

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Landscape design of Langya Mountain Scenic Area based on regional culture: A field study

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Abstract

In the context of rapid urbanization and the increasing homogenization of tourism landscapes, integrating regional cultural elements into landscape design has become essential for reinforcing cultural identity and enhancing visitor engagement. This study explores the Langya Mountain Scenic Area in Chuzhou, China, to develop strategies for translating local culture into the spatial landscape forms. It proposes a research pathway consisting of cultural excavation, element extraction, and landscape expression. The study systematically identifies and classifies the regional cultural elements of Chuzhou, with a particular emphasis on the symbolic translation of regional culture and the representation of the landscape. This includes the construction of material carriers, spatial organization, the incorporation of visual symbols, and the design of immersive experiences, collectively facilitating both the inheritance and innovative expression of local culture. By embedding cultural genes into specific landscape compositions and integrating the topography and cultural nodes of Langya Mountain, the study advocates for the restoration of historic sites and the creation of thematic zones, such as the Folk Culture Square and the Food and Chuju Cultural Experience Zone. These efforts enable a systematic translation from cultural distillation to scene creation. The research demonstrates that the spatial expression of regional culture not only enriches the cultural depth of the landscape but also significantly enhances visitors' cultural experience, offering a design paradigm for the cultural landscape development of Langya Mountain and contributing to the advancement of regional cultural landscape design theory.

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1. Introduction

As urbanization continues to accelerate, the pace of daily life has become increasingly fast, prompting a growing number of people to turn to travel and tourism as a means of relieving stress and seeking physical and mental well-being (Mierzejewska *et al.*, 2023). Particularly in the post-epidemic era, urban tourism and scenic areas have assumed not only recreational functions but also serve as important platforms for conveying cultural identity and evoking local memory (Rusu *et al.*, 2023). Against this backdrop, the integration of culture and tourism has emerged as a prevailing trend, with tourism landscape design playing an increasingly vital role as a bridge between spatial expression

and cultural communication (Ramkissoon, 2022; Taylor *et al.*, 2022).

However, the rapid growth in the number of tourist landscapes has also revealed a range of challenges. Many scenic areas exhibit homogeneity in design style and lack distinctive cultural expression. In terms of landscape form, plant configuration, and the application of cultural symbols, the designs often fail to integrate regional natural conditions and local cultural characteristics. This results in repetitive architectural forms, similar landscape features, and the overuse of generic cultural elements (Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, intangible cultural resources are insufficiently embedded in the design process, and local narratives are often absent, making it difficult to evoke a sense of cultural identity or emotional connection among tourists (Lan *et al.*, 2021).

Based on field research conducted in the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, several issues have been identified regarding the representation of regional culture and the overall quality of the landscape. For instance, some historical monuments and sites have been damaged, cultural spaces are underutilized, landscape elements lack sufficient recognizability, expressions of local folk culture are minimal, and the proportion of native plant species is relatively low. These problems have collectively diminished the cultural appeal of the scenic area and adversely affected the tourist experience. This study focuses on the representation of Chuzhou's regional culture in the landscape design of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area. It systematically identifies and refines representative cultural elements and promotes their spatial translation and visual expression through the integration of tangible and intangible cultural resources. The aim is to improve the overall landscape quality, enhance tourists' sense of cultural identity and emotional connection, and create a tourism landscape rich in distinctive regional characteristics.

Present research on the representation of regional culture in tourist landscapes primarily focuses on static extraction of elements or symbolic stacking, lacking practical pathways for exploring spatial narratives, visual reconstruction, and the development of visitor empathy toward cultural elements, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region (He & Liu, 2024). This study integrates the regional culture of Chuzhou with the landscape resources of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area to construct a framework for cultural excavation, element extraction, and landscape-based expression of regional cultural transformation. Through literature analysis and field investigation, the study systematically identifies and refines key cultural elements of Chuzhou, establishing a symbolic system for their representation within the

landscape context. A multidimensional translation strategy is proposed, encompassing spatial organization, visual symbolism, and immersive experience. The emphasis is placed on visitors' perceptual processes in engaging with cultural imagery, thereby enhancing the interactivity and cultural depth of the landscape.

2. Literature review

As a vital carrier of regional culture (Yang *et al.*, 2025), the landscape design of tourist scenic areas not only facilitates the transmission and innovation of regional culture but also generates significant ecological, economic, and social benefits. It enhances visitors' physical and mental well-being, supports cultural continuity, and contributes positively to the sustainable development of cities (Brooks *et al.*, 2023). However, the effective representation of regional culture within such landscape designs of tourist scenic areas often depends on tourists' field visits and immersive experiences. This reliance presents a new challenge for incorporating regional culture into the design of tourist landscapes (Xiang *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, a key challenge facing the landscape design of tourist scenic areas is to successfully embed regional cultural elements into spatial environments in a way that allows them to be perceived, understood, and appreciated by visitors (Hashimoto *et al.*, 2023).

Present research on landscape design in tourism areas primarily focuses on improving spatial functions and optimizing landscape structure (Hersperger *et al.*, 2020). Key areas of focus include allocation of green space, organization of traffic flow, and the coordination and enhancement of landscape nodes, all aimed at strengthening the overall service capacity of scenic destinations (Chang *et al.*, 2024). Simultaneously, several scholars have begun to explore the behavioral characteristics and experiential pathways of tourists, seeking to enhance the attractiveness and interactivity of landscape environments by improving movement, accessibility, and convenience (Huang & Bu, 2022). Overall, there is a discernible shift away from the traditional model of incremental construction toward a design philosophy centered on enhancing service effectiveness. This approach prioritizes systematic and strategic design within limited spatial parameters, aiming to maximize spatial efficiency and enrich the overall visitor experience (De Maio *et al.*, 2024).

However, existing research on integrating regional culture into landscape design remains limited, often confined to superficial forms of expression, such as the superimposition of symbols and visual presentation (Kutlu *et al.*, 2024). There is a notable lack of systematic analysis of regional cultural connotations and in-depth translation in

local spatial contexts (Anindhita *et al.*, 2024), particularly in regions with rich historical and cultural resources, such as the Langya Mountain Scenic Area in Chuzhou. In such contexts, the challenge lies in refining, reconstructing, and rearticulating regional cultural identity while respecting cultural continuity and ecological patterns (Bohnet *et al.*, 2022); more systematic methodological guidance and exploration of practical paths are needed.

Based on previous research, this study proposes a framework for landscape design in tourist destinations that integrates regional cultural characteristics. It focuses on introducing regional cultural elements to enhance scenic landscape cultural expression and the rational construction of tourist experience pathways (Della Spina & Giorno, 2021). The aim is to achieve authenticity in the representation of regional culture (Le *et al.*, 2022), offer diverse spatial experiences, and improve the overall efficiency of landscape services. Across an empirical study of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, this study investigates the mechanisms by which cultural narratives and spatial semantics interact (Alvarado-Sizzo, 2021), thereby providing both a theoretical foundation and a practical paradigm for future landscape design in tourism contexts.

