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## THE CULTURAL VALUE OF THE INFANT-RAISING ROOM SCENE IN HUNAN DURING THE QING DYNASTY FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract:

From a historical point of view, the Infant-Raising Room in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty has an important cultural value. This cultural value can only really play a positive role under specific conditions. This paper utilizes the historical perspective and combines the “scene theory” of the New Chicago School to provide a new theoretical direction for studying the cultural value of the Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty, starting from the space's symbolic significance and value orientation. Through the analysis and argumentation of the historical facts of the infant-raising room in Hunan Prefecture in the Qing Dynasty, this paper reveals that the local authenticity of the cultural connotation of the infant-raising room needs to be excavated in depth from multiple perspectives. It emphasizes the synergy and localization of different cultural elements to solve the problem of precise matching between comfortable facilities and the needs of a good life.

### Keywords:

Scene Cultural Values; Qing Dynasty; Hunan; Infant-Raising Room; Historical Perspective.

## Introduction

A research team led by Terry Nichols Clark, a tenured professor at the University of Chicago, has proposed a new paradigm in urban studies known as the "Scene Theory." According to Wu Jun (2017), this theory is based on citizens' cultural and artistic consumption practices, integrating elements such as public products oriented towards amenities and diverse populations to form scenes. The theory explores the embedded cultural values and lifestyles within these scenes. The term "scene" in Scene Theory is derived from the English word "scene," as used in the film to include dialogue, setting, props, music, costumes, and actors—everything that conveys a film's intended message and feeling to the audience. Chinese scholars Wu Jun and Terry N. Clark (2014) argue that a "scene" is a symbolically meaningful social space composed of consumption amenities and practices, reflecting differentiated value orientations.

The Qing Dynasty, led by the Manchu ethnic group, was the last flourishing period of ancient Chinese agrarian society. After the establishment of the Qing, there was a significant focus on infant-raising charitable activities (Wang Fan, 2014). In the early Qing period, the issue of infant drowning became increasingly severe, prompting both the court and local gentry to place greater emphasis on establishing infant-raising amenities. This study uses a historical perspective to focus on the scene cultural value of the Infant-Raising Room in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty, employing Scene Theory to conduct an empirical analysis with the Qing Dynasty Hunan Provincial Infant-Raising Room as a case study. It addresses the following two questions: What scene cultural value does the Qing Dynasty Hunan Infant-Raising Room possess from a historical perspective? Under what conditions can the scene cultural value of the Qing Dynasty Hunan Infant-Raising Room truly exert a positive influence?

## Literature Review

This review aims to explore scenario theory and the cultural value of the Hunan Infant-Raising Room in the Qing Dynasty to reveal its profound significance in urban and social development. Scene theory is particularly favored by the New Chicago School, which emphasizes that a collection of amenities and public goods can have a clustering effect on a specific group of people through cultural values and lifestyles, which in turn affects the socio-economic outcomes of a city (Wu Jun, 2017). In China, scholars have widely used scenario theory in various research fields, including behavioral studies, urban public policy, and public culture. Still, fewer systematic analyses have been conducted specifically to analyze the cultural value of scenarios in the Hunan Infant-Raising Room in the Qing Dynasty. As a government-sponsored charity organization in the Qing Dynasty, the nursery reflected the social concern and measures to solve the problem of abandoned babies, and its historical background and cultural significance need to be explored in depth. Although studies have been conducted to explore the charities and public policies of the Qing Dynasty (Wang Weiping & Pan Weifeng, 2022), there is still a lack of relevant literature focusing on the cultural value of the nursery scene. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of the Qing nursery combined with scenario theory can not only reveal the multidimensional aspects of its cultural value but also provide new perspectives and insights for current social policies and urban planning.

