

Study on the Cultural Connotation and Design Elements of Hakka Dwellings in South Jiangxi

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Abstract: The Hakkas are a part of the Han culture, mainly located in southern Jiangxi. They have rich and colorful local culture, language and customs, as well as unique dwellings with aesthetic, economic and cultural connotations. In this paper, we will make a brief analysis of the types of Hakka dwellings in South Jiangxi, make a deep study according to the modern aesthetics and design, and put forward the corresponding scheme for the protection of dwellings. In order to preserve the Hakka dwellings intact, it is necessary to develop and utilize them properly.

1. Introduction

The Hakka dwellings are representative to some extent which can not only be used for living, but also for defense. According to the local living habits, geomancy concepts and cultural traditions, residents construct dwellings on the original empty land through technology. It not only respects local customs, but also shows respect for ancestors. In-depth study of the aesthetic and design concepts of Hakka dwellings is conducive to specific practical solutions.

2. Types of Hakka Dwellings in South Jiangxi

Minority nationalities in our country pursue the principle of “big mixed and small communities”, so dwellings in South Jiangxi are mainly inhabited by small communities. The basic types include “the enclosed house”, “round-dragon house” and “hall-house combination”. Even though there are some differences in details among them, they still tend to be similar in general. The following three types of Hakka dwellings are analyzed.

2.1 Enclosed House

Located in Dingnan, Longnan and other areas, this house is a special form of dwellings in South Jiangxi. It forms beautiful scenery of Hakka dwellings with earth building in Western Fujian and round-dragon House in eastern Guangdong.

2.2 Round-dragon House

The so-called “round-dragon house” is another special form of Hakka architecture and a means of spreading Hakka culture in eastern Guangdong. It is distributed in some villages in South Jiangxi and some counties in northwestern Jiangxi.

2.3 Hall-house Combination

Hakka dwellings are the main type of dwellings in South Jiangxi, which are distributed in different villages and towns with different types. With the development of history, hall-house combination has evolved from the ancient courtyard dwelling in the Central Plains to the present form. Among them, “Nine Halls and Eighteen Wells”, as a symbolic thing, has extraordinary significance.

3. Cultural Connotations of Hakka Dwellings in South Jiangxi

3.1 Geomantic Culture

Among the Hakkas, the traditional idea of “harmony between man and nature” has been widely spread. Most residents believe that people should make enough contribution and love to nature. Therefore, residents in any region understand nature, protect and utilize it, and integrate architecture into nature, so as to achieve harmonious development between man and nature. What we call geomancy culture is an important step for the Hakkas to achieve the goal of “harmony between man and nature”.

This kind of culture has certain religious significance, but it is the experience of the Hakka ancestors through observation and practice step by step, which is a kind of theory. Generally, in the construction of such buildings as “round-dragon house”, some items that residents feel auspicious will be placed in the main hall and the main entrance. They embody different functions. For example, set half-moon hills in the main hall and pan pools in front of the main entrance to regulate temperature, water storage and fire prevention, and imply life and growth in nature and yin-yang balance. Hakka dwellings also have certain reference for the layout and housing orientation. They usually build according to the direction of mountains and rivers and make full use of the land. Trees behind the buildings should not be cut down, but can only be used for construction. After using geomantic culture to choose the site, the dwellings will be integrated with nature, showing a magnificent scene.

3.2 Confucian Culture

As a minority Hakka, their blood contains a strong flavor of Confucian literature. So, education has always been attached great importance, and also fully reflects the flavor of Confucian culture in architecture. Generally, Hakka buildings contain schools, which rank the second only to family temples. Local residents also use special commemorative ways to write the name of people who won the honor on the “flagstone”, which is also a way for Hakkas to attach importance to education, knowledge and culture.

3.3 Religious Culture

In the long history, because of the frequent occurrence of wars, history and other reasons, the Hakkas had to make a scale of migration, but they always have their respect for their ancestors in mind. The significance of Hakka Temples mentioned above lies in this. The Hakka people usually regard ancestral temples as the core of architecture. The elders of the family are sitting around the ancestral temples according to their superiors and inferiors. Every big family lives together, helps each other, respects and loves each other, with a clear distinction of status.

