

Constructing City With Regional Culture, Cultivating New Trend With Urban Landscape: Study on the Cultural Construction of Chongqing's Urban Landscape

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Abstract

Urban landscape construction is not only a project of material civilization, but also a systematic one that is closely associated with urban culture, which places great influences on the thought and spirits of the residents. It is the eternal need of the urban landscape construction as well as the spiritual need of the urban residents to integrate regional cultural resource into the cultural construction of urban landscape, thus building an urban landscape featuring bountiful regional culture.

Key words: Urban landscape; Cultural construction; Chongqing's regional culture

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INTRODUCTION

In 1996, it is underlined in the Declaration of Istanbul that "our city must be a place where people can live a wonderful life with dignity, health, security, happiness and hope."

How does city make our lives better? It should be considered in two aspects: The denotation and connotation of the city. The city's connotation mainly includes economic level, social morality, quality of the citizens, cultural atmosphere, etc., while the city's denotation is its landscape. Urban landscape is the carrier of the

city's connotation, and a city's connotation can be fully displayed through its landscape. Just as Eliel Saarinen, an American architect, said, "A city is an unfolded book, where its ambition can be found."

Chongqing, as one of the biggest municipalities directly under the central government, is an important central city. It is a famous historic and cultural city, the center of the upper areas along the Yangtze River, a major modern manufacturing base of the nation and the comprehensive transportation junction of the southwest region. Under such historical background, Chongqing's urban landscape construction, as a significant component of its city construction, increasingly gains importance. The construction and development of the urban landscape are on a favorable path, and the cultural construction of urban landscape is a promising way for future city construction.

1. URBAN LANDSCAPE AND URBAN LANDSCAPE CULTURE

Before getting into the cultural construction of urban landscape, it is necessary to clarify some basic conceptions.

1.1 The Definition and Connotation of Urban Landscape

Urban landscape is the external expression of urban space and material substance, the organic combination of natural and artificial landscape, which has roughly four major components: firstly, urban material architectural elements, i.e. buildings; secondly, spatial elements, which includes squares, roads, parks, etc.; thirdly, cardinal plane, mainly means road surfacing; fourth, pieces like advertising column, luminaries, trash bins and city sculptures.

The connotation of landscape is reflected in the following aspects:

a) The functionality of urban landscape. A city is not an artwork only for watching. It is a place where

people actually live. Therefore, urban landscape shall serve to satisfy people's functional needs, to provide sufficient space, complete infrastructure and cultural and recreational facilities for industrial development.

b) The ecology of urban landscape. Urban landscape is the outcome of people remodeling natural landscape. Thus the constructing process is also the transforming process of natural ecosystem to urban ecosystem. A landscape is beneficial to people if it is in accordance with the ecology principle, minimizes the damage to the environment, exploitation of natural resources and destruction to the biodiversity, and rationally utilizes what is given by the nature.

c) The culture of urban landscape. Superficially, urban landscape is material substance and space. However, it is closely linked to people's spiritual world. Urban landscape is the artificial processing of nature by human spirit and the carrier of organizational system of human society, people's values and their mode of thinking. As a product of human spiritual activities, urban landscape contains a conceptual world. It is the embodiment and symbol of a city's spirit; it witnesses the history of an era and reflects the jumpy pulse of a society.

Urban culture is the core of urban landscape while urban landscape is the external expression of urban culture. The design and construction of urban landscape are the unification of material and spirit. Through the modeling, color, material and space, landscape expresses a certain kind of spiritual connotation and cultural implication, creates a certain kind of atmosphere such as a sense of history and culture, an upbeat mood, a display of ethnic culture, etc..

d) The aesthetics of urban landscape. During the constructing of urban landscape, people not only question for functionality, but also beautiful. In that process, there are inevitable problems concerning the structures' size, color, accessory, the allocation of different structures, the cadence and rhythm of the whole spatial arrangement, etc., which all fall in the category of aesthetics.

1.2 Value of the Cultural Construction of Urban Landscape

The emphasis is on cultural construction of urban landscape results from the essential connotation of urban landscape and people's aesthetic requirements. And in turn, the cultural construction of urban landscape places great influence on the thought and spirit of the residents.

