

Study on the Application of Chinese Traditional Poetry Culture in Garden Design

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Abstract: As an important part of ancient Chinese architecture, Chinese classical garden plays a pivotal role in the world garden construction system, and being one of the three major garden construction systems in the world. Both traditional poetry art and garden art are treasures of Chinese culture. Garden art carries the artistic conception of poetry, and poetry art is also the source of garden artistic conception. To promote the deep integration of garden design and poetry art, the garden can be rich in landscape charm and cultural connotation, achieve the integration of emotions and scenery, and create a profound spiritual realm through mutual influence. This study introduces the architectural characterization of Chinese traditional garden, analyzes the application of poetic culture in garden design from three perspectives: poetic scenery, poetic techniques, and poetic imagery, and summarizes the inspiration of traditional poetry culture to modern garden design. It aims to provide inspiration for modern garden design, make modern garden full of poetry and literary meaning, highlight the artistic value of garden landscape, and achieve the goal of inheriting and promoting traditional culture with the aid of classical garden.

Keywords: Chinese traditional poetry culture; Garden design; Artistic conception; Landscape art

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese architecture is a prominent and distinct aspect of Chinese traditional culture, forming its own system. Over the course of thousands of years, Chinese architecture has evolved into a form of intangible cultural heritage with a strong national character. Through its three-dimensional artistic expression, Chinese architecture showcases unique structural features and artistic qualities. It encompasses various types of buildings, including public buildings, official structures, folk dwellings, and garden architecture. Garden architecture, an integral part of traditional architectural culture, embodies rich cultural connotations and a distinctive aesthetic sensibility. Broadly speaking, garden architecture includes both gardens and buildings, with the two intertwining and closely integrating to achieve a high level of spatial fusion. Among the diverse architectural types are pavilions, terraces, pavilions, corridors, boats, towers, pavilions, study rooms, verandas, halls, galleries, and pagodas. Gardens are generally categorized into artificial landscape gardens and

natural landscape gardens. Garden architecture not only serves functional purposes such as appreciation, leisure, and cultural entertainment but also demonstrates profound artistic achievements, primarily focusing on the harmony between landscapes and buildings while emphasizing artistic conception. Garden designers often employ ingenious methods to organize the construction of garden architecture, incorporating calligraphy and painting into the design, resulting in profound garden aesthetics. Traditional gardens, whether in terms of artistic techniques, aesthetic characteristics, or landscaping skills, prioritize the simultaneous consideration of gardens and buildings (Liao & Shi, 2000). Therefore, the term "garden" in this article refers to the broad concept that encompasses both gardens and buildings.

China's poetic culture originated in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, developed during the Western Han, Eastern Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, and reached its peak during the Tang and Song dynasties. Poetic culture is the most brilliant gem in Chinese traditional literature. The collision between poetry and garden has existed since ancient times. Whether it is the depiction of gardens by literati and scholars or the use of poetry in garden architecture to embellish garden names, plaques, couplets, etc., it reflects the connection between garden design and poetry. Studying the application of traditional poetic culture in garden design not only helps uncover the contemporary value of Chinese traditional culture but also contributes to the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture and highlights the artistic value of garden architecture (Lv, 2003; Yablonsky, 2021). For contemporary garden architecture design, it also holds significant reference and inspiration.

2. THE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERIZATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL GARDEN

2.1 The development and characteristics of traditional Chinese garden architecture

As early as the Xia and Shang dynasties, the embryonic form of garden architecture was already present in China. During the Qin and Han periods, large-scale garden architecture, primarily royal gardens, emerged. It was during this time that the traditional garden design concept of "one pond and three mountains," which emphasized harmonious water features, also appeared. In terms of architectural forms, halls, pavilions, towers, and pavilions had already become prevalent (Xiong, 2010). During the Wei and

