



A nostalgic trip to Ruijing, Dadu

Discovering ancestors' wisdom at Jingzetou village

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Visiting Ruijing in the Dadu district is like taking a nostalgia time machine that brings you back to traditional agricultural times. Besides well-known attractions like Gujing Trail, Grandma's Kitchen and the Bullet Memorial Wall, more exploration of an early, slower-moving life style from bygone, more challenging periods of time are to be discovered. Why not slow down and learn about the past?

What most of us know about Ruijing Community is that it's a rest stop for Purple Crow Butterflies, as well as near popular landmarks like the Bullet Memorial Wall and Grandma's Kitchen. However, not many people know about the old name of Ruijing Community: Jingzetou is a dwelling place with interesting natural and ecological backgrounds, and features many stories filled with old time wisdom. Let's take a look at this place from that perspective.

An abundant wellspring nurtures the mountain-top village

In the past, the isolated Dadu Mountain was known for its lack of water sources, as the landform combination of pebbles and laterite does not easily retain enough moisture. The drought caused by high evaporation and low amounts of precipitation make Dadu Mountain Taiwan's driest natural ecological district. Early life on the mountain was difficult. Thus, there's an old saying to scare off little girls from the locals: "If you do not behave, you will marry a guy who lives on Dadu Mountain."

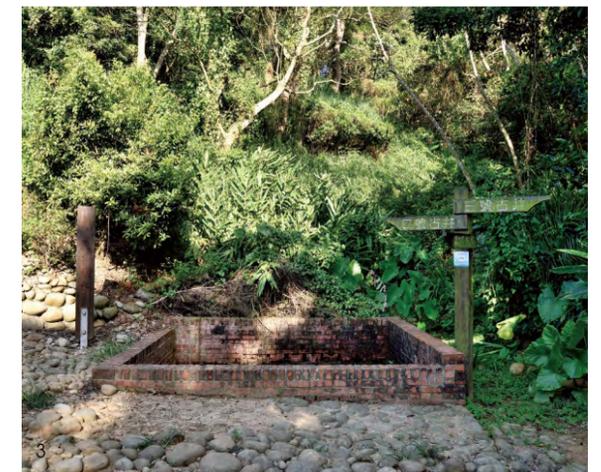
There are four main villages on the mountain south of Taiwan Boulevard: Xinchuanze, Nanliao, Lifeng and Jingzetou. Places featuring "jing" (wellspring) in Taiwan are very common, but "jingze" (in Taiwanese) and "jing" are quite different. "Jing", like that used in "Longjing" was originally came from underground wells. However, the top of Dadu's is high above groundwater sources; "jingze" is the gathering of natural water resources from the mountain creeks, which is then formed into a wellspring.

"Da Shui Ku" (also a well or reservoir) is the four villages' common characteristic, and Jingzetou is the wellspring that protects the forest creeks. The three "jingze" of the villages provide villagers with quality water all year round. Other than the first wellspring that provided quality water for the residents and the second for water-saving, the third wellspring provided for livestock and rinsing, which would have been considered luxurious in older times. Water resources from mountain creeks, compared to groundwater, take more time to accumulate. Therefore, residents in the past usually stood in long lines to obtain water, an experience still in local memory.

The three wellsprings of Jingzetou led to the name of "Ruijing". Nowadays, tap water is more popular than water from the Jingzetou wellsprings, and this place has turned into part of the Rui An Temple site. If you are ever in Ruijing,

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He's a professor at the General Education Center in Providence University, who enjoys observing nature and cares about ecological issues and culture on Dadu Mountain. He is good at exploring the local cultural characteristics based on the ecological environment in the community.



1. Ruijing is located on the mountaintop of Dadu.
2. Ruian Temple is the religious center for the locals.
3. The three "jingze" of the villages provide village people quality water all-year-round.



1. Several traditional houses can be seen on RuiJing Road.
2,3. Gujing Trail is the well-known attraction in Ruijing.

come and visit the temple and think of how those in the past lived with the wellspring water at this cultural landmark.

Bullock cart pathway shows how people had to live with their wits

"The naturally adapted life is the way" describes how people once had to live by their wits. The ordinary roads and natural scenery were part of their ancestors' life patterns, and the bullock cart and its pathways are significant examples.

