

The Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains" Green Development and Aesthetic Study of Huai'an Canal Culture

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Abstract: This paper explores the aesthetic representation of the "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains" green development concept in the canal culture of Huai'an. By reviewing the connotations of the green development concept and the historical background of Huai'an's canal culture, the paper analyzes its significance in the construction of modern ecological civilization. The study points out that the combination of natural beauty and cultural beauty in Huai'an's canal culture vividly embodies the "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains" concept, providing important cultural reference and practical pathways for the current ecological civilization development.

Keywords: Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains; Green Development; Huai'an Canal Culture; Ecological Civilization; Cultural Aesthetics.

1. INTRODUCTION

As global environmental issues become increasingly severe, the concept of green development has gradually gained worldwide consensus. China's notion that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" reflects not only the importance placed on ecological preservation but also a profound understanding of sustainable development. Huai'an, as an ancient hub of canal transport, has achieved a unique balance between ecology and economy through its culture. This paper provides a concise overview of Huai'an's long history, its brilliant canal culture, and the

intellectual support it offers for the preservation and utilization of its cultural heritage(Flader et al., 1992).

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE "LUCID WATERS AND LUSH MOUNTAINS" GREEN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

As the negative impacts of environmental degradation intensify, humanity has gradually realized the urgency and importance of protecting the ecological environment(Critchley & Schroeder, 1998). A global consciousness towards ecological protection has awakened, prompting many regions and countries to actively adjust and improve the relationship between humans and nature. Specifically, the awakening of human ecological awareness is reflected in the following aspects: First, the awareness of environmental protection emerged relatively early in academia. For example, in 1923, Albert Schweitzer, the founder of modern environmental ethics in France, included both humans and animals within the scope of ethics in his book *The Philosophy of Civilization: Culture and Ethics*, proposing the ethic of "reverence for life." In 1933, American environmentalists introduced the concept of "land ethics," and in 1962, Rachel Carson from the United States published *Silent Spring*, marking the academic community's entrance into the "ecology era." Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping has become the core leader of China's socialist development. Xi has placed great emphasis on ecological civilization and, in consideration of China's specific ecological circumstances, proposed new concepts such as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets." This idea has provided a comprehensive answer to the relationship between environmental protection and economic development, laying a solid theoretical foundation for China's commitment to green and sustainable development (Tudor, 2014).

2.1 The Concept of Green Development

The green development concept emphasizes the organic integration of economic development and environmental protection. At its core, it seeks to achieve sustainable economic growth through the scientific and rational use of resources and environmental conservation(Mesarovic & Pestel, 1975). General Secretary Xi Jinping's notion that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" highlights that environmental protection is not only a necessary condition for economic development but also a

crucial guarantee for sustained economic growth(Taylor, 1999).

2.2 The Specific Content of the Green Development Concept

The green development concept encompasses areas such as resource conservation, environmental protection, ecological balance, and sustainable development. Its goal is to achieve the harmonious integration of economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection, promoting a society that is resource-efficient and environmentally friendly(Sauer & Leighly, 1963).

3. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF HUAI'AN CANAL 'TRANSPORT'

Huai'an, located in eastern China, has long been known as the "throat of canal transport." Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, Huai'an's unique geographical position made it a key hub for canal transport, carrying the heavy responsibility of national grain transportation. Over time, canal transport culture developed into a distinctive cultural system, encompassing economic, political, social, and cultural aspects(Shao, 2004). During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the excavation of artificial canals such as the Han and Hong canals connected major river systems like the Yellow River, Huai River, and Yangtze River, initiating the canal transport industry (Huang, 2012). This not only significantly contributed to national unification but also laid the foundation for the formation of a nationwide waterway network and the establishment of the canal transport system (Pingsheng & Jinfang, 2024). In the Qin and Han dynasties, with national unification, the establishment of centralized power, and the increasing demand for grain in the capital, the transportation of grain from agriculturally prosperous regions to the capital became normalized (Forster, 1985). The central government prioritized the development and maintenance of the canal network to secure grain transport, leading to the gradual establishment of China's canal transport system(Wang, 2008). During the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, various rulers fully exploited the shipping potential of the Yellow River and constructed a series of transport canals, effectively linking the northern and southern water systems (Sigley et al., 2024). This also improved skills in canal excavation and river management, preparing the way for even larger-scale development of shipping. The opening of the Grand Canal during the Sui and Tang dynasties, along with the

