

Research on the Renovation of Traditional Villages Based on Postmodernism

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Abstract Traditional village as a part of cultural heritage shows unique historical, cultural and architectural characteristics. With the accelerating urbanization, ecological environment of traditional villages has been threatened, local cultures have degraded, even all traditional villages have shown similar images, thus effective protection and update is urgently needed. Based on the background and characteristics of postmodernist design, this study explored problems in the renovation of traditional villages, analyzed the renovation cases of some traditional villages and then concluded the scientific renovation strategies, so as to provide references for the future renovation design of traditional villages.

Keywords Traditional village, Postmodernism, Renovation

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With the further acceleration of urbanization, many traditional villages have gradually degraded for the shock of external reasons. The proposal of rural revitalization strategies makes the protection and renovation of traditional villages more important. This research explored the renovation strategies of traditional villages based on postmodernism, and on this basis analyzed problems faced by traditional villages during the renovation, proposed corresponding strategies combined with the practical cases, in order to provide references for the future renovation of traditional villages.

1 Background and characteristics of postmodernism

1.1 Background

In 1960s, western countries had encountered severe problems during the fast economic development, such as environmental pollution, high crime rate, and population explosion, which made their citizens feel disappointed about modern civilization, and longing for the past time. Traditional modernist design failed to satisfy people's diversified requirements then, for its rigidity. Against this background, the art field had witnessed changes. Some architects first proposed reform, rejected uniform and rigid modernist style, and acclaimed the beginning of postmodernism^[1].

1.2 Characteristics

1.2.1 Anti-tradition and anti-norm. Postmodernist design attempts to break the norms of traditional designs, for being dissatisfied with the elitism, purism and international styles of modernism^[2]. It stresses the individualized means of expression, pursues avant-garde and innovative techniques, and diversified designs. Postmodernist design always rebuilds traditional

elements and integrates them with modern design concepts, and adapts traditional design languages into modern aesthetics.

1.2.2 Diversification and innovation. Different from the unitary design expression of modernism, postmodernist design prefers blends diversified design styles^[3]. Moreover, postmodernism also values the diversification of materials and forms, so as to create rich visual effects. Designers often apply colors with strong contrasts and also materials with different textures to show uniqueness.

1.2.3 Participation and interaction. Postmodernist design stresses participation of and interaction between people, and pays attention to the needs and experience of users. The designers are devoted to create spaces that are able to trigger the emotional resonance of users, and they also focus on psychological and physical experience of users, to build more flexible and humanized spaces, and present individualized works that can reflect the public aesthetic emotions^[4].

1.2.4 Sustainability and ecological features. Against the context of energy crisis and environmental degradation, the conflicts between man and nature have been aggravated. Therefore, postmodernist design pays more attention to sustainable development, and designers attempt to integrate natural environment with design, apply various means to reduce the consumption of natural resources and destruction to environment, and aim to create designs that can harmoniously coexist with the environment.

2 Problems in the renovation of traditional villages

2.1 Decline of indigenous cultures

Along with the changing values, modern people have had less consciousness of inheriting

indigenous cultures. Numerous villages try to improve economic effects through developing tourism industry, simply copy other regions' development strategies, and build similar eye-catching scenic spots^[5]. As a result, these villages have gradually lost their own individuality, and been displayed in the same style.

2.2 Shabby village buildings

There are always buildings with a long history in traditional villages, and most of them have not been properly protected for the age, material aging and villagers' weak consciousness. The young generation goes to other places for working, the elderly people are main residents in traditional villages, many buildings grow shabby^[6]. These all contribute to the damage of original images of these villages, and the loss of their regional characteristics.

2.3 Poor infrastructure

Traditional villages have relatively backward infrastructure. For instance, most of them are not easily accessed for the narrow and bumpy roads, which seriously restricts the transportation of people and goods. Even some villages have no tap water, and villagers have difficulties in drinking water and power supply, which limits economic development of the villages. In addition, lack of educational, medicinal and cultural service facilities also influences life quality of villagers.

2.4 Degradation of ecological environment

A sound ecological environment is the foundation for the sustainable development of traditional villages. With the further urbanization, natural landscapes in traditional villages have been gradually replaced by modern constructions. Excessive land reclamation, lumbering, and quarrying have severely damaged

local ecological environment. Moreover, increasing factories and poor environmental awareness of villagers have also aggravated the environmental problems.

3 Cases of traditional village renovation based on postmodernism

3.1 Jingzhu Village in Chongqing

3.1.1 General situation of the study area. Jingzhu Village is located in Xiannvshan Township, Wulong District, Chongqing City, it is said that the village was inhabited in as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty. The village has its own special natural resources for being surrounded by natural landscapes, the comfortable climate and diversified plant species. Most of the buildings in the village are traditional wooden structures. The village has been faced with severe “hollowing-out”, shabby buildings and threatened soil ecological safety before the renovation design.