Jin periods, traditional garden architecture experienced rapid development. Wooden structures gradually replaced rammed earth structures and became the mainstream. The flourishing of religion during the Southern and Northern Dynasties also contributed to the development of temple gardens. The aesthetic conceptions of private gardens and temple gardens began to integrate with natural landscapes during this period. Furthermore, it was during the Wei and Jin periods that poetry, particularly landscape and pastoral poems, began to flourish, marking the initial collision between poetry and garden architecture. The Tang and Song dynasties were periods of great prosperity and cultural flourishing in literature, art, and the economy. The art of garden construction reached a highly mature stage, particularly in the application of wooden structures. In terms of techniques, artistic ideas, layout, and structural design, it reached unprecedented heights. Designers skillfully integrated the art of calligraphy and painting with garden architecture, fully incorporating the highly developed poetic and literary culture of the time. This resulted in a perfect fusion of garden, architecture, poetry, and painting in terms of scenery and landscaping. Among them, the poetic ambiance of Song-style gardens is particularly profound and enduring (Wang & Jia, 2006).

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the development of garden architecture reached new heights, surpassing the rapid progress seen in the Tang and Song periods, and formed an independent and complete system. At this time, the basic types of Chinese gardens had taken shape, classified into four different schools. Each school of garden architecture had its own characteristics in terms of style, form, layout, spatial relationships, artistic taste, cultural connotations, and ideological implications, establishing its own distinct style. In terms of architecture, emphasis was placed on the integration and harmony with the natural environment, advocating for adaptation to the local conditions and pursuing an aesthetic ambiance that blended seamlessly with the surroundings, achieving a harmonious integration of the environment and garden architecture (Cheng & Wang, 2011). During this period, the fusion of poetic culture and garden architecture gradually manifested in the structural layout. Techniques resembling poetic composition, such as "rising scenery," "middle scenery," "main scenery," and "subdued scenery," were used in garden design. Additionally, rhythmic and layered poetic devices, such as "mountains recur and waters repeat" and "willows darken while flowers brighten," were applied to garden design, especially in the arrangement of garden routes. The records in "Yin Jin Ling Zhu Yuan Ji" (Records of Visiting Various Gardens in Jinling) provide examples of such spatial levels and sequential

layouts (Callagher & Cullis, 2021).

2.2 The function and layout of traditional Chinese garden architecture

Traditional Chinese garden architecture encompasses a wide range of types with diverse functions. The most common ones include pavilions, terraces, pavilions, corridors, boats, towers, pavilions, retreats, verandas, halls, galleries, halls, and pagodas. These garden structures can be perched on hilltops, nestled in the heart of the garden, built along water edges, or constructed in harmony with the terrain. They exude profound artistic conceptions and brim with aesthetic charm. The primary function of traditional Chinese gardens is to provide cultural entertainment and leisure, placing a strong emphasis on artistic quality. Their functionality can be categorized into three aspects: First, they highlight artistic aesthetics. For instance, through unique landscape layouts and tour routes featuring undulations and layering, they present elegant, intricate, cozy, or surprising scenic effects. Second, they emphasize practicality, serving as venues and creating an atmosphere for recreation, entertainment, and gatherings. Third, they showcase cultural connotations. In traditional Chinese garden architecture, it is common to inscribe poetic verses on garden names, couplets, and plaques, reflecting a profound integration of poetry and literary culture and epitomizing the harmonious blending of scenery and emotions. Traditional Chinese garden architecture pays attention to the hierarchical relationship between "mountain and water as the primary focus, and architecture as the subordinate." For example, the Zhan Garden in Nanjing features a concentrated arrangement of buildings contrasting with the surrounding landscape. The temples and gardens in the Qingcheng Mountains of Sichuan have a dispersed layout, highlighting key areas that are relatively concentrated. The architectural layout of the Huqiu (Tiger Hill) in Suzhou follows the path of the tour route. These are specific examples of the hierarchical layout relationship. In addition, there are layouts based on local conditions, emphasizing adaptive adjustments, layouts that balance tranquility and movement, and layouts that emphasize spatial relationships through scenic framing and borrowed scenery (Hou & Cheng, 2009).