establishment and implementation of various canal transport laws and regulations during the Tang and Song dynasties, culminated in the formation of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal during the Yuan dynasty and the expansion of maritime transport(Xi, 2011). By the Ming and Qing dynasties, Huai'an had gradually become the command center for canal transport, river management, shipbuilding, and grain transshipment, emerging as the true canal transport hub and one of the four major cities along the canal(Shi et al., 2019). This marked the peak of Huai'an's prosperity in history.

3.1 The Impact of Canal Transport on Huai'an's Economy, Society, and Culture

Canal transport promoted the development of Huai'an's industry, commerce, and tourism. During the Tang Dynasty, Chuzhou (modern-day Huai'an) was one of the ten most important prefectures in the country. In the Song Dynasty, Chuzhou's commercial taxes ranked third nationwide. By the Ming and Qing Dynasties, thanks to the combined influence of canal transport, river management, salt trade, and tax monopoly systems, Huai'an became one of the four major cities along the Grand Canal and one of the ten largest cities in China (Li & Zheng, 2020). It also emerged as the political, economic, and cultural center of the Jianghuai region, almost functioning as a provincial capital. Huaiyang cuisine, one of China's four major culinary traditions, originated in Huai'an. Canal transport also spurred Huai'an's social and cultural development, producing many famous figures(Dong et al., 2024). The spirit of dedication, rule of law, innovation, and inclusiveness found in canal transport culture remains a driving force for Huai'an's modernization and prosperity today(Mao et al., 2014).

3.2 Economic Development

Canal transport required ships and storage facilities, which promoted the development of shipbuilding and related industries in Huai'an. Ensuring navigable waterways also led to engineering projects that further developed the region. The demand for materials for shipbuilding and river engineering brought significant business opportunities, while the canal facilitated trade between Huai'an and other regions, leading to unprecedented commercial prosperity. Records show that in the Ming Dynasty, Huai'an's annual commercial tax revenue reached over 2 million strings of cash, accounting for nearly one twenty-fourth of the national total. This trade also fostered the development of local industries and handicrafts(Mesarovic & Pestel,

1974).

3.3 Political and Social Influence

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the role of Canal Transport Governor was typically held by high-ranking officials such as Ministers or Deputy Ministers. To ensure the successful management of canal transport, the imperial court often granted these governors additional responsibilities, including military oversight, coastal defense, and regional governance. The Canal Governors had a significant political influence on Huai'an, participating in military campaigns to suppress banditry, peasant uprisings, and foreign invasions, as well as organizing local defense efforts during dynastic transitions. Administratively, they combated corrupt officials and eunuch factions, managed disaster relief efforts, and initiated hydraulic projects. Canal Governors also played a role in foreign relations, safeguarding national and ethnic interests.

3.4 Urban Development

Canal transport also accelerated urban development in Huai'an. According to the Yuanfeng Jiuyu Zhi, during the early Song Dynasty, towns along the canal included Beishen Town in Shanyang County, Shibailihe Town, Hongze Town, and Dukou Town in Huaiyin County, and Xucheng Town, Pingyuan Town, and Guishan Town in Xuyi County. By the Ming and Qing dynasties, in addition to the development of Huai'an Prefecture, new towns like Xincheng, Hexia Town, Banzha Town, Qingjiangpu Town, Wangying Town, and Xiba emerged. With the establishment of the Changying Granary and Qingjiang Shipyard, as well as the strategic position of Qingjiangpu as a transportation hub, it gradually flourished and became more important, eventually replacing Shanyang County as Huai'an's political and economic center.

