

# Research on the Reconstruction of Traditional Culture and Ethics Based on Rural Aesthetics Theory

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**Abstract:** Rural aesthetics is an important part of Chinese traditional culture, and it has paved the way for the modernization process of rural areas in China. Today, urbanization is accelerating. On one hand, a huge floating population is pouring into the city in search of a better living environment and living conditions. On the other hand, urban residents are more eager to return to the countryside and live a comfortable and paradise-like life. From the perspective of rural aesthetics, this study analyzes the path of traditional culture and ethical reshaping, and constructs rural cultural values, in order to provide some reference for maintaining national identity and tracing the origin of traditional culture.

**Keywords:** Rural aesthetics; Traditional culture; Cultural construction

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## 1. Introduction

Instead of cities, the country's most prominent spearhead lies in rural China, which is manifested in the current stage of rural China, where the economic level is generally low, and the level of governance is not high, especially reflected in the lack of traditional spiritual civilization. Thus, this research is conducted on rural culture and ethics issues based on the current situation. With the development of the global economy, China's modernization process is accelerating, so it is also accompanied by the rapid development of urbanization and industrialization. Industrialization has impacted China's rural areas in the following ways. First, the process of economic development has accelerated, but the content and connotation of traditional culture and ethics are declining, the spirit and culture of rural areas are gradually becoming scarce, and the awareness of religious belief is weak. Besides, there are serious deviations in the values and other aspects of rural culture, which cannot adapt to the modernization process. Finally, in the process of China's social modernization, the countryside has deviated from the "track" and gradually drifted away, leading to a departure from ideology, ethics, and culture, causing a sense of crisis in the society.

From the perspective of rural aesthetics, combined with the perspectives of rural revitalization and beautiful countryside construction, this article discusses various problems encountered in the transition process of the rural society, then analyzes rural traditional culture and rural ethics issues. On this basis, the meaning of contemporary rural life is defined. In addition, this article also provides ideas and inspiration for the path towards rural revitalization. By reconstructing the local culture and ethics of rural aesthetics, the problems of humanities and ethics in the countryside can be resolved.

## **2. The definition of “traditional culture” and “ethical reconstruction” from the perspective of rural aesthetics**

### **2.1. Rural aesthetics versus natural aesthetics**

Rural aesthetics and natural aesthetics are different, natural aesthetics appeared much earlier than rural aesthetics. According to relevant records, Confucius expounded on natural aesthetics earlier, expressing emotions and integrity through mountains and rivers.

Second, there are obvious differences in the nature of the two. Some people think that rural aesthetics is a stripping of urban aesthetics, a subset of it. However, in reality, the two are far apart. The former is more influenced by metaphysical aesthetics and rural aesthetics. Chinese rural aesthetics not only reflects the longing for rural life, but also contains a reclusive humanistic atmosphere, expressing the simple aesthetic taste of literati <sup>[1]</sup>. Some scholars pointed out that this is actually just a fantasy of “literati and refined scholars.” Its essence does not truly reflect the emotional journey of rural people, but conceals the beauty of the countryside in some sense <sup>[2]</sup>.

Third, Chinese rural aesthetics presents obvious rural characteristics. Chinese rural aesthetics has distinct characteristics of rural life, specifically, it is more poetic and has more human vitality. Both Chinese rural poetry and pastoral paintings have shown this aesthetic feature, especially in rural culture. Natural sceneries are very common in rural poetries and paintings. Line drawing techniques are used to show the simplicity and uniqueness of the countryside, and to fully enjoy the spirit; as for elegant artistic conception, simple landscapes are used to show the most profound and unique realm, showing your own noble character.

### **2.2. Reconstruction of ethics and traditional culture**

Ethics is about connections and norms that arise when people get along with each other, and it is the standard by which people measure behavior in life. Chinese ethics originated in the countryside and developed and expanded in the cities. Chinese traditional culture is family-centered, and its structure has two basic features: first, the natural production model; second, the social structure from family to country. The core content of the resulting social civilization is ethics. Secondly, ethics is the most representative intangible cultural heritage in the rural society. Whether it can be properly adjusted in the contemporary era is a problem that needs to be addressed.

