The Aesthetic Culture of Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Residence Architecture in the Perspective of Tourism Landscape

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Abstract

Chanshan, as one of the three major overseas Chinese regions in Guangdong, has been included in the national intangible cultural heritage list because of its unique construction techniques of ancient residential buildings. Based on the ontological study of Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese residential architecture, this paper analyzes the geographical, humanistic, and economic characteristics of the Chaoshan region from the overall characteristics of overseas Chinese residences, explores the causes of the formation of architectural forms by combining the theories of Confucianism, folk aesthetics, sociology, and attempts to analyze the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of the residential buildings in the context of Chaoshan culture and the community nature of the Chaoshan people – “All rivers run into the sea”, and to analyze the historical, cultural connotations and artistic values it contains. In addition, it explores the protection and inheritance strategy from the perspective of tourism landscape development, with a new to provide a reference for displaying the contemporary Chaoshan overseas Chinese tourism landscape and enriching cultural tourism. The architectural art of Chaoshan overseas Chinese dwellings is an epitome of traditional Chaoshan culture, and an in-depth study of the art of Chaoshan residential architecture is of positive and far-reaching significance in the conservation and development of Chinese cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chaoshan Overseas Residence Architecture; Aesthetic Features; Cultural Regional Character; Tourism Landscape.

Introduction

Chaoshan area, as one of the three important Han nationality hometowns in Guangdong, has high cultural value and profound historical significance. Based on local traditional forms, residential buildings selectively draw on and absorb foreign cultural elements, with both open and pragmatic internalized aesthetic features of improvement. Based on the geographical, economic, and humanistic characteristics of the Chaoshan region, this paper studies the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of the residential buildings in Chaoshan overseas Chinese villages, promotes the protection and inheritance of the residential buildings in Chaoshan overseas Chinese villages, strengthens the regional identity, cultural cohesion and cultural confidence of the Chaoshan people, and truly extends the historical context of Chaoshan and spreads and carries forward the Chaoshan culture.

There are many studies on the folk dwellings of Lingnan overseas Chinese, including Lu Qi’s Guangdong Folk Dwellings, Tang Xiaoxiang’s...
Lingnan Modern Architectural Culture, and Aesthetics, Zheng Dehua’s Architectural Culture of Guangdong Overseas Chinese Townships, Tang Xiaoxiang’s Analysis on the Aesthetic Cultural Characteristics of the Architecture of Modern Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Townships, Guo Huanyu’s Analysis on the Productive Characteristics of the Folk Dwellings Culture of Modern Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Townships, etc. This paper makes a systematic study of the origin, type, characteristics, and development of residential buildings in overseas Chinese villages, and fully excavates the characteristics and aesthetic value of residential buildings in overseas Chinese villages. However, from the perspective of the tourism landscape, the protection and development of residential buildings in Chaoshan and overseas Chinese are just starting. In addition, there is abundant research on overseas Chinese villages in Wuyi of Guangdong Province. The architectural researches of overseas Chinese villages in Chaoshan, Xingmei, and other places need to be deepened, and the perspective of multidisciplinary comprehensive research needs to be expanded.

The focus of this study is to take the perspective of the tourism landscape as the starting point, explore the cultural origin and cultural expression characteristics of residential buildings in Chaoshan overseas Chinese hometown at the cultural and aesthetic level, and study the aesthetic culture of residential buildings in a more systematic and in-depth way, to propose protection and inheritance strategies in the future, and provide ideas for the integration, protection, and development of Chaoshan characteristic cultural resources.

**Research Objectives**

The residential buildings in Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese hometown are the continuation and development of the excellent architectural art in the Central Plains. They are unique in style, exquisite in technology, distinctive in characteristics, and have unique cultural connotations and aesthetic value. It has witnessed the history of overseas Chinese’s struggle and the historical changes in their hometown, and also contains the deep feelings of overseas Chinese for their hometown and relatives. The architectural art of Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese residence is the epitome of Chaoshan traditional culture. Its aesthetic and cultural characteristics show the ethnic disposition of Chaoshan people “embracing all rivers”, and the rich connotation of absorbing Chaoshan culture and overseas culture. The in-depth study of it has positive and far-reaching significance in the protection and development of Chinese cultural heritage. The purpose of this study is to achieve the following research objectives:

1. Reveal the historical humanity, cultural connotation, and artistic value contained in the aesthetic culture of the residential buildings in Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese hometown.