3.5 Cultural Tourism in Huai'an

Due to the convenience of the Grand Canal, numerous famous figures, including foreigners, have traveled through or visited Huai'an throughout history, leaving behind poems and travel notes. In the Tang Dynasty, notable foreigners who visited Huai'an included the Japanese monk Ennin and his students, as well as members of the Japanese imperial mission to Tang China. They traveled along the canal, either heading north or south, or departed from Chuzhou by sea to return home. Additionally, many Silla people resided in Shanyang and Lianshui. During the peak of the Northern

Song Dynasty, tourism resources in Chuzhou were even richer, with high-rise buildings and pavilions scattered throughout the city. By the Ming and Qing Dynasties, due to the combined influence of canal transport, river management, salt trade, and tax monopoly systems, Huai'an's tourism service industry ranked among the best in the country. The Emperor Zhengde of the Ming Dynasty visited Jiangnan and twice stopped to enjoy Huai'an, requesting songs and beauty. Similarly, Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty paused frequently in Huai'an during his six southern tours, inspecting river works and reviewing troops. Huaiyang cuisine, which originated in Huai'an, is not only a form of culinary art but also a cultural heritage. It was developed and flourished within the philosophical context of "harmony between heaven and man."

3.6 The Overall Structure of Huai'an Canal Transport Culture

Huai'an's canal transport culture is known for its rich cultural content and unique regional characteristics. Firstly, it reflects the fusion of nature and humanity. The canal transport system in Huai'an relied on the natural environment while achieving harmonious coexistence through the construction of artificial waterways. Secondly, it embodies the dual effects of economy and culture. Canal transport not only drove regional economic development but also stimulated cultural prosperity and exchange. The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal was initiated in 486 BCE when King Fuchai of Wu ordered the excavation of the Hangou Canal from Zhuyuwang on the Yangtze River to Moku in the north of Huai'an. This connected the Yangtze and Huai Rivers, marking the beginning of Huai'an's enduring relationship with the Grand Canal and canal transport. The canal brought unprecedented economic and cultural prosperity to Huai'an. The pillars of Huai'an's urban development were "river, canal, salt, tax, and postal service," with shipbuilding, customs duties, Huai salt distribution, and material trade all playing critical roles in its economic growth. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, canal transport, particularly the shipping of grain from the south to the north, was a top priority for the rulers. From the first Canal Governor Wang Hong in the Ming Dynasty to the last Governor Enshou in the late Qing Dynasty, there were a total of 262 Canal Governors, with 122 serving in the Ming Dynasty and 140 in the Qing Dynasty. Among them, notable figures like Wang Zongshu, the first to experiment with sea transport, and river management expert Pan Jixun, made significant contributions. In Huai'an, they pioneered world-leading techniques for managing silt-laden rivers, leaving a lasting legacy in the history of canal transport. After the Yellow River shifted its course

southwards and merged with the Huai River during the Southern Song Dynasty, Huai'an became a confluence of the Yellow, Huai, and Grand Canal rivers. As the Yellow River gradually silted up the Huai and Si Rivers, river management around Huai'an became increasingly important. From the late Ming period until the Yellow River shifted northward again in the fifth year of Emperor Xianfeng's reign (1855), the Qingkou area in Huai'an remained the center of river management. Qingjiangpu in Huai'an also became the headquarters for the River Governor for nearly two centuries. Huai'an's Customs Office was established during the Xuande reign, and the Ministry of Works began collecting tolls in the Chenghua reign. By the Chenghua and Hongzhi reigns, the customs system had been institutionalized, forming a separate taxation system from traditional commercial taxes known as the "Customs Tax System." The establishment of Huai'an Customs was not a coincidence. It was a product of the evolution of China's ancient commercial tax system and the economic development of the Ming Dynasty. As commerce expanded, market trade became more diverse and specialized, and rural markets developed a three-tier structure: procurement markets, distribution markets, and retail markets, drawing more rural areas into the sphere of commercial circulation.

