

Exploration of Decorative Components of Ancient Houses in Zhanjiang

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Abstract: As a part of Lingnan architectural decorative art, the unique decorative style of Zhanjiang ancient residential decorative art shows the traditional residential decorative art of Lingnan. Through field research and literature search, the article researches on the causes of the influence of decorative art of Zhanjiang's ancient dwellings, artistic construction forms and artistic characteristics, etc. The study concludes that: the decorative art of Zhanjiang's ancient dwellings is formed under the influence of special geographic location and traditional culture, and it utilizes the artistic forms of clay sculpture, wood carving, stone carving and other forms of decorative elements such as beams, purlins and squares, columns, cornices, gable, roofs, doors and windows, etc. The art forms are rich and varied, with unique features of Zhanjiang architecture. It is hoped that through the research on the decorative art and culture of Zhanjiang traditional dwellings, the protection and inheritance of local culture will be promoted.

1. Introduction

As a witness of traditional regional architecture, the decorative art of ancient dwellings has witnessed all the past changes from ancient times to the present. Entering into the new period, with the prosperous development of modern design, the design development of housing construction industry is also presenting diversification. At the same time, the residential buildings in the traditional ancient villages have been impacted, under pressure of destruction and even extinction. Ancient dwellings carry regional culture and folk customs, and their decorative art has strong historical and cultural, aesthetic and tourism values, reflecting the representativeness and typicality of traditional cultural heritage. The state has also been formulating relevant policies. For instance, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, in collaboration with other units, has jointly initiated the identification work for "Traditional Building Craftsman" in Guangdong Province. This initiative aims to promote local departments' efforts in unearthing and safeguarding the architectural construction skills associated with traditional dwellings. It advocates for the preservation and development of traditional culture and skills while mitigating the potential encroachment from modern architecture [1].

2. Background of Research on Ancient Residential in Zhanjiang

As a representative of western Guangdong, Zhanjiang has traditional Lingnan architectural style and decorative art, which not only shows the implication of our traditional culture but also enriches the connotation of our architecture. Taking the study of Zhanjiang ancient dwelling decorative art as the main point, we can better understand the architectural decorative style of western Guangdong and help us to correctly view the contents of traditional culture about western Guangdong architecture.

Zhanjiang is located in the southern tip of the mainland China, facing the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea in the east, and overlooking the Qiongzhou Strait and Hainan Island in the south, the whole is located in the southern border of the motherland and has a superior geographical position. At present, Zhanjiang has 12 villages selected in the "Chinese Traditional Villages" list, [2] divided into three batches, the first batch are Bontang Village, Baisha Town, Leizhou City, Longmen Town, Leizhou City, Chaoxi Village, Nanxing Town, Leizhou City, Donglin Village, Suixi County, Jianxin Town, Su two villages; the second batch are Jijia Town, Leizhou City, Zhoujia Village, Leizhou City, Zhifeng Town, Zhioming Village, Leizhou City, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Village, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Town, Zhifeng Village, Qingtong Village, Yingli Town, Leizhou City, and Guanxin Village, Nanxing Town, Leizhou City; the third batch are Shuang Village, Hetou Town, Suixi County, Tiaofeng Village, Lingbei Town, Suixi County, Beilao Village, Yangjia Town, Leizhou City, and Goose Sense Village, Beihe Town, Leizhou City [3]. Zhanjiang's traditional villages of ancient dwellings are mostly buildings from the Ming and Qing Dynasties to the Republic of China; they are the product of human historical civilization and Chinese farming civilization, like a vast museum of folklore, lying quietly in the dark and quaint.

Zhanjiang ancient residential building types mainly of patio courtyard type and watchtowers type, mostly brick and tile structures, the overall layout of residential staggered, flying eaves and warping corners. (Figure 1, Figure 2) The basic structure of the patio courtyard style is a four-sided house or a three-sided house with one wall and a patio in the center, which is enclosed to form a courtyard. [4] Watchtower is as a traditional village defense system appears, almost every village has built watchtowers, built into two types: clan collectives and self-construction by wealthy families, mainly serves as a defense against Japanese invaders and pirates. [5] Decorative arts attached to the ancient residential buildings, ancient residential buildings is the body of the decoration, decoration not only beautify and protect the ancient residential buildings, but also can reflect certain characteristics of the times and people's spiritual pursuit, with the characteristics of functional materiality and spiritual culture, no matter decorative subject matter, artistic characteristics and performance techniques, have a high level of art.



