

# Reconnecting Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, and Hun: A Framework for Contemporary Heritage Transmission and Regeneration of Huizhou–Style Vernacular Dwellings

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## Abstract

This study seeks to construct a framework of contemporary inheritance and regeneration strategies for the “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” of Huizhou–style traditional vernacular dwellings. To this end, the research employs documentary analysis to systematically review the historical evolution, cultural connotations, and contemporary challenges of these dwellings. Based on field investigations conducted in representative Huizhou traditional villages, this study selects multiple typical vernacular dwellings as case studies, documenting their architectural form, timber structural systems, spatial organization, decorative craftsmanship, and associated cultural practices. Combined with case analysis, it conducts an in–depth examination of the architectural characteristics, spatial layout, structural logic, decorative artistry, and their embedded relationship with regional culture in Huizhou–style dwellings. Using the five analytical dimensions of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” as a coding framework, a comparative research approach is adopted to analyze the continuities and ruptures between traditional dwellings and contemporary construction practices in the process of inheritance. The findings indicate that the contemporary inheritance of Huizhou–style dwellings often prioritizes the replication of architectural form (“Xing”) while neglecting structural systems (“Gou”), spatial conception (“Jing”), decorative artistry (“Yi”), and cultural connotations (“Hun”), resulting in a fragmentation of their original value system. The study argues that effective regeneration should transcend superficial stylistic imitation and return to the ontological relationships among these five dimensions. Specifically, regeneration should be guided by three operative principles: (1) revitalizing timber structural systems to re–establish a material

and technical foundation for the “Three Carvings” art; (2) adaptively reprogramming traditional spatial configurations to respond to contemporary living needs while retaining their core spatial logic; and (3) interpreting and transmitting cultural connotations to sustain the spiritual continuity of Huizhou-style dwellings. The research outcome is a multidimensional analytical and strategic framework that identifies key indicators and intervention directions for each of the five dimensions, providing both theoretical support and practical guidance for the sustainable regeneration and living inheritance of Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings in the context of rural modernization.

**Keywords:** Huizhou-Style Vernacular Dwellings; Heritage Transmission and Regeneration; Xing-Gou-Jing-Yi-Hun Framework; Timber Structural System; Living Heritage

## Introduction

Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings hold a significant position in the history of Chinese architecture due to their distinctive regional character, exquisite construction techniques, and profound cultural heritage (Fang & Li, 2022; Fu et al., 2021). The rigorousness of their architectural forms, the sophistication of timber structural systems, the introversion of spatial layouts, the richness of decorative artistry, together with the embedded Confucian principles, clan culture, and the philosophical wisdom of harmony between humanity and nature, collectively constitute the unique, irreplicable cultural gene of these dwellings (Cao & Mustafa, 2023). Rather than existing as isolated architectural attributes, these elements are mutually embedded and collectively sustain the material, spatial, artistic, and spiritual integrity of Huizhou-style dwellings. With social development and ongoing urbanization, rural construction paradigms have undergone transformation. Traditional villages now face unprecedented pressures and challenges, placing the survival and evolution of Huizhou-style traditional dwellings at a critical juncture (Jia et al., 2024).



**Figure 1** Huizhou and Huizhou-style Architecture

However, in the practice of rural modernization, the “inheritance” of these dwellings often falls into superficial and fragmented approaches. For instance, new constructions might incorporate elements such as Horse-head gables while overlooking the underlying timber structural systems, spatial organization, craftsmanship, and cultural connotations that originally supported them. In some cases, traditional timber structures are replaced by reinforced concrete systems, which not only alters the construction logic but also deprives decorative arts—particularly wood carving—of their original structural foundation and functional significance. As a result, the inheritance of the “Three Carvings” art is gradually separated from its architectural and technical context, pushing it towards a state of symbolic preservation rather than living transmission (Cao & Mustafa, 2023). This mimicry of “Xing” (form), coupled with the neglect of “Gou” (structure), “Jing” (spatial conception), “Yi” (artistry), and “Hun” (spirit), not only fails to achieve genuine inheritance but also accelerates the erosion of the core value of traditional dwellings, reducing them to hollow shells of mere “cultural symbols” (Fang & Li, 2022).

This phenomenon reveals a deeper methodological problem in current inheritance practices: the lack of an integrated analytical framework capable of addressing the interdependent relationship between form, structure, space, art, and cultural spirit. Consequently, a crucial challenge demanding resolution is how to transcend superficial imitation, re-examine the internal logic and ontological relationships among multiple architectural dimensions, and explore effective strategies for achieving the holistic and living inheritance and regeneration of Huizhou-style traditional dwellings within contemporary rural construction (Zhang et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, this study introduces the analytical paradigm of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” as a systematic framework to reassess both the problems and potentials of contemporary inheritance practices.