3. THE APPLICATION OF POETRY CULTURE IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Traditional classical gardens are always filled with poetic sentiments and

picturesque scenes, which demonstrates the close association between poetry and gardens. Poetry and gardens in Chinese history developed simultaneously, and they intertwined and influenced each other. For example, during the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, the rise of landscape poetry directly influenced the shift of focus in garden architecture towards landscape development. In the Tang Dynasty, poetry and poetic sentiments began to consciously blend into the art of garden architecture, especially in private gardens (Wang, 2021). In the Song Dynasty, various poetic styles specific to garden aesthetics were developed. As Mr. Chen Congzhou once said, "Chinese gardens and Chinese literature are deeply intertwined and inseparable. I believe that in studying Chinese gardens, one should start with Chinese poetry and literature, as it is necessary to seek their essence and explore their origins first, which will then facilitate the resolution of many issues. If one only discusses gardens in isolation, the understanding will not be profound." Therefore, it is evident that poetry and gardens mutually influence and permeate each other. The study of garden design inevitably relies on the application of poetic and literary culture (Langley et al., 2016).

3.1 Poetry landscape architecture

"Poetic garden creation" refers to the design and construction of gardens based on the specific content of poems, the expressed ambiance, or the created spiritual atmosphere. Poetic garden creation is a concrete manifestation of seeking the essence and exploring the source, as many garden designs can be traced back to poetry. For example, in the Humble Administrator's Garden in Suzhou, the shaping of artificial mountains is inspired by the line "The woods end, the stream originates, and there lies a mountain with a small opening" from the Peach Blossom Spring. Above it, there is an inscription that reads "Another hidden paradise," employing the technique of scenic composition to highlight the transcendental ambiance of Li Bai's poem: "Peach blossoms float downstream, disappearing into the distance, and there exists another world beyond the realm of mortals." The "Wuling Spring Scenery" in the Imperial Garden of the Yuanmingyuan is also derived from Tao Yuanming's poem "Returning Home." The Guoqulai Garden, created by the Song Dynasty literatus Chao Wujie after his retirement, is an exemplary case of poetic garden creation. It not only expresses elegant aspirations but also resonates spiritually with the predecessors.

"Poetic scenic embellishment" is an indispensable aspect of garden design. Using poetry to adorn garden names, plaques, couplets, and

inscriptions is a common practice in various types of gardens. By employing the technique of poetic scenic embellishment, garden owners express the artistic sentiments and convey the ambiance of the landscape. In the novel "Dream of the Red Chamber," there are remarkable descriptions of poetic scenic embellishments. From the seventeenth to the eighteenth chapter, during the examination of talents in the Grand View Garden, Jia Zheng tests Jia Baoyu's achievements and progress, while exploring the scenery of the garden. Examples include inscriptions such as "Qishi's Lingered Elegance" and "Phoenix's Graceful Demeanor," as well as naming a field "Aromatic Village," inspired by the line "At the firewood gate, water flows, and rice flowers fragrance" and so on. Although these literary poems were skillfully created by the author, they vividly demonstrate the wonderful application of poetry and literary culture in garden design. Furthermore, in actual garden construction, there are numerous examples of using poetry to "poeticize" scenery. For instance, the Lingered Music Studio, True Understanding Pavilion, and Distant Fragrance Hall in the Humble Administrator's Garden are named after lines by Han Qi. The "Secluded Pavilion" in the Shadow Garden is derived from Li Bai's poem "Seeking the Autumn Feelings at the Purple Extreme Palace," with the name perfectly complementing the landscape, creating a sublime and harmonious composition (Andy & Sally, 2000).

