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# From Chinese Landscape Painting to Landscape City -- Exploring the Design and Development of Chinese Ideal Living Environment

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**Abstract:** There are many “urban diseases” caused by the purposeless expansion of contemporary cities, such as ecological damage, lack of characteristics, and the same face of cities, which urgently need a new urban planning and construction method to solve the problem. Under this background, “landscape city” was put forward by Qian Xuesen in 1993. Its concept has made great contributions to the ecological and characteristic construction of Chinese cities. Chinese traditional landscape painting is a unique cultural and spiritual content with Chinese characteristics. At the same time, there is a “heterogeneous isomorphism” relationship between Chinese landscape painting and landscape cities. Landscape painting also reflects the ideal way of living of Chinese people since ancient times. Therefore, applying the idea of “harmony between human and nature” in Chinese landscape painting to the ecological construction of landscape cities, and applying landscape culture and spirit to the characteristic expression and artistic conception construction of landscape cities can create ecological cities with unique Chinese characteristics. Taking the construction of Fuzhou landscape city as an example, this paper explores the path of modern city’s “landscape”, summarizes and puts forward some methods of ecological city planning and construction with Chinese characteristics, which has certain guiding significance for the construction of modern “landscape city”. At the same time, it points out that the construction of landscape city with unique Chinese culture is an excellent path to realize the ideal living environment with Chinese characteristics.

**Keywords:** Landscape Painting, Landscape City, Living Environment

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## 1. Introduction

This paper starts from elaborating the concepts of Chinese landscape painting and landscape city, discusses the background of landscape city and its internal relationship with landscape painting, compares the planning of landscape city with that of British pastoral city, and puts forward that the construction of landscape city has certain advantages in current urban planning. Taking Fuzhou's landscape city construction as an example, this paper analyzes the achievements of Fuzhou's landscape city construction, summarizes the methods of modern landscape city construction and puts forward relevant suggestions. Finally, it is pointed out that the construction of landscape cities is an excellent path to build ideal human settlements with Chinese

characteristics, which has certain practical guiding significance for future urban planning and construction.

## 2. Concept of Landscape Painting and Concept of Landscape City

### 2.1. Landscape Painting

Traditional Chinese landscape painting is a spiritual art derived from Chinese philosophy. It is full of the temperament and interest of literati, and also contains the spirit of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It is an important part of traditional Chinese culture, and it is also a unique cultural content with Chinese characteristics. In Chinese traditional landscape painting, literati not only

expressed the yearning for natural landscape, but also found the ideal way to get along with human and nature. Landscape painters express their personal spirit and spiritual pursuit and achieve the purpose of self-cultivation through landscape painting, and finally make landscape painting gradually sublimate into a unique Chinese landscape spirit concept and culture in the development of history. Landscape painting perfects the literati freehand nature landscape garden development, thus also carried on the landscape city construction [1].

## 2.2. Landscape Cities

The purposeless expansion of modern cities led to the destruction of urban landscape and the loss of regionality. High-rise buildings are everywhere in the city, and people are surrounded by reinforced concrete. For the lack of urban characteristics, the destruction of ecological resources, and the deterioration of urban environment reflection, the concept of "landscape city" arises.

The concept of "landscape city" was first put forward by Qian Xuesen, a famous scientist in China, at the Symposium on "landscape city-Chinese city looking forward to the 21st century" held in Beijing on 28 March 1993, hoping to create a new ecological city with both modernization and Chinese cultural characteristics. In addition, Qian clearly pointed out: "The idea of landscape city is the organic combination of Chinese and foreign culture, is the combination of urban landscape and urban forest". The core of the proposition of "landscape city" is the combination of city and nature. Landscape generally refers to the natural environment, and city generally refers to the artificial environment. Mountain, water and city can and should complement each other [2]. He believes that the construction of "landscape city" should not only give nature back to the city, but also give the beauty of art to the city [2]. The goal of "landscape city" is to achieve "let the high-rise buildings have courtyards, some high-rise open-air trees and flowers in the middle", "buildings should also be different, including upstairs green garden" effect.