## Research Objectives

1. To systematically elucidate the internal logic and multidimensional values of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” in Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings by examining their interrelationships across architectural form, structural systems, spatial organization, decorative artistry, and cultural spirit.
2. To identify and critically analyze the specific challenges, disconnections, and distortions encountered by each of the five dimensions (“Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun”) in the process of contemporary inheritance and rural modernization.

3. To construct a multidimensional analytical and strategic framework for the contemporary inheritance and regeneration of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings, grounded in the “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” paradigm, and to propose corresponding intervention directions for sustainable practice.

## **Literature Review**

### **Holistic Research and Value Perception of Huizhou-Style Vernacular Dwellings**

In recent years, academic understanding of the holistic value of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings has continually deepened, moving beyond a focus on singular elements towards a multidimensional examination of their complexity and systematic nature (Fu et al., 2021). Early research primarily emphasized macro-level descriptions of regional characteristics, historical evolution, and artistic style. Subsequent studies gradually expanded the analytical scope to include construction logic, spatial organization, decorative systems, and cultural symbolism, marking a shift from descriptive documentation to integrated interpretation. Scholars have increasingly recognized that these dwellings are not merely physical entities but also living heritage embodying regional culture, social ethics, and philosophical thought (Fang & Li, 2022).

Studies have further pointed out that the construction techniques of Huizhou-style dwellings integrate Han culture from the Central Plains with indigenous local traditions, resulting in a distinctive regional architectural character (Cao & Mustafa, 2023). The interplay between architectural form, timber structural systems, spatial hierarchy, and decorative artistry contributes to a coherent cultural expression rather than a collection of isolated features. The combination of lines, surfaces, and spatial variations collectively constitutes their unique artistic charm.

However, amidst the growing acknowledgment of their holistic value, challenges in their “living” inheritance have also been exposed. Although some studies address conservation and development issues, they often lack in-depth analysis of the specific dilemmas arising in the context of modernization and rural transformation (Li et al., 2022). In particular, the difficulty of translating holistic value cognition into operative inheritance mechanisms remains insufficiently explored. While existing research has engaged with the cultural connotations of Huizhou-style dwellings, further investigation is still required concerning their spiritual continuity and cultural translation within contemporary society (Fang & Li, 2022).

## **Challenges and Issues in the Contemporary Inheritance of Huizhou-Style Vernacular Dwellings**

Against the backdrop of urbanization and rural construction, the inheritance of Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings faces numerous challenges, among which the superficial appropriation of traditional elements and the erosion of core value are particularly prominent (Li et al., 2022). Scholars have observed that current inheritance practices often rely on the replication of external forms while neglecting the underlying structural logic, spatial organization, and cultural connotations that sustain these forms (Fu et al., 2021). This tendency results in an imbalance between “Xing” (form) and other architectural dimensions, especially “Gou” (structure) and “Hun” (spirit), leading to fragmented inheritance outcomes.

From a spatial perspective, the introverted layout of Huizhou-style dwellings—especially the lighting and ventilation patterns associated with skywells—exhibits certain incompatibilities with contemporary living standards (Fang et al., 2023; Liu, 2023). A key difficulty in both research and practice lies in implementing adaptive renovations that respond to modern functional demands without undermining the original spatial logic. Furthermore, with transformations in traditional lifestyles, cultural elements embedded in these dwellings, such as clan-based social organization and the farming-and-studying tradition, are gradually diminishing (Fang & Li, 2022).

Existing studies have identified these problems but tend to address them in isolation, focusing separately on form, space, or culture. Consequently, conducting an in-depth analysis of the root causes of these challenges and exploring inheritance pathways that transcend superficial imitation and return to the essential interrelationships among multiple dimensions have become central concerns in current research on Huizhou-style dwellings (Fu et al., 2021).

## **Research on Contemporary Inheritance and Regeneration Strategies for Huizhou-Style Vernacular Dwellings**

In response to the challenges confronting Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings, both academic and professional communities have explored diverse inheritance and regeneration strategies. At the technical level, research has focused on the preservation and innovation of traditional construction techniques, including digital documentation and the contemporary application of timber framing technologies such as mortise-and-tenon joints (Chen et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2023). Some scholars argue that reactivating traditional timber structural systems can provide a renewed material and technical foundation for the structural inheritance of the “Three Carvings” art (Cao & Mustafa, 2023).