3.1.2 Renovation designs.

(1) Reducing interventions and maintaining unique characteristics of the village. In field investigation, the designers fully investigated old buildings, natural geological landscapes and current farmlands and orchards in the village. Scenes that show vitality of life and local culture were chosen and maintained in the project. In addition, special terrains and vegetation were kept, and only a few landscape facilities were built. For example, there is a small original Tiankeng (a kind of karst topography looks like a giant hole) surrounded by pine woods. The design added only a path passing through the woods and a slope down deep into the hole, and maintained the primitive images of Tiankeng and the cliffs to the most. In another pine woods, a wooden pavilion with plain natural style was set up for visitors relaxing and enjoying the natural scenery quietly.

(2) Uniting tradition with modernity, revitalizing the countryside. For the serious soil degradation in the village, suitable crops were chosen to improve soil quality based on the scientific analysis. To reduce water and soil loss, runoff routes along the hills, woodlands and valleys were reasonably planned, bare rocks were used for the runoff diversion so that the rainwater can be used not only as waterscapes, but also for irrigation. Some old buildings were reformed according to usage requirements. The reception center once was an old building with a century-long history. Some buildings were repaired and reinforced, internal functions renovated, traditional construction components were recovered, such as stone walls, gray tiles

and wooden windows. Moreover, rammed earth, glass and steel were used to build modern spaces by the old buildings, to form the dialogue between old and new, and show the new vitality of the old village.

(3) Fully using local intangible cultural heritage. The bamboo art, building new facilities. A few new buildings can be designed in strictly-controlled areas to give the village new functions. Main public spaces in the village such as tea pavilion, book bar, and bamboo pavilion, were all built with local bamboos. Local intangible cultural heritage inheritors were invited to choose the building techniques and traditional materials, which would not only echo with the overall image of the village, but also display traditional cultures of the local area. Tea pavilion at the village entrance was designed as a public space for villagers' communication. Book bar open to the public enriched spiritual life of the villagers.

3.2 Ding-Peng-Huang area in Dongguan City

3.2.1 General situation. Dingwu Village, Pengwu Village and Huangwu Village are 3 ancient villages located in northern downtown of Dongkeng Township, Dongguan City. Founded in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the 3 villagers have been nourished by neighboring rivers and mountains, and favorable natural conditions, generating rich traditional cultures. Ancestral temples, ancient buildings, other historic heritages, old and famous tree species are common in the villages. However, the villages have also been faced with many problems for the poor management, such as water environment deterioration, lack of public facilities, weak consciousness of cultural inheritance, and disrepair of old buildings.

3.2.2 Renovation designs.

(1) Improving water quality, rebuilding the harmony between man and water. A unique regional feature for these villages is that there is a pond of Fengshui at the entrance to each village. The ponds provide water not only for daily life of villagers, but also for irrigation. However, these ponds have been all contaminated with the social development, the relationship between man and water has been gradually split. The project applied scientific measures to improve water environment, more watersides terraces were built for villagers enjoying the water spaces.

(2) Protecting traditions, inheriting culture and history of the villages. On the 20th day of the first lunar month, villagers in Huangwu Village worshipp God of Land and pray for blessings and harvest. This is known as “Ershi Hui” (meeting on the 20th day), and also is a precious

cultural heritage of the village. The project set up a garden for the “Ershi Hui” culture, to better propagate traditional culture and provide a leisure space for villagers. Then, Yuliao Ferry and Beilou were rebuilt. Yuliao Ferry was the first place that the parting sons arrived at when they came back, on Dragon Boat Festival, villagers of Pengwu Village gathered here for dragon boat racing and celebrated harvest and reunion of families. The rebuilt ferry enabled the locals to experience scenery of the past, and enjoy the happiness of their ancestors. Beilou, or North Gateway, was said as the place for villagers climbing high and praying for good luck before they left home. The rebuilt Beilou became a good spot for sightseeing. In addition, to inherit the villagers' tradition of opera performance, a stage of traditional Lingnan style was designed on the square.

(3) Activating ancient walls, rebuilding village landscapes. Ancient walls were protected and repaired, leisure pathways were built along both sides of the walls for villagers. To further enrich village landscapes, plank roads were built so that villagers can enjoy the fascinating scenery of water and ancient villages. At night, the plank roads with well-designed light atmosphere created a wonderful night environment. Sunflower and oilseed rape were planted in the fields, which greatly revitalized the villages and made the whole environment a giant oil painting for the gorgeous flowers in spring and autumn. These countermeasures effectively integrated old and new of the 3 villages, refreshed their images and cultural appeal.

4 Renovation strategies of traditional villages based on postmodernism

4.1 Inheriting local merits, integrating ancient and modern features, continuing the long history and culture

Postmodernism attaches importance to the absorption and application of traditional cultures, and often innovates the latter by integrating with modern cultures. Renovation of traditional villages should particularly protect and inherit local cultures, and at the same time absorb modern cultural elements. Local cultural elements, such as architectural style and handicraft should be well maintained. Those significant ancient buildings can be restored or rebuilt to continue history of the villages. The places carrying memories of villagers such as ancient wells and trees must be protected and integrated with modern landscape elements to satisfy daily recreational needs of villagers.