Urban landscape is in possession of functions of hinting, empathizing and enlightening. Through non-linguistic form, urban landscape prompts people to be conscious, think and make connections, thus activating the function of hinting. During the constructing, various kinds of public and culturally significant way can build an environment where positive influence can be placed to people's minds and thus unconsciously empathizing them

to quest for the true, the good and the beautiful. Since landscape is the everywhere, people will be in a passively receiving status all the time. Though it is a unidirectional education method, it can be enlightening and can make people gradually come to realize the connotation of the surroundings. Therefore, urban landscape can also act as an educational resource.

In order to give full play to the above functions of urban landscape, it is imperative to stick to cultural construction of urban landscape, which means during the constructing process, we should fully integrate the regional culture, express the cultural features, spiritual connotations and fine traditions of the region through proper material landscape. In this way, the urban landscape will become more characteristic, and the people in it will also enjoy and be enlightened by the true, the good and the beautiful, both physically and mentally.

2. CHONGQING'S REGIONAL CULTURE

Regional culture is passed to in a social group generation by generation. It is a systematic mode of life with a core value and a shared standard of behavior. It includes the life habit, production mode, customs, thinking habit and some other code of conduct which were created and recognized together by the social group in this region, and members of this group also share similar traits of character and aesthetic taste to some extent.

Chongqing's regional culture is the life mode restricted and driven by the core value formed through thousands of years by Chongqing people. It includes their particular thinking and living pattern, and life contents which are accumulated in regard of corresponding habit and social values, shared character traits, aesthetic taste, code of conduct, customs, etc..

2.1 The Spiritual Connotation of Chongqing's Regional Culture

Chongqing is the only exit from Sichuan Basin to the ocean, and the docks are always full of boats and people. The exchange of goods invariably results in the opening-up of the region, hence the extroverted and open spiritual temperament of Chongqing culture. During the interflow with Hubei and Central China, Chongqing not only receives the external culture, but also keeps exporting its own culture to the outside. This kind of cultural interaction germinated and ripened the main body of Chongqing's regional culture, and it is what makes Chongqing's culture distinctive.

2.1.1 Harmony in Diversity

Historically, immigrant played a significant part in Chongqing's population structure. Ceaselessly, Chongqing take in people from all places, which result in Chongqing people's considerable immigrant psychological complex. Ba culture, Chu culture, Jin-Chu culture and culture of

central plains interacts at multi-levels, such multiple cultures equally co-exist and communicate with each other in Chongqing, allowing various cultural factors harmoniously co-exist in the same regional culture and presenting a tolerant bearing of harmony in diversity.

2.1.2 Tenacity and Constant Self-Improving

Chongqing's physiognomy of high mountains and big rivers has made the live of the ancestors extremely hard. However, under such arduousness, Chongqing people showed their courage, tenacity, tough spirit and optimism. They did not bow in the face of great pressure; instead, they held their head up high, fought and strove to be stronger.

2.2 Resources of Chongqing's Regional Culture

Under the guidance of the open, tolerant and tenacious spiritual connotation, Chongqing has formed an abundant regional culture, which all are important resources available in the cultural construction of urban landscape.

2.2.1 Historical Culture of Ba-Yu

Chongqing is a famous historic and cultural city with a long history of more than 3,000 years and honorable revolutionary tradition. Besides, it is the center of ancient Ba-Yu area where the Ba-Yu culture is originated and the long history of Chongqing is cultivated. In the course of history, Chongqing has accumulated abundant cultural resources, which are extensive and profound with a wide range and big span. For example, Dazu stone carvings (which are world cultural heritage), Daxi ancient cultural relics, Longgupo ancient cultural relics and Fishing Town site.

2.2.2 Immigrant Culture

Immigrant culture means a new cultural accumulation or type formed from long-term changes by an immigrant group during or after the immigration. It is a type of regional culture with multi-layer and multi-aspect contents.

