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## CONFUCIANISM AND DESIGN OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE RURAL SETTLEMENT: INFLUENCES, VALUES, CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

*The article explores how Confucianism and the Confucian concept of the clan influenced the design of architectural styles of rural settlements, the spatial forms of traditional settlements, which are harmonious, in sharp contrast to the large number of similar settlements with chaotic layouts. Individual houses and courtyards make up a coherent and orderly «single» system of a zigzag structure, making its internal functions clear and rational. The author analyzes the perception of the space of traditional Chinese settlements from the standpoint of balanced relations between people and nature, which are promoted by Confucianism. The author proposes a concept of settlement space that is relevant to the present, meets the modern needs of ecodesign and the principles of preserving the ecological criteria of coexistence on the planet, and reveals the influence of a doctrine that emerged more than 2 thousand years ago. The scientific contribution of this paper is a study of the Chinese interdisciplinary scientific discourse on the influence of Confucianism on the formation of Chinese settlement design traditions and, at the same time, emphasizes the importance of Confucianism's ideas and meanings in relation to the interaction of people outside their homes, in particular, in social relations. The importance of human dignity, family values and rights, and the creation of a harmonious and orderly social environment are components of the Confucian design, which is inherent in the style of settlements and social relations. It is noted that this design reflects traditional thinking embodied in various types of life activities that are guided by Confucianism and imperceptibly promote the idea of etiquette and order, so that education and space are closely combined in the Chinese socio-cultural space. The materials of the article are useful for those who study design in higher education institutions or are engaged in scientific research on the impact of philosophical ideas and deep meanings on everyday life.*

**Key words:** *design, confucianism, traditional countryside, rural settlement, contemporary meaning.*

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## КОНФУЦІАНСТВО І ДИЗАЙН ТРАДИЦІЙНОГО КИТАЙСЬКОГО СІЛЬСЬКОГО ПОСЕЛЕННЯ: ВПЛИВИ, ЦІННОСТІ, СУЧАСНЕ ЗНАЧЕННЯ

*У статті досліджується як конфуціанство та конфуціанська концепція клану вплинули на дизайн архітектурних стилів сільських поселень, на просторові форми традиційних поселень, які є гармонійними, що різко контрастує з великою кількістю подібних поселень з хаотичним плануванням. Окремі житлові будинки та дворища складають цілісну і впорядковану «єдину» систему зигзагоподібної структури, роблячи її внутрішні*

*функції зрозумілими і раціональними. Здійснено аналіз сприйняття простору традиційних китайських поселень з позиції збалансованих відносин між людьми і природою, які пропагуються конфуціанством. Пропонується концепція простору поселення, яка актуальна для сьогодення, відповідає сучасним потребам екодизайну та принципам збереження екологічних критеріїв співжиття на планеті й виявляє вплив вчення, яке виникло юльше 2 тис. років тому. Науковим внеском даної роботи є дослідження китайського міждисциплінарного наукового дискурсу щодо впливу конфуціанства на формування традицій китайського дизайну поселень та, водночас, підкреслюється значення ідей та сенсів конфуціанства по відношенню до взаємодії людей поза межами їх помешкань, зокрема, у соціальних зв'язках. Важливість людської гідності, сімейних цінностей та прав, створення гармонійного та впорядкованого соціального середовища є складовими створеного конфуціанством дизайну, властивого і стилю поселень і соціальним стосункам. Зазначено, що цей дизайн відображає традиційне мислення, втілене в різних видах життєдіяльності, які керуються конфуціанством і непомітно пропагують ідею етикету і порядку, так що освіта і простір тісно поєднуються у китайському соціо-культурному просторі. Матеріали статті корисні для тих, хто вивчає дизайн у вищих навчальних закладах або займається науковими дослідженнями впливу філософських ідей, глибинних сенсів на повсякдення.*