But when the number of people in the family is large and they need to live separately, the Hakka will basically re-select their location and it should also be self-supporting portal. Of course, in the construction of new buildings, ancestral temples must also be the center of the construction plan of buildings around, forming refreshing dwellings.

4. Aesthetic Value of Hakka Dwellings

4.1 Beauty of Ecology

Before the implementation of construction, the Hakka will choose the construction site and time according to geomantic culture. Although certain beliefs exist, there is still a reasonable construction according to the natural environment. The traditional location method is used to blend the dwellings with the surrounding natural landscape, so that the overall building is not contrary to nature. If the site is chosen on the hillside, the Hakka people will build the buildings corresponding to the mountains according to the direction of the mountain body, forming a beautiful and spectacular picture scroll. It will broaden horizons and not hinder the cultivation of farmland. Therefore, from all aspects, it belongs to the best way to choose the location.

The Hakkas also have unique views on materials. Generally, local materials will be taken. Triad soil with better selectivity will be used for construction, but it is generally used for walls. Of course, when a wall is built, only 60 cm of rammed soil is needed, and it will not be affected by external temperature. Because the walls of Hakka buildings are generally about 1m, the indoor and outdoor temperatures do not interfere with each other.

The Hakka people abide by the tenet of “harmony between man and nature”. They have their own accumulated experience and unique insights, which are “symbolic” understandings of the external natural environment. The Hakka, according to the trend of the mountain situation, gives people a sense of “Coiled Dragon” as well as a high level of aesthetic value.

4.2 Beauty of Spatial Structure and Architectural Characteristics

The beauty of Hakka architecture is not only reflected in its unique shape, but also has its own internal characteristics. Symmetry, enclosure and centripetalism are the three basic characteristics. The construction of unique buildings of Hakka, not only needs to meet people’s daily needs, but also provides convenience in daily life.

The structure of Hakka dwellings in South Jiangxi is generally symmetrical. The ancestral hall of the family is located in the center of the building so that people in the family can carry out activities at a specific time. Moreover, the core position is an important public social place where people gather to participate in public activities. The residence order of buildings must be allocated according to the superiority and inferiority, the old and the young. There can be no disrespect for the elders and disturbance of spatial order. Hollow-out in the middle makes the sunshine penetrate into the whole room, and the corresponding doors and windows increase the speed of air exchange, making the whole building more refreshing and breathable.

The Hakka dwellings in South Jiangxi reveal the deep emotions of the historical river in both design and decoration. It can not only bring people visual impact, but also make the deep emotions of their ancestors and the expression of architectural implications exquisite.

5. Elemental Design of Hakka Dwellings

5.1 Design Elements

According to the shape of the “enclosed house”, the building has square, circular, semi-circular and irregular figures. But the classic “enclosed house” is square.

The upper part of the house is divided into two types of circumference that are “国” and “口”. For example, Yanyiwei in Yang village is a kind of square building with four stories high and each floor connected. The plane looks like the word “口”. Four high walls are closed, so people usually call them “high guard circumference”. The largest Guanxi New Enclosure in South Jiangxi is surrounded by a square artillery tower. Looking down at Guanxi New Enclosure, the whole is formed like “回”. The middle of entrance is the core ancestral hall of the enclosed house. The ancestral hall is situated on the central axis of the whole building and is symmetrically arranged according to the symmetrical axis. This is commonly known as “Nine Buildings and Eighteen Halls”.

The layout of “round-dragon house” is circular, and the height of the building does not exceed two stories. The following is a detailed analysis of the overall structure of the “round-dragon house”.

It is symmetrical to the left and right, with a half-moon-shaped pond in front and a half-moon-shaped fetus in the back. The combination of the two forms a round house. Situated in Xunwu County, Simadi is a “round-dragon house”⁴. Stones are used to build an outer wall. The upper left corner of the house is a pond. There are special fetuses, dragon halls and round dragon rooms in the rear. Its patio lets sunshine sprinkle all over the house, improves the air quality in the room and immerses the whole space in harmony.