At the spatial level, adaptive reuse and functional revitalization have emerged as key approaches. Studies suggest that through appropriate functional reprogramming and the integration of modern amenities, it is possible to accommodate contemporary living requirements while preserving the core spatial conception of traditional dwellings (Vafaie et al., 2023; Li et al., 2021). Examples include transforming traditional dwellings into boutique hotels or cultural experience spaces, enabling them to gain renewed vitality through adapted functions. Furthermore, scholars emphasize the importance of enhancing public awareness of the spiritual and cultural values embedded in these structures through educational and participatory initiatives, thereby reinforcing their relevance in contemporary society (Gravagnuolo et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2024).

Despite these advances, existing strategies often remain fragmented across technical, spatial, and cultural dimensions, lacking an integrative framework capable of coordinating form, structure, space, artistry, and spirit. This limitation highlights the necessity of developing a multidimensional analytical paradigm to synthesize diverse regeneration approaches and guide holistic inheritance practices.

## Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Figure 2, the conceptual framework diagram illustrates the challenges confronting the five core elements “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” of Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings in the contemporary context, along with the corresponding strategies proposed to address them, ultimately guiding the dwellings toward sustainable development. The framework treats the five dimensions as an interrelated system: “Gou” (structure) provides the material foundation; “Xing” (form) represents architectural expression; “Jing” (spatial conception) mediates space and daily life; “Yi” (artistry) conveys aesthetic and symbolic value; and “Hun” (spirit) embodies core cultural and ethical principles. It also highlights that contemporary practices often overemphasize “Xing,” resulting in fragmented inheritance, and that effective regeneration requires coordinated interaction among all five dimensions. The entire framework adheres to the logical progression of “current status → problems → strategies → objectives,” striving to demonstrate both systematic nature and comprehensiveness (Figure 2).

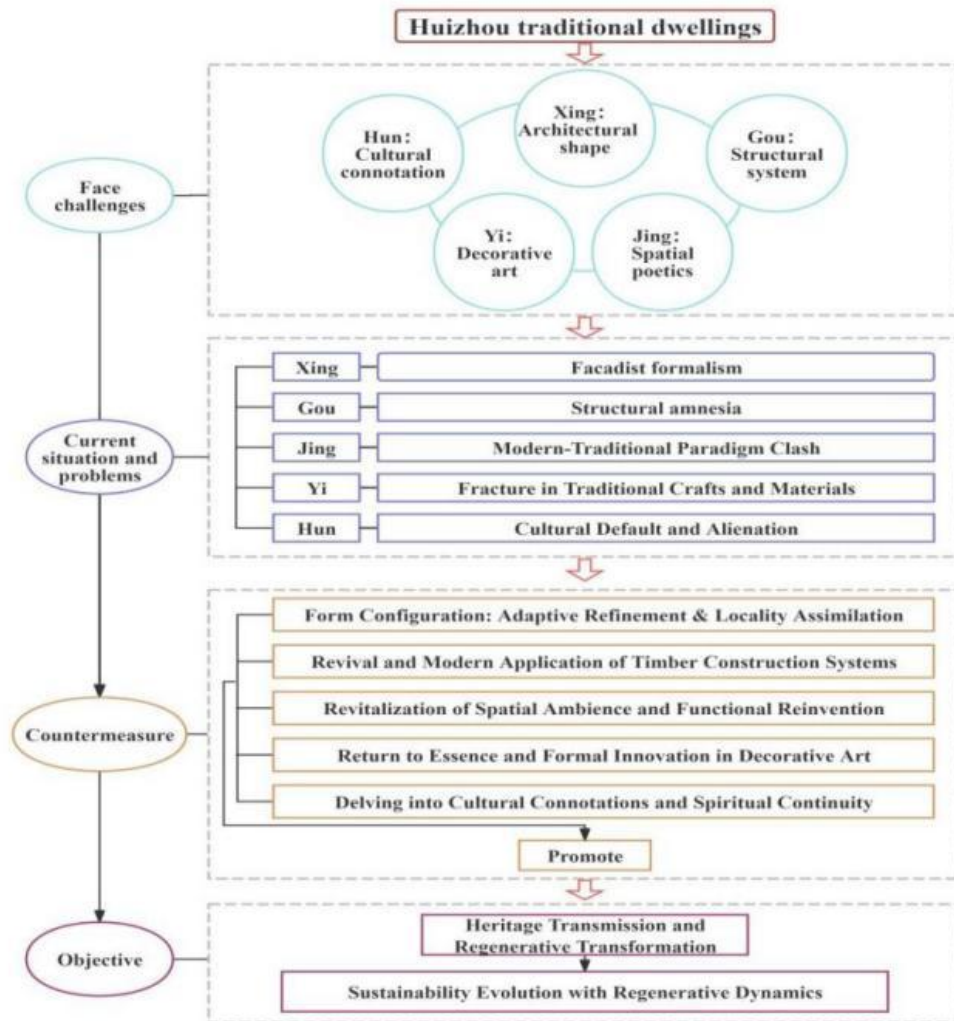


Figure 2 Conceptual framework

## Research Methodology

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to systematically analyze academic publications, monographs, policy documents, and relevant reports. This review aimed to clarify the theoretical connotations, historical evolution, and value characteristics of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” in Huizhou-style dwellings, identify gaps and limitations in current research, and establish a solid theoretical foundation for the study.