Chongqing has experienced several immigration periods, making itself a relatively typical immigrant region. Large-scale of immigration has made external cultures group ones, and those who settled become the heirs. And since they had to interact with the original groups and other immigrant groups, the regional culture in Chongqing went through a series of massive changes and thus formed a particular immigrant culture.

2.2.3 Culture of Anti-Japanese War

During the Anti-Japanese War, Chongqing served as a second capital besides Beijing, which made it the commander center in the main battlefield as well as a genuine political, economic and cultural center due to the arrival of various institutions, organizations and cultural elites at that time. There are numerous architectural sites during Anti-Japanese War in Chongqing. Besides, the culture of Anti-Japanese War is the spirit accumulation of patriotism, courage and braveness, which were formed

during eight years of war when Chongqing served as a second capital of the Kuomintang. Such a culture carries profound connotation of high unification towards the enemy, courageous dedication for the benefits of the nation and arduous striving with perseverance.

2.2.4 Traditional and Folk Culture

Folk culture is a kind of spontaneous pop culture created by the working people at the bottom of society and it has existed in the folk tradition of all ages. Chongqing, as a concentrated area of multi-nationality, has a rich folk culture. According to the fifth national population census in 2000, there are 55 nationalities in Chongqing, and the ethnic culture is particularly characteristic.

Sichuan opera, Chuanjiang Haozi, the military dance of Ba people, the Dragon dance of Tongliang, the folk songs of Wushan, Jielongchuida, bamboo curtain picture of Liangping, and flower lantern of Xiushan all are part of traditional and folk culture, which are various in form, colorful in content and close to life. And most of them are things people love to see, hear and easily accepted.

3. STRATEGIES FOR CHONGQING'S CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN LANDSCAPE

Urban landscape is the most direct perception for the residents and visitors of a city, and the biggest and most obvious name card of that city. A city image build with fine urban landscape can attract investors and visitors to boost the economy, and more importantly, a favorable environment can improve the quality of people's life, cultivate their nobility and aesthetic taste, thus forming a healthy lifestyle and raise the city's civilization level. Therefore, the cultural construction of urban landscape does not concern the construction of material culture, but also the sublimation of spiritual culture. And we need to respect the history, abide by the rules and make scientific planning, gradually expand and perfect the urban landscape construction, thus build a beautiful city full of cultural backgrounds as well as vitality.

3.1 Overall Planning of Chongqing's Cultural Construction of Urban Landscape

A city is a compound system of economy, politics, environment, society and culture, as well as a thinking system of time and space. The design of urban landscape is complicated system engineering, and its cultural construction, a system itself, is only one part.

There are countless cultural factors that can be used as references in the cultural construction of urban landscape, but we should focus on Chongqing's regional cultural resources since we want to build a landscape with Chongqing features. However, Chongqing's regional cultural resources are also plentiful. Therefore, in order to make good use of those resources and make the

urban landscape a cultural one with profound cultural backgrounds and modern spirit so that it can advance fine traditions as well as modern atmosphere, we cannot make random choices but follow a overall design that has unified planning, underlines key factors and points to an area.

In 1999, the 20th meeting of World Architecture Construction Federation was held in Beijing. The Beijing Charter was passed on that meeting and it put forward the principle of integrity:

we shall see clearly from the group's relation: from the planning and construction of single building and city group, to the combination and integration of urban and rural planning, and even the coordinated development of different regions should all be basic factors to be concerned in architecture, the relative integrality of built environment and the incorporation with nature should be pursued all the time during development. (Wu, 1999)

Such a principle of integrity can be applied in the cultural construction of urban landscape as well.

3.2 Strategy Discussion of Chongqing's Cultural Construction of Urban Landscape

3.2.1 Urban Sign System

Urban sign system is the combination of various public service facilities that provide conditions and securities for people in public space and other corresponding identification system. It is an integrated service system with multiple functions in urban planning and construction, public property of society and a tool for the city to communicate with its residents, and its design is part of the urban landscape. We are all familiar with the bus stations, flyovers, road side benches, trash cans, sign boards, streetlights, light boxes, advertising boards, handrails, news stands, kiosks, telephone booths, etc., and they all belong to urban sign system, which is one of the standards to measure a city's civilization level, and an important carrier to reflect the cultural construction level of its urban landscape.

