

A Preliminary Exploration of Pathways for Integrating Traditional Aesthetics into the Construction of Beautiful Villages in the New Era

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Abstract: Li Bai lamented in his poem “Asking the Moon with a Cup of Wine: My Old Friend Jia Chun Asked Me to: “The men of today cannot see the ancient moon / Yet this moon once shone on the men of old.” The relationship between tradition and contemporaneity involves not only a re-examination of time and space but also the continuation and reconstruction of aesthetic experience. Mingyue Village, located along the Tea-Horse Road in Pujiang, Chengdu, historically a post station on the Southern Silk Road, preserves 6,000 mu of ecological Lei bamboo forests and 2,000 mu of ecological tea fields. For millennia, villagers have maintained the agrarian tradition of “rising with the sun and resting with its setting.” In the context of new era rural construction, Mingyue Village has integrated the traditional poetic aesthetics of “bright moon shining through pines, clear stream flowing over stones” with modern lifestyles through environmental creation and cultural creativity, demonstrating the practical value of the aesthetic concept of “harmony between nature and humanity” (Tian Ren He Yi) in contemporary rural construction. This paper aims to explore how traditional aesthetics can guide villages to achieve synergistic development of ecology, culture, and industry, providing a theoretical reference and practical pathways for contemporary rural revitalization.

Keywords: traditional aesthetics, rural revitalization, harmony between nature and humanity, cultural inheritance

1. Introduction

The concept of “harmony between nature and humanity” (Tian Ren He Yi) in traditional Chinese aesthetics represents an aesthetic ideal pursuing the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature. From the imagery of Tao Yuanming’s “fragrant grass fresh and beautiful, falling blossoms colorful and profuse” in the Peach Blossom Spring to the tranquil realm in Wang Wei’s poem “the cassia flowers fall, the spring mountain is empty,” these all reflect the ancient Chinese aesthetic conception of rural life. This tradition not only constitutes the archetype of the Chinese literati spirit but also resonates with the “poetry and distant lands” sought by contemporary people. Against the backdrop of new rural construction, how to understand and reconstruct the relationship between traditional aesthetics and contemporary rural areas has become a core issue of practical significance.

2. Theoretical Framework for the Contemporary Transformation of Traditional Aesthetics

The traditional Chinese aesthetic system is deeply rooted in agricultural civilization, emphasizing the ecological ethics and aesthetic principles of “passing on the family through farming and studying”. Chen Wangheng, points out that traditional agrarian aesthetics pertains not only to forms of production and life but also to a philosophy of human interaction with nature. This thought remains highly instructive for contemporary rural construction. The practice of Mingyue Village demonstrates that traditional aesthetics is not static local knowledge but rather a resource capable of creative transformation and innovative development.[1] Its transformation pathways mainly include three aspects: firstly, continuing the principle of natural adaptability in spatial form, such as conforming to the terrain and respecting the original geographical and ecological patterns; secondly, promoting the living inheritance of material and intangible heritage at the cultural level, such as combining traditional craftsmanship with modern design; thirdly, constructing a development model of co-creation and sharing between old and new villagers at the social level, promoting the modern evolution of community relations.

3. Analysis of Rural Construction Pathways Guided by Traditional Aesthetics — The Case of Mingyue Village

The formation of rural landscapes is influenced by multiple factors such as geographical environment, climate characteristics, and historical context, exhibiting significant regional differences. Distinctive rural forms like the Chuanxi Linpan,

Jiangnan water towns, and northern courtyards are material manifestations of the traditional aesthetic thought of “adapting to local conditions”. In the new era rural construction, it is necessary to deeply explore regional characteristics to avoid the homogenization dilemma of “a thousand villages looking the same,” allowing traditional aesthetic thought to become the theoretical guide for differentiated rural development.[2] The practice of Mingyue Village provides implementable pathways for reference regarding the application of traditional aesthetics in contemporary rural construction:

3.1 Spatial Creation

This is specifically manifested in: preserving the original village texture and natural (context/veins); adhering to the principle of “repairing the old as old, coexistence of old and new” for building renovations; continuing the material language of Chuanxi Linpan vernacular dwellings, such as column-and-tie timber structures and brick-tile walls, while skillfully integrating modern construction techniques. This creation method maintains the spatial pattern of traditional settlements coexisting harmoniously with the natural environment while meeting modern living needs, achieving the contemporary translation of traditional aesthetic thought.