## 3. Modern Planning Theory About "Landscape City" and Its Development

### 3.1. Urban Planning Requirements of "Clear Waters and Green Mountains Are Mountains of Gold and Silver"

On 12 October 2021, in a video address to the Fifteenth Summit of Leaders of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Xi Jinping said: "Clear waters and green mountains are mountains of gold and silver". Good ecological environment is not only natural wealth, but also economic wealth, related to economic and social development potential and stamina. We should speed up the formation of a green development mode, promote the win-win situation of economic development and environmental, and build a global home with coordinated

economy and environment. Thus it can be seen that the country pays more and more attention to the urban planning of green ecology, and the concept of green sustainable human and natural environment is becoming more and more important. This coincides with the concept of "harmony between human and nature" in landscape painting and landscape city.

### 3.2. Comparison of the Concept of Pastoral City and Landscape City

In 1898, the British planner E. Howard put forward the "pastoral city" theory, which regards the city as a whole to study. Connecting with urban-rural relations, it puts forward urban planning problems that adapt to modern industry, and puts forward opinions on important issues of population density, urban economy and urban greening [3]. The basic idea of the pastoral city is based on the construction of a new type of city with urban-rural integration and beautiful environment. It puts forward that all the advantages of active urban life should be combined with the beauty and welfare of the countryside. The whole city presents a circular structure of radiation under his conformation. Through this circular structure, the city is surrounded by agricultural land and all the peripheral green belts are accessible on foot. In addition to the peripheral forest park belt, the idea of the garden city requires the city itself to be full of lush green.

Qian Xuesen's urban planning concept of landscape city has profound humanistic spirit and national characteristics. He was worried about "blocky high buildings" and "bleak urban environment". Out of this deep humanistic concern, Qian Xuesen advocated the integration and systematization of urban construction and the application of Chinese garden art to urban planning in large regions. "Landscape city" is a city belonging to the public. It not only considers the quality of the living environment of the general public, but also proposes that in socialist China in the 21st century, "large-scale gardens" will no longer be exclusively enjoyed by feudal aristocrats [4]. At the same time, guided by the "landscape city" which integrates the essence of Chinese traditional culture such as poetry, garden and landscape painting, the city will form a unique cultural landscape with Chinese characteristics. The Chinese people's pursuit and yearning for the natural landscape and the unity of human and nature have always been reflected in the traditional construction. "Building the whole city into a super large garden [4]" reflects the Chinese people's good vision of being close to nature and living in harmony with nature.

Similarities: Howard's pastoral city opened up a new stage of urban planning combined with urban economy and urban environmental greening. The ultimate goal of landscape city is to build a human settlement environment with the integration of artificial environment and natural environment. Landscape city is a prospective urban planning and design. They all have ecological attributes, and try to find a model of human and natural harmonious living environment by exploring and studying the relationship between human and nature, in order to solve the "urban disease" brought by the

development of modern industrial cities. In addition, both concepts try to deal with the interactive relationship between urban development and ecological environment by analyzing the interaction between human activities and natural ecological evolution process, and strive to realize the ideal city integrating urban space and natural environment.

Differences: The starting point of pastoral city is to solve the urban planning and ecological problems of urban-rural integration in urbanization and counter-urbanization. Although the goal of landscape city is also to achieve the goal of harmonious coexistence between human and nature, that is, the effect of “harmony between human and nature”, but the starting point is based on the landscape culture and humanistic spirit of landscape painting. The unique artistic conception of Chinese landscape painting makes the construction of landscape city also have strong cultural attributes and spiritual connotation. On the other hand, the urban planning pattern constructed by the concept of idyllic city is a closed ring with scattering shape, fixed volume, strong and limited, and low feasibility. This natural integration is very deliberate and artificial. However, the construction of landscape urban planning pattern is integrated and systematic, which largely depends on the existing natural environment such as mountains or artificial environment. It has a larger design volume, emphasizes that it is born according to the situation and has a stronger realization. It is a more advanced natural, integrated and systematic natural and artificial collection. At the same time, the landscape city is also a higher form of spatial evolution of human settlement environment.

