of the Oroqen Autonomous Banner in 1951, the Oroqen people in the Northeast began to stay away from the forest and gradually adapt to the life of cities and towns. The hunting culture has been preserved as a folk custom, and most Oroqen people have lived in brick and stone houses. In the journey of poverty alleviation, the Oroqen Autonomous Banner officially lifted its hat in 2020, and the history of national poverty-stricken countries has gone forever. High tech construction methods and modern building materials have given birth to the "one side in a thousand villages" type indemnificatory brick houses. The traditional folk houses of xierenzhu have faded out of the life of the Oroqen people. Only 42 concrete xierenzhu columns of



different sizes standing on kuturqi square, Alihe Town, and Oroqen Autonomous Banner have been preserved. In addition, dobukur Hunter village, located in Dayangshu Town, retains the "a cha" handover style in the design of its tourist center, but its overall shape is no different from ordinary wooden houses.

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**Figure 6.** Oroqen

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/171418329540462124/>

#### **4.3 Extraction of regional cultural symbols**

(1) Blindly advocating the original appearance and abusing modern building materials: Although the 42 orange slanted columns standing on kuturqi square retain the "a-cha" handover form of the original dwellings, they have been greatly improved in height and spatial dimensions by taking advantage of the high-strength characteristics of concrete materials. However, the root cause is only the imitation of the original appearance of the oblique column, the imitation of the external form of the building, and the neglect of the building skin and the hollow part at the top of the building. Glass windows, steel frame nets, and painted totem patterns of Oroqen nationality.

The lack of the true spirit of the Oroqen people is also the main reason for the lack of regional cultural symbols.

(2) Insufficient understanding of national traditional culture: the newly built modern oblique benevolence column does not understand the sociality, humanism, and naturalness of the existing form of the original building. The Oroqen people keep their faith in architecture, use light to "illuminate" their own lives, and use birch bark to express the harmonious coexistence between



the nation and nature. This is also the lack of regionality in the process of integrating the traditional houses and modern buildings of the Oroqen people in today's architectural design.



**Figure 7.** Oroqen Ethnic Folk House in China  
Source: Xinhua She



**Figure 8.** Oroqen Ethnic Modern House in China  
Source: Xinhua She





**Figure 9.** Oroqen Ethnic Modern House in China  
Source: Xinhua She

#### ***4.4 Inheritance and innovation strategies of Oroqen architectural culture***

##### ***4.4.1 Humanity***

The folk customs of the Oroqen people are condensed into three story clues: the first clue is the life of the Oroqen people, including hunting culture, light culture, shaman sacrifice, and other different national cultures; The second clue is the life of the Oroqen people, including their birth, marriage, daily life, and death; The third clue is the disappearance of traditional cultural symbols, including the birch bark craft of the Oroqen people and other folk cultural activities

##### ***4.4.2 Sociality***

With the high-level development of science and technology and the fast-paced frequency of life, more and more people are engaged in urban construction, focusing on the economy. The traditional culture of ethnic minority areas is gradually forgotten by people and needs to be awakened. The exhibition hall retains the original national architectural form. In the design process, the preservation and extension of national culture and the metaphor of the national spirit will become a new understanding of the regional cultural elements of Minority Architecture.

##### ***4.4.3 Naturalness***

Local materials are the best choice for construction that needs to be inherited in their original style. The practice of returning to the application of traditional materials in modern buildings can not only meet people's psychological complex of nostalgia and root seeking but also meet the needs for environmental protection. In the construction of a new large space and embedded load-bearing structure, modern materials are undoubtedly irreplaceable. The comprehensive consideration of the construction time, performance, and cost is ultimately based on whether it conforms to the spirit of the place and the inheritance of the style of the village architectural culture. Therefore, while vigorously advocating the use of local materials to inherit regional architectural culture, we must strengthen the improvement and promotion of the mechanical performance, durability, thermal performance, and seismic performance of local materials, especially the renewable utilization of local materials, which can avoid the depletion of resources and the deterioration of the ecological environment.

## 5. Conclusion

The economic development of ethnic minority areas has always been the focus of the state's attention. Building rich and beautiful villages with ethnic minority characteristics and Realizing Rural Revitalization in ethnic areas are important ways for ethnic areas to get rid of poverty and become rich. With the steady advancement of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, the inheritance and innovation of the architectural culture of ethnic minority villages will help the economic development of ethnic areas. Only by "inheriting in innovation and protecting in inheritance" can the path of development be realized and the ethnic minority areas step into a well-off society with harmonious and scientific development in an all-round way.

The study of Oroqen architecture can not only preserve the traditional national culture and spirit and make it better inherited and developed but also bring more design techniques to local cities, especially for urban construction in ethnic minority areas, and form more diverse urban buildings.

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