3.7 The Aesthetic Embodiment of the "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains" Concept in Huai'an Canal Transport Culture

The development of canal transport spurred Huai'an's economic and political growth, which in turn stimulated local cultural advancement. As the economy flourished, Huai'an's societal customs evolved through phases, from simplicity to opulence, and back to a simple and refined state. The essence of canal transport culture is a precious historical heritage left to the people of Huai'an.

4. THE FUSION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL BEAUTY

The natural beauty within canal transport culture is primarily reflected in the rivers, waterways, and the scenic landscapes along the routes. The concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains" emphasizes environmental preservation and restoration, which finds vivid expression in the culture of canal transport. Through the management and protection of waterways, Huai'an not only maintained a healthy ecological environment but also laid a solid foundation for cultural inheritance. The prosperity brought by canal

transport to Huai'an's economy and politics inevitably led to cultural flourishing. Literature and arts in Huai'an thrived, starting with the Han Dynasty's Meicheng and his father's "Han Fu," and continuing through to the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, producing famous poets, novelists, and playwrights. Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West* in the Ming Dynasty became one of China's "Four Great Classical Novels." Huai'an scholars, such as Yan Ruoku, a pioneer of the Qianjia School in the Qing Dynasty, contributed significantly to academic research. The region also led in various fields, especially in hydraulic engineering and medicine. Buddhism and Taoism held deep roots in Huai'an, with the Puzhao King Temple in Sizhou being one of China's five major Buddhist temples and Bochi Mountain in the city a famous Taoist site during the Tang Dynasty. As Huai'an's economy progressed, its customs followed a cycle from simplicity to luxury and back to a pure and robust simplicity. The essence of canal transport culture remains a valuable asset to Huai'an's people.

5. INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND ECOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION

The cultural landscapes of canal transport, such as ancient sites and historical buildings, form a harmonious unity with the surrounding natural environment. These cultural landscapes are not only historical witnesses but also invaluable resources for modern ecological civilization. By protecting and utilizing these landscapes, Huai'an can achieve both cultural preservation and ecological conservation. The ancient Grand Canal gave rise to a rich culture, much of which remains preserved in the form of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The hydraulic cultural heritage of Huai'an, closely tied to canal transport, is a core part of this heritage. This refers to the excavation, management, and maintenance of the Grand Canal within Huai'an, as well as the rise and fall of related hydraulic facilities like sluices and dams. Along the Huai'an stretch of the Grand Canal, there are five ancient cities and two major towns. From north to south, these include the ancient cities of Huaiyin, Huai'an, and Qingjiang, as well as the remains of Sizhou city and the county town of Xuyi at the confluence of the Sui, Tang, and Song Canals into the Huai River. Local cultural traditions like Huaihai Opera and Huai Opera have been included in the national intangible cultural heritage list. The unique geographical environment has nurtured a distinctive culture around Hongze Lake, including fishing tool-making techniques, which are an essential part of this cultural heritage.

Jinhu's Yangge dance and Huai'an's "Ten Rhythms of Drums" have been designated as part of Jiangsu's cultural preservation projects and listed as intangible cultural heritage. Along with Nan Zha Folk Songs from the Huai'an district, they represent the region's folk music and dance. Songs like the "Fishermen's Drum" and the "Horse Lantern Dance," which are popular in the Hongze Lake area, also hold historical and artistic value. The legends of Han Xin in Huai'an have been included in the provincial intangible cultural heritage list. In the field of traditional Chinese medicine, Huai'an is known for "Shanyang Medicine," with Wu Jutong's Treatise on Warm Diseases being a significant contribution to traditional Chinese medical theory, systematically studying the causes, pathology, development, and treatment of warm diseases. This work remains a gem in the history of Chinese medicine. Huai'an also boasts a wide variety of traditional handicrafts. The peasant paintings from Boli draw inspiration from folk arts like paper-cutting and embroidery, creating modern folk artworks that are rich in rural life and marked by a distinctive artistic style.