#### **4. Practical Exploration of Modern “Landscape City” --Takes Fuzhou as an Example**

There is a “heterogeneous isomorphism” relationship between Chinese traditional landscape painting and landscape city. Mountain huts and forest trails in landscape painting reflect the poetic dwelling in the eyes of Chinese literati, which is the expression of the concept of “harmony between human and nature”. The fundamental purpose of landscape cities is also to achieve the ultimate effect of “harmony between human and nature”, but its skeleton is no longer just natural landscape, but includes the unity under the comprehensive elements of the whole modern urban construction. The “transfer and imitation” of landscape painting to landscape cities not only reflects the traditional Chinese thought of “harmony between human and nature”, but also provides the idea and path of ecologicalization and Chinese characteristics for the living environment of contemporary Chinese cities. Landscape city is not only a natural city with mountains and rivers, but also a planning idea of inheriting Chinese unique landscape culture and integrating the aesthetic conception of traditional landscape painting [5].

Good natural landscape environment conditions provide an excellent natural framework for the construction of landscape

cities. The world's appreciation of China's natural landscape is confirmed by “Heaven above, Suzhou and Hangzhou below”, the wonderland of Yunnan Diqing, which is world-renowned as “Shangri-La”, and “Guilin has the best landscape in the world” [1]. Since 2020, Fuzhou as a coastal city, the use of good natural landscape conditions to vigorously build country parks and landscape city pattern, to create a high-quality landscape city.

##### **4.1. Build an Ecological Green Space Pattern - Build an Ecological Space Network**

Based on the characteristics of landscape cities, in recent years, the landscape pattern of governing mountains and rivers and revealing mountains and rivers in Fuzhou has highlighted the ecological background and enriched people's enjoyment of the beauty of mountains and rivers at home. It has realized the concept of people walking through mountains and rivers and sharing mountains and rivers, and created a living environment closely related to the ecological environment. At present, the city has accumulated the construction of all kinds of small parks more than 1400 ring mountain leisure trails 131.3 kilometers in six urban built 680.3 kilometers waterfront leisure trails. Fuzhou is not only in the main urban area, but also in combination with the construction of Binhai New City, University City and other areas to continuously strengthen the basic work of the ecological environment, which not only does the ecological environment well, but also creates cultural, tourism and leisure space together. We will focus on promoting a number of important projects such as landscape space, greenway park and thematic small park, and build an ecological green space pattern and ecological space network integrating landscape, green and comfortable for Fuzhou.

##### **4.2. The pattern of Natural Feng Shui Is Highlighted - The Artistic Conception of “One Pond and Three Mountains”**

The “landscape culture” in geomancy occupies an important position in China's long and splendid ancient culture, among which religion, philosophy and aesthetics are the most closely related to landscape. The three constitute the carrier of landscape culture, and also constitute the unique style and rich ideological connotation of landscape culture. Fuzhou landscape city construction conforms to our country ancient times “Feng shui view” and the landscape painting portrays ideal landscape pattern [6].

Fuzhou historical landscape pattern itself is very consistent with the concept of “one pond and three mountains”. East Wenlin Mountain (Qishan), West Jinji Mountain (Gushan), known as “left flag right drum”; the city itself includes the “three mountains” (Wushi Mountain, Yuping Mountain, Yushan Mountain), formed the trend of horns [7]. Minjiang River meandering along the west and south side of the city, Beishan Shuangxi east, west ring city down, into the Minjiang River, in the west side of the city for east and west lake. Therefore, the landscape pattern of Fuzhou city can be

summarized as “there are cities in the mountains, mountains in the city, rivers and lakes, southeast and sea [8]”. Since the 1980s, the landscape pattern of Fuzhou has gradually changed due to the continuous expansion of urban construction, but the landscape pattern of Fuzhou is largely retained. Three mountains remained, and the Minjiang River has continued to this day. The Jin'an River and its branches returned to the inner city of Fuzhou. But East and West Lake, only West Lake exists. Mountain vegetation remains, but its landscape has changed. Wushan multi-resident government agencies, institutions; the original scenic spots of Pingshan are often damaged [9].