For empirical investigation, a set of representative Huizhou-style dwellings was selected as case studies. Field surveys documented their architectural form, timber structural systems, spatial layouts, decorative artistry, and associated intangible cultural elements, including clan culture and local customs. Observations were systematically recorded to support subsequent comparative analysis and framework development.

Through case analysis, the study examined the specific challenges and disconnections affecting each of the five dimensions (“Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun”) in contemporary inheritance practices. A comparative approach across multiple cases was employed to identify recurring factors influencing inheritance and regeneration, providing practical insights for strategy formulation.

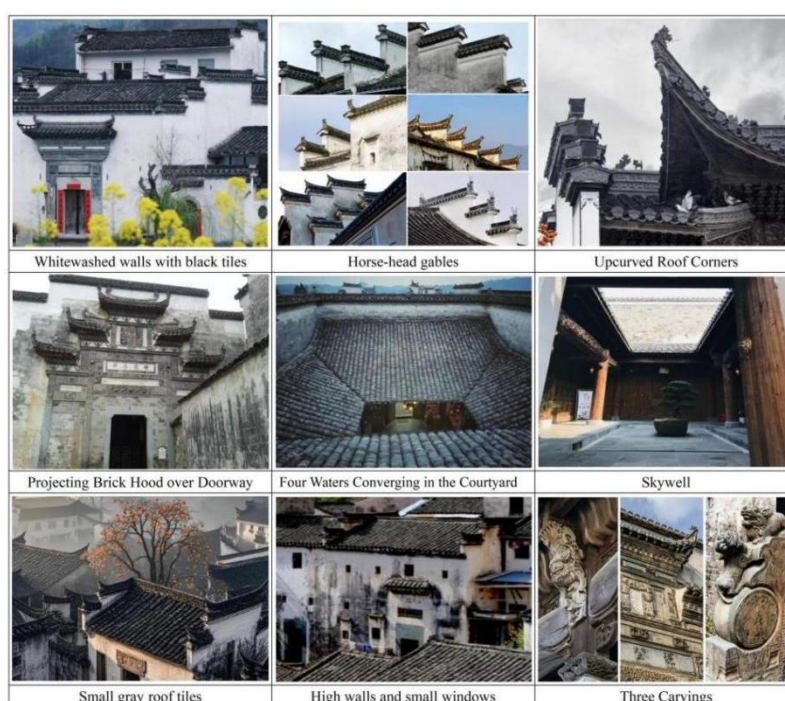
Additionally, comparative research was conducted on traditional architectures from other regions and cultural contexts to investigate technological innovation, functional adaptation, and cultural translation. Lessons from these experiences informed the construction of a more universally applicable and operational framework for the inheritance and regeneration of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings.

## Research Results

Analyzing the Inherent Logic and Multidimensional Value of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” in Huizhou-Style Traditional Vernacular Dwellings

### “Xing”: Regional Representation and Aesthetic Value of Architectural Form

The “Xing” of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings refers to their distinctive architectural morphology, primarily manifested in visual features such as whitewashed walls with black tiles, Horse-head gables (Ma Tou Qiang), small gray roof tiles, and upcurved roof corners, as illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Architectural Features (Source: Photographed by the researcher)

These architectural forms reflect an intelligent response to the local environment, climatic conditions, and cultural beliefs. The iconic stepped gable wall serves both practical functions, including fire prevention and wind resistance, and symbolic purposes, embodying local aspirations for Feng Shui and wealth accumulation. This study finds that the formation of Huizhou architectural morphology emerges from long-term interactions among regional culture, the natural environment, and construction techniques. Its aesthetic value lies in the harmonious integration of environmental responsiveness, formal elegance, and cultural meaning.

### “Gou”: Structural Wisdom and Technical Value of the Timber Framing System

The “Gou” of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings refers to their sophisticated timber framing system, primarily employing post-and-lintel and column-and-tie construction methods, as illustrated in Figure 4. Mortise-and-tenon joints connect the timber elements, providing seismic resistance and disassemblability. Beams, columns, tie beams, and purlins serve both as load-bearing components and as carriers for carvings, achieving a synthesis of function and aesthetics.

The Huizhou timber system demonstrates adaptability to topography and functional needs, while sustainability is enhanced through the use of renewable wood materials. Exquisite craftsmanship, particularly mortise-and-tenon techniques requiring no iron nails, exemplifies traditional construction wisdom. This structural system is not only the architectural skeleton but also a vessel conveying “Yi” (artistry) and “Hun” (spirit).