3. Research methods and field study

3.1. Research methods

Considering regional culture as a starting point, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating

qualitative analysis, field research, and in-depth interviews. It integrates and applies theories of design, semiotics, and grounded theory to construct a four-tier theoretical framework: (i) Excavation of regional cultural content; (ii) Extraction of cultural elements; (iii) Representation of regional cultural landscapes; and (iv) Cognitive transformation of tourists (Figure 1).

In the first phase, the fundamental concepts of regional culture were explored through qualitative data collection. In the second phase, cultural content was analyzed and extracted to establish a mapping relationship between regional culture and landscape design. In the third phase, abstract cultural attributes were translated into tangible spatial representations. Finally, in the fourth phase, visitors experienced esthetic resonance through their interaction with the landscape and underwent cognitive transformation through perception, interpretation, and sharing of their experiences.

Specifically, regional cultural connotations serve as the foundation of landscape design, while the representation of regional cultural landscapes constitutes a core component of landscape design. Based on insights drawn from visitor experience feedback, four strategic approaches were developed. First, existing spatial resources were leveraged to enhance the cultural vitality of the site. Second, the circulation routes within the landscape were restructured to strengthen spatial narratives. Third, technologies, such as augmented reality and virtual reality, were employed to expand visitor

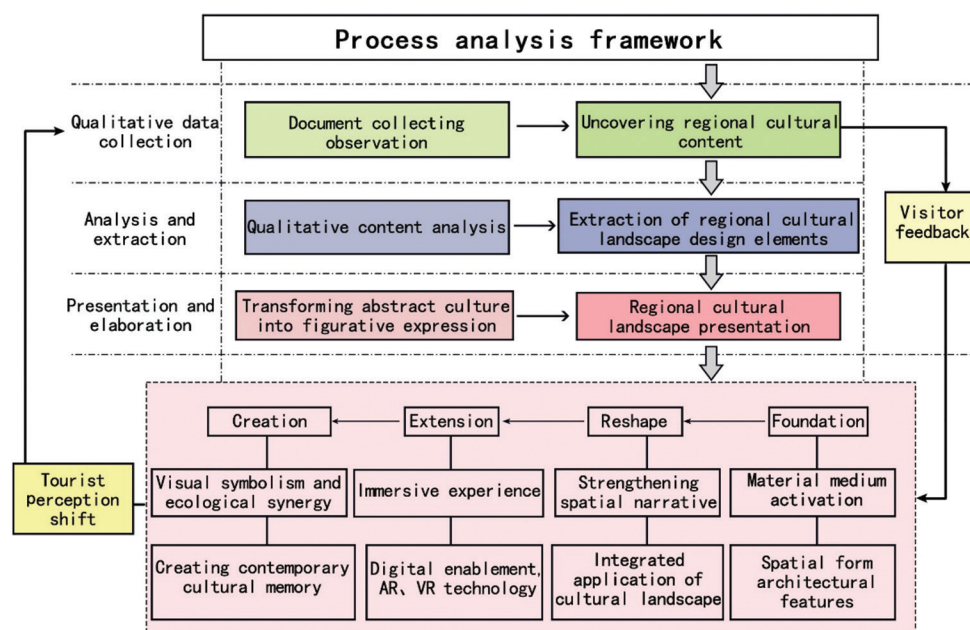


Figure 1. A process analysis framework for presenting and interpreting regional culture in the landscape

Source: Diagram by the authors.

Abbreviations: AR: Augmented reality; VR: Virtual reality.

perception and deepen immersive engagement. Finally, efforts were made to construct a contemporary cultural memory, promoting the co-evolution of cultural and ecological values. This framework reinforces the variable logic among culture, space, and experience. Through detailed field studies, the research clarifies the collection paths, extraction methods, and presentation mechanisms of landscape design elements, aiming to systematically analyze the processes of spatial translation and strategic expression of regional culture in landscape design.

3.1.1. Excavation of the deeper meanings within regional culture

As an important tourist attraction in Chuzhou, Langya Mountain carries a rich regional cultural connotation and diverse intangible cultural heritage. To further enhance the cultural distinctiveness of the scenic area and enrich the visitor experience, this study draws upon the theory of landscape genes to systematically extract the cultural elements unique to the Chuzhou region. It explores the pathways for their integration and transformation within landscape design, to achieve both the effective preservation and innovative expression of regional culture.

This study adopts a combination of qualitative literature analysis, field surveys, and landscape genetic excavation. It collated literature related to the regional culture of Chuzhou,

including news reports, government reports, and academic publications ($n = 48$), which were collected and analyzed. Word frequency coding analysis was employed to identify recurring cultural concepts, excluding items with fewer than three mentions or inconsistent references. Initial concepts, such as the Zuiweng pavilion, Langya temple, and historical stone steles, were extracted. These were subsequently reclassified based on semantic associations and similarity relationships into six fundamental categories: (i) Building type; (ii) Festival type; (iii) Symbolic forms; (iv) Plant species; (v) Types of crafts; and (vi) Historical elements. These categories formed the basis for frequency statistics of cultural elements in the study (Table 1).

The frequency distribution of cultural elements was calculated using Equation I.

$$F_i = \frac{N_i}{N_{total}} \times 100\% \quad (I)$$

where F_i denotes the frequency proportion of cultural elements in category i ; N_i denotes the total number of occurrences of cultural elements in category i ; and N_{total} denotes the total number of occurrences of all cultural elements.

The results indicate that building type accounts for 39.94 percent and the historical elements for 17.3 percent, altogether comprising over 50 percent of the total. These

Table 1. Frequency statistics of cultural elements in the Langya Mountain Scenic Area

Scope category	Frequency	Initial concepts	Frequency	Percentage	Representative cultural carriers
Building type	127	Zuiweng Pavilion	62	0.195	Key scenic spots, Cultural heritage of Ouyang Xiu
		Langya Temple	38	0.119	Buddhist temple complexes, traditional temple fair venues
		Nantian Gate	27	0.085	The main peak, Daoist architectural ensembles
Festival type	48	The Langya Temple Fair	26	0.082	Temple fairs, traditional foods, and folk performances on the ninth day of the first lunar month
		The Chuzhou Flower-drum Opera	22	0.069	Live folk opera on a historic stage
Symbolic forms	30	The symbolic motif of <i>Qu Shui Liu Shang</i> (曲水流觞)	18	0.057	Ground relief carvings, decorative railing designs
		Rang Quan	12	0.038	Landscape for water system restoration
Plant species	24	<i>Chuju</i> (滁菊), <i>Chimonanthus praecox</i>)	16	0.050	Youxiang Valley cultivation area, creative industry innovation
		Native trees and shrubs	8	0.025	Langya elm, riparian vegetation rehabilitation of Shenxiu Lake
Types of crafts	34	Bamboo weaving, stone carving	6	0.019	Exhibition and sale of intangible cultural heritage products
		Folk culinary practices	28	0.088	Langya Su candy, Su Hu pai
Historical elements	55	Ouyang Xiu	32	0.101	Memorial museum, NPC interaction, poetry stele garden
		Su Shi (1037–1101)	7	0.022	Historical person
		Historical stone steles	16	0.050	Cliffside rock inscriptions

Abbreviation: NPC: Non-player character.

two categories form the core cultural DNA of the region. Festival type (e.g., temple fairs and flower-drum theater) and types of crafts represent the primary carriers of living heritage, exhibiting significantly higher frequencies compared to static cultural symbols.