Fuzhou city from landscape painting to landscape city's “transfer and imitation” and “heterogeneous isomorphism” can be shaped from two points. The first point is to highlight the original landscape city pattern, to create a “one pond and three mountains” city skeleton. “one pond and three mountains” is the traditional myth of three mountains (Penglai, Fangzhang, Yingzhou) and an island. Its mode is the deep-rooted embodiment of the idea of immortals in Chinese landscapes in classical gardens, which has shifted from ideological recognition to physical aesthetic appreciation. Pingshan, Yushan and Wushan in the ancient city imply three mountains in the East China Sea. However, in the construction of “landscape city” in Fuzhou City, this pond is not water, but the roof of Fuzhou City is like a pond water from the perspective of bird's eye view [9]. The most characteristic of traditional regional architecture in Fuzhou is the saddle-like “saddle wall”. The roof outline of the buildings in Fuzhou surges like waves, highlighting the beauty of the three mountains, thus forming the artistic conception of “one pond and three mountains” in Fuzhou. But in today's Fuzhou skyline by the destruction of new buildings, become no longer low gentle, it is difficult to achieve the meaning of ancient Fuzhou landscape. The second point is selective access to retain “the city's mountain landscape visual corridor [9]”, so that citizens can see mountains in the city. Due to the needs of economic development in the city, many high-rise buildings have been built at or adjacent to the foot of the mountain in the past two or three decades, which hinders the view of the mountain.

#### **4.3. Construction of the Accessibility of Mountains and Rivers -- To Create a Fuzhou Country Park with Both Beauty and Wisdom**

The goal of landscape city is “popularization”. The popularization of landscape cities has two meanings. The first meaning is the aristocratic exclusive or private enjoyment of traditional gardens, while the landscape of landscape cities refers to the landscape shared by the whole people without class and status distinction. The second meaning is to shorten the distance between residents and landscape, and increase the accessibility of landscape. The construction of Fuzhou landscape city in the new era needs to pay attention to the construction of landscape accessibility, and the construction of Fuzhou landscape accessibility is inseparable from the construction of rural parks. In recent years, more and more people come to the country park, they climb mountains in the country park, walk and breathe fresh air to deeply experience

the ecological charm of the landscape city and the profound cultural heritage of Fujian. Country park by a total of 20 kilometers of mountain trails connected along the 24 main landscape nodes, including 5000 square meters of jasmine sea terrace park, overlooking banyan city's magnificent prayer platform, other tunnels of fuyuan tunnel... Walking in it can not only breathe fresh air but also experience the city's mountain leisure. At the same time, on the basis of maintaining the characteristics of ecological landscape, it has also built the first project of digital ecological construction of Fuzhou City Park. Citizens can use smart large screen scanning code to card these sports mileage in exchange for green energy to exchange for mobile phone charging, wireless network, intelligent seats and other characteristics' welfare [10].

#### **4.4. The Slow Way of Poetic Dwelling -- The Construction of Urban Slow Walks Connecting the Urban Landscape**

In 2021, Fuzhou strived to change “seeing the landscape” to “entering the landscape”, and strived to make the construction of its landscape city benefit the people. Fuzhou vigorously built ecological parks and mountain leisure trails in areas close to residential areas and with good landscape environment, and promoted the construction of mountainside and waterside leisure walking system. At present, Fuzhou city has built “Jidao, Wendao, Fudao, Yuedao” four characteristics of slow walk, a total length of 126.5 kilometers. The slow-moving system from Jinji Mountain to Jinniu Mountain is connected with hot spring park, CBD of Wusi Road, Zhongshan Road block, Yeshan Spring and Autumn Park and Zuohai Park of West Lake, which will bring the slow-moving experience of “the most scenic city and historical and cultural city”. In addition, Fuzhou also vigorously implemented the overall quality improvement project of Minjiang River and Wulong River. Since last year, a number of ecological restoration projects have been built and opened, such as Sanjiangkou Ecological Park, Jin'an Lake Park and Qishan Lake Park. Wang Wenkui, deputy general manager of Fuzhou Planning and Design Research Institute Group said: “We emphasize that these slow spaces, such as mountain trails, water trails, and especially the trails of alleys with Fuzhou flavor, are connected in series, so that people can watch mountains, look at water and walk alleys in a comfortable way in the urban area to experience the unique landscape of Rongcheng and the special features of historical and cultural cities [10]”.

