

# Research on the Development of Leisure Fisheries in Shipu Town, China, from the Perspective of Fishing Culture

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## ABSTRACT

Fishing culture represents a comprehensive survival mode of communities represented by fishermen, developed over human history. It emerged from the survival needs of fishing communities and evolved through the historical processes of fishery farming and animal husbandry. Fishing culture possesses characteristics of universality, dynamism, and integrity, enriched by strong local ethnic features. This paper uses Shipu Town in Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province—a region with typical fishing culture characteristics in China's coastal areas—as its primary case study. Field investigations reveal that while the fishing culture industry in Shipu Town faces challenges such as the decline of cultural landscapes, weak inheritance, and intense industry competition, leveraging the region's economic, social, and cultural attributes through effective cultural tourism planning, emphasizing cultural continuity, and driving industry transformation can enable the inheritance, preservation, and promotion of Shipu's fishing customs and culture.

## KEYWORDS

Fishing Culture; Leisure Fisheries; Development Strategy; Shipu Town.

## 1. OVERVIEW

Leisure fisheries, as an emerging form of fishery, combine sightseeing, entertainment, dining, and science education with fishery production to create a comprehensive recreational industry. They encompass a variety of activities, including ornamental fisheries and fishing experiences, offering opportunities to appreciate natural beauty while gaining insight into fishing culture.

Fishing culture, a unique historical creation from prolonged fishing activities, includes aspects such as fishery history, engineering relics, production methods, fishing gear, customs, poetry, dance, and cuisine. It bears witness to the historical development of fisheries. Over time, fishing culture has played an increasingly significant role in leisure fisheries, enriching the industry with cultural depth and distinctive experiences.

Shipu Town, located in Xiangshan County, Zhejiang Province, is one of China's six central fishing ports, boasting a long history of fishing and abundant cultural resources. Predominantly centered on fishery harvesting, Shipu has developed an extensive marine economic chain. However, declining marine resources and adjustments to fishing policies have posed unprecedented challenges to traditional fisheries. In response, Shipu has actively explored industrial upgrading and economic development pathways, with leisure fisheries becoming a key direction.

As a coastal town in eastern Zhejiang, Shipu is rich in fishery resources and densely populated with fishing villages. Its renowned attractions, such as Shipu Fishing Port Ancient Town, Dongmen Fishing Village, and Chinese Fishing Village, highlight the town's long-standing and diverse marine

fishing culture. The fishing culture of Shipu epitomizes the historical civilization created by generations of fishermen in their socio-environmental context. Historic fishing villages serve as vital carriers of this cultural legacy.

This paper aims to explore how fishing culture can be better integrated into leisure fisheries to ensure its preservation and development. By analyzing the current state of leisure fishery development and the unique charm of Shipu's fishing culture, it proposes effective strategies and pathways to facilitate their integration. This approach not only supports local economic diversification and enhances residents' quality of life but also preserves and promotes valuable fishing culture heritage, ensuring the sustainable development of leisure fisheries in the region.

## **2. SHIPU TOWN'S FISHING CULTURE TOURISM RESOURCES**

Shipu Town, when compared to other coastal cities in China, boasts rich and diverse marine cultural resources. The region possesses an array of natural and cultural landmarks. This section analyzes Shipu Town's fishing culture from three resource dimensions: behavioral, material, and spiritual.

### **2.1. Important Festival Resources**

#### **2.1.1. China Fishing Season Opening Festival**

Dating back to the Neolithic period over 6,000 years ago, Shipu Town established a distinctive fishing civilization due to its reliance on the sea and close association with fish. To enhance the quality of life for its people and foster economic and social development, Shipu residents integrated marine tourism culture with traditional fishing customs, creating festive events that blend traditional customs with opera, dance, and other performing arts.

In 1998, Shipu hosted the first nationwide "Fishing Season Opening Festival," which revolves around the theme of "resting and resuming fishing." This event, emphasizing the motto "To treat the world kindly is to treat humanity kindly," was named the "China Fishing Season Opening Festival." Held annually, the festival has since become a unique marine celebration, characterized by vibrant fishing culture and coastal tourism features, making it one of China's renowned folk festivals.

#### **2.1.2. Shipu Town's "March 3rd Beach-Going Folk Festival"**

In 2009, the "March 3rd Beach-Going Folk Festival" was listed as one of Zhejiang Province's endangered cultural heritage projects. This traditional folk festival, rooted in Shipu's customs, has evolved into a signature event that incorporates sports, marine competitions, dance troupes, acrobatic performances, and other festive activities. Celebrations feature dragon and horse lantern dances, parades, and theatrical performances based on folklore such as The Spicy Snail Girl's Marriage Proposal. This interactive and lively event showcases high levels of participation and encapsulates cultural, recreational, and communal elements.

