

# “Harmony and Coexistence”: A Study on the Internal Logic and Practical Paths of Empowering Border Happy Village Construction through the Ecological Aesthetics of Ethnic Minorities in Western Yunnan

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**Abstract:** Against the background of rural revitalization, how to break through the traditional economic development model and balance ecological protection, cultural inheritance, and livelihood improvement has become an important issue in the construction of border happy villages. Taking “harmony and coexistence” as the core perspective, this paper explains the internal logic of ethnic minority ecological aesthetics, empowering the construction of border happy villages, analyzes the collaborative mechanism from the dimensions of ecological wisdom inheritance, cultural identity construction, and industrial-ecological integration, and constructs a “five-in-one” practical path integrating industry, ecology, culture, governance, and life. Through strategies such as characteristic industry cultivation, ethnic culture activation, and village space reconstruction, it provides theoretical support and practical paradigm for the organic unity of ecological protection, cultural inheritance, economic development, and grassroots governance in border ethnic areas.

**Keywords:** Ethnic minorities in western Yunnan; Ecological aesthetics; Border happy villages; Internal logic; Practical paths

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## 1. Introduction

Rural revitalization is a major strategy for China to promote regional coordination and achieve common prosperity in the new era. In border ethnic areas, rural revitalization is not only related to economic development but also directly linked to border stability, cultural inheritance, and ecological security. The modern border happy village is a new model of border development launched by Yunnan based on rural revitalization, which is a systematic and comprehensive project of rural modernization. However, in specific

practices, some ethnic minority villages simply equate rural revitalization with GDP growth, new housing construction, and road hardening, ignoring the ecological background and cultural roots, leading to problems such as excessive ecological development, weakening ethnic characteristics, hollowing out of local culture, and weakening of villagers' dominant position. In this regard, it is necessary for us to return to the local countryside and explore a sustainable development path from local culture. Ethnic minorities such as the Dai, Hani, Yi, and Jingpo in western Yunnan have formed unique ecological concepts and aesthetic systems in their long-term coexistence with nature. It is not an abstract theory, but practical wisdom integrated into production and life, folk rituals and oral literature, with the core of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, reverence for nature, and rational utilization of nature <sup>[1]</sup>.

## **2. Internal logic of ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in Western Yunnan empowering the construction of border happy villages**

The empowerment of ethnic minority ecological aesthetics to border happy villages is not a simple cultural ornament, but a fundamental reshaping of the rural development logic, shifting the development direction from “external plunder” to “internal symbiosis.”

### **2.1. Innovation of development path: From resource plunder to ecological symbiosis**

In the traditional development model, nature is often regarded as a resource pool to be plundered at will, and rural development presents a trend of “resource plunder.” In contrast, the ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in western Yunnan regards nature as a partner for coexistence and prosperity, adhering to the concept of “harmony and coexistence.” In these concepts, man is never the conqueror of nature, but a part of nature. Village development must not come at the cost of destroying nature, but should follow the rhythm of nature and pursue development on the premise of protecting ecology, which also sets the most basic value bottom line for the construction of border happy villages. The construction and development of border happy villages take the health and integrity of the ecosystem as the bottom line, abandon the short-sighted model of “pollution first, treatment later”, and turn to a sustainable path of “development in protection and protection in development”, realizing a benign interaction between rural development and ecological protection and laying a solid foundation for the long-term development of rural areas <sup>[2]</sup>.

### **2.2. Expansion of value dimension: From GDP supremacy to multiple values**

Ethnic minority ecological aesthetics advocates the integration and balance of multiple values. From the perspective of ecological aesthetics, a forest, a stream, an ancient tree, and an ancient village have multiple values such as ecological services, cultural beliefs, aesthetic experience, and social cohesion. The evaluation system of border happy villages should also shift from a single economic dimension to a comprehensive consideration of ecological, cultural, social, governance, and other dimensions, comprehensively measure the achievements of rural development, avoid ignoring other important values due to one-sided pursuit of economic growth, and promote comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable rural development <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.3. Transformation of subject role: From external implantation to endogenous driving force**

Traditional rural development is mostly led by the government or capital, and villagers are in a passive

position. The ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in western Yunnan is a concentrated embodiment of “local knowledge” of local society. The key to empowering the construction of border happy villages with ecological aesthetics is to activate the endogenous development momentum of villages<sup>[4]</sup>. By excavating and utilizing local ecological aesthetic resources, villagers become the leaders and beneficiaries of construction, stimulating their enthusiasm and creativity, forming a sustainable endogenous development model, making rural development more vital and stable, and avoiding the dilemma of development after the withdrawal of external forces<sup>[5]</sup>.

