

Zhejiang Huzhou Mulberry-Dyke & Fish-Pond

GIAHS (2017)



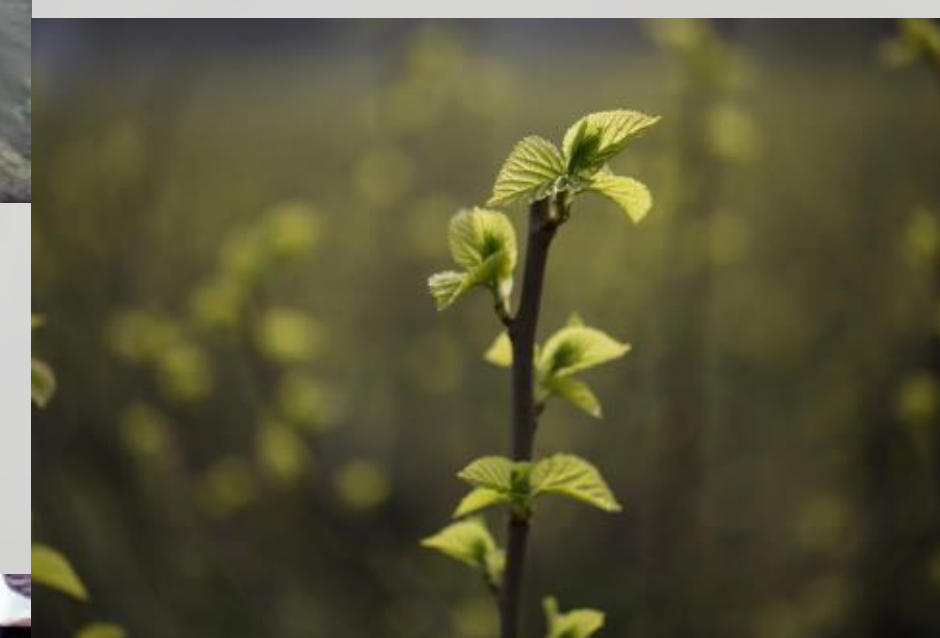
A Chinese metaphor "Seas changed into mulberry fields and mulberry fields into seas" means time brings great change to the world. "Zhejiang Huzhou Mulberry-dyke & Fish-pond System" is a story about "seas has been changed into mulberry fields".

2500 years ago, Huzhou which is 100 kilometers away from Shanghai, was a low-lying wetland, with neither water conservancy facilities, nor large-scale agricultural production. Later, with the rapid population increase, our ancestors managed to make the lowlands into fishponds by digging out mud for dyke, planted mulberry trees on the dykes, raised silkworm with mulberry leaves in order to keep surviving.



January harvest fishes, yielding about 15,000 kg/ha from the ponds. At that time, farmers remove the sludge from pond-bed and then disinfect the fish ponds. The sludge was put on mulberry trees field as fertilizer.

March the beginning of spring, mulberry trees budding and growing when farmers start to prepare their ponds for fish-farming.



May farmers start to raise the spring silkworm. The left-over of mulberry leaves and silkworm feces in raising are used as fish feed.



In this way, year after year, our ancestors had created with their wisdom the ecological cycle of "ponds for fish-farming, dykes for mulberry plantation, mulberry leaf for silkworm rearing, silkworm feces for fish feed, pond sludge for mulberry fertilizer". They skillfully combined land resources and crop rotation time to make the resources and benefits to the maximum.



Over thousands of years, the Mulberry-dyke & Fish-pond System has formed a unique pastoral landscape with typical Chinese style of southern Yangtze River, and derived prosperous and splendid culture. For example, "eat fish soup meal" on the day of fish harvesting by adults and children together is a custom to pray for good harvest of the coming year; "worship the silkworm goddess" is played in the every spring by farmers for better blessing, and so on. It can be said that these cultures have been deeply ironed in the mind of the local people, and keep affecting the people of generation after generation, and become the most important roots, souls and veins of our lives.



Until today, still retain core area of 4,000 hectares of mulberry fields and 10,000 hectares of fish ponds in Huzhou.