2. Explore the local characteristic culture of Chaoshan and put forward the necessity and urgency of protection and inheritance from the perspective of the tourism landscape.

**Literature Review**

In the 1980s, the study of residential architecture emerged from the perspective of architecture. In the new century, with the heating up of rural tourism in the process of urbanization, the study of Lingnan’s traditional village culture has gradually attracted the attention of experts and scholars. The research results of regional and morphological characteristics of Lingnan traditional villages and folk dwellings are abundant. Wang Jian’s paper “A Study on the Architecture and Culture of Guangzhou Folk Dwellings” (2002) and Lu Yuanding’s monograph “Lingnan Culture, Character, Architecture” (2005) conducted a special study on the ethnic culture, folk culture, main body culture and subculture of folk dwellings and villages. Yang Zhanhui’s

The architecture of overseas Chinese residences is a combination of overseas Chinese culture and local culture. It has special economic characteristics and social relations characteristics and should be studied from the perspective of interdisciplinary and comprehensive research. Relevant academic works and papers mainly include Lu Yuanding, Wei Yanjun, Guangdong Folk Houses (1990), Lu Qi, Guangdong Folk Houses (2008), etc; Lin Chong’s Research on the Development and Form of Arcade Street House (2000), Tang Xiaoxiang’s Research on Modern Lingnan Architecture Aesthetics (2003), Wu Miaoxian’s Research on Modern Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Architecture Aesthetics (2006) and other papers. In addition, in recent years, there have been many papers by Guo Huanyu, such as “Comparison of Cultural Integration Modes of Modern Guangdong Overseas Chinese Hometown Dwellings”, “Changes in Modern Guangdong Overseas Chinese Hometown Families and Their Impact on Dwellings Space”, which have made targeted research on the architecture of Guangdong Overseas Chinese Hometown; Tang Xiaoxiang’s “Lingnan Modern Architectural Culture and Aesthetics” (2010) believes that the residence of overseas Chinese is the outstanding manifestation of the “cultural regional character” of modern Lingnan architecture. This article points out the imbalance of the development of overseas Chinese architecture in the region, as well as their respective aesthetic characteristics and humanistic character; Lai Ying’s Research on Modern Architectural Aesthetics in Xingmei Overseas Chinese Hometown (2005) has enriched and broadened the vision and discipline system of architectural culture research in Guangdong Overseas Chinese Hometown; Guo Huanyu’s “Analysis of the ‘Productive’ Characteristics of the Folk Residence Culture in Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Hometown in Modern Times” (2015) examines the architectural cultural phenomenon of overseas Chinese hometown from an interdisciplinary perspective; Wang Yuanlin, Deng Minrui, “Changes in the lifestyle and social customs of overseas Chinese hometown in modern Guangdong -- Taking Chaoshan and Wuyi as examples” (2005), Wu Miaoxian, Tang Xiaoxiang, “Modern overseas Chinese investment and the development of architecture in Chaoshan overseas Chinese hometown” and other papers
promote the research of architectural culture in overseas Chinese hometown from the perspective of culture, sociology, economics, etc; Tang Xiaoxiang’s “Aesthetic and Cultural Characteristics of Modern Lingnan Overseas Chinese Hometown Architecture” (2002) summarizes and compares the aesthetic characteristics of the three Lingnan Overseas Chinese Hometowns of Wuyi, Chaoshan and Xingmei. This perspective transformation and method innovation provide new research perspectives, ideas, and methods for the study of overseas Chinese hometown architecture culture.