#### **2.4. Remolding of space-time concept: From space-time disembedding to local attachment**

The process of modernization has made rural areas face the problem of “space-time disembedding”, and the unique sense of place has gradually disappeared. The ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in western Yunnan is deeply rooted in a specific regional environment and fosters a strong sense of local attachment among people<sup>[6]</sup>. In the construction of border happy villages, based on ecological aesthetics, on the one hand, people protect and activate the village pattern and production landscape to retain the “form” of the countryside; on the other hand, people inherit festivals, songs, and dances, handicrafts, and so on to continue the “soul” of the village. These measures enhance community cohesion, enable villagers to have deep feelings for the countryside, effectively resist the impact of “space-time disembedding”, and enable the countryside to maintain its unique charm and vitality in the tide of modernization<sup>[7]</sup>.

### **3. Practical paths of ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in Western Yunnan empowering the construction of border happy villages**

#### **3.1. Industrial empowerment: Building border characteristic integrated industries led by ecological aesthetics**

Based on the current situation of more mountainous areas, less cultivated land, and rich ecological resources in the border areas of western Yunnan, guided by the ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities, people promote industrial ecologization, ecological tourism, and product characterization, and achieve a win-win situation of ecological protection, cultural preservation, and income increase for the masses. In terms of agriculture, people tap the landscape and ecological value of traditional farming, develop organic planting and an under-forest economy, and build terraces, woodlands, and other ecological scenes with both production and sightseeing functions<sup>[8]</sup>. In terms of handicrafts, relying on intangible cultural heritage projects such as brocade, bamboo weaving, wood carving and silver ornaments of all ethnic groups, people use ecological raw materials such as bamboo, wood, cotton, linen and minerals, integrate ecological aesthetic symbols such as ethnic totems and landscape patterns, build a “cooperative + intangible cultural heritage inheritor + e-commerce live broadcast” platform, and expand the trading channels of handicraft products<sup>[9]</sup>. In terms of cultural tourism, relying on resources such as the scenery of the western Yunnan border and ethnic villages, people build small-scale, original, and immersive ethnic ecological experience tours, and provide products such as farming experience, intangible cultural heritage research, and border folk custom check-in, so as to better realize the dual development of tourism benefits and villages<sup>[10]</sup>.

### **3.2. Ecological empowerment: Practicing habitat-type ecological management of ethnic ecological wisdom**

Adhering to the ecological wisdom of “coexistence and prosperity between man and nature” of ethnic minorities in western Yunnan, each border happy village is regarded as a home for human beings and all living creatures to live and multiply together. Near-natural, low-disturbance, and localized ecological restoration and protection measures are adopted to better achieve stable ecological development. In terms of ecological restoration, people give priority to the use of native tree species and herbs, summarize the mountain protection, water control and forest cultivation experience of people of all ethnic groups, delimit ecological core reserves based on traditional protected areas such as sacred mountains, sacred lakes, sacred forests and village god forests, connect ecological matrices such as mountain woodlands, ditches and streams to form ecological protection corridors around villages, and build a solid border ecological security barrier <sup>[11]</sup>. In terms of human settlement environment improvement, people bid farewell to large-scale demolition and construction, and carry out all “micro-transformation and fine-improvement”, retain the layout texture of villages built against mountains and rivers, build a number of residential buildings with both ethnic elements and ecological functions, use environmentally friendly building materials and energy-saving facilities to make houses ventilated and close to nature. In addition, infrastructure construction such as sewage treatment, garbage treatment, and courtyard greening should also integrate ecological aesthetics, so that public facilities such as roads, ditches, and public toilets are both practical and beautiful, making the village full of natural and ecological beauty, and turning ecological protection from “I am asked to do” to “I want to do” <sup>[12]</sup>.