3.2 The poetic techniques in landscape design

In garden design, the application of poetry goes beyond its role in poetic gardening and scenic composition. Many garden designs and architectures incorporate the content of poetry, its techniques of wording and phrasing, rhetorical devices, structural layouts, and rhythmic features. In ancient times, many renowned garden designers were also poets themselves, such as Bai Juyi, Wang Wei, and Liu Zongyuan. They subtly introduced the techniques and content of poetry into spatial planning, structural construction, emotional expression, and content presentation in garden design. In terms of spatial structure, poetry played a role in guiding sensory perception, creating transitions and harmonies, and balancing dynamic and static elements (Lewis, 1988). It directed visual changes from close to distant, from inner to outer spaces, and utilized spatial combinations to enhance emotional experiences. In terms of content presentation, various sources of inspiration were utilized, and techniques such as rhythm, metaphor, borrowed scenery, framing, and the use of silence were employed. In expressing emotions, poetry used words to create artistic ambiance, while gardens utilized landscapes to create ambiance,

emphasizing the elevation of physical, emotional, and intellectual realms. Gardens became the medium, and poetry became the vessel, adhering to the concept of "the ambiance lies beyond the form," serving as an outlet for one's aspirations and emotional expressions.

3.3 The artistic conception of poetry in landscape design

In artistic creations, artistic ambiance is a spiritual realm and essence expressed through specific forms. The ambiance of poetry surpasses that of garden landscapes and belongs to a higher and more profound aesthetic category. Ambiance in aesthetics is the dynamic effect of imagery, abstract thinking, and emotional dimensions, which, through the fusion of scenes, creates a rich artistic fascination that touches the soul. In garden design, the poetic ambiance can achieve an effect that captivates and enthralls people. Visitors resonate with the artistic sentiments of the garden creators through the recitation and contemplation of poetry, perceiving the philosophical connotations bestowed upon the landscape by poetry and attaining a higher level of aesthetic appreciation (Castelblanco et al., 2021). By embodying poetic ambiance, the emotions, thoughts, willpower, and character of the garden creators are infused into the landscape, creating a rich cultural and artistic atmosphere that allows visitors to experience the boundless beauty of scenery. For example, the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, facing West Lake with its spacious and layered open spaces, cleverly combines rigid steel materials and transparent glass, harmonizing black, white, and gray tones to transform the coldness of modern architectural materials into the profound elegance of traditional ink painting and calligraphy.

4. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF TRADITIONAL POETRY CULTURE ON MODERN LANDSCAPE DESIGN

In garden design, artistic ambiance is the crystallization of the fusion between observation and perception. Garden ambiance represents the refined aesthetic taste and artistic cultivation that visitors experience after sensing the emotions, thoughts, willpower, and character of the garden creator. It embodies the charm of garden design, the depth of ideas, and the concrete manifestation of thoughts. In classical garden design, ambiance has always been the primary pursuit and consideration of the garden creators (Johansen, 2010). Gardens without ambiance are destined to be forgotten and disappear into the passage of time. None of China's

traditional renowned gardens can separate themselves from the pursuit of ambiance. Gardens are not only places for leisure and recreation but also spiritual homes and sanctuaries for literati and refined guests. They serve as important spaces for them to express emotions, convey their aspirations, and realize themselves.

4.1 The development status and existing problems of modern landscape design

In garden design, artistic ambiance is the crystallization of the fusion of scenes, where observation and perception intertwine. Garden ambiance represents the advanced aesthetic taste and artistic cultivation that visitors experience after sensing the emotions, thoughts, willpower, and character of the garden creator. It embodies the charm of garden design, the depth of ideas, and the concrete manifestation of thoughts. In classical garden design, ambiance has always been the pursuit and consideration of the garden creators. Gardens without ambiance are destined to be forgotten and disappear into the passage of time. None of China's traditional renowned gardens can detach themselves from the pursuit of ambiance. Gardens are not only places for leisure and recreation but also spiritual homes and sanctuaries for literati and refined guests. They serve as important spaces for them to express emotions, convey their aspirations, and realize themselves.