**Ключові слова:** дизайн, конфуціанство, традиційна сільська місцевість, сільське поселення, сучасне значення.

**Problem statement.** Confucianism has had a significant impact on Chinese and global history. It shapes and fosters Chinese culture and permeates every aspect of social life (Bae, 2020: 608). The reflection of Confucianism's political philosophy, economic thought, and military thought reflects culture's beneficial influence on the political economy of that era. Confucianism, a Chinese ethical and philosophical school, founded by the Chinese philosopher Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius), is central to the Chinese way of life and principles of societal organization. Confucius drew from ancient traditions to conceive of an ideal human characterized by humanity, a sense of duty, respect for elders, love for humanity, modesty, justice, and self-restraint. Confucius promoted harmonious relationships between individuals and encouraged social order both in the family and in the state., Confucius emphasized the importance of a clear hierarchy in society and the distribution of responsibilities among its members. Confucianism viewed moral self-improvement and adherence to etiquette as fundamental to maintaining social order, proclaimed the power of the ruler sacred, and be the goal of public administration. Confucianism held that the goal of public administration is the people's interests. Following the time when the Han Dynasty distanced itself from Confucianism, the integration of Confucianism with Taoism and Buddhism during the Wei, Jin, Sui, and Tang Dynasties, and the emergence of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties marked new stages in its development. Confucianism has undergone various changes throughout its long history and has emerged as an essential part of China's cultural heritage (Hu, 2021). This philosophy and ideology are profoundly significant to Chinese politics, economy, culture, philosophy, patriarchal ethics, science and technology, etc. It has been the Chinese nation's code of conduct and moral code from the 5th century BC, till nowadays. The traditional urban planning, settlement planning, architectural

design and dwelling house design in China are inevitably influenced by the traditional Chinese culture. Compared with the traditional agricultural society, they align with the self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy and go forward tortuously with the birth of the traditional culture. A unique form has been formed in this environment – The Confucian village pattern and residential shape (Jiang-Fu, 2021). As the orthodox thought of feudal times, Confucianism has a great impact on the creation of traditional Chinese settlement space, especially in the space of traditional clan settlement, which can reflect the mainstream Confucianism of traditional Chinese context behind it because it reflects the characteristics of social and economic activities of the rural clan in the corresponding feudal period in architectural form space (Jing, Shan, 2023).

Exploring the ideological and cultural theoretical basis of traditional settlement space construction and discovering the advantages and disadvantages of traditional settlement space construction theory and paradigm can help people to understand more deeply the space form of traditional and the design idea of architectural details, which is beneficial to the protection, restoration, inheritance and development of excellent traditional culture, especially the construction culture of settlement. They will also bring enlightenment and beneficial thinking to China's contemporary space construction and design (Kwon, Woo, 2019: 272).

At the same time, from the core idea of Confucianism, this paper explores the theoretical basis of the formation of its spatial order, starting from the clan culture of the real traditional village. Analysis of the traditional settlement environment and the villager's production, life, ecological activities and the relationship between the Confucian core ideas. Combined with examples of the clan of residential architecture research, he explores the Confucian culture in residential architecture design

and plays the role of significance (Lee, Min, Kim, 2022: 14-142). From the macroscopic village location to the microscopic brick tile transformation, seeks the clan settlement the space creation rule. On this basis, we conclude that “courtesy” and “benevolence” are the criteria people follow in their daily life and behaviour in traditional society.

**Analysis of research.** Confucianism is the main focus of this study, other scholars have made notable contributions to the study of Chinese rural settlements. Yu Jiandong focuses on the application of traditional Confucian principles to modern architecture and also explores how to achieve harmony with the environment (Yu, 2014). In addition, scholars like JW Spain argue that cultural differences and geographical conditions facilitate frequent cultural exchanges and interactions between peoples (Spain, Brewer, 2002: 187-194). Wu Liangyong has also delved into the link between cultural values and traditional Chinese architectural design (Wu, 2016: 95). These researchers, among others, have emphasised the multidimensional character of Chinese settlement design, which is influenced by a variety of historical, cultural and environmental factors. The significance of this study is that it reveals an ecological view of settlement design, which is an emerging concept in today’s society. It has important implications for contemporary urbanisation and sustainable development, making it an important decision for policy makers in these fields.

**The aim.** Of the article is to investigate how Confucianism and the Confucian concept of the clan has greatly influenced the design of architectural styles and the perception of space in traditional Chinese settlements, and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the design of rural settlements in China by drawing on the work of other leading researchers in the field.

**Presentation of the main material.** Nowadays, the rise of Confucianism is an inevitable result of history and a revelation of the times. At the same time, combined with examples of modern residential architecture research, explore the role and significance of Confucian culture in residential building design. Confucianism can last for thousands of years without being destroyed, it has unique and strong vitality and is not invariable, rigid thinking. It means the Chinese national culture has full adaptability and great inclusiveness. A “reasonable core” must exist beyond time and space to have immortal value. Confucian philosophy provides us with rich and profound ideological resources and valuable wisdom for solving modern society’s problems (Liu, Chunyu, 2022: 353). Confucian culture is an open scientific system and

can keep pace with the times. Confucianism can not only solve the problems faced by human society but also promote the harmonious development of the relationship between man and the world and promote the progress of human civilization (Lily, Kong, Yang, 2021). Therefore, as far as the present age is concerned, it is very important to study the great realistic value of Confucianism, especially to analyze its influence on Chinese culture and environment.

