



Interior view of Shengwu lou. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

Fujian Tulous, China

An Exemplar of a Unique Chinese Architectural Style

Site Significance

Fujian Tulou is a unique Chinese multi-story rammed earth architectural form of the Hakka and Minnan people in Fujian Province, China, built for communal living and defense. The literal translation of the term “tulou” is “earthen building,” and there are about 3000 tulou located in southwestern Fujian province. These are mostly located in the mountainous regions of Longyan City and Zhangzhou City precincts and were built between the 12th and the 20th centuries.

The Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) has identified many of the Fujian tulous as a National Cultural Heritage Protection Unit. Six tulou clusters and four tulou structures, comprising 46 tulou structures were inscribed in 2008 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Shengwu lou, located in Pinghe County, which also houses Zhuangshang

Dalou, the largest known Fujian tulou, and Juening lou, the largest known circular Fujian tulou, was one that was not included in the UNESCO inscription.

Polychrome paintings, clay sculptures, and woodcarvings can be seen inside the building, door and window panels, and walls and roof tiles. The building contains more than 600 pieces of carved wood elements, each featuring a unique design, and more than 100 pieces of clay sculpture and wall paintings. Shengwu lou has been described as “the most exquisite tulou for its decorative arts” by Chinese tulou scholar Mr. Huang Hanmin.



Threats

Pollution
Neglect
Encroachment

Start Date

2009

Project Goals

Preservation by Design®

Planning

The building already has a structural conservation plan underway. However, the most significant part of the building, its decorative elements, is still in need of a specialized conservation plan. This will include a thorough and systematic documentation of all the decorative elements, scientific analysis and research, and conservation recommendations.

Shengwu lou needs a conservation master plan and a regional development plan to help improve the unplanned development and pollution of the natural surroundings (e.g. trash accumulation in Lu Stream). The plans can help to better define the relationship between the various sites in the immediate surroundings, especially those owned by the Ye clan and along the Lu Stream. The plans may also explore the relationship between Shengwu lou and other more obscure tulou in Luxi Township, and with the Tianluokeng and Chuxi tulous clusters in Nanjing and Chuxi.

Project Partnerships

- Pinghe County People's Government
- Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage

Conservation Science

Shengwu lou features elaborate decorations and greater artistic value than other tulous. Shengwu lou is also different in its layout as a combination of "unit tulou" and "communal corridor tulou" whereas the others are all "communal corridor tulou."

Many of the decorative elements are in need of conservation and will receive the attention of professional conservators, while structural deficiencies will be strengthened in order to ensure the continued survival of this important example of a unique architectural form.

Community

As an effort to encourage tourism to the area, the addition of Shengwu lou to the other two popular tulou clusters can form a more interesting and diverse tour circuit: visitors can admire Tianluokeng for its famous top view, Chuxi for its impressive collection of closely located tulou, and Shengwu lou for appreciation of traditional tulou architectural art. This can help to extend visits to the tulou and encourage the opportunity for financial development in the local community.

The cleaning up of the natural environment and control of new incompatible construction can also help to protect the natural habitat of the village and the quality of life of the inhabitants by, for example, cleaning farm land, underground water supplies and rivers for children to fish and swim in.



Example of a decorative carving in Shengwu lou.
Photo by © Global Heritage Fund



Example of a decorative wall painting in Shengwu lou.
Photo by © Global Heritage Fund



Children in the courtyard of Shengwu lou. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

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