

New Zeitgeist in China: opportunities for sustainable rural development

新思潮崛起——中國鄉村可持續發展的契機

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(翻譯 李克翰)

Tucked in the far end of western Yunnan Province, bordering Tibet, Qiunatong is amongst the most impoverished of villages in China. Most residents earn less than RMB2,300 per person per year – the national poverty line. I spent Christmas in 2015 here. It took us one and a half days to drive in from the nearest city. A short stay in the village certainly does not provide the full picture of development in China, but it illuminates some of the opportunities and challenges people in this country face as the era of the “New Normal” dawns.

The “New Normal” has largely been used as a narrative to manage expectations of global investors, foreign governments and domestic audiences unnerved by the slow down of China’s economic growth. Yet the slow down may be exactly what the country needs as communities and businesses re-assess their way forward. Sustainable development appears to be more feasible as the necessary institutional support becomes available, and the right kind of consumer demand emerges. Qiunatong Village is a case in point.

Qiunatong is surrounded by mostly unperturbed forests and soaring snow mountains. Sitting upstream on the Salween River (or Nujiang in Chinese), the village is irrigated with unpolluted water that is safe for drinking. Most villagers belong to the Nu ethnic group and are simultaneously Catholics who worship in chapels that have stood the test of time. Over the years, rich ecological and cultural assets have drawn a steady stream of travellers to the village.

隱沒於雲南省西北部重巒疊嶂中的秋那桶，是雲南與西藏交界處最北端的村子，也是中國最貧困的鄉村之一。我們車行一天半，才能從距離最近的地級市大理到達村內。在這個人均年收入低於國家貧困線 2300 元的小村莊，我們度過了 2015 年的聖誕節。在村內短短兩天的停留雖然不足以讓我們完全瞭解中國鄉村發展的現狀，卻能一窺在“新常態”下國內鄉村所面對的一部分機遇和挑戰。

“新常態”是中國未來發展走向的新定位，也用作管理全球投資者、外國政府和國民對中國經濟增長放緩的預期與不安。中國經濟增長放緩對不少國內外企業和投資者帶來短期的負面影響，但對中國的農村而言卻可能是休養生息的時機。誠然，當政策與制度漸趨成熟、消費者的行為逾見合理，農村可持續發展就有望變得可行——秋那桶村便是一個有說服力的例子。

秋那桶村座落於薩爾溫江（在中國稱為怒江）的上游，被自然的叢林和靜謐的雪山所環繞。村民能夠享用乾淨安全的食水。大部分村民是怒族人，也有來自傈僳族、藏族、獨龍族的，信奉天主教，會到古老的小教堂禮拜。近年來，優美的自然與人文風光為秋那桶村帶來了穩定的旅遊客源。



View of Qiunatong Village

A number of entrepreneurial villagers recognise the value of Qiunatong's heritage and have begun to develop small-scale eco-tourist services targeted at independent domestic tourists. A couple of inns now offer basic accommodation and catering services to visitors who have arrived for an idyllic and healthy retreat from urban life. The inns have in turn generated some spill over financial benefits by buying the vegetables, fruits and fungi that other villagers have foraged or grown.

Successes so far have given village leaders further incentives to protect the natural and cultural assets of the village. Their pursuit also takes advantage of provincial policies that aim to conserve villages with high heritage value. One of the policies encourages, and in cases requires, villagers to build new homes in indigenous building forms.

一批有創業精神的村民意識到了秋那桶自然資源與傳統文化的價值。他們開始在村內主動開辦小規模生態旅遊服務，對象以國內背包客和自駕遊客為主。村內幾家客棧可提供基本的住宿與餐飲服務，是國內居民遠離城市喧囂，享受健康田園生活的好去處。當然，這些客棧通過收購其他村民耕種的蔬菜、蓄養的禽畜和採集的山貨，轉而用於客棧經營，獲利頗豐。

目前發展的成果讓秋那桶村民逐步意識到保護自然和文化資源的重要性。他們的生活追求也充分契合當地政策的良性引導——越來越多地轉向為對秋那桶村傳統價值的保護。當地政府推行的其中一條政策便是鼓勵當地村民建蓋傳統の木楞房或夯土房，這樣的建築形式也正適宜於秋那桶的氣候和生活環境。



Main house of a village inn

This is one step forward from the “New Rural Village Construction” policy which, issued in 2005, attempted to relocate millions of rural households to new “villages”, often with houses built of hollow concrete blocks – a popular choice of masonry construction material that is perceived to be modern but is less earthquake-resistant and a poorer insulator for the climate of Western and South-western China.

Much remains to be done for Qiunatong’s eco-tourist services to mature, especially if villagers are serious about satisfying increasingly sophisticated travellers. The branding of the village, articulation of its unique story, training of tour guides, establishment and maintenance of walking trails, complementary merchandise, touch points for ecological education and many other forms of services have yet to take shape.

這是自 2005 年中國推行新農村建設以來發展轉變的開始。過去幾年新農村建設的策略之一是整村推進，中國西部和西南部許多偏遠貧困地區的村莊就地重建或新建搬遷，以此將鄉村的舊有面貌換新，提升基礎設施條件，設立當地農林產業與市場經濟的接入點。新建的農村民宅和公共建築幾乎都以空心磚砌體結構為主。嶄新的水泥磚房在大多數村、鎮、縣政府和民眾看來是“現代化”的象徵，卻仍存在抗震安全性能參差不齊、與當地氣候適應較差或對當地文化傳承不足等問題。

對於秋那桶的生態旅遊現狀而言，還有許多方面值得改善，特別是考慮到如何滿足不斷增長的冗雜繁複的遊客需求。村莊的品牌化、文化的挖掘與彰顯、對當地村民的導覽培訓、遊覽路線的確立和維護、完整的本土商品鏈建立、生態旅遊教育的落腳與實施，以及其他更多形式的服務內容都需要進一步完善。

Importantly, significant financial and human resources are still needed to address problems that are fundamental to the improvement of livelihood and living standards in the village, which must take priority in order for eco-tourism or any other economic opportunities to flourish. This includes investments in agricultural productivity and diversity, waste management, healthcare, education and other basic services.

The pursuit of Qiunatong's entrepreneurs, the new turn of government policies, and the choice made by domestic tourists to visit the village despite its remoteness point to an emerging Zeitgeist in China that is less reported by mass media. People are now looking to recuperate from the costs of high GDP growth and explore more balanced, integrated approach to development.

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當然，生態旅遊發展不能完全取替基礎社會公共服務。幫助村民改善基本的生計問題和生活水平的工作，仍然需要財力與人力資源的投入，比如提高當地農業效率和多樣性、垃圾污水處理、村民安全健康與保健、持續教育等。這些公共服務甚至是進行生態旅遊或其他形式的經濟開發的首要前提。

中國當前的新思潮正持續地體現在秋那桶創業村民的奮鬥、當地政策的新動向，以及城市人對傳統農郊生活的重新審視。如今這種動向尚難見諸於國際主流媒體。然而，國內居民確已逐漸開始從過去為 GDP 增長付出的巨大代價中反思回溯，並開始探索更加均衡平等、互補協調的發展模式。

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