### **2.2. Material Resources**

#### **2.2.1. Natural Resources**

Shipu Town is located centrally along the coastline of Zhejiang Province, bordered by Xinqiao Town and Dingtang Town to the north, Sanmen Bay to the west, and Hupu Town and Gaotang Township to the south. It faces Da MUYANG and Cat's Head Ocean to the east, earning its reputation as a key marine town along the middle Zhejiang coastline.

#### **2.2.2. Architectural Cultural Resources**

Shipu Middle Street, also known as Zhongjie, traces its origins back to the Ming Dynasty and flourished during the Qing Dynasty, now boasting a history of over 600 years. The area once had over

80 temples for religious activities and served as a commercial hub during the early 20th century. Historically, Shipu was an important site for marine trade and ocean fishing, and its Middle Street hosted thriving businesses such as silk shops, copper stores, and pharmacies. While parts of this commercial center have decayed, restoration efforts have preserved remnants of its architectural heritage, reviving it as a tourist attraction that reflects the Ming and Qing Dynasties' styles.

### 2.2.3. Culinary Culture Resources

Shipu's culinary traditions emphasize freshness and seasonality in seafood. Local specialties include raw salted crabs, prepared by carefully cleaning and seasoning the crabs to preserve their natural flavors. Other culinary traditions include:

1. **Seasonal Freshness:** Prioritizing the natural taste of seafood.
2. **Salting:** A prevalent method in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, such as the preparation of Jia Sha Cakes, a signature local pastry.
3. **Pickling:** Popular among fishermen for preserving food, including pickled shrimp, crabs, and clams.
4. **Pairing:** Combining seasonal vegetables with seafood, as seen in local seafood noodles.
5. **Innovation:** For instance, dishes like Pu Fish Noodles have been refined to highlight the freshness of fish and the texture of noodles, creating a unique local culinary identity.

## 2.3. Spiritual Resources

### 2.3.1. Traditional Fishing Customs

Shipu Town's history has cultivated a wealth of fishing customs, including shipbuilding, net-making, and traditional fishing practices. As a nationally recognized cultural town and one of China's six major fishing ports, Shipu has preserved its distinct fishing customs. Traditional practices such as building durable wooden fishing boats and preparing nets through intricate craftsmanship reflect the ingenuity and experience of local fishermen. Ceremonial traditions, such as decorating ships with flags and holding rituals to bless safe voyages, underscore the cultural importance of these activities.

### 2.3.2. Artistic Resources

Shipu is home to an array of traditional artistic expressions, including:

- **Xiangshan Ballads:** These encompass fishing songs, mountain songs, and field songs, which are closely tied to fishing activities such as setting sail, raising anchors, and hauling nets.
- **Instrumental Music:** Shipu's percussion instruments, such as the "Wanhualong Drum," have been adapted and enriched by generations of folk artists.
- **Embroidery and Painting:** Inspired by maritime life, Shipu's fishermen produce intricate embroidery and paintings that depict marine life, fishing tools, and everyday scenes, vividly capturing the essence of fishing culture.
- **Fish Lantern Dances:** These performances blend the imagery of fish with animal forms, serving as both a festive entertainment and a prayer for prosperity.

## 3. DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS FOR SHIPU'S FISHING CULTURE

### 3.1. Integrating Tourism with Various Industries

Shipu Town leverages its abundant marine resources and coastal location to develop its identity as a historic "tourist town." By consolidating local resources and focusing on marine tourism projects,

Shipu promotes the integration of urban and rural tourism while enhancing the quality of tourism experiences.

### **3.2. Enhancing the Distinctiveness of Cultural Tourism**

By exploring hidden traditional fishing cultural resources and revitalizing fishing villages, Shipu can strengthen its appeal. Introducing new ideas, innovating industries, and hosting cultural exchange events can further showcase traditional fishing culture on a global scale.

### **3.3. Developing Unique Cultural Tourism Products**

Shipu must differentiate its tourism offerings to avoid market homogenization. Creating distinctive local products, such as fishing-themed souvenirs and cultural artifacts, will help build a stronger brand identity and broaden market opportunities.

### **3.4. Implementing Policy-Driven Cultural Tourism Development**

Policies that align with regional characteristics and market competition can guide sustainable development. Prioritizing harmony between people and nature while leveraging local resources ensures the successful integration of fishing culture into economic and social frameworks.