## *Scene Cultural Value*

The New Chicago School, led by Terry Nichols Clark, posits that clusters of public goods oriented towards amenities form distinct scenes. These scenes encompass cultural values and lifestyles that attract different groups of people, leading to varied urban outcomes (Wu

Jun, 2017). Scene Theory's concept of "culture" is not abstract or vague but is grounded in neighborhood environments, where public goods oriented towards amenities, diverse populations, and practices coalesce to form scenes. These scenes embed value orientations, lifestyles, and quality of life, influencing the mobility and aggregation of human capital, such as the creative class, and driving economic growth and social development (Wu Jun, 2017). Thus, the "scene" concept in this theory transcends the material aggregation of amenities and activities, serving as an externalized symbol of culture and values that influence individual behavior. For instance, in the world of Disney, visitors adhere to order and trust each other, shedding bad habits from their daily lives and becoming more civilized. Disney's spatial arrangement of "scenes" encourages people to willingly conform to humane coordination.

Chinese scholars have extensively applied Scene Theory across various fields, including behavioral research, urban public policy, public culture, lifestyle amenities, the cultural growth machine, regional cultural consumption differentiation, cultural heritage, urban cultural innovation paths, urban community spaces, media image, buzzing productivity, and industrial heritage tourism. The earliest application of Scene Theory in China was Wu Di's study on Scene Theory and Chinese urban residential behavior. Wu Di, Gao Peng, and Dong Jichang (2011) proposed that cultural and value factors influence urban residential real estate demand and residential preferences. Subsequently, Wu Jun became one of the key figures in collecting and researching urban scene data in China. In 2013, Wu Jun, Xia Jianzhong, and Terry N. Clark (2013) introduced and analyzed Scene Theory, suggesting that it offers a new theoretical framework for urban development, planning, service, management, and relevant public policy formulation in China, and summarised several principles regarding the theory's impact on urban public policy. In 2014, Wu Jun and Terry N. Clark (2014) explored Scene Theory's implications for urban policy from the perspectives of globalization, the growth of cultural consumption, the rise of the middle class, and individualization, identifying two dimensions of policy insights: national or state levels and local levels. Chen Bo and Liu Bo (2016) used the analytical framework of Scene Theory to categorize the utility dimensions of endogenous public cultural resources and conducted empirical analysis to demonstrate the aggregation effects among these dimensions. Qi Shuyu (2017) focused on lifestyle amenities, arguing that only by relying on specific cultural spatial environments integrating various cultural practices and diverse populations into different "scenes," and showcasing the values and lifestyles within these scenes, can the unique utility of lifestyle amenities be fully realized. Wu Zhiming, Ma Xiulian, and Wu Jun (2017) posited that cities and communities have become a combination of growth machines and entertainment machines, i.e., cultural growth machines, and argued that the cultural scene construction of cities or communities has political, economic, and social characteristics. Li Huifen and Ye Nanke (2017) used panel data on cultural consumption from 13 prefecture-level cities in Jiangsu Province from 2010 to 2014 to conduct empirical research on cultural consumption differences under different cultural scenes using fixed effects models and block regression methods. Zhang Zheng and Yu Bokun (2019) suggested that China's cultural industry parks have entered the "scene operation" stage and argued that urban cultural industry parks can use the five elements of Scene Theory as a starting point for their transformation, enhancing their productivity and consumption through constructing, marketing, operating, and communicating scenes.

Liu Guiru (2020) explored the morphological connotation of cultural and creative districts as a form of social-cultural symbols and local aesthetic practice spaces based on Scene Theory, positioning the "scene" of cultural and creative districts as a cognitive prerequisite for

constructing their media image. By employing the communication concept of "scene," Liu integrated cultural and creative districts into a virtual "entrance scene," discussing the feasibility paths for constructing and communicating the media image of cultural and creative districts through "re-scenification." Wen Wen and Dai Juncheng (2021) analyzed the shift from "pre-scene" to "post-scene" trends using the research paradigm of Scene Theory, discovering that scenes have evolved from cultural phenomena represented by music communities and the interaction between "cultural forms, people, and places" to cultural consumption scenes and urban management tools shaped by urban culture and public policy. They identified two empirical research directions: virtual cultural scenes based on "pre-scenes" and cultural community scenes based on "post-scenes." Qi Ji and Terry N. Clark (2022) integrated the "buzz" theory and the measurement of "buzz productivity" into Scene Theory, providing a theoretical perspective for global urban research, offering insights into urban innovation, and proposing a measurement tool based on urban scene research for the sustainable development and innovative growth of urban living circles. Chen Bo and Chen Lihao (2023) analyzed the evolutionary mechanisms of industrial heritage tourism sites, discovering a logical framework with endogenous spatial production as the driving force and scene value expression as the external representation. They suggested that future research should focus on enhancing the planning and construction levels of industrial heritage tourism sites by leveraging historical resources, fostering an innovative expression atmosphere, encouraging diverse participation, and recreating the spirit of public space, thus enhancing the scene value of industrial heritage tourism sites.