“Hall-room combination” is the simplest dwelling called “Four Fans and Three Rooms”. The wealthier families will build two buildings around them, connecting the two houses through the

armpit corridor. With the increasing number of houses, there will be scale of inverted “凹”, eventually forming “Nine Wells and Eighteen Halls”.

5.2 Decorative Elements

Hakka dwellings reflect the perfection of architectural decorative patterns in the design of roofs, walls, doors and windows. The Hakka people show historical stories, legends, paintings and calligraphy.

Residential decoration is mainly in the wall core, wall edge and wall top. Prominent decoration is gray plastic, traditional wall books and so on. In the enclosed house of South Jiangxi, a row of gun holes is set up on the wall for defense. The ground is made of special materials such as moisture-proof, skid-proof, muddy-proof, pebbles and floor tiles. It can not only meet people's increasing needs, but also be environmentally friendly, comfortable and beautiful.

Doors and windows are not only used for ventilation and lighting, but also represent the power and prestige of the owner. The Chinese sentence of “Men Dang Hu Dui” shows the importance of the door in the building. The most decorative place for a door is its head. People usually use a sloping roof and then cover it with a layer of tiles. The decoration of the door is also varied, including spiritual animals, flowers and grass, insects and fish. The interior design of dwellings is an important step. The key points are the beams and timbers of ancestral halls and the foreheads of doors and windows. The lower hall is the place where the folk paintings of the roof are curved into character stories or flower mascots.

5.3 Color Elements

Colors of the walls, roofs, doors and windows and so on show the merging of native simplicity, purity, and harmony with nature into single, forming a unique regional custom.

From the color of the enclosed house, gravels of all sizes fully show their role, and yellow clay is used to bond. Black and yellow form a sharp contrast, showing a unique visual impact. Hakka also use some bright colors to decorate the enclosed houses. These dwellings are particularly dazzling in the light of the sky. Local people attach importance to the combination of architectural color and natural color, follow the world outlook of “harmony between man and nature”, attach importance to nature and uphold nature.

5.4 Material Elements

There are many kinds of materials to build the outer wall of the enclosed house, such as stone Tablet wall and stone strip wall, but the most famous one is the exterior walls built with river pebbles.

Hakka dwellings in South Jiangxi are located in mountainous areas. There are many rivers nearby, and there are a lot of pebbles in the rivers. When triad soil is used to ram wall, adding river pebbles can increase firmness and reduce costs, thus achieving environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasant effects.

6. Protection Strategies of Hakka Dwellings

With the continuous renewal of the new era, modern architecture is gradually replacing traditional architecture, and Chinese traditional architecture is gradually disappearing. In order to prevent the rapid disappearance of traditional buildings and to protect the buildings with cultural connotation and aesthetic value from being replaced, the state and relevant departments should strengthen the management and protection. Therefore, the following suggestions are for reference and implementation.

Firstly, fully understand the aesthetic value and cultural value of traditional architecture, and increase publicity. At the same time, the rational planning of traditional architecture should be carried out to minimize the impact of modern architecture on Hakka dwellings and ensure the harmonious development of tradition and modern.

Secondly, transform the cultural connotation of Hakka into design elements, and apply it to areas

with Hakka cultural implications, so that the Hakka culture will continue to be inherited. It is also suggested to develop the commercial value of buildings and develop tourist attractions rationally. This can not only preserve the traditional dwellings, but also promote the development of related industries, increase the income of Hakka people, and achieve a win-win situation of inheritance and prosperity.

7. Conclusion

By explaining the cultural connotation, aesthetic value and design elements of Hakka dwellings, we have a certain understanding. Although the Hakka people have experienced storms and rains, they always remember their ancestors' precepts in the hearts, which are embodied in the architecture. Hakka dwellings increase the cultural atmosphere while meeting the needs of daily life. This is worthy of our continuous protection and rational development and utilization.

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