3.2 Cultural Inheritance

Constructing an Innovative Mechanism for “Living Protection” By introducing studios for traditional crafts like pottery, dyeing, painting, and calligraphy, and establishing mechanisms for artists and new residents to settle in, Mingyue Village has formed a cultural ecology where traditional skills and modern creativity nourish each other. More importantly, by establishing participation mechanisms for indigenous villagers, the community has come to recognize the contemporary value of local culture through involvement in cultural tourism services.

3.3 Industrial Development

Practicing a Sustainable Model of “Following the Way of Nature” (Dao Fa Zi Ran) Mingyue Village employs an eco-agricultural model of “tea and bamboo symbiosis,” developing green planting and ecological processing, while simultaneously promoting the integrated development of cultural creativity and rural tourism. This industrial model maintains the productive function of the countryside while expanding the pathways for realizing ecological and cultural value, embodying the ecological economic thought of “all things nurtured together” (Wan Wu Bing Yu) in traditional aesthetics.

(1) The design preserves the basic form and material texture of Chuanxi Linpan architecture, such as the reuse of old bricks, tiles, and timber structures, while introducing modern waterproofing, ventilation, and lighting technologies. This enhances spatial comfort and practicality while continuing the traditional style.

(2) Cultural Empowerment of Functional Formats. A typical case, “Sunshine Room Afar”, transforms traditional indigo dyeing craftsmanship into a modern cultural creative experience project. The old house retains traditional elements like earth walls, tiled roofs, and wooden beams. Lighting designs such as bright floor-to-ceiling windows allow traditional skills to regain vitality in a modern context.[3]

(3) Integration and Coexistence in the Community Dimension. Mingyue Village promotes interaction and cooperation between new and original residents by introducing cultural creative projects and artist residency programs, forming a new community network. Together, they construct a mechanism for cultural production and benefit sharing, achieving innovative development of the traditional rural social structure under modern conditions.

4. Traditional Aesthetics Provides a Three-Tier Pathway Reference for Contemporary Rural Construction

(1) Philosophical Level: Establishing the Ecological Value of “Harmony between Nature and Humanity” Traditional aesthetics emphasizes that humans and nature should be an organic whole of mutual prosperity, providing a philosophical foundation for sustainable rural development.[4] At the practical level, an ecology-first planning principle should be established, respecting the regional ecological baseline and formulating an ecological management system to ensure rural development does not exceed environmental carrying capacity.

(2) Methodological Level: Establishing a “Adapting to Local Conditions” System of Regional Expression Deeply explore local natural endowments, historical context, and folk characteristics to establish a system of regional expression encompassing architectural forms, material craftsmanship, and landscape features. Focus on protecting the spatial pattern of traditional settlements, continuing local architectural vocabulary, and avoiding the simple transplantation of foreign architectural forms.

(3) Implementation Level: Constructing a “Pluralistic Co-governance” Community Participation Mechanism Establish a mechanism of co-construction and co-governance involving multiple parties such as villagers, experts, and social forces.

[5] Enhance villagers' cultural consciousness through traditional cultural education and skill training, making them the main force in inheriting traditional aesthetics. Simultaneously, establish a traditional aesthetics evaluation system, incorporating the realization of aesthetic value into the evaluation criteria for rural construction effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

The practice of Mingyue Village demonstrates that traditional aesthetics holds significant guiding value in contemporary rural construction. The key to its success lies in achieving the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional aesthetics, realizing the synergistic advancement of ecological protection, cultural inheritance, and industrial innovation. Through spatial reshaping, cultural empowerment, and community co-construction, the philosophical thought of "harmony between nature and humanity" is transformed into operable practical pathways. Future rural construction should delve deeper into the wisdom of traditional aesthetics, establish a rural aesthetic system based on cultural confidence, and forge a path for rural revitalization with Chinese characteristics and Eastern aesthetics. This is not only the inheritance and protection of traditional culture but also an active exploration of new forms of human civilization.

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