The 1904 "Taiwan Fort Sites"(an important Japanese-era map) depicts Jingzetou village alone on the mountain top. Southeast of the village was a place named Fangshejiao, to the west was Shanzejian, and in the southwest was Dadu village. Dadu was the economic center on the mountain top, and the road in between this place and Jingzetou was a major access road.

HuaShan Road is a major access road but, in early times, it was a difficult pathway for bullock carts. As you go further along the road, turn right and bypass the small temple in front of the cemetery, it leads to a famous steep path named Daduchi. Daduchi is short but it has 25-meter-tall laterite gravel layer, which made it difficult carrying daily necessities to Dadu with one bullock cart or a weak or injured bulls. In order to solve such these issues, village residents would prepare two strong bulls and put the healthier one in the front and one in the rear.

A side from the bullock cart pathway, GouZhong Road is another special cultural landmark in Ruijing. This road was formed naturally under earlier geographical conditions; generally, residents could get access to this road. However, the road could easily be flooded during the typhoon or rainy seasons, due to the laterite path which caused poor drainage. At its end, this road naturally turned into a drainage system. GouZhong Road used to be the main road connecting the two villages, Jingzetou and Lifeng. The road name was eventually changed to the current RuiJing Road. As you walk on this road, several types of residential houses from different eras can be seen. You will find houses made with soil clay, red bricks and modern community homes. Moreover, you will find the bases of traditional houses are piled-up rocks on two sides of the road, designed to protect against unexpected flooding.

Although you won't be able to see bullock carts and the old paths, the ancestors' resourcefulness can still be appreciated in the efforts that they put into the roads when faced with Dadu Mountain's geographical and weather conditions.

A precious natural historic sight:Thorny bamboo walls

As you are wandering in Ruijing, bamboo is a common sight. Ruijing was surrounded by bamboo forests, so several place names relate to bamboo (zhu), like "West Zhuweize", "Shanbaozhuze" and "Zhulinjiao".

Some of these bamboo-named places were formed naturally, others artificially. For instance, tall thorny bamboo can be seen in Zhuweize and the bamboo forest behind Shandojingze in Ruijing. This bamboo was intentionally arranged in two or three rows to deter thieves in the independent mountain top village. The village was surrounded by bamboo walls and an exit was made at the south end of the village (northwest of Ruian Temple). According to an octogenarian elder, most of villagers are the descendents of the Lin Family. Lin had 11 robust brothers and they would guard the village by standing at the village exit. Once, a thief entered the village, got caught and was beaten up badly; the news spread and the village was left in peace for good.

The thief-preventing bamboo walls can only be seen today southwest of Shankojingze. The thorny bamboo walls are approximately 180-years-old today, making them the oldest such walls known in the history of Taiwan.

A lengthy, Japanese silver grass lined road brings richness to Ruijing

The sight of Japanese silver grass indicates the ninth solar term of a year has arrived, which indicates the harvest season for grain, including millet, corn and wheat, is upon us. The high altitude climate in Ruijing offer caused drought. Japanese silver grass was considered as an important crop normally seen at lower altitude mountains in Taiwan.

The local villagers mentioned that there weren't many houses built with roof tiles before the 1950's and '60's. Instead, sun-dried silver grass was the main architectural material for roofing. The reason that silver grass products became Ruijing's main local industry was due to the hazardous climate and geographical conditions. The northeast seasonal winds every September through April on the top of Dadu brings lower temperatures, which also produces stronger Japanese silver grass. In the past, many rooftops of industrial factories in the then central business center, Lugang, were built and covered with tough and strong grass from Ruijing.

In earlier times, Ruijing residents would grow white Japanese silver grass, then harvest the grass and



1.The bases of traditional houses on RuiJing Road feature piled rocks.
2.This artificially constructed thorny bamboo wall was to prevent against thieves.
3. Visiting Ruijing will bring you back to traditional agricultural times.

dry it. The dried grass was shipped and sold at Hemei, Shenggang, Lugang or Xihu in Changhua. At that time, a bullock cart filled with dried silver grass was worth 100 yuan per day, which made this family business in Ruijing somewhat lucrative. The hazardous weather and geographic conditions brought a good economy to Ruijing, in what was an interesting, yet bitter chapter of Ruijing history. Today, we can look at the Ruijing Community's mural walls with illustrated bullock carts filled with silver grass and think of how the villagers shipped and sold silver grass with these carts along RuiJing Road and HuaShan Road, all the way to Lugang. 🌿