Inheritance and expression of Confucianism in traditional clan settlements

Confucianism, derived from China’s ancient buildings, ancient villages, traditional residential planning and construction rules, is the theoretical basis of China’s traditional space creation. Its architectural layout and structure also reflect the influence of “harmony between man and nature”. Clan settlement has typical significance in Chinese traditional living space. It is based on consanguinity, involving all aspects of production, life, recreation, and another spatial family village (Shan, Tian, 2022). In its formation, it was greatly influenced by Confucian culture and thought and gradually evolved into a residential building with regional and national characteristics. The planning and establishment of clan settlement, space form, development law and so on are all unique and accompanied by Chinese traditional culture (Fig. 1).

The Confucian thought of “benevolence, propriety and the doctrine of the mean” is comprehensive and impacts the spatial order. The Confucian theory of dwelling place also has an important enlightenment to modern society. First, Confucianism is family-oriented, advocating a “benevolent” relationship between men and women, derived from the family as the central living space, the traditional space for the ancestral hall, hall, or elderly room as the main axis. At the same time, Confucianism also advocated the importance of human dignity and rights and the

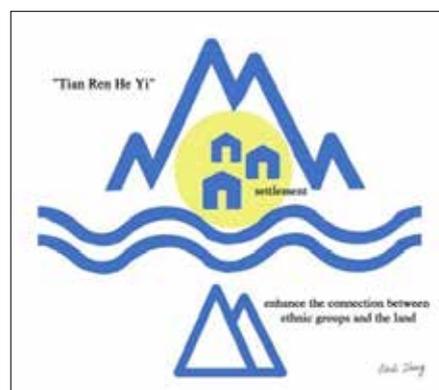


Fig. 1. Weidi Zhang, The layout of the clan under the “Heaven and Man thought”, 2023 (author’s)

establishment of a harmonious, equal, and orderly social environment. Secondly, the space of clan settlement reflects traditional thought, embodied in marriage, funerals, temple and other activities (Fig. 1). Production, life and other activities, all guided by Confucianism and imperceptibly propagate the idea of etiquette and order so that education and space are closely combined (Wu, Liang, Shen, Jiang, 2022: 989).

The ideal state of human settlement in traditional settlement construction is “harmony between man and nature”. For production and living, we should choose the best ecological space. This paper expounds and analyzes how to use the concept of “harmony between man and nature” in a modern landscape environment and demonstrates and explains it with examples. First, “Harmony between Heaven and Man” will produce ecological space for life, close ties between clansmen and regions, meet the needs of a self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy in settlements and embody regional, economic and ecological characteristics in space construction (Shan, Tian, 2022). With the symbiosis of man and nature as the design principle, the living environment can conform to the laws of nature and social development and create a sustainable and inclusive modern urban landscape ecosystem. Then the ancient planners, designers and gardeners imitated nature and sought harmony between the “Heaven Way” and “Humanity”. They drew inspiration from natural elements and regarded space as a condensed and characteristic natural life with a unique theme and ecological nature (Zhang, Chan, 2021: 377). Therefore, in a sense, the traditional space system is an organic whole full of the concept of harmonious coexistence of man and nature, with strong vitality and inclusiveness. Third, the decorative elements of traditional Chinese space are mostly based on the surrounding natural environment, promote the spirit of craftsmen, and pay attention to beauty so that the building structure and craft aesthetic reach a perfect fusion, such as Huizhou ancient architectural stone carvings, wood carvings, brick carvings, wall paintings, they work fine, prominent theme, exquisite material, it is a typical representative. On this basis, architectural decoration and architectural essays in the traditional space to assume the role of “teaching without words” in education have not yet been popularized today. The exercise of spreading stories, inheriting culture and other functions is a typical residential space with the nature of education (Gao, 2022: 3437).

Overall, the creation of traditional clan settlement embodies the social consciousness, economic basis and political environment, clan belief and the

construction level of successive dynasties. It has rich and profound philosophical connotations and embodies a unique understanding of the relationship between human nature and nature. Chinese traditional clan settlements have identities and differences. For example, the clan concept centred on family keeps the vitality of clan settlement and reflects the identity characteristics of traditional settlement; meanwhile, with the social and economic development and frequent population flow, traditional clan settlement appears to be differentiated and varied. Influenced by the geographical, political and historical environment and other factors, the settlement planners and users have different interpretations and applications of Confucianism, resulting in various traditional settlements with local and clan characteristics. Confucianism is the ideological and cultural basis behind the identity and differences of traditional Chinese settlements. It is a key to opening the door to traditional Chinese buildings.