The study employed five landscape genetic mining methods: Perceptual mining, genealogical mining, geographic mining, meaning mining, and retrospective mining. Perceptual mining refers to the perception and experiential understanding of cultural landscapes by visitors; genealogical mining sorts out the transmission path of regional culture; geographic mining studies the material carriers of spatial and cultural elements of the landscape; meaning mining explores the symbolism of cultural landscapes; and retrospective mining reviews the historical evolution of the cultural landscape. The study of tourists' perceptions of regional cultural values within the landscape area was conducted using a structured questionnaire, with a focus on perceptual exploration (Figure 2). Based on the analysis of 500 valid responses, natural ecology and architecture emerged as the most prominent aspects of material culture, accounting for 34 percent and 37 percent, respectively. In terms of intangible culture, folk activities constituted 36 percent, while local culinary traditions accounted for 27 percent. An integrated analysis of both cultural dimensions revealed that tourists exhibit the strongest demand for immersive experiences and interactive cultural engagement.

A comparison of the literature analysis and questionnaire results reveals that building type holds the highest percentage in both sources, underscoring its central role in Chuzhou's cultural identity. Literature data also indicate that

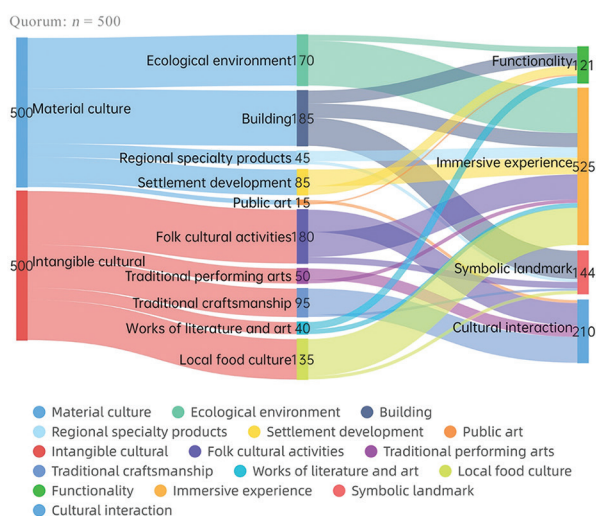


Figure 2. Survey on the perception of regional cultural values in scenic areas
Source: Diagram by the authors.

festival type (15.09%) and historical elements (17.3%) are highly prominent, aligning with questionnaire findings that highlight tourists' strong demand for immersive experiences and cultural interaction. These findings suggest that future design strategies should strike a balance between the preservation of historical assets and the promotion of living heritage. However, while plant-related keywords appear infrequently in the literature, tourists expressed a high level of interest in natural ecology, pointing to a discrepancy between theoretical focus and practical visitor expectations.

3.1.2. Extraction of regional cultural elements

Field investigations were conducted in April and October 2024, coinciding with the peak travel seasons of spring and autumn. The predominantly sunny weather during these periods facilitated on-site image collection, interviews, and questionnaire distribution. A combination of semi-structured interviews, observational filming, and questionnaires was employed during the research visits to document and analyze representative elements of the cultural landscape. Simultaneously, interviews were carried out with key stakeholders, including local residents, young tourists, and bearers of intangible cultural heritage. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, resulting in a total of 16 valid interview transcripts (Table 2).

Table 2. Structure of interviewees and key insights from the interviews

Interview ID	Profile of interviewees	Number	Key findings from the interviews
I1–I2	Intangible cultural heritage inheritor	2	The feasibility of contemporary transformation of the traditional symbols profile of cultural heritage inheritors, methods to preserve and transmit intangible cultural heritage
R1–R4	Local residents	4	Historical spatial memory, developmental changes in the scenic area, and development vision for the scenic area
C1–C3	Cultural studies expert	3	Spiritual core of regional culture, young people's acceptance of traditional culture
L1–L2	Landscape designer	2	Modes of presenting the cultural landscape, conservation of historic buildings, and the need for visitors' interaction
Y1–Y4	Representative young tourist	4	Barriers to cultural perception and expectations for experience, visitor satisfaction with the scenic area, and experiential needs
S1	Scenic area manager	1	Maintenance costs of cultural carriers and the visitor conversion rate

NVivo software (version 14, Lumivero, United States) was used to code and conceptualize the content of the 16 interview transcripts, resulting in 128 initial concepts. These concepts were then re-categorized based on semantic and logical relationships, yielding a total of 15 conceptual categories. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, a two-person coding method was employed, and inter-coder agreement was used for verification. This process provided a theoretical foundation for the subsequent design phase (Table 3).

Based on the design program requirements, regional cultural elements are refined through the simplification and abstraction of symbols (Figure 3), eliminating superfluous details. Priority is given to representative cultural elements that can be effectively translated into design and embodied in symbolic form, thereby establishing a distinct language

of landscape design to achieve both the inheritance and innovation of regional culture. Emphasizing the process of translating regional cultural elements into landscape design symbols, the composition is articulated through point, line, plane, and volume, presenting landscape expressions imbued with cultural imagery. In this way, regional culture is preserved, reconstructed, and regenerated within the landscape space.

The study summarized the core cultural genetic elements in the landscape design of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area. These include traditional festivals (such as the Langya Temple Fair and Chuzhou Flower-drum Opera), cultural heritage carriers (including historical buildings, inscriptions, and the Zuiweng Pavilion), geographical symbols (such as landscape patterns and pavilions), and spatial imagery (including cultural symbols and landscape

Table 3. Open coding analysis results

Encoding	Scope name	Definition	Attribute dimensions	Typical initial concepts ^a
1	Visual readability optimization	Design strategies for reducing the cognitive load of symbols	Complexity/color/scale/contrast	01 Symbol abstraction requirements
2	Carrier age-friendly design	Meeting the perceptual needs of older adults	Fonts/touch/sound intensity/materials	51 Stone bench with wooden cushion
3	Digital technology applications	Enhancing digital interaction fluency	Speed/stability/compatibility	125 Interactive device creativity
4	Productive landscape management	Balancing ecological conservation with experiential functions	Carrying capacity/zoning/reservation/compensation	37 <i>Chuju</i> picking restricted flow
5	Sustainable operations and maintenance assurance	Control long-term operating costs and energy consumption	Cost/energy/durability/maintenance	90 Service facilities
6	Rehabilitation of historic buildings	Restoration of the historical acoustic environment	Sound pressure level/tone/source location	43 Material texture memory
7	Immersion experience threshold	Setting the balance between depth of experience and cost	Loss of props/participation/frequency of updates	78 Gamification design
8	Symbolic hierarchy	Establishment of a system of differential expression of cultural symbols	Core/transitional/peripheral zones	81 Core symbol continuation
9	Intergenerational diffusion of innovations	Means of enhancing the cultural identity of young people	Gamification/socialization/technology	33 Temple fair break-in quests
10	Geographical adaptation of materials	Application of indigenous materials and traditional craftsmanship	Authenticity/cost/durability	61 Using local lapis lazuli
11	Spatial narrative enhancement	Transmitting cultural logic through layout	Axis/sequence/focus	96 Zuiweng Pavilion-Langya Temple Axis
12	Ritual survival	Preserving the spiritual core of traditional rituals	Process/time/taboo	94 The festival needs a full process
13	Message readable conversion	Enhancing audience understanding of cultural information	Languages/fonts/multimedia	89 Spoken language
14	Flexible functional zoning	Dynamically adjusting the intensity of space use	Time/people flow/functionality changeover	123 Functional space crossing
15	Ecological and cultural symbiosis	Synergy between natural systems and cultural expressions	Native plants/ecological restoration/symbols	115 Overrepresentation of exotic tree species