## **3. Reasons for the reconstruction of rural traditional culture and ethics**

### **3.1. The decline of rural aesthetic trends**

The decline of rural culture is the reason for the decline of rural aesthetics. Starting from modern society, especially after the Commercial War (the Opium War), the signs of decline in rural China gradually appeared: in the period of the Republic of China, it was even worse. This is because most people living in the countryside were deeply influenced by the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and became outstanding representatives of that era, and their forward thinking was deeply bound by the helplessness of reality. In the dilapidated society of China's countryside, the commoners did not have enough to eat, the future was uncertain, and they did not have the ability and energy to develop rural aesthetics. Objectively speaking, the decline of rural ethics and aesthetics is caused by the following factors. First, the soul of ethics and aesthetics is attached to the feudal system, but the feudal system has collapsed. Universal ethical norms serve the political system and conform to the economy and culture of the feudal era; corruption in feudal society will inevitably lead to the decline of social ethics. Secondly, after the introduction of the West, they were influenced by Western literary thoughts. Especially in the late Qing Dynasty, due to the aggression of foreign forces against China, the Chinese society was degraded to the extreme. The traditional ethical concepts have been severely attacked by the West, and the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture has been hit unprecedentedly. Lastly, the decline of rural culture is caused by the impact of the rise of modern

popular culture on society. With the development of industrialization and marketization, China's popular culture has shown unprecedented prosperity. In the information age, popular culture is loved by people because of its popular and down-to-earth characteristics.

### **3.2. The impact of the modernization process of rural society and the crisis of order in rural society**

#### **3.2.1. The transformation of contemporary ethical language and the maintenance of rural civilized order**

In the development process of China's reform and liberation for more than 40 years, the cultural development in the society has shown a thriving picture. Different cultures coexist, and different ideas and values are intertwined, forming different societies and social lives. Under the background of cultural integration and transformation in rural areas, and under the influence of modernization and urbanization, the development of Chinese rural areas must not only maintain traditional ethical concepts, but also adapt to new development trends, so that the development of Chinese rural areas can be achieved in the shortest possible time. Complete the transformation process of modernization, seek media from traditional and modern communication, and strive to not exclude the "ethics of modernity" that is not excluded in the process of marketization or even in the process of globalization; phase separation<sup>[3]</sup>. Only by looking for specific practical ways of rural social ethics and ethics that conform to Chinese characteristics can China's rural society develop benignly. Wang Jianlin believes: "The development theme of rural society is to achieve the orderly or state transformation 'from the natural static harmony to the dynamic harmony of the unity of nature and self-consciousness' through the transformation of the village, so as to realize the modernization of rural society. Only cultural modernization, especially the modernization of its core element — ethics, is modernization in the ultimate sense, and it can also provide sufficient resources and spiritual support for the smooth transformation of villages." Grasping the essence of contradictions is an effective way to resolve them<sup>[4]</sup>. Of course, the modernization of the rural economy needs financial support, and the spiritual civilization and cultural modernization of the countryside is by no means a one-day achievement, but the real modernization of the countryside is the ethical modernization at the cultural level, so The construction of the spiritual and cultural level of rural society must be through the joint efforts of the whole society, relying on spiritual civilization, the modernization process of the countryside can be strongly guaranteed.

#### **3.2.2. Fragmentation and confusion of traditional rural ethics**

With the development of the rural commodity economy, the living habits of rural residents are increasingly commercialized, and some villagers have gradually abandoned traditional ethical concepts; combined with the penetration of urban culture and the development and diffusion of modern media, it is easier for rural residents to absorb various cultures from all over the world. Traditional ethical concepts have become fragmented, no longer a whole, but gradually rejected by people. First of all, the beliefs of some villagers have been shaken. More and more people have shown reverence for money, and the people's concept of material interests has become stronger and stronger. In the planning of life, the soul lacks the support of belief, and the soul becomes nothingness. Secondly, due to the impact of modern media, the ephemerality and fragmentation of network information, and Western utilitarianism, some villagers cannot distinguish their own cultural products. Coupled with the rise of individualism, materialism, and pragmatism, the pursuit of materialism has become the new beliefs and values of most people, and fine ethical traditions such as honesty and trustworthiness, diligence, and thrift are gradually lost<sup>[5]</sup>. Third, as industrialization enters the countryside, the countryside develops rapidly, and the income of farmers continues to increase. However, in many cases, the development of the rural economy often comes at the expense of the environment. Indiscriminate felling, sand pumping, rock digging, mountain digging, and lack of reasonable

planning have caused serious soil erosion, resulting in frequent disasters, prominent land desertification, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, and heavy metal pollution. The changes in both material and spiritual narrative environments have caused the evaluation of rural ethics to lose its original judgment scale. The decline of rural ethics and the diversity and intermingling of various ethics have resulted in the lack of rural ethical norms in today's rural society.