### ***Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty***

The Infant-Raising Rooms were charitable institutions vigorously promoted by the rulers of the Qing Dynasty. These institutions, established with the participation of officials, the gentry, and the public, were dedicated to nurturing and caring for abandoned or unwanted infants. Their establishment received significant attention from both the state and society. In the first year of Kangxi (1662), the first Infant-Raising Room was established at Guangqu Gate in the capital (now Beijing) to care for abandoned and sick infants. Under governmental guidance and encouragement, various prefectures, sub-prefectures, and counties set up Infant-Raising Rooms. Many local officials and gentry supported the operation of these institutions by allocating public land and funds or donating money and land. In this context, the infant-raising cause in Hunan experienced significant development. During the Qianlong period, Hunan established 44 infant-raising rooms, with an additional 25 being built by the Daoguang period (Zhou Qiuguang, Zhang Shaoli, Xu Deyu, et al., 2010).

Research on Chinese Infant-Raising Rooms can be traced back to 1912, with one of the earliest analyses provided by Yu-Yue Tsu, a political science PhD from Columbia University, in his dissertation *The Spirit of Chinese Philanthropy: A Study of Mutual Aid*. In the late 20th century, Japanese scholar Fuma Makoto was among the first to examine philanthropic organizations in the Ming and Qing dynasties, identifying through his study of the Tongshan Hui that this society evolved from releasing animals to providing aid to humans, marking an early phase of civil philanthropy (Liu Faliang, 2015). Taiwan-based scholar Liang Qizi has become one of the most influential researchers in this area, exploring the historical background, structure, and nature of these charitable institutions. Liang advocates for examining these organizations from the subjective perspectives of benefactors (Xiao Jun, Yuan Chunhua, Lin Zhenlin, & Wang Chengdang, 2022). In mainland China, one of the earliest significant contributions to philanthropy research was made by Deng Tuo with his 1998 publication, *A*

History of Relief from Disasters in China (Liu Faliang, 2015). Later, People Living in the Qing Dynasty discussed infanticide practices across various regions, analyzing the establishment of Infant-Raising Rooms as a partial solution. Despite saving many lives, these institutions' limited funding fell short of meeting the extensive needs of impoverished families with infant daughters (Zhang Chaofan, 2018). A Brief History of Chinese Philanthropy delves deeply into the charitable institutions of the Ming and Qing periods, examining government relief efforts alongside the rise of civil philanthropy (Qin Lei, 2022). Additionally, A History of Philanthropy in Hunan provides a comprehensive look at charity in ancient and modern Hunan, detailing the founding, funding sources, and operations of the Hongjiang Foundling Hospital and offering statistical insights on Infant-Raising Rooms across various counties in Hunan (Chen Xianglin & Li Chenxi, 2021).

Wang Weiping and Pan Weifeng (2022) analyzed the Qing Emperor Yongzheng's approach to private philanthropy from a policy perspective, highlighting his explicit support for institutions such as the Pujitang and Infant-Raising Rooms, along with his commendation and encouragement of charitable activities aimed at assisting the elderly and orphans. Ling Yan and Wang Xiao (2022) investigated the operational details of Qing-era rural Infant-Raising Rooms in Pingxiang, Jiangxi, focusing on newly discovered records to examine these institutions' roles in local social governance. Qin Lei and Shan Xiaoyang (2021) studied the relief policies of Guiyang during the Daoguang period, exploring how the Guiyang administration mitigated social conflicts and promoted regional stability by establishing various charitable organizations. Finally, Zhang Min and Zou Guangtian (2021) reviewed the architectural development of charitable relief amenities in China, tracing the evolution of support-focused buildings from the perspectives of traditional Chinese architecture and ancient charity structures.