Note: ^aInitial concept numbers were 01–128. Due to space constraints, only examples of high-frequency initial concepts are included.

Regional culture	Categorisation	Name (of a thing)	Element extraction	Concrete application	Iconography
Material culture	Natural landscape	Native plant	<i>Langya</i> elm, <i>Zuiweng</i> elm	Botanical landscape, colour configuration	
	Architectural style	<i>Qu Shui Liu Shang</i>	Waterline, streamline	Scenic road, tour route	
	Architectural style	Pavilion culture	Flying eaves and upturned corners	Scenic area architecture	
Intangible culture	Folk culture	<i>Yangge</i> lantern, <i>Hongshan</i> opera	Rice-planting dance, character stories	Theatre stage, figure sculpture	
	Traditional crafts	<i>Chuju</i> culture	<i>Chuju</i>	Botanical landscape, colour configuration	
	The art of painting	Phoenix painting, <i>Tianguan</i> Painting	Phoenix, ink, plain, five colours	Reliefs, sculptures, scenic walls	

Figure 3. The results of the genetic excavation of the Chuzhou regional cultural landscape
Source: Diagram by the authors.

sculptures). On this basis, the study proposes targeted and optimized design strategies aimed at realizing the dynamic preservation and innovative expression of regional culture within the landscape.

3.1.3. Presentation of regional cultural landscapes

Building upon the previously extracted landscape elements, the presentation of regional cultural landscapes focuses on visual, perceptible, and experiential design approaches that embody regional cultural identities. This transforms the landscape into a tangible medium for conveying cultural content, thereby enhancing public awareness and recognition of local culture. Specific presentation techniques can be developed in the following dimensions: (i) Material medium activation; (ii) Strengthening spatial narrative; (iii) Visual symbolism and ecological synergy; and (iv) Immersive experience (Table 4). Together, these contribute to the co-creation of a landscape expression system imbued with cultural depth and spatial resonance. The findings of this study indicate that the spatialized expression of regional culture not only enriches the cultural significance of the landscape but also significantly enhances visitors' cultural perception and immersive experience.

- Material medium activation: Regional culture is tangibly expressed through culturally symbolic architecture, sculptures, landscape features, and planting schemes.

Table 4. Strategies for representing regional cultural landscapes

Types of cultural expressions	Design approaches	Field study applications
Material medium activation	Integration of traditional architecture and contemporary functions	Stone reliefs of <i>Langya</i> Temple, wooden structure restoration of <i>Zuiweng</i> Pavilion
Strengthening spatial narrative	Cultural axes connecting spatial scenes	<i>Ouyang Xiu</i> Memorial Trail (from the memorial hall to <i>Zuiweng</i> Pavilion)
Immersive experience	Multi-sensory interactive devices	Stage for Flower-drum Opera, immersive springs with cultural soundscape, local food culture experience, AR-based historical reenactment
Visual symbolism and ecological synergy	Integration of cultural symbols, native plants	Design strategy for cultural IP, <i>Chuju</i> cultivation, restoration of the <i>Rang Quan</i> historical water system

Abbreviations: AR: Augmented reality; IP: Intellectual property.

The Chuzhou *Langya* Mountain Scenic Area adopts a unified style of pavilions in the scenic area, combining the culture of stone carving and cultural vehicles, such

as decorative carpets and couplets, thereby reinforcing the cultural character of the site.

- (ii) Spatial narrative enhancement: By structuring the layout of the landscape space to visibly incorporate regional cultural elements within the overall design, the ambience and experiential quality of the cultural environment are significantly enhanced. Storytelling is embedded within the spatial design to create a layered and immersive cultural experience. The landscape is organized into functional zones based on traditional cultural themes, such as a folk culture activity area and a culinary heritage experience zone.
- (iii) Immersive experience: The incorporation of cultural narratives, historical figures, and scene reenactments allows visitors to sense the historical rhythm and emotional depth of the culture embedded within the landscape. In the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, the design of cultural routes is thoughtfully integrated with key cultural landmarks, such as the Ouyang Xiu Memorial Hall, Langya Temple, and Zuiweng Pavilion. Through multi-sensory design interventions, visitors can fully experience and immerse themselves in the cultural atmosphere of the landscape. For example, the establishment of a historical-style theater within the scenic area hosts performances of the Chuzhou Flower-drum Opera, offering an engaging way to encounter and appreciate the intangible heritage of traditional theater.
- (iv) Visual symbolism and ecological synergy: Visual symbolism and ecological synergy represent a strategic approach to regional cultural landscape design

that integrates cultural expression with ecological preservation. The use of symbolic techniques, such as color, patterns, and decorative motifs, enables the visual articulation of regional culture. For instance, patterns from local folk paintings are extracted for use in landscape vignettes, while landscape sculptures are reused to convey cultural symbols, such as *Qu Shui Liu Shang* (曲水流觞) and stone carving culture in Mount Langya. In terms of ecology, introducing native plants with local cultural characteristics, such as *Chuju* (滁菊), without destroying the original landscape pattern and ecological structure, achieves a link between vegetation and cultural identity. The convergence of visual language and ecosystems was constructed, conveying the essence of regional culture and building ecological resilience, as well as a culturally rich landscape space.

3.2. Study area

3.2.1. Overview of the study area

The Langya Mountain Scenic Area (Figure 4) is located in the southwestern suburbs of Chuzhou City, approximately 5 km from the urban center. Characterized by undulating peaks and layered ridges, with elevations generally ranging between 200 and 300 m above sea level. The highest point is Xiao Feng Shan, which reaches an elevation of 317 m. Geographically, it lies between 118°07'35"–118°18'21" east longitude and 32°15'17"–32°21'49" north latitude. The entire area spans approximately 115 sqkm. The core



Figure 4. Langya Mountain Scenic Area

Source: Map by Google Maps (2024). <https://earth.google.com/web/@32.28856034,118.27621771>.

area includes several distinct attractions, such as Yefang Garden, Zuiweng Pavilion, Shenxiu Lake, Langya Temple, and Nantian Gate.

Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) began his renowned “The Records of Zuiweng Pavilion” with the words “All the mountains around Chu are thus; the southwestern peaks, forests, and gullies are particularly beautiful—azure, profound, and striking—this is Langya” (Yin, 2019). The *Langya* mentioned here refers to Mount Langya, historically known as Motoling. It was renamed during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) by Emperor Sima Rui (276–323), who, bearing the title King of Langya, conferred the mountain its present name. In the 6th year of the Tang Dali era (762–779), Li Youqing (728–777), the governor of Chuzhou, collaborated with the monk Fachen (unknown birth and death years) to build a temple on the mountain. Emperor Li Yu (937–978) of the Tang dynasty (618–907) bestowed upon it the name Baoying Temple. In the 3rd year of the Taiping Xingguo reign (976–984) of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), Emperor Taizong Zhao Guangyi (939–997) issued an imperial plaque and renamed it Kaihua Zen Temple. During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), it became known as the Kaifu Ruler’s Temple. As it was located on Mount Langya, it came to be commonly referred to as Langya Temple. Although the original structure no longer exists, the temple remains one of the key Buddhist and Daoist sites in the Han cultural region. In the 5th year of the Qingli reign (1041–1048) of Song Renzong (1010–1063), Ouyang Xiu was demoted to Chuzhou, where he befriended Zhixian (unknown birth and death years), the abbot of Langya Temple. The following year, Zhixian built a pavilion for Ouyang to enjoy wine and compose poetry. He named it Zuiweng Pavilion and thereafter authored “The Records of Zuiweng Pavilion.” Since then, Mount Langya has gained enduring fame through Ouyang Xiu’s literary works, attracting a continuous stream of visitors. It was designated one of China’s ten key national forest parks in 1985, listed as a National Key Scenic Spot in 1988, and awarded a 4A-level tourist area rating in 2001. On February 6, 2024, it was officially recognized as a national 5A-level tourist attraction.

3.2.2. Selection of key observation nodes

Regarding cultural density, the study focused on areas with a high concentration of cultural heritage, such as the Zuiweng Pavilion, Rang Quan, and Youxiang Valley, which function as significant spatial carriers of historical and cultural expression. In terms of visitor traffic, based on online data and field observations, landscape nodes with high pedestrian flow and active visitor engagement were selected to enhance the study’s practical relevance.

4. Chuzhou regional cultural landscape presentation

4.1. Distribution characteristics of material culture elements

Chuzhou, situated at the cultural crossroads of “the head of *Wu* and the tail of *Chu*,” possesses a unique character shaped by the fusion of northern and southern traditions. This distinctive regional temperament has given rise to a rich cultural heritage, including Langya culture, Zuiweng culture, flower-drum theater, and temple fairs. Grounded in the theory of cultural landscape genes, this study adopts a methodological framework that incorporates literature review, field research, and interview analysis. It constructs an extraction pathway that consists of regional culture, spatial carrier, and cultural expression, systematically identifying and interpreting cultural genes within Chuzhou that are representative, translatable, and capable of spatial expression. These elements are subsequently integrated as core components within landscape design.

Through an in-depth analysis of Chuzhou’s regional cultural resources, this study extracts designable symbolic elements from both its tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Key elements identified include native plants, the tradition of *Qu Shui Liu Shang*, pavilion culture, cliffside rock inscriptions, and other symbols that collectively embody the cultural identity of Chuzhou. The spatial distribution of the cultural elements in Langya Mountain is shown in Figure 5.

4.2. Inheritance of intangible cultural elements

The carrier of regional cultural landscape expression serves as a vital medium linking cultural connotation with spatial manifestation. In the landscape design of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, Chuzhou’s regional culture is made both visible and experiential through diverse spatial media, thereby achieving a harmonious integration of culture and environment. This study systematically categorizes Chuzhou’s regional cultural resources and identifies five primary types of presentation carriers.

Architectural and structural carriers: These include traditional architectural forms, such as pavilions and elements of stone carving culture, serving as significant spatial expressions of Chuzhou’s cultural heritage. For instance, the cliff inscriptions at Zuiweng Pavilion embody the literary spirit of Ouyang Xiu, encapsulated in the phrase “The Old Drunkard’s intention lies not in the wine,” reflecting the deeper contemplative ethos of the literati.

Spatial carriers of cultural activities: These include temple squares, festival stages, and folk performance spaces, which serve as physical platforms for the living



Figure 5. Spatial distribution of cultural elements in Langya Mountain

Source: Map by Google Maps (2024). <https://earth.google.com/web/@32.28856034,118.27621771>.

transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Cultural expressions and traditional events, such as the Chuzhou Flower-drum Opera and Langya Temple Fair, are staged in these spaces, allowing local festivals and performances to be experienced and sustained within the landscape.

Landscape vignettes and sculptural carriers: Cultural identity is reinforced through the installation of symbolically rich landscape vignettes and sculptures. Visual motifs such as those inspired by the *Qu Shui Liu Shang* totem are employed to enhance the expression of cultural imagery within the landscape, deepening both the visual and symbolic resonance of the space.

Ecological and plant-based carriers: Native flora and vegetation with cultural significance, such as the *Chuju*, serve as key media for conveying natural esthetics and humanistic sentiment. These elements embody the regional esthetic philosophy of the “unity of heaven and humanity,” seamlessly integrating ecological values with cultural expression.

Narrative and guide-system vehicle: Through the integration of directional signage, culturally informative monuments, and digital interactive media, visitors are provided with a multi-layered, immersive cultural experience.

The presentation of Chuzhou’s regional cultural landscape not only relies on the construction of physical space but also places greater emphasis on the profound integration of cultural connotations and the transmission

of sensory and emotional perceptions. The interplay of these diverse carriers not only enriches the layers of landscape expression but also enhances the distinctiveness and communicability of regional culture, thereby fostering both its inheritance and contemporary innovation.

4.3. Spatial patterns of landscape expression

Mount Langya Scenic Area benefits from a favorable geographical location and excellent accessibility, being situated close to the city center of Chuzhou, approximately 150 km from Hefei and 55 km from Nanjing, as depicted in Figure 6. Chuzhou itself lies at the periphery of China’s coastal economic redevelopment zone and is well served by major transport infrastructure, including Chuzhou Railway Station, Chuzhou North Train Station, and key expressways such as the Ninghe, Chuning, and Ningluo Expressways. These transportation arteries significantly enhance connectivity between Langya Mountain and major cities within Anhui province, including Hefei, Ma’anshan. Simultaneously, road links between Chuzhou and adjacent cities have been optimized, facilitating the extension of the Yangzhou–Zhenjiang–Nanjing tourist corridor to include the Langya Mountain Scenic Area. This integration not only strengthens the regional tourism economy but also greatly improves the mobility and distribution of tourists.