5.1 The Enlightenment of Huai'an Canal Transport Culture on Modern Ecological Civilization Construction

The green development concept embedded in Huai'an's canal transport culture reflects ancient wisdom regarding the respect and protection of the natural environment. This serves as an important inspiration for modern society to enhance ecological awareness. We should draw on this concept to bolster public ecological consciousness and promote societal participation in ecological civilization construction.

5.2 Enhancing Ecological Awareness

In recent years, the banks of the outer and inner canals, spanning 30 kilometers across Huai'an, have effectively preserved the rich historical and cultural relics of canal transport, making Huai'an a significant hub of Grand Canal cultural heritage. This area vividly showcases the classical charm of the "Canal Capital." On June 22, 2014, the Grand Canal was successfully inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with Huai'an housing five rivers: the Inner Canal, the Ancient Inner Canal, the Ancient Yellow River, the Central Canal, and Zhangfu River. Five heritage sites, including the Shuangjin Lock, Qingjiang Grand Lock, Qingkou Hub, Hongze Lake Dike, and the site of the Governor's Canal Transport Office, have also been included in the protection list. In the suburban areas of Huai'an along the canal, lush green trees and grasses preserve the original ecological

landscape. The section from the Northern Jiangsu Irrigation Main Canal to the ancient Qingkou stretches a total of 37 kilometers, featuring both the Ming Dynasty's excavated Inner Canal and the newly opened Grand Canal from 1959. The Huai'an municipal committee and government have mandated that the preservation of the canal's beginning and end should maintain its original appearance. For the inner canal sections in the urban area, which no longer primarily serve shipping functions, protective utilization is being implemented. In 2006, the "Ancient Qingkou Hydraulic Scenic Area" was established, encompassing the confluence of rivers and the natural and cultural landscapes along the banks, particularly the imposing hydraulic structures on the waterways. Historians and cultural experts have praised the Ancient Qingkou Hydraulic Scenic Area as an open-air water conservancy museum in China. Within a 3-square-kilometer radius of Huai'an's hydraulic engineering hub, over 20 major hydraulic works such as large electric pumping stations, control sluices, ship locks, and underground culverts have been built, serving functions such as irrigation, flood drainage, flood discharge, navigation, electricity generation, and economic benefit.

5.3 Promoting Green Economic Development

The economic development model within Huai'an's canal transport culture emphasizes the rational use of resources and environmental protection. This aligns closely with the concepts of modern green economic development. By drawing on the experiences of canal transport culture, we can explore a sustainable development path that maintains economic growth while protecting the environment. The ruins of the ancient city wall of Huai'an serve as a historical testament to the city and are an important component of its status as a historical and cultural city. Its unique urban structure, consisting of three connected cities, stands out in the history of urban construction in China and holds significant historical, artistic, and scientific research value. The ancient streets of Hexia preserve the architectural style of the Qing Dynasty and are deeply marked by canal culture, featuring stonework from the ancient canal. There are also streets related to shipbuilding, such as Nail Iron Lane, Copper Lane, Bamboo Lane, Rope Lane, and Bellows Lane. Additionally, Hexia hosts memorial sites such as the Han Hou Fishing Platform and the Piao Mu Temple, commemorating the general Han Xin and the legendary figure Piao Mu, as well as the Mei Pavilion dedicated to the renowned Han poet Mei Cheng. Upstream on the northern bank of the Qingjiang Lock, there is a Grand Canal Cultural Square, where relief sculptures encapsulate the

2,500-year history of the canal's changes in Huai'an. A water tourism route developed during the Kangxi era has been established at the Qingjiang Lock, which integrates canal management efforts along the ancient canal's banks. To protect the banks without harming the original ecosystem, measures combining engineering techniques and biological methods have been implemented, preserving and restoring the ancient canal's landscape.