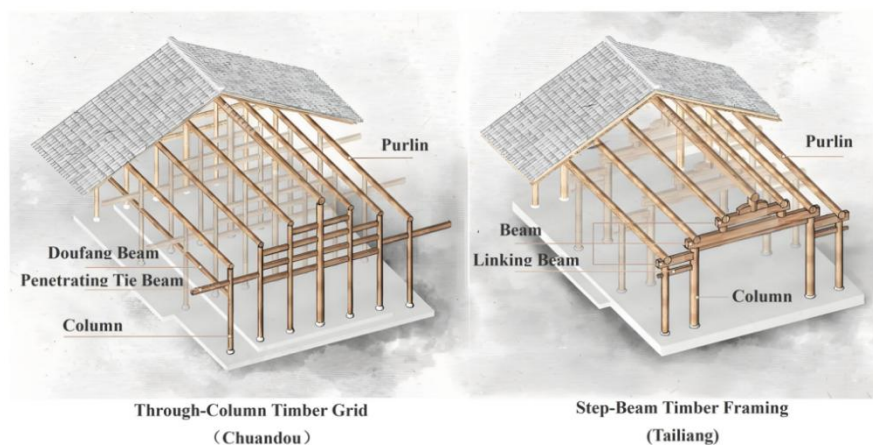


Figure 4 Timber framework (Source: Constructed by the researcher)

### “Jing”: The Introverted Depth of Spatial Conception and Its Living Value

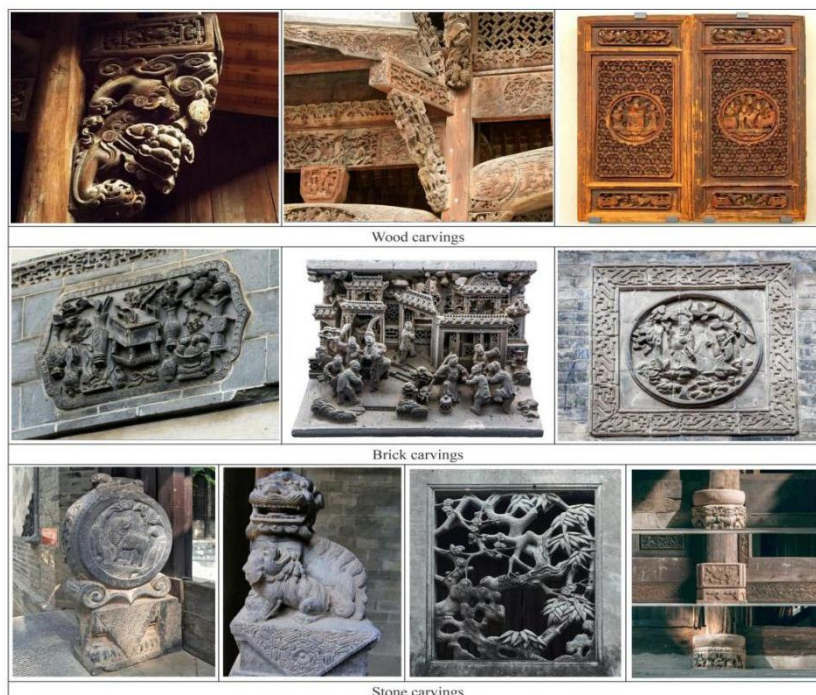
The “Jing” of Huizhou dwellings is a spatial concept centered on the skywell, creating an introverted, layered layout. It functions as a hub for daylighting, ventilation, drainage, and social interaction, embodying the Huizhou philosophy of “Four Waters Returning to the Hall” (Si Shui Gui Tang), symbolizing wealth accumulation and cohesive clan culture.

This spatial conception is valuable for its seamless integration of natural elements, blending interior and exterior, while balancing privacy and communal needs in multi-generational living. It also creates a distinctive ambiance that enhances quality of life and fosters a deep sense of belonging (Pan & Cheng, 2025).

### “Yi”: The Exquisite Decorative Artistry and Its Cultural Value

The “Yi” of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings refers to masterful decorative artistry, most notably the “Three Carvings” (wood, brick, and stone carving), as illustrated in Figure 5.

These carvings are not merely ornamental; they carry ethical doctrines, auspicious symbolism, and cultural meaning. Through visual analysis and cultural interpretation, their value can be understood as documenting Huizhou’s historical and social landscape, demonstrating the exceptional wisdom and aesthetic pursuit of local artisans, and perpetuating core cultural values such as Confucian ideals and clan ethics. In this way, the carvings serve as tangible embodiments of the Huizhou people’s spiritual world.