### **3.2.3. The rural elite lacks a mainstay and lacks cohesion**

In recent years, along with urbanization and socio-economic transformation, the structure of the elite class in rural China has undergone historic changes. The identity transformation of the rural elite has become a new identity and continues to play a leading role in rural society. In the process of rural economic development, those "get rich first" farmers have the courage to struggle and innovate and have made achievements in their fields. They are important pillars and leaders of the society. However, they cannot really become a rural elite with social status<sup>[6]</sup>. They have indeed played a huge role in the development of the countryside and brought prosperity to the local residents, but most of them have not been able to continue and develop the rural society and civilization with their own financial resources and influence. Most people rely on money to change the environment and poverty in the village. However, this is only limited to changes in the environment and quality of life and has little effect on the cultural essence.

## **4. Traditional culture and ethical reconstruction approaches in the perspective of rural aesthetics**

### **4.1. Finding a way out from the dilemma of rural social and cultural order: Reconstruction of values**

Realizing the value reconstruction of rural social culture is the best way to solve rural social and cultural problems. The humanistic values of the countryside must be fundamentally connected with reality based on the characteristics and advantages of the countryside, and the authentic local culture must be discovered. Only by breaking through the previous concepts, organically combining the current development mode with rural reform, and reconstructing rural culture with the aesthetic concept of "rural" can make it a unique rural feature, and at the same time, modern industrial civilization and modernization are organically combined to produce a vibrant local culture. First of all, the essence of rural traditional culture should be absorbed and carried forward. Secondly, the rural population has been impacted by modernization, new values have not yet emerged, and old concepts are already swaying like duckweed.

### **4.2. Changes in modern rural ethics**

#### **4.2.1. Adaptability to the modernization of rural ethics**

In the traditional rural ethics, what should be followed is "take the essence and discard the dross," and if they are not compatible, the dross must be discarded<sup>[7]</sup>. First of all, China is a multi-ethnic country, with each ethnic having its own unique local ethical characteristics; it is an important symbol of the national spirit to maintain the national characteristics, realize the development of the national characteristics of each nation, and maintain the harmony of the nation. Secondly, the biggest difference between urban and rural areas lies in the economic foundation, and the role of improving rural economic development is particularly prominent. Lastly, the city discriminates against the countryside and still maintains its perception of people having different social status. This pedantic thinking should be changed<sup>[8]</sup>. Everyone is equal and should be treated the same; in the process of rural development, we must look at it with a modern perspective in order to achieve long-term development.

#### **4.2.2. Mass media construct humanistic soil**

Media utilization and constructing the localization of rural humanities is the inevitable choice and the only way for contemporary local aesthetics and communication media. The revival of the countryside is

inseparable from the support of the media, and the mass media is also inseparable from this huge rural market. In the process of economic development, cities rely on the media to have a more complete and accurate understanding of the countryside. At the same time, villages also need to disseminate rural characteristics and rural culture through the media, so as to enhance the power of rural culture and enhance the confidence of rural culture.

### **4.3. Maintain national identity and return the national spirit to its original nature**

In the study of rural ethical culture, we should not simply set the city and the countryside against each other, separate the city and the countryside, nor allow the two to integrate in the process of development, because the city and the countryside have their own characteristics. As far as rural ethics culture is concerned, in order to realize the sustainable development of rural ethics, there must be a development path suitable for rural ethics. The specific measures include restoring rural memory, revitalizing traditional festivals, rebuilding rural ethics and cultural confidence, rebuilding rural talents, and cultivating new rural elites.

## **5. Conclusion**

China's traditional aesthetics are bred in the original rural culture, combined with the traditional culture and ideas accumulated in China for five thousand years, all of them come from rural aesthetics and culture. Therefore, the decline of rural social ethics and rural aesthetics will inevitably lead to qualitative changes in traditional Chinese aesthetic civilization, which must be given sufficient attention and vigilance. To examine and reflect on the above issues from the perspective of rural aesthetics, the forgotten spirit in the cultural and ethical reconstruction of rural society needs to be rediscovered<sup>[9]</sup>. A suitable way for modern rural construction from excellent culture and traditional ethics needs to be formulated, and arouse the confidence in the hearts of villagers, so as to realize the development of the countryside. In rural aesthetics, the transformation of traditional culture and rural ethics is a new attempt to integrate traditional culture with modernization, and it is also a way for politicians to treat and understand the development of the countryside sincerely.

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