4.3.1. Planning and design concepts

The landscape planning and design scheme for the Langya Mountain Scenic Area emphasizes the preservation of the ecological and natural environment, as well as the

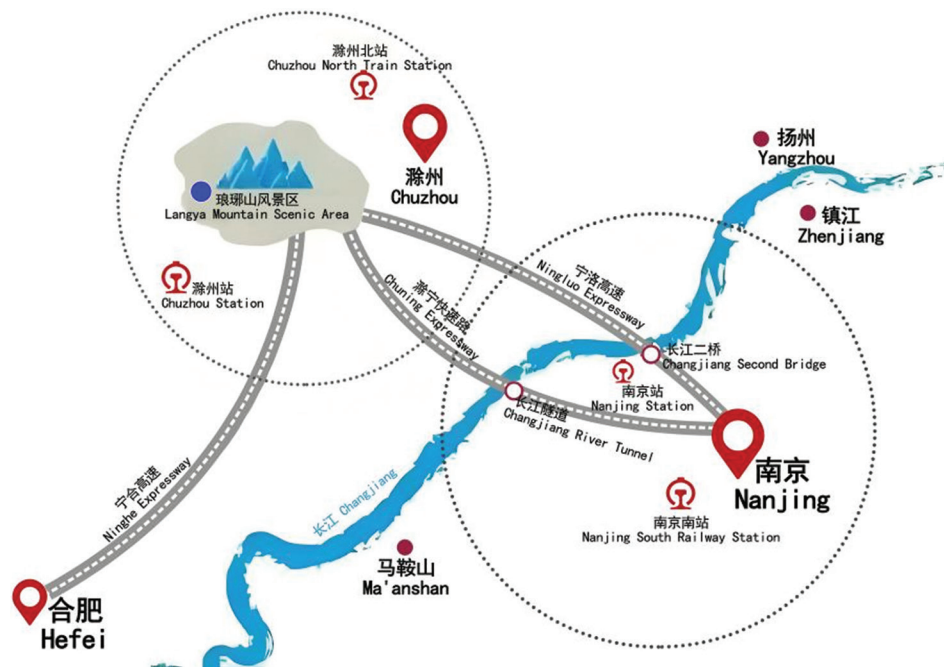


Figure 6. Chuzhou Langya Mountain Scenic Area Location Map
Source: Map by the authors.

respectful protection of historical monuments. It focuses on enhancing the cultural experience and participatory engagement of visitors, fostering a deeper sense of cultural identity and belonging. By thoroughly exploring the region's cultural characteristics and extracting representative cultural elements, these elements are then symbolically translated into specific components of the landscape design. Through thoughtful spatial composition and contextual integration, the scheme aims to create culturally enriched landscapes imbued with strong regional character, thereby establishing meaningful places and evoking lasting memories for tourists.

Through the four-fold presentation strategy of cultural gene implantation, natural feature guidance, experience interaction and participation, and service system guarantee, this study establishes a pathway for expressing regional cultural landscapes, tailored to the context of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area. At its core, the approach views the landscape as the carrier, culture as the soul, experience as the medium, and functionality as the foundation, achieving the spatial reproduction and living inheritance of regional culture.

4.3.2. Overall layout

The overall layout of the Mount Langya Tourist Scenic Area is structured with four different spaces: Entrance space, transition space, core space, and epilogue space. The entrance space includes facilities, such as car parks, scenic

gateways, visitor service centers, and landscaped strips on both sides of the entrance, providing visitors with essential services, including orientation information, parking, and ticketing. The transition space features attractions, such as the Youxiang Valley, Zuiweng Pond, Turning Rock, and Sky Creek Cloud Trail. The core space centers on the Zuiweng Pavilion and Langya Temple, showcasing culturally significant landmarks, such as the 3,000-year-old Zuiweng Pavilion and the revered Buddhist temple, along with a variety of traditional structures, including pavilions, terraces, and halls. The stretch from Nantian Gate to the East Gate constitutes the epilogue space, marking the conclusion of the scenic experience.

In line with the overall planning layout (Figure 7), there is a pressing need to further enrich the visitor experience, with particular emphasis on cultural engagement and participatory interaction. For instance, the design of a folklore cultural square can serve as a key feature, integrating folk culture elements into the layout and detailing of the space. This approach allows tourists to engage with local traditions during their visit, offering an immersive experience of diverse regional cultural expressions.

4.3.3. Chuzhou regional characteristics, folk culture square

The Folk Culture Square in the Langya Mountain Scenic Area (Figure 8) is designed as a platform for disseminating Chuzhou's regional culture, offering visitors an immersive

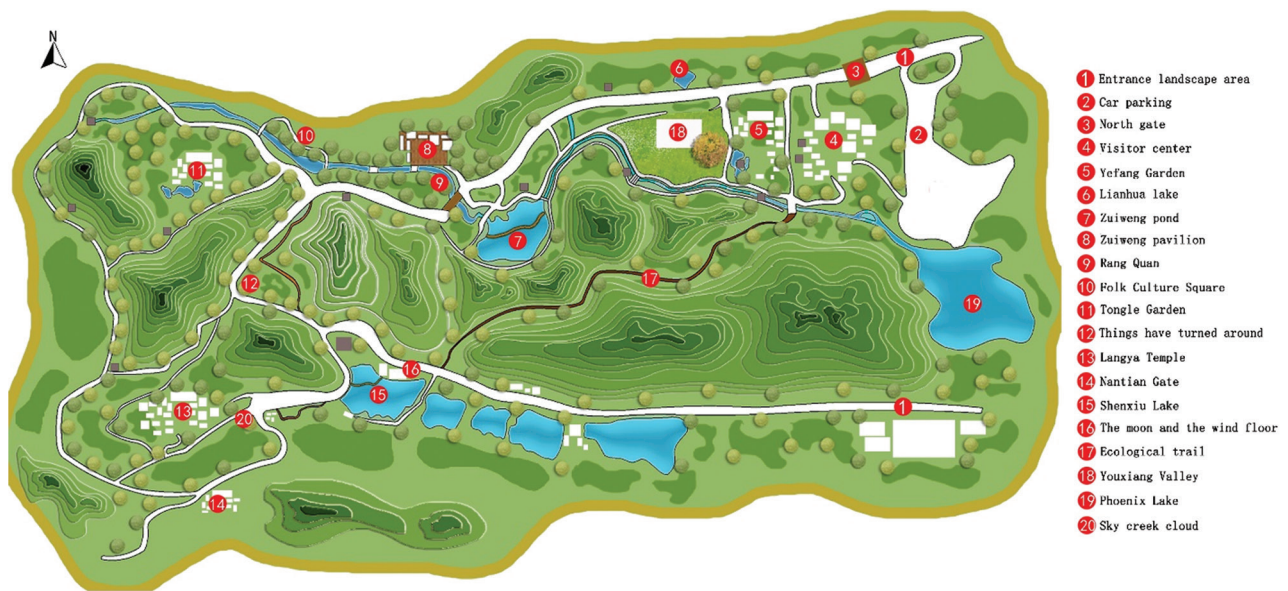


Figure 7. The overall layout of the Regional Cultural Landscape of Chuzhou Langya Mountain Scenic Area
Source: Map by the authors.