**Figure 5** Three Carvings (Source: Photographed by the researcher)

### **“Hun”: The Profound Cultural Connotations and Spiritual Value**

“Hun” constitutes the essence of Huizhou-style dwellings, encompassing clan culture, Confucian doctrines, the Huizhou merchant spirit, and agrarian–mercantile traditions. These cultural concepts are materialized through form, structure, space, and decoration, endowing the architecture with distinctive vitality. Examples include memorial archways extolling loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness; ancestral halls emphasizing scholarship; and the literati–merchant ethos embedded in daily life.

Huizhou dwellings serve as vessels for cultural continuity and social ethics. Their spiritual value lies in sustaining regional identity, shaping inhabitants’ behavioral norms, and embodying the ideal of harmony between humanity and nature.

Collectively, “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” form an interconnected value system. Understanding the inherent logic of these elements is essential for developing effective inheritance and regeneration strategies.

### **Diagnosis of Challenges and Issues in the Contemporary Inheritance of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” in Huizhou–Style Traditional Vernacular Dwellings**

#### **“Decontextualization” and Symbolic Appropriation of Architectural Form (Xing)**

Field investigations reveal that during rural construction and tourism development, the architectural forms of Huizhou-style dwellings—such as Horse-head gables and whitewashed walls with dark-grey tiles—are often decontextualized and reduced to superficial decorative symbols. Detached from their original construction logic, material constraints, and cultural connotations, these elements prioritize visual appeal over functionality, structural rationality, and regional adaptability. This formalism dilutes regional identity and creates a void of cultural meaning, as simplified symbols fail to convey the profound significance embedded in the original architecture. Superficial imitation ultimately strips the dwellings of their depth as carriers of culture.

#### **The Trend Towards “ Reinforced Concrete” and the Loss of Traditional Craftsmanship in the Structural System (Gou)**

Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings are renowned for their sophisticated timber framing systems. However, the adoption of modern construction materials, particularly reinforced concrete, has disrupted these traditional frameworks. Wood carvings, which rely on timber as a physical and structural medium, lose their integrity when timber is replaced, resulting in a decline in artistic value and cultural significance. This shift also reduces the demand for traditional timber construction, indirectly contributing to the gradual disappearance of skilled artisans. The essence of

Huizhou wood carving—its integration with structural members—is compromised when structures are replaced, leaving carvings as superficial decorations rather than meaningful components of the architecture.

### **Functional Alienation and Lifestyle Conflicts in Spatial Conception (Jing)**

The introverted spatial layout of Huizhou-style dwellings, organized around the skywell, faces challenges of functional alienation and limited adaptability to modern lifestyles. Issues include incompatibility with contemporary living requirements, increased privacy expectations, and phenomena such as vacancy and hollowing-out. Many dwellings have been left unoccupied, resulting in “hollow houses” that waste resources and gradually erode the vitality of traditional settlements. This spatial dysfunction accelerates the decline of both individual dwellings and the broader village context.

### **Crude Reproduction and Cultural Symbolization of Decorative Artistry (Yi)**

The “Three Carvings” (wood, brick, and stone) face multiple challenges in contemporary inheritance, including breaks in the craftsmanship chain, commercialization, and changes in materials and techniques. The decline of traditional apprenticeship and the complexity of carving techniques have led to fewer skilled artisans. Driven by tourism and commercial interests, some carvings are reduced to souvenirs, while substitute materials and mechanized production compromise the original texture and cultural resonance. These trends diminish both the aesthetic value and the cultural significance of the decorative arts.

### **Cognitive Disconnect and Spiritual Erosion of Cultural Connotations (Hun)**

The “Hun”—the spiritual and cultural essence of Huizhou dwellings—faces weakening awareness among younger generations (Harrison, 2010). A lack of understanding of the cultural narratives, ethical concepts, and regional traditions undermines the architecture’s spiritual foundation. Excessive commercialization further strips villages of their authentic cultural atmosphere, while traditional cultural education is often marginalized in modern schooling (Waterton & Smith, 2010; Smith, 2006). This results in superficial public comprehension of Huizhou culture, hindering the cultivation of deep cultural consciousness and confidence.

Overall, the contemporary inheritance of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings faces challenges across technical, spatial, artistic, and cultural dimensions. Disruptions in structure, functional alienation, compromised artistry, and spiritual erosion collectively threaten the continuity and integrity of the dwellings. A profound understanding of these issues is essential for formulating effective inheritance and regeneration strategies.