In the renovation design of old buildings, the original images and structures should be kept and consolidated with modern materials, rural cultural symbols used to decorate these buildings according to cultural aesthetics of users, and also internal functions updated to meet the villagers' needs. Furthermore, rich cultural resources of the villages can be explored and properly used to trigger the vitality of the villages, modern cultural elements absorbed, to artfully integrate local traditional culture and modern culture.

4.2 Exploring rural connotations and showing the unique beauty of rural life

Some renovation designs copy other design cases blindly, leading to the serious homogenization of village images, and failing to show the local characteristics. Postmodernist designs reject the stereotype and stress the diversity. Therefore, local history, traditions, cultural features and human geography should be fully investigated and studied. Special features of the villages must be maintained and restored (Fig.1), the characteristic geological

environment and plant species well preserved, cultural connotations of the villages fully explored and integrated with modern culture^[7]. Folk customs and traditional handicraft are both unique features of the traditional villages, these traditions and folk customs should be inherited and promoted during the renovation, and also innovative elements introduced into the design. In addition, the inheritance and development of traditional handicraft should be valued to revitalize local handicraft industry. The comprehensive application of these strategies will help explore connotations of the villages and display their characteristics, and input vitality to their future development.

4.3 Co-building the future for the villagers, and a happy idyllic life

Villagers are main residents in the villages, and they know the villages very well. Their participation helps designers to know the exact needs of users. In the preparation stage, the government and design departments can invite more villagers to express their opinions and

expectations, to ensure the final effect of village renovation. All villagers should be well informed about the details of the renovation, including the target, schedule and expected results, to enhance the villagers' sense of trust. In the renovation, villagers are encouraged to join in the restoration of buildings and landscapes (Fig.2), which will not only enhance the villagers' sense of acceptance about the plan, but also create the spaces more suitable for the villagers' needs^[8]. The propaganda on village protection and cultural heritage should be enhanced to attract the villagers' attention on the conservation of traditional villages and cultures.

4.4 Protecting rural scenery, keeping serenity and beauty of the field

Special natural environments of the villages contribute to the characteristic landscape spaces. However, accelerating urbanization and poor environment protection consciousness lead to the destruction of natural environment. Village renovation should pay more attention to the sustainable development and environmental



Fig.1 Local characteristics maintained in the village renovation



Fig.2 Villagers engaged in the village renovation



conservation, reasonable utilization of land resources, respect natural terrains and waters, and avoid large-scale land deterioration. The already-polluted natural environment should be improved through ecological restoration. In the renovation of buildings, energy-saving technology, renewable energies and environment-friendly materials can be more applied to reduce the energy consumption. Moreover, the health-care facilities, water and power facilities of the villages should be improved to make the villagers' life more convenient. Education and propaganda activities should be organized to enhance the villagers' environment protection consciousness, the villagers encouraged to engage in the environment conservation. The village renovation must adhere to the road of sustainable development, target at the long-term development, and avoid the irreversible destruction to rural ecological environment because of the pursuit for short-term benefits.

5 Conclusions

Through the researches on postmodernism

and analysis on the cases of traditional village renovation, the study put forward strategies of renovating traditional villages based on postmodernism in view of the problems of traditional villages. The strategies stressed inheriting and innovating unique cultures of the traditional villages, paid attention to villagers' needs, and focused on the sustainable development of villages. However, limited study cases could not reflect the application of postmodernism in the renovation of traditional villages comprehensively. The study aimed to improve the ecological environment of traditional villages using these strategies, inherit cultural contexts of the villages, and show the unique beauty of these villages.

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waterfront landscapes.

When designing university campuses, more attention should be paid to the setting of water landscape and waterfront activity areas. In addition, the coverage of green plants in the activity areas should be reduced to lower people's green vision rate, which can help people engaging in outdoor activities in the park better release stress and regulate emotional states. In addition, these different environmental landscapes also provide residents with spaces for social activities, opportunities for leisure and recreation, habitats for natural species, and maintain biodiversity.

4 Conclusions

Outdoor yoga in open lawn area and waterfront area has the best effect on reducing pulse and blood pressure and regulating emotions. Additionally, leaf mandala in waterfront area and outdoor activities in lawn area and waterfront area can significantly reduce the pulse of college students, and these two landscape areas have a significant effect on reducing negative emotions. The waterfront area not only has a regulatory effect on negative emotions, but also has a significant impact on the improvement of positive emotions. Low shrub area can significantly reduce the diastolic blood pressure of college students, while dense forest area can

significantly reduce their negative emotions. Outdoor yoga in dense forest area has a significant effect on reducing negative emotions, while both activities have no significant effect in low shrub area.

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