In summary, existing research indicates that Chinese scholars have not yet utilized Scene Theory to analyze the scene cultural value of Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty. Current research on the cultural value of historical architectural heritage is relatively concentrated. The study of conditions for the realization of the scene cultural value of Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty is also lacking, mainly focusing on macro policies and micro regulations. Most research on Infant-Raising Rooms is conducted within the broader framework of Chinese charitable culture, emphasizing its historical and cultural significance. Currently, many historical buildings or sites of Infant-Raising Rooms from the Qing Dynasty in Hunan are used as traditional-style exhibition museums, which diminishes their inherent scene cultural value.

### **Historical Perspective**

As a civil charity institution in the Qing Dynasty, the Infant-Raising Room primarily focused on the care and adoption of abandoned infants. Its operations relied on donations and support from local society and government officials. The Qing Dynasty's Infant-Raising Rooms formulated specific regulations based on the conditions of each region, detailing the procedures for the adoption and care of infants. This paper takes the Infant-Raising Room in the capital of Hunan Province as a case study, analyzing its organizational structure, personnel management, and infant care practices to explore the scene cultural value inherent in the Qing Dynasty's Hunan Infant-Raising Rooms. Additionally, it examines the conditions under which this cultural value can be fully realized.



***Provincial Capital Infant-Raising Room***

The Provincial Capital Infant-Raising Room was established in 1724. Over the years, it expanded in scale and improved its management. The Infant-Raising Room was managed and operated by the following personnel: one general manager, four principal officers, one assistant manager, initially 70 wet nurses (which increased to a maximum of 210), two elderly women, one doctor, one office clerk, five hall servants, three clerks, one cook, two water carriers, one rice grinder, and one milk collector. The staff in the Infant-Raising Room typically numbered around 100, with clearly defined duties. The specific responsibilities are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Organization of the Infant-Raising Room in Hunan Province during the Qing Dynasty**

Name	Number of People (Persons)	Responsibilities
General Office	1	Appoint and supervise the Head Officer
Head Officer	4	Actual responsible person
Assistant	1	Assist the Head Officer
Wet Nurse	Not fixed, no more than 70 people	Nursing
Elderly Women	2	Manage wet nurses
Doctor	1	Consultation and prescribing medicine
Secretary	1	Reporting and handling requests
Hall Attendant	5	Handling miscellaneous tasks in the hall
Hall Secretary	3	Registration and filling forms
Cook	1	Catering and lodging
Waterman	1	Manage the well
Reception Nurse	1	Receiving abandoned infants
Hard Rice Worker	1	Hard rice
Cattle Breeder and Milker	1	Raise cows and milk them
Cattle Breeder and Delivery Attendant	1	Raise cows and milk them

Source: The data in Table 1 is compiled from the research findings of Tan Ting's Study of the Hongjiang Foundling Hospital in the Late Qing Dynasty (2018).

***Infant Management***

Infant management is the core of the Infant-Raising Room's operations, focusing on the care and prospects of the infants. This includes methods of infant care, the reception of infants, infant nurturing, and their future paths. This section will analyze the infant management mechanisms of the Qing Dynasty's Hunan Infant-Raising Rooms.

The various infant-rising rooms in Hunan during the Qing Dynasty developed multiple infant care methods based on factors such as scale, social environment, asset levels, number of infants, and the qualifications of the wet nurses. These methods included institutional care, foster care, self-care, and sponsored care. Initially, the care method was predominantly

institutional care, but it gradually evolved to include multiple methods. In the mid to late periods, rural infant care organizations, to save costs, mostly adopted self-care and foster care methods. Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of these four care methods.

**Table 2: Characteristics and Comparative Analysis of Infant-Raising Room Infant-Raising Methods in Hunan Provincial City in the Qing Dynasty**

Infant Care Method	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages	Development
Hall Care	Infants are raised within the infant care hall	1. Comprehensive amenities and strict management. 2. Hygiene and medical care are well established.	1. High operating costs. 2. Limited scale and number of infants raised.	Earliest
Foster Care	Infants are raised by wet nurses at home	1. Supplements insufficient care capacity. 2. Reduces complex management processes. 3. Saves management costs.	1. Risk of wet nurses misusing resources. 2. Resources might be used for their children.	No hall care was established in the late Qing period, primarily foster and self-care
Self-Care	Financial aid is provided periodically, and biological parents raise the infants	1. Simple operation, saves management costs. 2. Biological parents take care. 3. Increases infant survival rates.	1. Preference for male infants. 2. Adults might consume the milk.	
Donation Care	Donors designate assistance targets	1. Plays a central role in establishing infant care halls. 2. No limit on quantity.	1. Donated funds may not reach their intended targets.	