## **Toward a Multidimensional and Holistic Framework: Constructing Strategies for the Inheritance and Regeneration of "Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun" in Huizhou-Style Vernacular Dwellings**

### **Architectural Form (Xing): Strategies for Context-Sensitive Innovation and Regional Adaptation**

Inheritance strategies should prioritize context-sensitive innovation and regional adaptation, moving beyond superficial replication to grasp the underlying logic of Huizhou architecture. Engagement with the regional context is crucial for reinforcing local identity. Architectural design should draw from Huizhou's natural, historical, and cultural conditions, ensuring that new buildings respond meaningfully to the locale. Core formal elements can be abstracted and reinterpreted to meet contemporary needs and aesthetic preferences, rather than being copied literally. Finally, diverse design approaches should be encouraged to prevent stylistic monotony. Inheritance is a dynamic process, allowing varied interpretations while respecting the core spirit of the regional context.

### **Structural System (Gou): Strategies for Timber Framework Revival and Contemporary Application**

Strategies should focus on the revival and contemporary application of timber framing, reaffirming its structural and cultural value. Comprehensive documentation of traditional timber techniques—including detailed surveys, archival records, and oral histories—is essential to safeguard craftsmanship. Fostering a new generation of timber artisans through heritage bases, master-apprentice programs, and vocational training supports skill continuity.

Modern timber technologies should be integrated with traditional joinery systems, such as mortise-and-tenon connections, to expand applications in contemporary architecture. This approach maintains timber as a sustainable construction material while respecting traditional techniques.

The ontological link between timber frameworks and “Three Carvings” artistry should be restored. Integrating carvings into structural members ensures they function both structurally and artistically, reinstating their original inseparability from Huizhou architecture and preserving cultural significance.

### **Spatial Conception (Jing): Strategies for Revitalization and Functional Reprogramming**

Preserve traditional spatial layouts while introducing appropriate functional zoning. Core spaces such as skywells and central halls should be maintained, with moderate adjustments to align with contemporary living requirements. Modern technologies can improve lighting, ventilation, insulation, and moisture control, enabling a seamless integration of traditional spaces with modern lifestyles.

Public spaces within traditional settlements should be activated to reinvigorate community life. Initiatives such as community events, craft workshops, and participatory conservation programs encourage resident involvement, establishing a bottom-up, community-led preservation model and enhancing the vitality of the traditional settlement.

### **Decorative Artistry (Yi): Strategies for a Return to Essence and Innovative Expression**

To address crude reproduction and symbolic superficiality, strategies should emphasize returning to the essence of the “Three Carvings” and encouraging innovative expression. Enhancing aesthetic and craft standards, fostering artisanship with cultural depth, and broadening application scenarios beyond architecture—including cultural products, modern furnishings, and public art—can restore both artistic value and cultural significance.

Inheritance mechanisms must be strengthened, including representative inheritor systems and apprenticeship programs, to ensure intergenerational transmission of skills and continuity of intangible cultural heritage.

### **Cultural Connotations (Hun): Strategies for In-depth Interpretation and Spiritual Continuity**

To counter cognitive gaps and spiritual erosion, strategies should prioritize deep interpretation and spiritual continuity, reviving the cultural vitality of Huizhou dwellings. Documenting and interpreting cultural genealogies, clan culture, Confucian doctrines, the Huizhou merchant spirit, and agrarian-mercantile traditions provides a systematic understanding of their intangible value.

Multi-level cultural education and experiential programs—including craft workshops, folk activities, rituals, school curricula, and educational tours—enhance public engagement and cultivate cultural identity among younger generations.

Balancing tourism with cultural preservation is essential. Activities should follow “conservation first, rational utilization” principles, avoiding over-commercialization. Participatory and benefit-sharing approaches ensure that local communities become both custodians and beneficiaries, creating a sustainable cycle where cultural preservation and economic development reinforce each other.

## Discussion

This study discusses contemporary inheritance and regeneration strategies for the “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” of Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings, situating them within broader debates on rural revitalization and living heritage. Rather than treating these dwellings as static cultural relics or stylistic references, the findings highlight their nature as an integrated and dynamic system, in which architectural form, structural logic, spatial conception, decorative artistry, and cultural connotations are mutually constitutive and inseparable. Fragmented technical interventions or superficial stylistic imitation therefore prove insufficient for achieving sustainable inheritance, as they risk disrupting the internal coherence of this system (Harrison, 2010).

The results resonate with Li et al. (2023) PAF-based study on the revitalization of Huizhou traditional villages, which likewise argues that effective revitalization depends on the coordination of multiple driving forces rather than single-dimensional measures. However, while Li et al. (2023) focus primarily on the macro scale of village systems, governance structures, and policy-development dynamics, the present study shifts the analytical lens to the architectural scale, reconstructing the intrinsic logic of Huizhou-style dwellings through the fivefold framework of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun.” This micro-to-meso perspective clarifies not only how these dwellings function materially and spatially, but also what specific values are at stake in their inheritance and regeneration, thereby complementing macro-level revitalization research (Pendlebury et al., 2004).