5.4 Promoting Cultural Heritage and Innovation

As an important component of Chinese culture, the preservation and transmission of canal transport culture hold significant meaning for maintaining cultural diversity. By integrating modern technology and concepts, we can achieve innovation and development in canal transport culture, providing rich cultural resources for contemporary society. The canal transport culture highlights the spirit of dedication among the people of Huai'an. Canal transport is closely linked to national defense and is crucial for the normal operation of the country, yet it is also a high-risk endeavor that often requires significant labor and sacrifice. For instance, during the Qianlong and Daoguang eras, recorded in the Qing Shilu, Huai'an experienced several major accidents, demonstrating the rare spirit of fearlessness and sacrifice exhibited by Huai'an locals and many outsiders who worked each year to ensure that the canal boats could pass through and reach the capital smoothly. Canal transport has fostered a sense of discipline among the people of Huai'an, as it operates under strict regulations, which are fundamental to accomplishing transport tasks. The discipline and organizational concepts among the canal transport members reflect the overall legal and moral spirit of the Huai'an people. Furthermore, canal transport has spurred the innovative spirit of Huai'an residents; they continuously improved and transformed the river channels and innovated hydraulic technologies to ensure that canal boats could operate efficiently, leading to advancements in world-class hydraulic science and technology. Canal transport also promotes an inclusive spirit among the people of Huai'an. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, factors such as canal transport, river management, salt production, and taxation worked in concert, causing Huai'an to rise rapidly and become one of the top ten cities in the country, resulting in a significant influx of outsiders. Local records indicate that Huai'an was a melting pot of people from various regions, particularly in Qingjiangpu, where the foreign population was four to five times that of the local population, showcasing the broad-mindedness and inclusivity of Huai'an residents. Huai'an is a land of outstanding individuals, producing many notable figures, especially among

scholars. These include Mei Cheng, who pioneered the "Seven Styles" of Hanfu, Wu Cheng'en, author of *Journey to the West*, and researchers like Yan Ruoqi and Luo Zhenyu. Notable military figures include Han Xin, Liang Hongyu, and Guan Tianpei, while politicians such as Zhou Enlai also hail from this region. Other distinguished individuals include the physician Wu Jutong, mathematician Luo Tengfeng, banker Zhou Zuomin, photographer Lang Jingshan, and Peking opera master Zhou Xinfang, representing a wide array of fields. The Ming and Qing dynasties were a prolific period for Huai'an celebrities, which aligns with the rise of canal transport and the presence of canal officials, reinforcing Huai'an's status as the "Canal Capital." An analysis of these prominent individuals reveals two notable characteristics: first, nearly all these figures emerged from urban settings, and second, most had ancestral roots outside of Huai'an. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Huai'an produced two top scholars, Shen Kun and Ding Shimei, while families like Wang Tingzhen and Li Zongfang also "moved to Shanyang in the early Ming." Except for Ding Shimei, who relocated to the outskirts of Huai'an, all others grew up within the city. Moreover, several modern figures born in Huai'an, such as Premier Zhou Enlai (originally from Shaoxing, Zhejiang), epigrapher Luo Zhenyu (from Shangyu, Zhejiang), Governor Yang Shiqiang (from Suzhou, Anhui), Peking opera master Zhou Xinfang (from Cixi, Zhejiang), photographer Lang Jingshan (from Lanxi, Zhejiang), banker Tan Lisun (from Wuxi, Jiangsu), and patriotic figure Li Gongpu (from Changzhou, Jiangsu), all have ancestral roots outside of Huai'an. This phenomenon is attributed to the developed urban environment of Huai'an during the Ming and Qing dynasties, which attracted a large number of migrants from other regions. For over 2,500 years, the Grand Canal has undergone countless changes. Whether it was the Grand Canal during the Sui and Tang dynasties or the Jinghang Grand Canal in the Yuan dynasty, Huai'an has always been an integral part of this waterway, leaving behind a rich cultural heritage. The ancient canal nurtured a wealth of culture, and today a large number of tangible and intangible cultural heritages remain. On one hand, there are cultural heritages directly related to canal transport, including hydraulic culture, grain transportation culture, boat-making culture, taxation and commercial culture related to canal transport, salt transportation culture, religious culture of the canal, and guild culture associated with canal transport. The most significant and well-preserved aspects are those related to river channels, canal transport, salt industry, and religion. The cultural heritage of the Huai'an canal mainly includes hydraulic and canal transport culture. The ancient waterways include the Li Canal, the old course of the