Source: Author's drawing.

In Qing Dynasty Hunan, the infants cared for in Infant-Raising Rooms typically came either through parental or third-party placement or were found abandoned along roadsides. Each foundling hospital established specific age requirements for admission; for instance, the Hunan Provincial Foundling Hospital accepted infants only if they were brought within three to five days of birth, with strict refusals for those older than one year to prevent unsuitable admissions (Liu Faliang, 2015). Upon entry, infants required registration, including the exact date and time of admission. If parents delivered the infant, the record included the child's name, parents' names, address, and birth date for verification purposes. Unnamed infants were given a name by the hospital and registered accordingly. Similar procedures and age requirements apply to infants who were privately fostered or placed in care with a guardian.

Infant nurturing was a critical aspect of the care provided by the Infant-Raising Rooms, with a series of preventive measures to ensure the infants' health. Infectious diseases such as smallpox and measles posed significant threats, so the Infant-Raising Rooms took specific precautions. These included strict control over the wet nurses' contact with the outside world, maintaining cleanliness and sanitation with moxa disinfection, isolating new arrivals for a period, hiring doctors for diagnosis and treatment, and properly handling the deaths of infants.

For institutional care infants, the Infant-Raising Room served as a temporary shelter. Self-care infants were generally raised by their parents or taken in by others. Foster care infants were typically arranged by their foster families, with regulations in place to protect fostered female infants from abuse. The future paths for institutional care infants included being reclaimed by their biological parents or relatives, being adopted by others, becoming child brides, or staying in the institution until adulthood. Those who remained in the Infant-Raising Room would receive basic vocational skills and elementary education as they grew older.

### *Funding Sources and Expenditure*

Stable funding sources form the economic foundation for the normal operation of infant-raising activities. The funding sources for infant-raising activities in Qing Dynasty Hunan were diverse, mainly including public funds, donations, rents, taxes, and charitable contributions. Donations and rents were the primary economic sources, directly determining the scale and sustainability of infant-raising activities. See Table 3 for specific funding sources.

**Table 3: Analysis of Funding Sources for the Provincial Capital Infant-Raising Room in Hunan**

Category	Donor	Donation Content	Status
Public Funds	Government allocation of infant care funds and assets	Silver, land, houses, etc.	Important guarantee
Donations	Local officials and private entities	Silver, land, houses, etc.	Important source
Rental Income	Land rent, house rent, interest from pawnshops (government deposits silver in pawnshops to earn interest)	Rental income from houses, shops, storehouses, and land donated by officials and civilians or self-owned properties, principal deposited for interest	Important channel
Tax Donations	Funds allocated from local government taxes	Approved by local government, collected from merchants by the infant care organization	Mandatory and institutionalized



Stamp Donations	Receiving government- issued stamps and engaging in commercial activities to earn funds for infant care	Commercial activities	Only recorded usage in Hongjiang Infant Care Hall
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Source: Author's drawing.

Expenditure depends on the scale and methods of infant-raising. Institutional care incurs numerous expenses, while the procedures for foster care and self-care are relatively straightforward. Expenditure mainly includes milk expenses, management expenses, and miscellaneous expenses, with milk expenses being the largest for institutional care infants. Foster care and self-care typically involve only milk expenses. See Table 4 for a specific expenditure breakdown.