This study also aligns with the concerns raised by Zhang et al. (2025), who adopt a resident-centred perspective to examine tensions between authenticity and adaptive reuse in Huizhou traditional dwellings. Their findings regarding residents’ dissatisfaction with comfort, spatial efficiency, and functional suitability help explain the practical challenges identified here, particularly in relation to “Jing” (spatial conception) and “Hun” (cultural connotations). Whereas Zhang et al. (2025) primarily emphasise perceptual experience and policy responses, this research further suggests that many of these tensions originate from the fragmentation of the

internal chain linking “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun.” By diagnosing this internal disconnection and proposing strategies aimed at restoring their interrelationships, the study advances an integrated approach to adaptive regeneration that supports genuinely “living” inheritance rather than mere physical preservation or symbolic reuse.

### **New Knowledge from Research**

This study advances existing research by moving beyond fragmented and single-dimensional approaches, integrating the five dimensions of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” into an interconnected and systematic analytical framework. By clarifying the inherent logical relationships among architectural form, structural system, spatial conception, decorative artistry, and cultural connotations, the study provides a novel theoretical lens for comprehensively understanding the multidimensional value of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings.

Through the application of this framework, the research demonstrates that contemporary inheritance challenges do not arise from isolated technical or stylistic problems, but rather from the disruption of internal connections among these five dimensions during modernization. For example, the replacement of traditional timber structures with reinforced concrete not only results in the loss of construction techniques, but also undermines the structural foundation of wood carving, ultimately leading to the erosion of the architecture’s cultural and symbolic significance.

Building on this diagnosis, the proposed regeneration strategies emphasize synergistic and relational solutions that aim to restore these disrupted connections, rather than addressing each dimension independently. This approach conceptualizes inheritance and regeneration as a process of “holistic regeneration through reconnection,” offering a theoretically grounded and operational pathway to address the long-standing challenge of the “divorce between form and spirit” in the contemporary transformation of traditional vernacular dwellings.

### **Conclusion**

This study employs literature review, field investigation, case analysis, and comparative research to examine the contemporary value, inheritance challenges, and regeneration pathways of Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings. By systematically analyzing these dwellings through the integrated framework of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun,” the research clarifies their multidimensional value and internal logic, while proposing inheritance and regeneration strategies that provide both theoretical insight and practical guidance for their living inheritance.

The findings demonstrate that the “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” of Huizhou-style dwellings constitute an inseparable organic whole, in which architectural form (“Xing”) is intrinsically interconnected with structural systems (“Gou”), spatial conception (“Jing”), decorative artistry (“Yi”), and profound cultural connotations (“Hun”). Disruption to any single dimension inevitably affects the integrity and vitality of the entire system, underscoring the limitations of fragmented or form-oriented inheritance approaches.

The study further reveals that contemporary inheritance challenges are deeply rooted in broader processes of social transformation, changing lifestyles, cultural cognitive disconnection, and excessive commercialization. Issues such as the decline of traditional timber craftsmanship, the replacement of timber structures with modern materials, spatial incompatibility with contemporary living needs, and the symbolic alienation of the “Three Carvings” art reflect a structural imbalance within the traditional cultural ecosystem, rather than isolated technical problems.

By proposing a comprehensive analytical framework and multidimensional regeneration strategies, this research offers new theoretical perspectives and operational pathways for the conservation and development of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings. Emphasizing holistic understanding, cultural continuity, and architectural vitality, the study advocates a shift from superficial preservation toward genuine “living inheritance,” enabling Huizhou-style dwellings to regain relevance and vitality within contemporary rural construction and revitalization processes.

## Suggestions

Future research on Huizhou-style traditional vernacular dwellings should further refine and validate the analytical framework of “Xing, Gou, Jing, Yi, Hun” through broader empirical application and comparative case studies, thereby enhancing its generalizability, explanatory power, and operational applicability across different regional contexts.

In terms of practical inheritance and regeneration, policy formulation should place greater emphasis on aligning top-level design with localized implementation. Clear guidance and regulatory mechanisms for “New Huizhou-Style” architecture in rural construction are needed to prevent formalism and the indiscriminate use of cultural symbols, ensuring that new buildings genuinely embody the structural logic, spatial principles, and cultural essence of Huizhou-style dwellings, rather than merely reproducing their visual appearance.

Future studies may also expand into digital preservation and digital inheritance pathways, such as establishing integrated digital archives and databases to support research, education, and

public dissemination. In addition, further exploration of adaptive application models in rural tourism and cultural creative industries is encouraged, with particular attention to balancing economic benefits and social value, so as to promote the sustainable development of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings within contemporary rural society.

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