### **3.3. Cultural empowerment: Promoting ethnic cultural revival for the living inheritance of ecological aesthetics**

Extract ecological aesthetic factors from the culture of ethnic areas in western Yunnan, change the single static protection mode of traditional culture, deeply integrate ecological aesthetics with the living inheritance of ethnic life, and consolidate the cultural confidence and ecological identity of people of all ethnic groups in border areas. Systematically restore traditional ethnic festivals related to phenology, climate, and farming, and embed ecological customs such as mountain worship, forest worship, and water worship into festival activities such as the Sword Pole Festival, New Rice Festival, and Water Splashing Festival in villages, strengthen villagers’ traditional memory of ecological ethics, and enhance the cultural consensus of harmonious coexistence between man and nature <sup>[13]</sup>. Comprehensively collect and sort out ecological wisdom in oral traditions, folk songs, and ancient rules of all ethnic groups, establish an ecological culture resource database, record intangible cultural heritage skills, ecological folk customs, farming formulas, and other contents, and integrate them into local school-based courses and rural science popularization activities to pass on ecological aesthetics from generation to generation. Build village-level ecological aesthetics inheritance institutes and ethnic life exhibition halls to display the vivid scene of the integration of traditional production and lifestyles, residential buildings, and the natural environment of people of all ethnic groups in a panoramic way, and create ecological culture science popularization venues. At the same time, encourage villagers to reflect ecological aesthetics in clothing, food, and residences, so that ethnic ecological culture can walk from museums to villages and become spiritual nourishment for rural life <sup>[14]</sup>.

### **3.4. Governance empowerment: Constructing an ecological community governance model integrating reason, emotion, and law**

Based on the reality of multi-ethnic settlement and deep-rooted customary forces in border villages of western Yunnan, implant and graft the traditional reason and emotion culture of ethnic minorities, integrate modern rule of law concepts, establish a multi-stakeholder and multi-governance ecological community governance system, and transform ecological aesthetic concepts into operable and implementable guidelines and norms. Revise and improve village rules and regulations, transform the traditional ecological concepts and ecological aesthetic requirements of all ethnic groups into short provisions and codes of conduct that are acceptable to villagers and in line with the actual situation of villages, clarify villagers' obligations to protect, manage and use ecological resources and maintain environmental hygiene in villages, as well as the responsibility of mutual supervision and restraint, and guide villagers to self-restrain and self-manage. Establish a multi-party deliberation platform, absorb village elders, clan elders, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, party member representatives, and other personnel to set up an ecological council, give play to the prestige role of traditional rural sages in ecological construction and dispute mediation, complement the administrative management of modern village committees, take into account traditional customs and rule of law requirements, and enhance affinity and execution. Establish an ecological incentive mechanism, implement an ecological point system, award points to villagers for ecological behaviors such as tree planting and forest protection, cleaning and pollution control, and ecological publicity. Points can be exchanged for goods, dividends, and loans, forming a positive incentive mechanism for ecological construction and management, gathering the joint force of national participation in building a beautiful homeland, and consolidating the governance fortress of border villages.

### **3.5. Life empowerment: Creating a poetic and harmonious living scene in border areas**

Aiming at "poetic dwelling and happy settlement", integrate ecological aesthetics into the daily life of border happy villages in western Yunnan, build a happy homeland suitable for living, working, traveling, and border guarding, and let villagers share ecological and cultural dividends. Carry out diversified ecological and cultural activities, rebuild the emotional connection between villagers and land, mountains, forests, and streams through natural science education, ecological farming experience, local art creation, ethnic song and dance performances, and other forms, and cultivate the homeland feelings of loving and guarding the border, protecting green and loving beauty. Promote the traditional life philosophy of "moderate use and diligence and frugality" of all ethnic groups, advocate green and low-carbon travel, simple and environmentally friendly consumption, and garbage classification, abandon the bad habit of extravagance and waste, and make ecological life a daily habit of villagers. Optimize the layout of village public spaces, carry out ecological and artistic transformation of public areas such as ancient trees, ancient wells, ethnic squares, streamside trails and village entrances, integrate ethnic ecological patterns and landscape sketches, retain the original style and vitality of villages, so that public spaces not only meet villagers' needs for leisure, social interaction and deliberation, but also integrate with natural rhythms and cultural traditions <sup>[15]</sup>.

## **4. Conclusion**

Under the concept of "harmony and coexistence", the ecological aesthetics of ethnic minorities in western Yunnan injects unique vitality into the construction of border happy villages. Its internal logic lies in the

deep integration of traditional ecological wisdom and cultural inheritance, which not only protects the lucid waters and lush mountains but also promotes ethnic unity and social development. Through the “five-in-one” practical path of industry, ecology, culture, governance, and life, local ecological wisdom can be transformed into concrete actions to develop characteristic ecological industries such as ecological tourism and green agriculture, which not only increase villagers’ income but also beautify the village environment. At the same time, strengthen the leadership of grassroots Party building, deepen education on ethnic unity and progress, and make the beautiful vision of “prosperous border residents, beautiful border areas, stable frontiers and strong border defense” a reality. This exploration provides valuable experience for the governance of border ethnic areas and deserves continuous deepening and promotion.

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