**Table 4: Analysis of Expenditure for the Provincial Capital Infant-Raising Room in Hunan**

Expenditure	Content	Scope	Characteristics	Explanation
Infant Care Expenditure	1. Clothing and essential living expenses for infants. 2. Salaries and meals for wet nurses.	Hall care, foster care, self-care	1. Main expenditure. 2. Significant expense. 3. Variability.	Salaries for wet nurses vary depending on the economic conditions of the region and the method of infant care.
Management Expenditure	1. Salaries and meal expenses for management, attendants, doctors, and other personnel.	Hall care	Mainly focused on hall care operations	Determined by internal setup and asset levels.
Miscellaneous Expenditure	1. Expenses for rituals, festival candles, and other charitable activities. 2. Costs related to interactions between the infant care hall, government, and external parties, as well as other miscellaneous uses.	Within the infant care hall	Many items	1. The infant care hall maintains various deities and conducts ritual activities. 2. Regular allocations for other charitable activities to sustain operations. 3. Miscellaneous expenses for repairs, acquisitions, and social interactions.

Source: Author's drawing.

**Causes**

Infanticide by drowning refers to the practice where parents, unable to provide for a newborn, would drown the infant. Such incidents have a long history in China, as early as Han Feizi, which notes that parents would celebrate the birth of a boy but drown a girl (Tan Ting, 2018). In Hunan, the practice of infanticide—especially targeting female infants—was longstanding and became increasingly prevalent during the Qing Dynasty. Historical records attribute this practice to various causes, including poverty and food scarcity, high dowry costs, a lack of caretakers for agricultural families, fears of inheritance claims by married daughters, a preference for sons, natural disasters such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, and wartime hardships. A detailed analysis of these causes is provided in the following tables.

**Table 5: Analysis of Infanticide in Qing Dynasty China**

Reason	Affected Infants	Source
Family Poverty	Male and Female Infants	Liao Xiuli. 1909. Records of the Baiguo Infant Care Hall, Vol. 4, Giving Section. Hunan Library.
Extravagant Dowries for Daughters	Female Infants	Pan Qing. 1887. Notes on the Hongjiang Infant Care Hall, Vol. 1, Preface. Hunan Library.
Heavy Farm Work, No One to Look After Infants	Male and Female Infants	Lin Fengyi. 1817. Gazetteer of Guidong County, Vol. 17, Literature, Notices. Hunan Normal University Library.
Fear of Daughters Competing for Inheritance After Death	Female Infants	Lin Fengyi. 1817. Gazetteer of Guidong County, Vol. 17, Literature, Notices. Hunan Normal University Library.
Urgency to Have a Son	Female Infants	Lin Fengyi. 1817. Gazetteer of Guidong County, Vol. 17, Literature, Notices. Hunan Normal University Library.
Famine	Male and Female Infants	Li Wenhai, Xia Mingfang. 2003. Complete Collection of China's Relief Measures, Vol. 2, Part 1. Beijing: Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House.

Source: Author's drawing.

**Key Driving Factors**

The role of the government began with the enactment of prohibitive laws. According to Huangzhou Gazetteer, in the thirteenth year of Emperor Qianlong's reign, the Ministry of Rites issued a specific statute addressing the drowning of female infants, mandating that those found guilty of this act be punished as intentional murderers. The penalty included 60 strikes to the back with a wooden rod, followed by a year of forced labor (Wang Yan, 2021). Additionally, moral education through public advocacy was widespread across Hunan, aiming to save infants by publishing various notices, poems, and compilations of moral texts. These were circulated to condemn infanticide and encourage the community to support the welfare of infants, significantly aiding the development of foundling care. The Chinese character indicating merit

and demerit (Merit and Demerit Ledger), popular during the Qing Dynasty, also contained extensive admonitions against infanticide, encouraging people to rescue infants. This ledger categorized actions as good or evil and assigned ethical scores, serving as a powerful tool for promoting moral behavior. Another related practice was the child bride system, in which a newborn female infant was adopted as a future daughter-in-law for another family. This system was widely practiced across Hunan. According to the Yizhang County Gazetteer, impoverished families, unable to afford a dowry, often gave their newborn or young daughters, typically under ten years of age, to other households as child brides (Tan Ting, 2018).

However, the implementation of laws, public advocacy, and the child bride system could only mitigate but not fully eliminate the practice of female infanticide. This limitation underscored the necessity for dedicated measures to support families unable to raise infants and to care for abandoned babies. In the Qing Dynasty text *Ping Ping Yan*, infanticide of female infants was deemed highly disruptive to natural harmony, suggesting that preventing it required the establishment of Infant-Raising Rooms. It proposed that providing food and money to impoverished families could better support infant care than institutionalized foster care alone (Tan Ting, 2018).