Figure 1: Aerial view of a typical compound building in western Guangdong (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 2: Watchtower in an ancient village (Source: Self-portrait)

3. Factors Affecting the Decorative Art of Zhanjiang Ancient Houses

Decorative arts is particularly important in ancient residential architecture, mainly presented in the architectural form and decorative modeling with artistic beauty, and is the crystallization of the art of people in ancient. Zhanjiang's unique geographical environment and humanistic elements also fundamentally influenced the formation and development of Zhanjiang's ancient residential decorative art. Zhanjiang is located in the low latitude area south of the Tropic of Cancer, belonging to the tropical and subtropical monsoon climate, regulated by the marine climate all year round, the region is rich in seafood, developed fisheries, the climate is suitable for the four seasons, the rainfall is plentiful, the fruits are many varieties and rich in production, and these regional characteristics are reflected in the architectural components and decorative components of many ancestral halls [6]. Combining Zhanjiang architectural art, history and culture, and humanism, we are able to understand that, firstly, the development of maritime trade in Zhanjiang was prosperous, and the sea was an important lifeline for the survival and development of the people of the Zhanjiang area, and the dissemination of the maritime culture became an important social basis for the formation of Zhanjiang's ancient dwellings. Secondly, coupled with the ancient migration of immigrants to the south, the penetration of the culture of the Central Plains, and the prosperity of the culture of the imperial examinations, so that many villages in Zhanjiang, the literary style of the flourishing, talented people, quite large-scale ancient residential buildings with the decoration of the gorgeous, magnificent enough to highlight the master of the year's success and fame, wealth and glory, is the formation of Zhanjiang, the ancient dwellings of an important humanistic environment. Finally, while absorbing immigrant culture, Central Plains culture, and streamer culture, Zhanjiang indigenous culture is also preserved, which becomes an important cultural foundation for the diversification of decorative art of Zhanjiang ancient dwellings.

4. Zhanjiang Ancient Folk Houses Decorative Art Constructs

Among the existing ancient dwellings in the traditional villages of Zhanjiang, the decorative parts are mainly: roofs, gable, beams and columns, doors and windows, balustrades, pedestals, purlins and squares, etc. According to the structure of ancient residential dwellings, their decorative art constructs can be divided into two major parts: structural body and maintenance body.

4.1 Structural Body Decoration

Ancient residential decorative art construction structure system covers beams, purlins, santalums, columns and eaves, and so on. Beam frame is an important supporting structural component of

traditional residential buildings, which can be categorized into timber beam frame and stone beam frame according to the differentiation of construction materials, and can be categorized into outer gable beam frame and inner gable beam frame according to the differentiation of location. The beams are also the location where the decorative art of the ancient residential is more abundant and concentrated, especially in the part of the eaves where the beams are inserted and overhanging the columns. We can also be called the sparrow, belongs to the load-bearing components, has a strong decorative effect, wood and stone carving are often the main crafts, made into a variety of Hui pattern, auspicious cloud pattern, Bogu pattern, Lotus and so on, but also often carved figures, plants and animals and other patterns, beautifully decorated and full of good meaning. Zhanjiang part of the ancient residential corridors above also have masonry-style eave beams, the decoration of the eaves of the clay sculpture in the colorful depictions, the structure of the scroll form, the performance of prayers, heroes, traditional patterns and so on.

Purlin is the crossarm erected on the beams to hold the rafters, also known as purlin [7], in the residential building, the purlin and wall lap in the way of purlin and wall notch placement purlin and directly purlin inserted into the wall head, and then filled with brick or ash. The decorative color of purlin is mostly red and blue, mainly wood carving, and the decorative patterns are mostly made of fascies, which have the function of warding off evil spirits and symbolizing good luck and good meaning. Santalum is a crosspiece placed between or on top of columns. Square column is placed among the columns or columns on top of the crossarm. In Zhanjiang ancient dwellings, square is mainly divided into square and interspersed square, square has a knot and decorative role, decorative techniques are mostly in relief and pick the ground carving is based on the decoration of Lingnan good fruit, grass dragon pattern and lucky patterns such as fortune, luck and longevity and happiness.