In general, there are a lot of studies on the residential architecture of overseas Chinese townships, but there are relatively few monographs with the characteristics of overseas Chinese townships as the research topic. The following problems exist: Firstly, the regional research is unbalanced. The relevant studies on overseas Chinese townships in Wuyi of Guangdong are abundant, but the studies on the architecture of overseas Chinese townships in Chaoshan, Xingmei, and other places are still in the initial stage and need to be deepened, and the research results are not systematic and profound. Secondly, there is a lack of systematic and in-depth research on the aesthetic culture of residential buildings. In terms of culture and aesthetics, the excavation of the source and cultural expression characteristics of architectural culture is still relatively weak. On the whole, the research paradigm of traditional architecture continues, paying too much attention to the practice of architecture, the use of materials, the excavation of construction techniques, and the inheritance of texture. It is suggested that scholars should start from the disciplines of architecture, sociology, history, tourism, folklore, and so on, and open up ideas for the study of the architectural culture of the hometown of overseas Chinese from the perspective of multidisciplinary comprehensive research. Third, the one-sidedness of the research content focuses on the material level and ignores the research on the intangible culture level. From the perspective of the tourism landscape, this is not conducive to the overall protection of the residential buildings in the hometown of overseas Chinese, nor to the inheritance and further research of the intangible cultural heritage. From the perspective of the tourism landscape, the aesthetic culture of residential architecture in Chaoshan is still in the exploratory stage. Although some achievements have been made in architecture, compared with the research progress in humanities and social sciences, the research results lag and are weak. Therefore, the study of the aesthetic culture of residential architecture in Chaoshan overseas Chinese townships should broaden the field of view of the subject, let scholars in different fields start from their expertise, strengthen the interdisciplinary comprehensive research consciousness and the overall consciousness, to expand and deepen the research of this subject.
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Conceptual framework

Fig.1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

1. Literature research method

By reviewing and sorting out relevant literature and research results by experts and scholars in China and abroad, as well as compiling and summarizing local ancient literature, local chronicles, genealogies, and other literary and historical materials, combined with online data collection, the current status and results of relevant research were integrated and summarized to form the basic information for guiding the development of this study.

2. Field method

Field visits to the gathering places of overseas Chinese dwellings in Chaoshan, collecting data on geographical background, surrounding environment, architectural style, and historical residential culture, and analyzing the development status of ancient residential buildings. The basic information materials required for this study are extracted and screened using investigation and recording, field survey, surveying and mapping records, questionnaire interviews, etc.

3. Integrated interdisciplinary analysis approach

The architectural culture of Chaoshan overseas Chinese towns in modern times came into being under the historical background of social transformation. It developed and flourished with the economy of overseas Chinese as the driving force. It is the crystallization of the cultural exchange between China and foreign countries and contains the complex and changeable relationship among architecture, economy, society, and culture. The particularity of this research object determines the comprehensive and interdisciplinary nature of the research method. This paper intends to adopt the interdisciplinary comprehensive research method based on architectural image science, and draw on the research methods and achievements of architectural typology, architectural history, aesthetic culturology, sociology, psycho, logy, and other disciplines.

Research results

1. Overall characteristics of residential buildings in Chaoshan overseas Chinese

Chaoshan villages have a tradition of gathering families to settle down. The architectural
groups are usually centered on ancestral temples of clans, and other buildings are spread out around the ancestral halls, and connecter, with a huge scale and a characteristic of closed exterior and open interior. The ancestors of Chaoshan were mainly residents who migrated from the Central Plains, inheriting the tradition that official families attach importance to their families. With the migration of their ancestors, the palatial-style residence of large families in ancient times evolved into the Chaoshan residence of “house of the house” in eastern Guangdong. These residential buildings are enclosed in the center, symmetrical in the central axis, and distinct in primary and secondary, which profoundly reflects the feudal patriarchal clan and ritual concept. The architectural patterns developed are in the form of “Downhill Tiger”, “Three Wall Company”, “Four Gold Points”, “Five Rooms Over”, “Team Trailer”, and “Birds Tributing to the Phoenix”. This kind of architectural whole with axis symmetry and primary and secondary order is the environmental soil for the format ion of the Chaoshan people’s traditional ethical concept of attaching importance to clan and family as well as their cohesive and brave pioneering character.

Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Homestead inherits the orderly and harmonious characteristics of the traditional residential community layout and also absorbs the value orientation of commercial society in pursuit of practicality and efficiency. For example, the use of outer corridors, arches, and other space forms increases the richness of the traditional inward courtyard space and improves the traditional eaves gallery form into the colonnade form. Among the buildings in Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Hometown, the space experience is the most concerned in the main building, and the external architectural elements are only to enrich the shape, standing room, and decoration of local traditional buildings. The decoration art of buildings in Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Hometown is most praised by the world. It inherits the traditional techniques, mainly including wood carving, stone carving, porcelain inlaying, and color painting, and embodies the “mansion style” pattern of the concept of etiquette and splendid decoration art. It has won the reputation of “Chaozhou people’s homes are comparable to the imperial palaces in the capital” for Chaoshan folk houses.

2. Causes of the formation of the residential building forms in Chaoshan overseas Chinese Township

Influenced by the geographical climate environment, regional economic conditions, clan ideas, cultural customs, and other factors, the folk houses of Chaoshan Township in modern times have formed different forms and distinctive architectural styles and cultural connotations, among which an important factor comes from the influence of Marine culture. The unique geographical position of the Chaoshan region, which is backed by the Five Mountains and faced with the South China Sea, determines that the Chaoshan culture is deeply influenced by the Marine culture. Chaoshan culture is an extension of the Chinese culture of the Central Plains, a combination of the Central Plains culture and the local ancestors’ culture of Chaoshan, and the absorption of Marine cultural factors, forming its unique cultural characteristics. According to historical records, the Chaoshan people were colonized overseas very early. With the rise of the “Red Boat” trade, the Chenghai Zhanglin fishing Port has developed rapidly into the “Eastern Guangdong Ocean General Hub” where hipsters make a living “down the South seas” by boat. Especially in the late Qing Dynasty, maritime trade was active, which strengthened the maritime characteristics of the Chaoshan culture. Chaoshan is on the verge of Southeast Asia. A large number of Chaoshan overseas Chinese went abroad to make a living and returned home to build houses after hard work. Overseas Chinese bring the architectural
culture of the place where they live, integrate the local architectural style and other western architectural factors, and emerge a variety of Chinese and Western residential buildings. Therefore, the residential architecture of Chaoshan overseas Chinese is one of the typical representatives of Chaoshan culture deeply influenced by Marine culture. In the process of the impact and adaptation of different cultures, the relatively conservative and introverted traditional thoughts of Chaoshan people make the overseas living architecture of Chaoshan follow the Central Plains model, retain the traditional layout system, and form the characteristics of abiding by the ritual system, emphasizing the practical and prominent compatibility.

The deep-rooted clan cultural concept and strong regional identity of the Chaoshan ancestors prompted them to return to their hometowns to build construction, rebuild ancestral temples, subsidize cultural and educational undertakings, and launch traditional cultural activities after having accumulated some wealth. Chaoshan people have long been engaged in business activities with both opportunities and risks, and are famous for their attention to geomantic omen. The concept of geomantic omen and the theory of yin and yang and five elements in modern residential buildings are obvious manifestations. Chaoshan village site selection and building layout pay attention to feng shui focus on the bit direction, and even residential decoration of the wall of mountain wall has gold, wood, water, fire, and earth five categories, the most common is to curved water wall and pyramid-shaped gold wall.

Modern Chaoshan overseas Chinese residence maintains the layout and form of traditional residential space, forming the layout and combination of “atrium style”, the internal ethical space generated by the way of local identity, the traditional feng shui concept and construction method, and the decorative art features and styles of the combination of Chinese and Western elements is the expression of the aesthetic cultural characteristics and the formation of the cultural regional character of modern Chaoshan architecture. It is also the result of modern natural conditions, social economic factors, cultural conditions, and other comprehensive effects.