A successful urban sign system, besides its basic functions, can also, with its cultural and aesthetic factors, enhance a city's competitiveness, expand its influence and thus rebuild a city's image. How the urban sign system is can greatly influence the beautification and enrichment of a city's space. Furthermore, as a constituent the city, urban signs have considerable importance in expressing the urban culture. Therefore, while fully realizing the practical functions, we should also consider the city's regional culture and create an urban sign system rich in cultural characteristics and spirits.

The various aesthetical factors in the colorful tradition and folk culture of Chongqing's regional culture can be the inspiration for designing urban sign system. For example, the carvings found in most folk buildings and furniture in Chongqing can be applied to the handrails and armrests in public seats after some simplification, the

traditional folk model can be artistically applied to the design of telephone booths and news stands after some modification, and the gorgeous figures and color patterns in the Sichuan opera facial makeup and folk dresses can inspire the color allocation of the sign system.

3.2.2 Construction of Landmark Buildings and Scenery Spots, and Their Surrounding Landscape

Landmark buildings and scenery spots are compelling attractions in a city, and we have paid much attention to protecting them. However, for them to really beautify the city and unconsciously move and inspire the people, we have to integrate them with their surroundings, make unified planning and coordinated construction, and thus make them an integral whole. Otherwise, the landmark buildings and scenery spots left by the regional culture will drown in the chaotic surroundings, or even in the best scenario, its aesthetic measure and function of disseminating culture will be dampened.

For those single landmark buildings and scenery spots, there are many available construction potions:

Firstly, segregation with greenbelts: using green plants as set-offs, through their postures, heights and branches to visually coordinate or even eliminate the confrontation with surrounding buildings and highlight the main building's visual leading position.

Secondly, clear out the surroundings: which simply means highlighting the main building by tearing down surrounding buildings and facilities which have negative influence on the environment.

Thirdly, control the height, volume and color of surrounding buildings and facilities: for those buildings and facilities within certain area around the main building, we should strictly control their height, volume and color to keep them harmonious with the main building and thus bring out the best in each other.

3.2.3 The Construction of the Culture Brand Zone of Urban Landscape

Other than the construction of single landmark buildings, if a certain section or area has sufficient resources and conditions, we can go ahead and build the construction of brand culture zone of landscape, which has better integrality, and can show the regional culture of Chongqing more broadly, thus make its residents receive the culture edification and spiritual modification in a more comprehensive and profound way.

The construction of brand culture zone could be in a multi-angle and all-round way, such as central business district, university town, cultural region, food court, ancient town, revolutionary sites and historic sites, which all can be the foundation of the construction with various forms. As long as the inner integrity of the spiritual connotation is kept and the character of Chongqing's regional culture is expressed in a proper way during the process of the planning and constructing, they all can be constructed into a cultural zone of urban landscape.

For example, the “Hongyan Lianxian” is an integration of Hongyan Village, Hongyan Square, Refuse Pit, Bai Mansion, Songlinpo, Zhou Manson, Guiyuan, former site of the Xinhua Daily business department, etc., which all are revolutionary sites scattered in Chongqing and form the core line of a revolutionary tour. This is a very successful case of brand culture zone of urban landscape. The Grand Auditorium and Three Gorges Museum exhibit the refined culture and history origin of Chongqing, Ciqikou reflect Chongqing’s ancient town culture, Nanbin Road represents Chongqing’s cuisine culture.... The currently forming and already formed brand culture zones in Chongqing are in need of more conscious constructing and reconstructing, which can reveal Chongqing’s regional culture more plentifully and profoundly, and in the meantime, bring positive effects on cultivating new trend in Chongqing.

We should come to a full realization of the significance of the cultural construction of urban landscape, pay great

attention to the influence of fine regional culture in every aspects of urban construction, coordinate tradition and regional culture with modern society, and furthermore, expand the construction by going deep among the masses and with wide participation, thus allowing the city to carry and disseminate culture, breeding a city style full of Chinese culture charm and distinctive regional features.

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