Column is the main supporting role in the ancient residential architecture of the basic components, the structure is divided into two parts of the column base and column body, due to the Zhanjiang region windy and rainy all year round, the construction of the consideration of solid, moisture and durable function, therefore, according to the nature of the column material division, can be divided into three forms of stone columns, stone base wooden columns and stone base brick columns. Columns are also the focus of Zhanjiang ancient residential decorative arts, in the decoration of the performance of the column body is relatively simple; the column base is the focus of the performance, often made of stone carving, the process of relief and line carving, the form of Yazhong, drum-shaped, vase-shaped and so on. On the bases of the columns, the pattern of "anchor" also appears in some residential areas, reflecting the love of the sea; in some guild halls and ancestral halls, there is also a lotus flower on the base of the column, with vivid images and delicate carvings. (Figure 3)

The cornice is the junction between the roof and the exterior wall, also known as the eaves, which has the function of draining and protecting the wall. In order to adapt to the rainy weather in Zhanjiang, the cornice part of the ancient residence in Zhanjiang is mostly composed of dripping tiles, Jixiongfeizi and eave boards. The decorative patterns of dripping tiles are especially rich, including lion's head, runic symbols, curly grass patterns and copper coins, etc. The forms of tiles include dripping peony patterns in the shape of lotus petals and Ruyi hooks, etc. The colors of tiles are mainly yellow and green. Chicken-breasted fly has the role of stabilizing the structure and waterproofing penetration, and it is often coated with paint for waterproofing treatment, mostly in blue color, and engraved with decorative patterns such as curly grass pattern and runes. The eaves board in traditional residential buildings plays a role in keeping off the rain and protecting the building from the erosion of wind and rain. The decorative elements are mainly composed of complex reliefs, showing various themes such as fruits, figures, animals and plants, flowers and birds in Lingnan. These patterns are not only decorative, but also rich in storytelling.



a) Pillar at Bangtang village



b) Foundation pillars in Suer village



c) Base pillar of Chaoxi Village

Figure 3: Various shapes of base columns (Source: Self-portrait)

4.2 Maintenance Body Decoration

The maintenance system of the decorative art construction of ancient houses covers the gable, roof, doors, and windows. Gable refers to the wall of the horizontal outer wall of the ancient residential building, also known as the horizontal wall or the outer horizontal wall, the main role is to separate the neighboring residences and fire prevention [8]. According to the form of gable, it can be divided into gold-style gables, wooden gables, earth-style gables, water-style gables, and fire-type gables, collectively referred to as "gold, wood, water, fire and earth" five styles. The gable is also a part of the expression of decorative art in the ancient dwellings of Zhanjiang, especially in the upper part of the wall, the practice is divided into three lines and three belly, with Chu Hua below, in which "belly" is also called "plate belly", made of clay sculpture. The decorative pattern is mainly based on flowers and birds, figures and landscapes, and there are a number of carved leaky windows between the plate belly, which is not only rich in the sense of rhythm, but also can achieve the effect of lighting and ventilation.

The intersection at the top between the two sides of the roof slope is called the roof ridge, which is the highest point of the façade of the residential building and the focus of the decoration of the ancient residential building. The common roof ridge forms of Zhanjiang ancient residential buildings are flat ridge, dragon boat ridge, Bogu ridge, swallow-tail ridge, etc. The construction

process is based on the combination of bricklaying, stacked tiles and clay sculpture. The flat ridge construction form is simple and paved with bricks and tiles, mostly used in smaller scale residential. The shape of the other roof ridges is lighter, the two sides are warped, the decoration workmanship is more exquisite, and the decoration content is rich in geomancy meaning and beautiful symbols of people, animals and plants, auspicious motif and other patterns.(Figures 4 - 9)



Figure 4: Dragon boat ridge of the Gu Family House (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 5: Swallowtail Ridge in Yashao Village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 6: Bogu Ridge of Gu Family House (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 7: Bogu Ridge in Chaoxi Village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 8: Vertical ridges in Yashao village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 9: Ridge of the Gu Family House (Source: Self-portrait)

Door in the traditional residential architecture has the symbol of the gap between the rich and the poor, but also an important location of the decoration, divided into the outer door and over the door.