Local Qing officials in Hunan—regional governors and county administrators—played an essential role in the foundling care system. Provincial governors regularly issued public notices promoting foundling care, urging local officials and citizens to support these initiatives and providing policy guidance. Local county officials served as both founders and advocates, contributing to founding initiatives by donating salaries, organizing fundraising efforts, awarding community efforts, and overseeing operations. Although Hunan officials typically did not manage foundling institutions directly, they were involved in supervising operations and appointing managers to ensure the reliable function and growth of these amenities.

Civil involvement included the participation of gentry, wealthy merchants, and common citizens, who contributed by establishing and managing foundling care organizations, overseeing daily operations, and funding expenses. Particularly in the mid-to-late Qing Dynasty, many founding institutions were established by the local gentry, who often held positions of respect and influence. These leaders were typically nominated by officials or selected through public elections with county magistrate approval.

### **The Scene Culture Value of Qing Dynasty Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan Province**

The framework of scene cultural values proposed by Clarke and Daniel provides a powerful tool for analyzing complex social life and value compositions. This paper will comprehensively analyze the Qing Dynasty infant-raising rooms in Hunan Province as amenities, combining the three dimensions of legitimacy, authenticity, and theatricality in this framework, and considering their historical background. This analysis not only helps understand the cultural value of infant-raising rooms in the society of that time but also provides new perspectives and practical significance for the protection and utilization of modern cultural heritage.

The infant-raising rooms in Qing Dynasty Hunan Province embody profound Confucian benevolent thoughts, emphasizing charity, assistance, and moral education, making them part of traditional culture. Their establishment and development received widespread recognition and support from both the authorities and society, demonstrating their legitimacy and cultural orthodoxy. The Qing government promoted the establishment and development of infant-

raising rooms by enacting relevant laws and policies, providing funds and policy support, making them part of the national charity system, and highlighting the state's leading role in charitable endeavors. The organizational structure and management system of the infant-raising rooms were highly formal, with various personnel responsible for daily operations, from administrators to wet nurses, ensuring the effective operation and management of the rooms. The infant-raising rooms in Hunan Province were deeply rooted in local culture, reflecting the unique culture and customs of the region. Their creation and operation were influenced by Confucianism and tailored to local circumstances, possessing a high degree of local characteristics. The infant-raising rooms were not only charitable institutions but also carriers of local community expressions of benevolence and moral values. Through various charitable activities and facility construction, the infant-raising rooms showcased the enthusiasm and dedication of residents to charitable endeavors. In the Qing Dynasty, infant-raising rooms became a stage for gentry and social elites to express moral sentiments and social responsibilities. Through donations and participation in the management of infant-raising rooms, they demonstrated personal moral cultivation and social responsibility. The existence and operation of infant-raising rooms strengthened community cohesion and neighborly relations. Through joint participation and support for infant-raising rooms, community residents formed closer social bonds and mutual assistance relationships. The infant-raising rooms themselves, as well as related activities such as caring for infants, vaccinating against smallpox, and providing lifeboats, had a certain theatricality and appeal, attracting public attention and interest, and enhancing their cultural influence. Infant-raising rooms also demonstrated theatricality in their publicity and promotion. Through the creation and dissemination of various announcements, poetry, and publications, infant-raising rooms not only helped infants in practical actions but also guided and educated the public at the cultural level, enhancing their social influence. To some extent, the establishment and operation of infant-raising rooms broke the traditional negative perceptions of infants (especially female infants), promoted changes in social attitudes, and had certain transgressive and innovative significance.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that Qing Dynasty infant-raising rooms in Hunan Province, as amenities, exhibit unique cultural value and practical significance in multiple small dimensions of legitimacy, authenticity, and theatricality. Firstly, through profound traditional culture and state support, infant-raising rooms established legitimacy, providing a reliable foundation for charitable endeavors. Secondly, their localized and community-based operating models demonstrated authenticity, enhancing community cohesion and resident participation. Finally, through fascinating activities and glamorous promotional methods, infant-raising rooms successfully enhanced their theatricality, attracting more public attention and support. This multidimensional analysis method not only enriches our understanding of infant-raising rooms but also provides a new perspective for studying other historical cultural phenomena. At the same time, this study also reveals the important role of infant-raising rooms in enhancing community cohesion, promoting changes in social attitudes, and increasing cultural influence, with significant research and practical implications.