3. Aesthetic and cultural characteristics of residential buildings in Chaoshan overseas Chinese hometown

(1) The cultural spirit of respecting Confucianism and valuing a business

The “loyalty” and “courage” of Confucianism are the spirits of the Chaoshan people. This kind of respect and adherence to Confucian morality makes the architectural culture of Chaoshan overseas Chinese villages adapt to social changes by improving the old tradition under the background of the strong impact of foreign culture. First of all, the layout of the architectural groups in modern overseas Chinese towns reflects the identification and adherence to the traditional Confucian culture, which has a strong guardedness and robustness, reflecting the order of the hierarchy in Confucianism and the distinction between the primary and the secondary. Secondly, the long-term cultivation of Confucian culture has formed the custom and tradition of “worshipping literature and emphasizing education” in Chaoshan overseas Chinese. The folk sayings of Chaoshan: “Sell everything for children learning” and “Teach your child a thousand words better than give him a thousand taels of gold” show the Chaoshan people emphasize the importance of education.

(2) Clan beliefs passed down from generation to generation

Ancestral halls represent the spiritual representation of the lineage and clan unity of a surname. Chaoshan hometown of overseas Chinese has a long history. The villagers live
together, and the concept of the village is deeply rooted. The ancestral hall, as the symbol of the clan, has become the key decoration object in the architecture of Chaoshan Overseas Chinese Hometown. Most of the ancestral halls are “Four Point Gold” architecture patterns. There has always been a trend of “The carved beams and painted buildings must be extremely skillful and exaggerate the magnificence at all costs”. From the door tower screen to the door leaf window, from the beam-column frame to the roof ridge of the wall, the buildings are decorated with traditional arts and crafts such as wood carving, stone carving, color painting, gray sculpture, and inlaid porcelain, which have certain artistic value. Through the large-scale ancestral hall construction activities of overseas Chinese, the social wealth has enriched and carried forward the traditional folk arts and crafts such as wood carving and porcelain inlay. The ancestral hall building has become an artistic display carrier integrating the achievements of traditional skills.

(3) The thinking character of embracing all rivers

Business and trade exchanges and cultural exchanges with foreign countries have brought ideological innovation and open thinking to the Chaoshan region. Especially in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, a large number of overseas Chinese returned home to invest in promoting the development of Chaoshan architecture and gardens. On the one hand, the aesthetic taste and overseas experience of overseas Chinese have influenced the choice of architectural styles; on the other hand, the deep-rooted agricultural cultural tradition, the long-term accumulation of Chinese thinking, and the influence of local character have also made foreign architectural techniques and styles localized and localized in the overseas Chinese hometown of Chaoshan. These factors urge Chaoshan overseas Chinese architecture to retain the overall form of the traditional local architectural pattern, draw lessons from the use of western architectural styles and symbols, decorative themes and techniques and absorb and improve foreign cultural factors, showing a combination of Chinese and Western characteristics, which reflects the thinking character of Chaoshan people.

Fig.2 The aerial corridor of Chen Cihong’s former residence in Chaoshan District

For example, the typical representative of Chaoshan overseas Chinese home Chen Cihong’s former residence, three houses are the most distinctive Chaoshan “Team Trailer” style architecture, and “Shoukang Li” study “Three Lu” is western villa-style architecture, “Shanju Shi” to Western-style balcony, arch, round window decoration. The air corridor connecting individual buildings in the community was also borrowed from Western construction at that time. The most prominent reflection of the integration of Chinese and Western culture is the decoration of doors and Windows, which expresses the unique aesthetic feeling of local culture with the foreign decoration language. (Figures 2 and 3)

Fig.3 Decorative details of Chen Cihong’s former residence in Chaoshan District
(4) Elaborate rules of conduct

There is a proverb in Chaoshan: “Tilling the fields is like embroidering”, which reflects from the side the characteristics of the Chaoshan people to fine as the code of conduct. The land in Chaoshan Plain is small and there are many people. The concept of the ultimate use of land in the farming culture further affects the daily life behavior of the Chaoshan people. Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese residence decoration has always been famous for its exquisite carving and complex beauty. These details of the decoration with its exquisite skills, fine workmanship, and exquisite image won the attention of the world, highlighting not only the family’s social status and wealth but also the Chaoshan people’s pursuit of a better life and striving for excellence in life attitude.