The outer door is the most important display surface for the outside world, especially for the gatehouse door, the decoration mainly focuses on the gables, the ridge of the gatehouse, and the decoration of the inner eaves. The decoration on the gable and ridge of the gate is basically the same as that of the residential building, but the gable of the gate has no belly and leaky windows, and the patterns and decorations used have geomancy and auspicious meanings. In the roof of the gatehouse, in addition to the decoration of the main wall and the side wall of the door, the decoration of the plaque is also the most important, usually adopting the inscription on the plaque. The side of the openwork carving or relief carving is painted with landscapes, figures, auspicious motifs, etc., and the carving is delicate and exquisite. Windows in the residential buildings have ventilation and visual role, mainly openwork windows, pole window, and casement windows in three forms, openwork window materials to ceramics and stone-based, there are also useful for brick collage with geometric patterns and the image of the pattern of the magic weapon. Casement window and casement door decoration is similar, the material is mostly wood, the process is based on carving, commonly used motifs such as magic weapons, flowers, birds and plants, etc., the technique is exquisite. (Figure 10 - Figure 13)



Figure 10: HuiLin's front in Suer Village (Source: self-portrait)



Figure 11: Facade wood carvings in Chaoxi Village (Source: self-portrait)



Figure 12: Ceramic ornamental perforated window (Source: self-portrait)

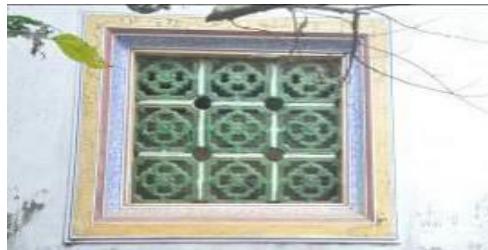


Figure 13: Green-glazed ornamental perforated window (Source: self-glazed)

In the process of researching the above content, it can be learned that the decoration of ancient dwellings in Zhanjiang is deeply influenced by a variety of factors such as nature and humanities, and the decorative art is extremely rich in subject matter. Characters, flora and fauna, text, traditional patterns and artifacts and other subjects are the focus of decorative expression, presented in different ancient residential buildings. In the decorative allegory not only symbolizes good luck and good as well as the role of warding off evil spirits, but also reflects the practicality of the design concept, presenting the characteristics of the times and people's artistic pursuits. In the decorative process, it can reflect the high artistic level and performance techniques of local craftsmen, highlighting the characteristics of Zhanjiang ancient residential decorative art style. Next, the article will focus on analyzing the characteristics of Zhanjiang ancient residential decorative art from the decorative materials and techniques.

5. Characteristics of Decorative Art of Ancient Dwellings in Zhanjiang

5.1 Characteristics of Stone Carving Art

Stone decorative art in zhanjiang region is widely used, because of the durable wear and moisture resistance and waterproof properties, and therefore more used in residential construction of the force components, such as the building's column base, beams, thresholds, balustrades, balustrades, steps, etc.,has a good role in stabilizing. In the decoration is often carved with auspicious symbols and evil spells and animals, the most representative is zhanjiang Leizhou stone dog, often placed in the residential housing doorway or the entrance to the village, there is to drive

away evil spirits from the meaning of disaster. In the carving process, the three commonly used techniques are round carving, openwork carving and relief sculpture, semi-dimensional and three-dimensional stone carving works are mainly. Semi-stereoscopic stone carving art with relief craft techniques, shoveling on the stone, the formation of concave and convex picture, with a semi-dimensional sense, commonly used in the door and railing and other places of decoration. Three-dimensional stone carving works of art mostly with the carving and round carving process, carving process works are mostly used for leakage of windows and door pillars and other decorations, and Leizhou stone dog is a typical round carving process carved out of the works. Most of the stone carving decorative art works modeling carving natural, vivid performance, and has a good decorative art effect.