Figure 8. The cultural squares
Source: Photo by the authors (2024).

opportunity to engage with local traditions. Emphasizing the integration of multicultural carriers within a landscape imbued with regional characteristics, the square provides not only a leisurely destination but also a cultural hub for interaction and exchange. It weaves together people, folk culture, and regionally characteristic landscapes, incorporating folk performances and artistic displays to enhance the depth of experience. The square features facilities infused with regional cultural elements and offers diverse forms of cultural engagement through thoughtfully designed public spaces that highlight local traditions. The layout of the Folk Culture Square responds to the topography



Figure 9. Floor plan of the theatrical stage
Source: Drawing by the authors.

and natural features of the surrounding landscape, aligning harmoniously with the broader scenic environment. A dedicated cultural stage is included to showcase Chuzhou's Flower-Drum Opera and other forms of folk theater. The rendered effects are illustrated in Figures 9 and 10.

4.3.4. Reproduction of monuments and sites, Rang Quan of water gurgling

Due to the impact of natural forces and historical transformations, many historical monuments no longer

appear in their original form. Reconstructing the style and appearance of these sites has thus become a methodological strategy for expressing the regional cultural characteristics of landscapes within scenic areas. In “The Records of Zuiweng Pavilion,” it is written, “Six or seven miles up the mountain, I gradually heard the sound of water gurgling, and the one that cascades out between the two peaks, let the spring also” (Yin, 2019). In front of the Zuiweng Pavilion lies Rang Quan (Figure 11), where a stone-constructed square pool captures the spring water before it flows into the mountain stream. The inscription of the two characters “Rang Quan” on the pool dates back to the 40th year of the Kangxi reign (1661–1722) in the Qing dynasty and was commissioned by the then-governor, Wang Cikui (unknown birth and death years).

As ancient springs gradually dry up, the methodological strategy of reconstructing historical monuments has become essential, particularly for the conservation of Rang Quan. Through integrating the water system, vegetation, and sculptural elements, the spatial hierarchy of the ancient spring stream landscape is established. Emphasis is placed on preserving the natural qualities of Rang Quan with minimal human intervention, thereby recreating the

distinctive waterscape associated with this historic spring. Green spaces are formed through the use of riparian planting, while the continuous flow of water evokes the enduring vitality described in historical texts. Sculptural installations inspired by elements of the flower-drum opera, along with seating and resting areas placed around the Rang Quan, further enrich both the esthetic and functional dimensions of the site. These features serve not only to enhance the visual appeal of Rang Quan but also to allow visitors to engage with the historical and cultural atmosphere, immersing themselves in the scene portrayed in “The Records of Zuiweng Pavilion.” The rendered effects are illustrated in Figures 12 and 13.

4.3.5. Landscape of Chuzhou, food culture experience zone

The shops within the Langya Mountain Scenic Area (Figure 14) are currently dispersed and lack coherent planning and refinement, which significantly detracts from the overall visual quality of the landscape. As integral nodes of consumer services, shops are closely tied to the scenic area’s economic vitality. The design and application



Figure 10. Proposed theatrical stage
Source: Illustration by the authors (2024).



Figure 11. Rang Quan
Source: Photo by the authors (2024).

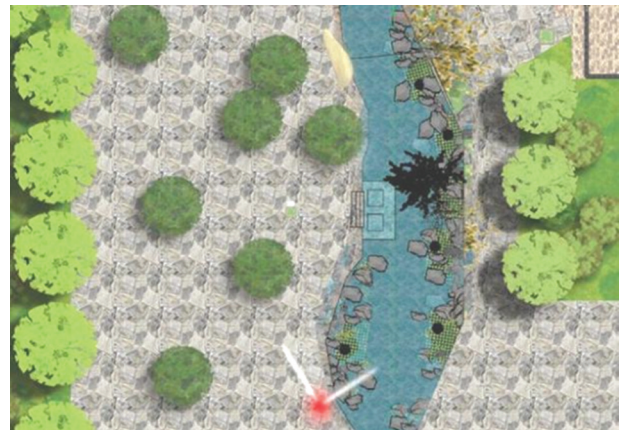


Figure 12. Floor plan of Rang Quan
Source: Drawing by the authors.



Figure 13. Rang Quan's gurgling spring
Source: Illustration by the authors.

should adopt a more scientific approach. We propose a verandah-style commercial pavilion layout within the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, emphasizing on unity of form and esthetic coherence. The architectural expression integrates key elements from the region's vernacular style and cultural heritage, ensuring harmony with the broader landscape context. Functionally, the space is organized to accommodate a variety of retail types, providing visitors with access to regional specialties from Chuzhou, culturally inspired souvenirs based on the Tai Shou theme, and areas for relaxation. The commercial pavilion design not only captures visual attention with its elegant and dignified appearance but also enhances the scenic value through complementary features, such as landscaped flowerbeds and culturally motif-inspired seating. These elements reinforce the regional identity and cultural depth of Langya Mountain, allowing visitors to appreciate both the esthetic appeal and the layered meanings embedded in the landscape. The rendered effects are illustrated in Figures 15 and 16.



Figure 14. The commercial pavilion
Source: Photo by the authors (2024).



Figure 15. Floor plan of commercial pavilion
Source: Drawing by the authors.

4.3.6. Chuju cultural elements, Youxiang Valley

Due to the dilapidated landscape of the Youxiang Valley (Figure 17), there is a pressing need to restore its former charm, as evoked in “The Records of Zuiweng Pavilion,” “wild fragrance, graceful trees, and verdant shade” (Yin, 2019). This poetic imagery can be restored by reinstating flower gardens that extend for several hundred meters. Visitors will be immersed in a sea of floral fragrance, evoking the sensation of leisurely wandering through a serene and scented natural environment, thereby breathing new life into Youxiang Valley.

The design of this site places particular emphasis on the configuration of vegetation. Planting should adopt a naturalistic approach, with clusters of flora arranged in an irregular, informal manner throughout the valley. Central to the scheme is the incorporation of native Chuzhou chrysanthemums, which are interwoven with indigenous trees, shrubs, and seasonal flowers of varying heights. These are planted in small groups, creating a dynamic interplay of density and openness, and a multi-layered floral landscape of diverse heights and textures. As the seasons shift, different flowers bloom in succession, imbuing



Figure 16. Proposed commercial pavilion landscape
Source: Illustration by the authors.



Figure 17. The Youxiang Valley
Source: Photo by the authors (2024).

Youxiang Valley with an ever-changing palette of colors and a tranquil, inviting atmosphere for visitors to enjoy. The rendered effects are illustrated in Figures 18 and 19.

5. Limitations of the study

Through field investigations and online data analysis, this study explores the pathways for expressing regional culture within the landscape design of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area. A systematic framework for cultural translation was developed, spanning from the distillation of cultural elements to the creation of immersive landscape scenes. However, due to certain objective constraints, the study still presents the following two limitations.