(5) The universal philosophy of life

For a long time, Marine culture and farming culture were integrated and interwoven, and the change in environment prompted the Chaoshan people to form a pragmatic and flexible philosophy of life. This cultural psychology is reflected in the view of architectural technology, which is the flexibility of materials and architectural technology. Chaoshan Plain has more people and less land. Chaoshan people invented the “shell ash sand”, which was used to ram into “rendered wall”. Gray plastic is also a unique decorative process made of gray paste with shell ash as the main raw material and then painted. It is often used to decorate the front window frame, roof ridge pendant belt, gable corner, and other parts. The Chaoshan sea breeze is a salty wet, hot climate, and wood is wet damaged, and perishable, so granite in residential beams, door belly, door frame, step, etc., has been widely used. Marine climate and sea breeze also gave birth to Chaoshan porcelain. Chaoshan is located in the earthquake zone around the Pacific Ocean and an area where typhoons frequently land in summer. To resist typhoons, the craftsmen created a mixed beam structure with the type of pendant and the type of lifting beam, which not only met the needs of disaster resistance in response to the local geographical and climatic conditions but also created a more spacious and airy indoor space. All kinds of local materials and flexible technical treatment make Chaoshan traditional architecture have strong natural adaptability, which reflects the pragmatic and flexible life philosophy of the Chaoshan people.

Discussions

The selection and formation of any architectural form and decoration cannot be separated from the cultural background that immerses and nourishes it, and the architecture of Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese residences is no exception. Its rich and colorful overall character is the result of the combined effect of traditional folk customs, patriarchal rites, marine culture, and foreign Western culture. Firstly, the overlapping cultural origins of marine culture and farming culture fully show that it not only strictly abides by the traditional patriarchal system but also has a strong sense of closure and territoriality; It also has the openness and inclusiveness of marine culture, focusing on the cultural origins of absorbing superior cultural factors. The second is the patriarchal system of the Central Plains culture. The change in Chaoshan population composition is characterized by multiple migratory displacements, and its culture has also been strongly influenced by the Central Plains culture, forming a cultural system with Central Plains culture as the main body and rich in local characteristics. The third is the connotation of folklore, including the aesthetic taste of traditional folk customs, folk connotations, the foundations of popular arts and crafts, and the external influence of Western culture.

Conclusion

This paper draws on the theories of aesthetic culture, psychology, and sociology to study the
aesthetic culture of Chaoshan overseas Chinese residential architecture, explore its overall characteristics and causes, and demonstrate the richness of the aesthetic culture of Chaoshan overseas Chinese residential buildings. The Chaoshan overseas Chinese dwellings reflect the profoundness of Chinese culture, the inclusiveness of Chaoshan culture, and the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, and its unique historical and humanistic value cannot be ignored. The conclusions are summarized as follows: First, there is a clear “correspondence” between the type of residences, the pattern of living in clans and the spatial layout of the landscape, and the cultural spirit of the Chaoshan people, who respected Confucianism and valued commerce, their strong clan consciousness and rich social customs. Second, the architectural and decorative arts, as well as the intangible cultural heritage of Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese reveal the aesthetic characteristics and humanistic spirit of the local people.

**Recommendation**

On the whole, this paper discusses the aesthetic culture of the architecture of Chaoshan’s overseas Chinese dwelling, focusing mainly on the level of tangible cultural heritage, while research on intangible cultural heritage remains to be deepened and expanded. In the contemporary era of cultural tourism, it is of positive and far-reaching significance to study the humanistic and aesthetic value of the residential architecture in Chaoshan, which is an important basis for the revitalization and conservation of the tourist landscape.

**References**