## **5. Under the Concept of 'Landscape City', the Renewal and Expansion of Modern Urban Living Environment and Thinking**

Landscape city is a poetic ecological complex, a conscious expansion of the city, and a construction path of poetic living environment with Chinese characteristics. But so far, the achievements of landscape cities are mainly reflected in

theory, it lacks a complete set of ideas and feasible solutions to solve the problems of modern cities, and specific practical projects and achievements are insufficient; but it is obvious that the landscape city has a strong integrity and ecological superiority, and it is the embodiment of the design of landscape culture with Chinese characteristics, which has the significance of further exploration. According to the existing theory and practical results, the construction of landscape city should firstly study the natural elements and urban spatial structure, then summarize the relationship between the natural elements and urban spatial structure of the construction area, and finally define the development direction and ultimate construction goal of the regional planning and construction on this basis. For the city with superior natural conditions, it is necessary to study the urban spatial structure form on the premise of natural elements [11]. This requires designers to start from the ecological, landscape and cultural aspects of the natural environment, and then put forward the design method of modern urban spatial structure formation incorporating natural landscape elements.

Although the construction of Fuzhou's landscape city is very successful, the construction of Fuzhou's landscape city depends largely on the natural and superior natural geographical environment of Fuzhou. However, for modern cities with high level of plain and modernization that do not have good geographical conditions, where will the construction of landscape cities go? The construction control of landmark buildings, the construction of inter-city skyline and the construction of visual corridor provide some ideas for urban construction, and the exploration of landscape path of modern urban buildings is one of the focuses. This requires that the buildings in the theory of "landscape city" should pay attention to the ecological function of the buildings in the natural environment, the aesthetic mood of the buildings and the orderly combination of the space sequence of the buildings. At the same time, in the architectural form design of "landscape city", we should pay attention to the landscape artistic conception of architectural form, the suitability of architectural size and scale combination, the flexibility of architectural plane and facade, the integration of architectural group and environment, and the combination of architectural form and multidimensional greening [12].

On the surface, as the name implies, "landscape city" is the characteristics of urban environment constituted by landscape, and becomes a unique artistic conception of urban environment. As an important part of urban space development, landscape city should have landscape ecological elements. It may be referred to as a model of the city, that is, "mountain-water-city", which emphasizes the composition of its landscape and the cultural connotation of the city [13]. At a deeper level, "landscape city" should not be simply understood as a city with mountains and rivers. It is an ideal city with the physical space environment and spiritual connotation of mountains and rivers, and should have unique cultural style and connotation of China. Therefore, the embodiment of landscape culture is the deep-seated characteristics of

landscape cities and the soul of landscape cities. This requires that in the construction of landscape city also need to pay attention to the protection of historical and cultural landscape, which can be reflected in recording and inheriting the history of civilization, activating the wisdom of excellent traditional city, inheriting the humanistic spirit of landscape and awakening the soul of ancient city [14].

## 6. Conclusion

In Chinese landscape paintings with spiritual primacy, the concept of "harmony between human and nature" is particularly emphasized, which coincides with the development concept of contemporary landscape cities. Therefore, it has certain enlightenment and guiding significance for the construction of contemporary landscape cities to explore the material expression of landscape concepts and explore its inherent cultural characteristics and philosophical spiritual sublimation with landscape paintings as the media. The traditional landscape concept in Chinese painting has accumulated valuable spiritual wealth for our city construction today. The essence of landscape city is the substantial and symbolic expression of traditional culture and human civilization accumulation. From the ancient landscape concept to today's urban construction, the poetic dwelling in the state of "harmony between human and nature" is our constant pursuit, which is the unique natural view and aesthetic consciousness of the Chinese people, and also the unique charm of the Chinese landscape city. The fundamental purpose of landscape cities is to explore the concept of human settlements and environmental concepts with national cultural characteristics, and to absorb some still viable content from the tradition, so as to bring better landscape and better order to industrial cities. In essence, landscape city is the pursuit of Chinese ecological habitation. It tries to create a Kind of Chinese "escape" habitation that "stays in a cage for a long time and returns to nature".

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