To begin with, due to limitations in research time and field conditions, the sample size of offline tourist feedback collected in this study was relatively small, making it difficult to fully capture the perspectives of visitors from diverse age groups and cultural backgrounds. To address this data insufficiency, the study supplemented the analysis with 500 valid tourist reviews extracted from major tourism platforms. A comprehensive evaluation of these reviews revealed recurring issues, including unclear cultural signage, poor integration of certain cultural scenes with the natural environment, and insufficient use of native plant species. Among these concerns, the spatial

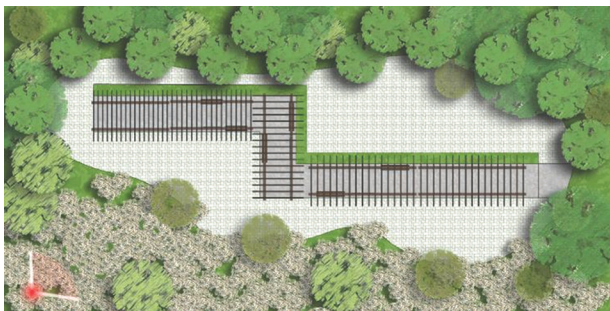


Figure 18. Floor Plan of the Youxiang Valley
Source: Drawing by the authors.



Figure 19. Proposed view of the Youxiang Valley
Source: Illustration by the authors.

arrangement of cultural landscapes received the most frequent negative feedback, indicating that visitors have higher expectations regarding the spatial organization and presentation of cultural content.

In addition, this field study was conducted primarily from late spring to early summer and did not encompass landscape variations across all four seasons. Seasonal differences may influence vegetation conditions, climatic environments, and tourist behavioral patterns, which could in turn introduce potential bias in the perception and evaluation of cultural landscapes.

Future studies could extend the temporal scope to encompass landscape conditions across all seasons, thereby capturing the dynamic transformations of cultural landscapes. In addition, broadening the diversity of tourist sources within the sample structure and integrating quantitative data analysis with visitor perception research would enhance the representativeness and applicability of the findings.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Strategies for cultural transmission through youth participation

Drawing on empirical research into the integration of Chuzhou's regional culture in the landscape design of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, this study finds that youth play an active role in recognizing cultural symbols, participating in immersive experiences, and contributing to the subsequent dissemination of cultural content. To facilitate the effective transmission of intangible cultural heritage, this study proposes a phased strategy at three interrelated levels.

First, at the educational level, regional cultural elements should be integrated into local curricula and design practices, while promoting collaboration between universities and scenic sites to support experiential teaching and cultural innovation. Second, regarding community participation, a multidimensional and collaborative platform is proposed to connect residents, designers, and site managers to strengthen grassroots organizations and long-term engagement in cultural practices. Third, in terms of communication infrastructure, the use of digital media, such as short videos and augmented reality, should be encouraged to establish youth-oriented channels that foster interactive and reimagined forms of cultural expression.

Grounded in empirical fieldwork and visitor feedback, these recommendations provide a practical and implementable roadmap for transitioning regional cultural landscapes from passive preservation to active

revitalization, and from static representation to dynamic, participatory engagement.

6.2. Recommendations for spatial optimization of cultural display and management

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that different types of cultural elements, such as inscriptions, pavilions, and cliff carvings, be strategically positioned within an average walking radius of 300–500 m. This spatial arrangement would facilitate the formation of a continuous and concentrated cultural perception zone for visitors. During peak travel seasons, scenic areas are encouraged to launch live performances, such as “Zuiweng Feng Yun” and “Landscape with Music,” incorporating diverse artistic forms, including traditional dance, *guqin* performances, and vocal music. These initiatives aim to enhance the immersive cultural experience for tourists.

The strategy also emphasizes the preservation of cultural heritage, including the restoration of the Zuiweng Pavilion, the digitization of cliff carvings, and the reconstruction of key cultural landmarks. Centered on the theme of “Zuiweng and the Langya Landscape”, the scenic area promotes poetry-related activities, live performances, and creative developments to establish the Ou Xiaoxiu cultural intellectual properties and develop a range of cultural and creative products. Through immersive and interactive experiences, combined with the integration of culture, commerce, and tourism, the site is actively expanding into markets, such as suburban tourism and self-driving tours, thereby enhancing its brand image and cultural appeal.

7. Conclusion

The preservation and transmission of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage within regional cultures has become a central focus of contemporary cultural development. Given the diversity of geo-cultural types, in-depth, thematically categorized studies are proving to be more effective. This study focused on the regional culture of Chuzhou, presenting the regional culture across the landscape of the Langya Mountain Scenic Area, to explore its spatial expression paths and dissemination methods.

The study identifies and selects representative aspects of Chuzhou’s regional culture—such as pavilion culture, water goblets, native plant species, and folk traditions—to organize their associated cultural values and spatial requirements. Through an analysis of elements, including pattern, color, material, and text, cultural symbols suitable for landscape design are distilled and subsequently integrated into spatial features, such as pavilions and landscape vignettes. By incorporating native

vegetation and natural landforms, the design aims to create immersive and interactive cultural landscapes.

In landscape creation, various cultural activities are hosted in different landscape spaces, creating a festive atmosphere, strengthening spiritual expression, enhancing visitor engagement, and promoting the daily transmission of regional culture in the tourism scene. Not only does this enrich the cultural dimension of the landscape, but it also offers a new pathway for the innovative expression and preservation of regional heritage.

The intangible nature of regional culture relies on spatial carriers, with landscapes serving as a medium that enhances its viability and facilitates its dissemination. This study proposes a four-step strategy of cultural excavation, element extraction, landscape expression, and cognitive transformation to establish a systematic approach for the spatial representation of regional culture.

Due to the richness and structural complexity of regional culture, its expression through landscape involves multiple layers and the construction of multidimensional carriers. There remains a need for further exploration of the coupling relationship between regional cultural content and landscape form. It is therefore suggested that continuous attention be paid to tourist feedback and the effects of cultural dissemination in actual cases, promoting the improvement of regional cultural landscape design theory and its application in a wider region.

Looking ahead, given the pronounced seasonal variations in visitor behavior and their perceptions of cultural landscapes, future research will extend fieldwork across different seasons to systematically examine how seasonal climate changes, across spring, summer, autumn, and winter, as well as local festivals, influence visitors’ acceptance and feedback regarding regional cultural expressions. In addition, as the cultural expression model proposed in this study is primarily based on qualitative analysis, future work will incorporate quantitative research methods. By integrating multi-source data, such as questionnaire surveys, expert evaluations, and tourist behavioral trajectories, the model will undergo quantitative validation and refinement to enhance its practical applicability and replicability. From a broader cultural perspective, the study also plans to select representative cultural destinations in East Asia (e.g., Huizhou in China, Nara in Japan) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Malacca in Malaysia) for cross-cultural comparison. This will help to explore the adaptability and transferability of the proposed research framework across diverse cultural landscapes, thereby providing theoretical support and practical reference for cultural landscape design from a global perspective.

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Conflict of interest

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Writing – original draft: Huan Cheng

Writing – review & editing: All authors

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

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Availability of data

Reasonable requests for the original data can be made by contacting the corresponding author through the email address provided.

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