### **3.5. Establishing a Unique Cultural Tourism Model**

To overcome the fragmentation of existing tourism resources, Shipu should adopt a systematic approach that integrates smaller attractions into a cohesive development framework. This strategy will mitigate the risks of natural and cultural resource discontinuities.

## **4. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR SHIPU TOWN'S FISHING CULTURE INDUSTRY**

### **4.1. Refining the Cultural Essence of Shipu Town's Fishing Industry**

#### **4.1.1. Emphasizing the Role of Fishing Culture Research Teams**

The development of fishing culture as part of Shipu Town's leisure fishery requires a specialized knowledge base, distinct from general business management principles. Establishing professional teams with expertise in humanities, marine sciences, and technical fields is crucial for advancing the cultural dimensions of leisure fishing. A comprehensive approach, involving planning, design, manufacturing, and promotion, is essential to cultivate interdisciplinary and practical technical talents. Furthermore, mechanisms for nurturing, selecting, utilizing, and evaluating fishing culture professionals must be systematically developed to ensure the sustainable growth of this sector.

#### **4.1.2. Establishing a Fishing Culture Information System**

Although Shipu's traditional fishing culture contains immense value, its scattered and fragmented nature often leads to neglect. Government efforts have made strides in preserving and consolidating these cultural resources, but further progress is needed. Learning from international best practices, Shipu can harness advanced technologies to build an integrated information system. Such a system would compile and analyze data on fishing culture and leisure fisheries, enabling real-time monitoring and updates. This digital platform would serve as a critical reference for enhancing the cultural depth of leisure fisheries.

## **4.2. Designing Fishing Culture Projects**

### **4.2.1. Exhibiting Traditional Fishing Culture in Leisure Fisheries**

Shipu's unique geographic and climatic advantages contribute to the distinctiveness of its leisure fishing grounds. Showcasing traditional fishing culture through exhibitions and interactive displays can provide visitors with an immersive cultural experience, increasing the reputation and appeal of Shipu's leisure fisheries. Utilizing diverse exhibition formats to present the historical evolution and practices of fishing culture will strengthen public awareness and appreciation.

### **4.2.2. Demonstrating Fishing Production Processes**

Given Shipu's expansive water areas and its reliance on fishing for sustenance, the community has developed various traditional fishing methods over centuries. The fishing grounds are active throughout all seasons, aligning with different ecological cycles. Educational displays on fishing tools, techniques, and key species such as yellow croaker and ribbonfish can offer visitors insights into the labor and ingenuity of local fishermen. These demonstrations not only highlight Shipu's economic contributions but also enhance the cultural landscape of leisure fisheries.

## **4.3. Formulating Strategies for Cultural and Economic Integration**

### **4.3.1. Building an Industry Cluster for Leisure Fisheries**

Developing an industry cluster for Shipu's leisure fisheries involves formulating scientific strategies and embracing market-driven approaches. By leveraging high-quality resources and fostering diverse investment mechanisms, the efficiency of cultural resource utilization can be significantly enhanced. Creating a long-term development plan, standardizing industry practices, and preventing harmful competition are critical steps toward establishing a stable and innovative leisure fishery network.

An investment fund dedicated to leisure fisheries and fishing culture development can help overcome financial barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises. Providing support services and fostering cooperative models will allow businesses to expand their reach while ensuring the orderly growth of the industry.

### **4.3.2. Establishing a Unified Brand for Shipu's Leisure Fisheries**

To strengthen its competitive position, Shipu must cultivate brand recognition among leisure fishery operators. Understanding target audiences and aligning marketing strategies with cultural values are vital for promoting the essence of fishing culture. A focus on branding efforts, incorporating both traditional and modern perspectives, can elevate the global profile of Shipu's leisure fisheries.

Incorporating innovative ideas from international markets into traditional fishing practices will further diversify the industry. By integrating fishing culture into every aspect of operations, Shipu can position itself as a leading destination for cultural and recreational tourism. Coordinated efforts among operators, government agencies, and cultural organizations will enhance the overall market influence of Shipu's leisure fisheries.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Fishing culture manifests uniquely within the leisure fishery sector, showcasing regional characteristics, cultural values, and historical depth. However, current presentations of fishing culture often suffer from fragmented spatial arrangements, lackluster thematic integration, and limited experiential offerings. To address these issues, a multidimensional approach is necessary—one that combines spatial integration, content reorganization, and the creation of experiential value.

By emphasizing the role of fishing culture as a core element of leisure fisheries, Shipu Town can achieve a harmonious balance between cultural preservation and economic development. The synergy

between fishing culture and leisure fisheries holds immense potential for fostering sustainable growth and enriching the cultural fabric of the region.

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