5.2 Characteristics of Wood Carving Art

Due to the unique climatic conditions of the Zhanjiang area, the local production of camphor, linden and boxwood is abundant. These wood species have the characteristics of fine wood, durability and easy processing, so as a decoration, mainly used in residential building structure and maintenance body, such as beams and frames, sparrow alternatives, doors and windows, inside and outside the eaves and indoor furniture and other parts of the decoration, carving skills are very exquisite and lifelike. At present, Zhanjiang ancient dwellings surviving wood carving works in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the common process of openwork carving, picking ground carving, relief carving and sticker carving of four kinds. Openwork carving has high requirements for skills, and for the convenience of production, it is often carved and then collaged into a whole by individual components, and is mostly used in decorative components such as windows, screens and partitions. The pick ground carving is the most traditional carving technique of wood carving, commonly used in decorative semi-mixed carving method and relief carving method, carving pattern three-dimensional, changes undulations, mostly used in square, purlin, doors and windows and other decorative. There are high relief and shallow relief, with three-dimensional and multi-layered sense, mostly used for decoration under the eaves, or the gate of the plaque, can enhance the spatial expression of the decorative place and rich sense of light and shadow, lead people into the best environment. Finally, the sticker carving is combined and developed on the basis of the fusion of a variety of carving techniques, which is more complex and delicate in decoration, exquisite workmanship, and is an excellent work of wood carving technology. (Figure 14)

5.3 Characteristics of Clay Sculpture Art



Figure 14: Yashao village wood carving with dragon relief

Zhanjiang is a coastal city, which is greatly affected by the sea breeze, and the use of clay sculpture materials is mainly shell ash to prevent the building from being eroded by the sea breeze. The clay sculpture has a sense of concave and convex, three-dimensional sense and strong corrosion resistance, therefore, clay sculpture works are widely used in the gable, ridge, lintel and other decorations of residential buildings. And the subject matter is wide, mostly for people like to see birds and flowers, fish and insects, landscapes and figures, calligraphy and beasts.[9] In the

production, two kinds of craft techniques, color painting and gray batch, most of the clay sculptures of color painting are mainly in plane form, often used in the decoration of internal and external eaves, the use of shell ash to make gray cake and color mixed into plastic materials for color drawing, the depiction form and subject matter have a lot in common with traditional Chinese painting, rich in color, gorgeous and colorful. The gray batch has a three-dimensional sense; there are two craft techniques of round carving and relief carving. It is mainly decorated on the roof ridge, gable wall, lintel window frame and other decorations, often using hanging fish, cocktail, and dragon and water beast as decorative themes, which has high aesthetic value and also reflects the high-value cultural connotation of Zhanjiang area. (Figures 15-19)



Figure 15: Gray molding decoration on the hanging ridge of Bangtang Village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 16: Gray molding decoration on the ridge of the roof in Chaoxi Village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 17: Gray molding on the wall of Chaoxi Village (Source: Self-portrait)



Figure 18: Gray molding on the walls of Bangtang Village (Source: self-published)



Figure 19: Lotus flower decoration on the wall of Bangtang Village (Source: Self-portrait)

6. Conclusion

The decorative art of ancient dwellings has the dual value of material culture and intangible cultural heritage. The study of the decorative art of traditional houses in Zhanjiang can not only understand the local customs and cultural heritage through the accumulated history and culture, but also deepen our knowledge, understanding and protection of traditional culture. The formation and development of traditional residential architecture is inextricably linked to the lifestyle and culture of local residents. The decorative culture and characteristics of ancient dwellings do not mean that they are old and outdated. In the process of iterative replacement of traditional villages, we need to recognize the importance of traditional decorative arts. In terms of design, we need to make traditional art and culture sustainable in modern society through continuous exploration and discovery of innovation, so that people can better perceive the atmosphere of traditional culture and humanistic heritage.

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