Li Canal (now abandoned with three wharves), the ancient Yellow River, the Middle Canal, and the Zhangfu River. The heritage areas consist of the hydraulic culture heritage area at the Qingkou Hub and the canal transport official's cultural heritage area, which includes the site of the Canal Transport Governor's Office. Significant heritage sites include the Qingkou Hub, Shuangjin Gate, Qingjiang Gate, the Hongze Lake dike, and the site of the Governor's Office for Canal Transport. On the other hand, there is the urban culture that coexists with the Grand Canal, encompassing commercial market culture, guild culture, culinary culture, theatrical culture, and folk culture. These cultural aspects not only have a decisive influence on shaping the spirit of the city but also have a profound impact on Huai'an's urban cultural construction, cultural life, cultural tourism, and the development of the cultural industry.

6. CONCLUSION

The Jinghang Grand Canal originated in 486 BC when King Fuchai of Wu excavated the Han Canal from Zhuyuwang on the Yangtze River to the northern end of Huai'an City in order to launch an attack on Qi, thus connecting the Yangtze River and the Huai River. From that point on, the city of Huai'an began to pulse in rhythm with the ancient Grand Canal and formed an inseparable bond with canal transport. Canal transport has facilitated the development of Huai'an's industry, commerce, and tourism services. During the Tang dynasty, Chuzhou was one of the top ten "tight states" in the country. In the Song dynasty, Chuzhou ranked third nationally in terms of commercial taxation. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, due to the combined influence of canal transport, rivers, salt, and trade, Huai'an emerged as one of the four major cities along the canal and among the top ten cities in the country, becoming the political, economic, and cultural center of the Jianghuai region. Huaiyang cuisine, one of China's four major culinary traditions, originated in Huai'an. Canal transport also promoted the development of social culture in Huai'an, leading to the emergence of many notable figures. The culture of canal transport is a valuable legacy left to the people of Huai'an, embodying the spirits of dedication, law and discipline, innovation, and inclusivity. These values continue to serve as powerful motivations for Huai'an's construction of a modern, well-off society. The economic and political development driven by canal transport inevitably fosters the growth of local culture. As the economy developed, the social customs of Huai'an transitioned from

simplicity to extravagance and then back to a simple yet rich state. The essence of canal transport culture is a priceless treasure bestowed upon the people of Huai'an by history. As an important link in ancient Chinese economy and culture, Huai'an's canal transport culture reflects the concept of green development, providing us with valuable historical experiences and cultural resources. In-depth study of this culture can offer beneficial insights for modern ecological civilization construction and promote the widespread practice of green development principles. The combination of natural beauty and cultural beauty in Huai'an's canal transport culture vividly illustrates the "lucid waters and lush mountains" concept, serving as a vital cultural resource for achieving sustainable development. The theoretical significance of this paper lies in the deep exploration of Huai'an's Li Canal culture and its related historical relics, investigating the current state of cultural landscapes in historical areas. By drawing comparisons and references, a comprehensive system of cultural landscape elements surrounding the Li Canal in Huai'an can be established, generating a reasonable evaluation mechanism to accurately assess its potential and shortcomings, leading to the formulation of corresponding protection and renewal strategies. Furthermore, the study of Huai'an's Li Canal will provide references for the cultural landscape systems of other similar historical areas along canals, contributing to the refinement of this research. The practical significance of this paper is to explore the landscape construction of historical areas surrounding the canal from the cultural perspective of "lucid waters and lush mountains equal gold and silver mountains." This approach can maintain the historical context and create a unique landscape style. Through the protection and renewal of cultural landscapes, the historical memory of the canal can be revived, revitalizing the historical areas along the Li Canal and providing a sense of belonging to the local people and an engaging experience for visitors. This, in turn, will promote the development of tourism and enhance the city's image.

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