Guizhou Dali Village Summer 2013 Field Mission Report

By Kuanghan Li

08/23/2013
Introduction

The GHF Guizhou project commenced in the summer of 2013 by collaborating with two of the most prestigious Chinese universities, Shanghai Tongji University and Pekin University, to carry out documentation and survey of Dali Dong Ethnic Village in Rongjiang County. The field mission lasted from July 16th to August 7th in Dali village and from August 8th to 12th in Guiyang. A total of 23 students, 3 professors and 3 teaching assistants were involved in the assignment with support from GHF China, Guizhou Provincial Research Center of Cultural Heritage Protection (GRCCHP), and Rongjiang County Cultural Heritage Management Unit.

Field work was divided into 2 main components that were carried out by the two universities respectively:

1) Documentation of selected historic structures by architecture students from Tongji University;
2) Survey and analysis of the built environment and socio-economic data of Dali Village, preliminary planning and design proposals carried out by student group assembled by Peking University.

Part 1: Historic Building Survey

15 students from the architecture department of Tongji University worked under the direction of 2 professors and 3 teaching assistants to complete documentation of a total of 26 historic structures; including 19 historic houses and other typical Dong village architecture such as the shelter bridges, historic well, granaries, “Sa” altar, etc.

The surveyed building selection was proposed by GHF China program director, Kuanghan Li, in consultation with professor from Tongji and Peking Universities. Even though the “Dali village historic building group” has been listed as the 7th batch National Protected site in May 2013, the precise listing of protected buildings were not defined and hence a lack of documentation drawings. Therefore, the purpose of the survey was to provide detail documentation drawings of the recommended protected buildings and some of the outstanding architectural features of Dali Dong village.

1GRCCHP is the technical arm of GACH and is the principal designated partner to GHF on the collaborative project.
All of the important historic buildings were recorded in their extant condition; other structures of secondary historic values were documented for context. In addition to documenting individual structures, 2 important public spaces that are integral to the village environment were also documented; i.e. the Drum Tower Square where the most significant and sacred symbols of a Dong village, the drum tower and “Sa “altar, are located, and the historic well with public pond, which is used by the villages for daily drinking and cleaning activities.

The team spent 10 days in the field carrying out site documentation and the final drawings were completed in Shanghai. The documentation was carried out via hand measurements and digital photography; the final products included AutoCAD drawings of building plans, elevations, sections and 3D models.

Figure 1: Professor Wang Hongjun from Tongji University explaining to the students the basics of carrying out historic building survey.
Figure 2: Left to right bottom: measuring the Dong shelter bridge; entering the data on site; interview with local carpenter.

Figure 3: AutoCAD drafting
Part 2: Data analysis and preliminary planning and design

Following the documentation work conducted by Tongji University, a group of 8 students assembled by Pekin University also carried out field survey focusing on collection of analytical data and preliminary planning and design proposals. The PKU team spent 14 days in Dali village and 6 days in Guiyang to complete the data gathering. The team presented to the township and village representatives on their preliminary findings before leaving Dali village, and also had a final presentation to GACH and GRCCHP in Guiyang.

The field work was divided into 2 main parts: planning and architecture. The planning team covered basic information of the village including land use, road and water systems, historic monuments and landmarks, landscape and line of vision, etc. The architecture team focused on basic architectural data including historical evolution of techniques and style, classed building types and their according treatments, etc. The architecture team also tried to come out with
some design proposals on how to rehabilitate some of the traditional houses. The findings will be gathered into a final report assembly by PKU students and Kuanghan Li by October 2013.

Figure 5: Prof. Sun Hua from Pekin University explaining to the students basics about Dali Dong village.

Figure 6: The team carrying out interviews with local residents.
Future Plans

Dali Dong village is listed on the World Heritage Site tentative list along with other Dong ethnic group villages in Guizhou, Hunan and Guangxi provinces. Tongji University Urban Planning Design Institute has already being assigned to come out with the master conservation plan for the collective nominated villages. However, since the MCP will cover about 20 villages, the level of investigation of each village may not be detail enough for project implementation purpose. Therefore, the main goal of this field mission is to provide baseline information for future planning and for project execution purpose. Even though the mission was divided into 2 components executed by 2 different institutes, GHF China Program Director, Kuanghan Li, together with local partner, were there to provide consistent support and direction.

The next step will be to compile the collected information and organize future work team to complete documentation and survey that were out of scope from this field mission. The organization of a local village working committee will also be the priority for the project to carry out smoothly and to gain support from the villagers. Negotiation is already in place with the township and village officials on
selecting sites for an Eco museum and a demonstrative rehabilitation project which can function as an expert work station. Design proposals for both projects will be launched as soon as site selection is confirmed.

Figure 8: Group photo of Tongji and Pekin Universities team member with local host.