#### Influence of Confucianism on Environment Design and Contemporary Enlightenment

Influenced by Confucianism, the planning and design of traditional rural clan settlements constitute a special regional environment. Its beauty of harmony between architecture and nature, the combination of architectural spaces, the creation of spatial functionality and the detailed decoration of architectural structures are of great reference significance and can inspire the environmental design of contemporary rural and urban areas:

- 1) The ecological settlement concept of harmony between man and nature, which constructs an ideal clan settlement environment of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, is a reference for contemporary urban planning and rural revitalization. On this premise, people with good living behaviour and habits maintain society’s sustainable development. The ecological environment is beautiful; the surrounding vegetation is luxuriant, the animal species are rich and colourful, the rich natural resources have provided the conditions for the villagers to reproduce, and the village production and life obtained a reliable guarantee. This kind of Confucian humanism and ecological design thought has the characteristics of Chinese traditional wisdom and is also lacking in planning contemporary cities and villages. Most contemporary planning and design have nothing to do with the natural ecological environment, the architectural space is relatively closed, and the connection and interaction between the living space and the living space of animals and plants are ignored (Fig. 2).

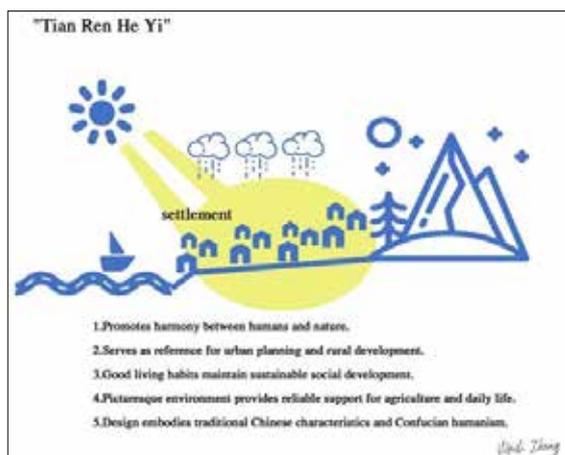


Fig. 2. Weidi Zhang, Best settlement option, 2023 (author's)

2) The spatial form of traditional rural clan settlements is very orderly and harmonious, with integrity and unity, in sharp contrast to many barbarous people and villages with chaotic planning at the same time. Single residences and courtyards constitute a complete and orderly “one” zigzag structure system, making its internal functions clear and rational. The arrangement form of unit houses makes the settlement space relationship clear, the living order clear, and the space sense strong. From the above aspects, the village has formed a certain degree of organization and stability of the human settlement system, thus ensuring people's normal production and communication activities and promoting socio-economic and cultural development. The distribution of units left and right so that the courtyard of this unit of public space has been efficient use, but also in line with the needs of small families.

3) The fine decoration of the complex plays a key role in the whole space. It represents a unique clan culture and reflects the connotation of Confucianism, which is of educational significance. Such a strong

sense of experience, and education in fun, so that the space has a cultural spirit of the design approach will be the future living space in urban landscape design. The exquisite craftsmanship of traditional architectural decoration is in line with the spirit of “craftsman spirit” advocated by contemporary times.

4) The indoor and outdoor space is closely related to the villagers' production, residence and customs; cultural activities constitute its space, and the form of space is restrained and changes the fate of villagers. The two are the relationship and development of mutual cause and effect. The natural environment of the village, the architectural space, and the villagers' customs are highly consistent, which are the tertiary space (production, life and ecology) advocated by contemporary rural space planning and have certain reference significance.

**Conclusion.** To summarize, based on the above, it can be argued that the influence of Confucianism, in particular the Li category, the philosophy of ritual, rite and cosmic order, which is reflected in the triad of Heaven-Earth-Human relations, on the mentality of the Chinese society is extremely large and can be traced in various fields. Architecture has become one of the most representative fields of combining Confucian philosophy and design. In this paper, some buildings in traditional Chinese paintings such as Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival are quoted to fully explain the embodiment of Confucianism in ancient architecture.

In modern society, people have different requirements for living in the environment, and the interconnectedness with the world through landscape and architecture is often overlooked or even ignored. Therefore, in this article, the authors emphasize the importance of design that is rooted in deep life-affirming philosophical criteria that have stood the test of time and continue to be relevant.

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