Modern gardens are created to satisfy people's longing for a connection with nature in urban areas. However, contemporary landscape designs in our country often excessively pursue standardized garden landscapes, overlooking the delightful charm of natural wildness. Homogeneous garden landscapes fail to convey the beauty of regional scenery and natural culture. In certain gardens, the selection of tree species is either too limited or focused solely on using rare and expensive species to demonstrate the garden's "high-end" appeal, often neglecting the ecological habits of the trees, which hampers the establishment of a stable environment for plant growth. In modern garden design, there is a significant lack of consideration and emphasis on the expression of artistic ambiance, leading to dull and low-level design works. While a few garden designs may exhibit artistic aesthetic, they often lack cultural connotations and cultural taste, overlooking the artistic effects of techniques such as inscriptions and landscape depictions. China's poetry and literary culture have a splendid and magnificent heritage, with rich cultural connotations and distinctive characteristics. Incorporating them into modern garden design can enhance the conceptual ambiance and cultural depth of garden

architecture, giving modern garden architecture a higher aesthetic appeal and aesthetic value.

4.2 Reflection on integrating the artistic conception of poetry into modern landscape design

Enhancing the cultural connotations of modern garden landscapes, creating garden landscapes with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics, and imbuing them with spiritual imagery are key considerations and areas of profound research in modern garden design, which require deep thought and exploration. In traditional culture, the application of poetry includes the pastoral poems of Wang Wei, the landscape poems of Xie Lingyun, as well as the excellent works of other poets such as Yang Wanli, Meng Haoran, and Fan Dacheng. These poems possess high artistic value that can be explored. They vividly depict natural landscapes and scenery, offering enlightenment and valuable references for modern garden design. For instance, Wang Wei's poetry expresses Zen, emotions, and states of mind exceptionally well. By studying Wang Wei's poetry and unearthing its artistic value, inspiration can be found for the design of modern gardens. By extracting creative elements and experiencing the poetic imagery, artistic and spiritual nourishment can be provided for various aspects of modern garden design, including the arrangement of artificial mountains, water management, atmosphere creation, and spatial layout (Janowski & Ingold, 2012).

In modern garden design, incorporating famous verses from Wang Wei's poetry as direct or indirect names for landmarks can endow the garden landscape with a richer cultural connotation. Wang Wei's famous line, "Poetry resides within painting, painting contains poetry," is an ideal reference for modern garden design elements. By deeply contemplating aspects such as topography, water features, architecture, and vegetation, and combining them with lines from Wang Wei's poetry to name landmarks, it is possible to recreate the poetic and artistic imagery of traditional Chinese garden architecture. This achieves the desired effect of integrating poetry into the garden atmosphere in modern garden landscapes. Furthermore, modern garden design should also learn from the principle of classical gardens to "imitate nature" and focus on creating a garden atmosphere that reveres nature and exudes tranquility and harmony. It should provide an escape from the hustle and bustle of urban life for people living in fast-paced environments. Wang Wei's poetry often describes birds and insects, expressing a yearning for a simple and serene spatial ambiance. In this era of returning to simplicity and authenticity,

garden design should emphasize creating habitats for animals, attracting insects and birds through well-planned plant configurations, and adding rich soundscapes of nature to the garden. This conveys the beauty bestowed by nature and creates a garden atmosphere brimming with natural charm.

5. CONCLUSION

Traditional Chinese poetry, whether in the past, present, or future, is an impressive spiritual wealth within the profound cultural heritage of our country. The cultural connotations, spiritual imagery, and ideological aspects contained in poetry and literature are the most valuable artistic, cultural, and spiritual treasures in this spiritual wealth. By incorporating the artistic conception of traditional poetry into garden landscapes, not only can the ideological aspects of the garden landscape be enriched, but also the cultural connotations can be endowed to the garden landscape. Transitioning the poetic imagery to the garden atmosphere achieves a perfect integration of poetic and garden culture, which has always been the pursuit of artistic designers in garden design throughout history. This article explores and characterizes the development, features, functions, and layout of traditional garden architecture. It introduces the influence and role of poetry in traditional garden design from the aspects of poetic garden creation, poetic landscape depiction, techniques, and artistic conception. By combining the current situation and issues in modern garden design, it puts forward thoughts and inspirations on how traditional poetry and culture can enlighten modern garden design.

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