## **Strategies for Enhancing The Scene Cultural Value of Infant-Raising Rooms in Hunan**

### ***Multifaceted Exploration of Cultural Connotations***

The scene cultural value of infant-raising rooms in Hunan needs to be explored and interpreted from multiple perspectives to create a rich and diverse scene value orientation, achieving

comprehensive enhancement of cultural experiential value and cultural spillover value. In today's era of rapid technological and internet development, the development of cultural value in "traditional exhibition-style museums" can no longer meet the demands of contemporary people for high-quality spiritual life. Therefore, the development of infant-raising rooms in Hunan needs to break the trend of adhering to original authenticity and tradition and encourage multidimensional interpretations of the cultural aspects of infant-raising rooms. This aims to showcase different value orientations, attract people from all over the country and even the world, promote the acceptance of infant-raising rooms in Hunan by people of different ethnicities, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds, and comprehensively enhance their scene cultural value. For instance, from a globalized and humanistic perspective, the diverse cultural connotations of Hunan's infant-raising rooms can be fully explored to meet visitors' emotional appeals. Taking China's Wansui Mountain Martial Arts City as an example, it focuses on Song culture, connecting city wall culture and Seven Dynasties culture to create a large-scale tourist area with the characteristics of Song martial arts culture, forest natural style, and leisure functions, providing visitors with a deep historical and cultural atmosphere, classic martial arts dramas, and beautiful forest park environment.

### ***Synergy of Different Cultural Elements and Localization***

Scene theory emphasizes the synergy and interaction between cultural amenities, communities, cultural practices, and people. Life cultural amenities can only maximize their value through interaction. Qi Shuyu (2017) pointed out that the cultural locality embodied by different life cultural amenities showcases regional spiritual temperament and is an important source of urban innovation. For example, Beijing's 798 Art District has become a world-class art zone, with over 400 art galleries and creative areas. This viewpoint of scene theory provides new inspiring ideas for the creation of scene culture in Hunan's infant-raising rooms, such as creative spaces, creative communities, and crowdsourcing spaces. Wu Jun (2017) pointed out that "cultural arts have indeed become a new way of thinking for urban development." This is highly relevant to the scene creation of infant-raising rooms in Hunan, helping to change the phenomenon of blindly constructing high-end cultural amenities in current urban construction while neglecting the construction of daily life cultural amenities. It also helps to avoid the phenomenon of focusing solely on cultural facility construction in the scene creation of infant-raising rooms in Hunan while neglecting other cultural elements' coordination. It also helps to avoid the homogenization of introducing popular IP cultural amenities and neglecting the exploration of characteristic cultural resources from Hunan's local area.

### ***Precise Matching of Amenities with Desirable Life Needs***

Amenities and activity layouts are closely related to people's desirable life needs. However, in reality, the planning and construction of these amenities and activities in some urban scenes are often chaotic. Scene theory research addresses this shortcoming by providing the cultural significance of each amenity, offering a scientific basis for matching people's desirable life needs. Taking the former site of the Hunan Provincial Infant-Raising Room in the city as an example, it is currently part of the Yucai School in Changsha, Hunan. Located on the south side of Yucai School's playground on Dongfang Road, Changsha, the former site of the infant-raising room is particularly prominent, embedded in the surrounding wall. A wooden gate about 2 meters high is still well-preserved, with a closed small wooden door on one side, which was the infant-receiving window at that time. The walls of the former site are adorned with reliefs of babies and inscriptions. The surviving former site of the Hunan Provincial Infant-Raising Room only adopts simple historical preservation measures and the most traditional reliefs to



tell the story behind it. Creating scene culture for Hunan's infant-raising rooms needs to achieve a sense of authenticity through some cultural heritage amenities or activities, thereby increasing local identity and improving life. In other words, the charm of "scene" lies in its ability to make people feel cultural appropriateness and humanistic characteristics, making the city a place where thoughts and emotions mingle and stimulate each other, guiding public behavior and promoting urban development (Wu Jun, 2014).

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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