

On the Embodiment of “Harmony but Not Uniformity” in Hakka Earth Buildings

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Abstract. *The Confucian Analects: Zi Lu:* "The gentleman aims at harmony, and not at uniformity. The mean man aims at uniformity, and not at harmony." "Harmony but not uniformity" refers to the pursuit of internal harmony and unity instead of apparent uniformity. There are more than 20,000 Yongding Hakka Earth Buildings, the world cultural heritages, which have the same internal architectural structure but diversified architectural forms. This article discusses "the embodiment of harmony but not uniformity in Hakka Earth Buildings" from such aspects as times, geographical locations and personal aesthetics.

1. Introduction

Yongding Hakka. Hakka, a branch of the Han nationality, refers to the Han immigrants who migrated from the Central Plains of China southward due to the wars. At present, there are about 100 million Hakka people spread all over the world. The first record about Yongding Hakka was in the Western Jin Dynasty. Record also says that "Pan Liaoquan entered Yongding from Henan through Anhui and Jiangxi in the Sui and Tang Dynasties"^①. The Yongding ethnic group of Hakka, formed in the Song Dynasty, basically entered Yongding from Ningdu and Wuyuan of Jiangxi through Ninghua, Changting and Shanghang.

Yongding Hakka Earth Buildings. Earth construction is one of the most primitive architectural patterns of mankind. "Archaeological researches show that earth construction has been widely used since the Neolithic Age. Buildings found in Banpo of Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province which were built more than 6,000 years ago were just earth buildings"^②. Since then, earth construction has been a normal pattern of buildings on the land of China until the Ming Dynasty in the 14th century, when earth was gradually replaced by bricks. However, the Hakka ethnic group formed since the Song Dynasty has been carried forward and developed in Yongding in southwest Fujian, where the rammed-earth construction techniques of folk houses have reached the peak of perfection.

2. Methodology

A Yongding Hakka earth building refers to a large-scale building composed of rammed-earth load-bearing walls made of unprocessed raw earth for group residence and defense. Usually consisting of three to four floors, they have been generally used for long time till now by the residents of Yongding. There are dozens of patterns for Yongding Hakka earth buildings, such as square buildings, round buildings and five-phoenix buildings. On July 6, 2008, "Fujian Earth Building", with Yongding Hakka Earth Building as the typical and core representative, was officially included in the *World Heritage List*. On the eve of the Lunar New Year in 2010, Hu Jintao, the then general secretary, visited and inspected Hakka earth buildings in Yongding and commented: "Hakka earth buildings are treasures of the Chinese culture and a model for large families and small societies to live in harmony. We must protect, inherit and make good use of this precious heritage passed down by our ancestors."^③

Yongding Hakka earth buildings adopt basically the same construction materials, processes, layout and structure. The materials are mainly sandy clay, fir, stones and lime, bamboo chips, green

bricks, tiles and other auxiliary materials. The process basically consists of site selection, design and construction. As for the layout, they mainly feature clear-cut central axis, central hall and inner corridor. In terms of construction, there are mainly two features: civil structure for the main building and hybrid structure of post-and-baulk and post-and-lintel structure to reflect a concept of "harmony". However, Yongding Hakka earth buildings are not rigid and uniform, but dynamic, which is mainly reflected by its diversified external forms, functions and cultural connotations, which are mainly influenced by the times, topography and personal aesthetics to reflect the concept of "not uniform".

Yongding Hakka earth buildings have been developing with the times, which reflects a kind of "dis-uniformity". The Hakka ancestors first entered Yongding at the turn of the two Song Dynasties. With the proliferation of individuals, the sharp increase in the number of people moving southwards, and the development of the economy in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Yongding earth buildings have experienced three stages, the early stage, the development stage and the maturity stage. This "dis-uniformity" caused by population and economic development can be embodied in three aspects, water resistance, defense and architectural style.

2.1 Water Resistant

For raw-earth buildings, water resistance is crucial. An obvious embodiment of this in Yongding earth buildings is the continuous improvement in their water resistance, which can be verified by the "stone foundation", which means the foundation made of stones. Yongding earth buildings have undergone the evolution from stone-free foundation, semi-stone foundation to stone foundation. Stone-free foundation means to rammer the earth directly from underground, such as the Aoyan Riying Building built in the Dade Period of the Yuan Dynasty (1297 ~ 1307); Semi-stone foundation means that the stone foundation is not higher than the ground, or is covered by a stone-made skirt about 1 meter high along the root of the wall root after coming out of the ground, such as the Gaodong Yonggu Building built in the 9th year of the Jiajing Period of the Ming Dynasty (1530); In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, stone foundation was widely used, which greatly enhanced the resistance of earth buildings to flood and tide.

2.2 Defense and Protection

The Hakka ancestors moved to the mountains to avoid the chaos caused by war. However, there were still wars, and in addition, there were threats from bandits and wild animals and fights among different clans for limited living materials. Therefore, early earth buildings had strong defense functions, such as thick walls (nearly 2 meters), solid doors, no windows on the first and second floors, fire protection devices, etc. The Fuxin Building built at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, which is the oldest earth building where people still live, has only one entrance door with the height of 3.5 meters and the width of 2.5 meters. The door leaves are covered with iron plates. There is also a "building moat" with the depth of 3 meters and the width of 5 meters 10 meters from the wall. The Wushi Building built between the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty has three entrance doors from outside to inside. Since the liberation, due to political stability, the defense functionality of the earth buildings has been greatly weakened. The buildings are basically residential earth buildings with the wall thickness of less than one meter. The ground floors are equipped with more windows for lighting and the doors are usually ordinary wooden doors. Moreover, instead of large earth buildings, the buildings are mainly linear earth buildings built by individuals as simple residential buildings.

2.3 Architectural Style

Located in the mountains in southwest Fujian, the earth buildings are relatively isolated from the outside world. Therefore, the architectural styles of the earth buildings have also been limited by the tradition for a long time and the materials are basically natural materials or roughly-processed materials owned by the native place. After the Opium War, the country was opened, and the

construction of the earth buildings began to blend into the styles of other places and even all over the world, which is represented by the Zhencheng Building. Zhencheng Building was built in 1912. Lin Xunzhi, the owner of the building, was once a member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of China. He applied many colors to the entrance door and the fancy wall, embodying the principle of diversity and unity emphasized by western architectural aesthetics. The wooden back railing under the eaves of the inner corridors on the third and fourth floors embodies the style of Suzhou gardens. The four round granite pillars in front of the ancestral hall were delivered from Shanghai with western style. The opening of the hall railing is connected with the patio, embodying the Greek style. Since the 1980s, with the development of economy, modern building materials like steel and cement have gradually replaced traditional building materials like civil sand and gravel, and the earth building is no longer a building that only uses rammed earth for load bearing, but a kind of Yongding residential building in a broad sense.

The earth buildings also vary due to different geographical locations. The typical representative of the earth buildings is the square building, but due to geographical restrictions, there are more than 30 variants, which is another kind of "dis-uniformity". Generally speaking, it can be analyzed from three angles, specific area, location and topography.

As for the area, in Yongding, as a mountainous area, eighty percent of the area are mountains, only ten percent is water and only ten percent is farmland. Since there is little flat land, places with areas, i.e. Gaobei, Kanshi, Fushi and Hulei, mostly adopt the "mansion-styled" earth buildings, while places with less flat land, such as Xiayang and Daxi, mostly adopt standalone earth buildings. The so-called mansion-styled earth building refers to a building with two halls and two courtyards or three halls and two courtyards, with a single-storied or two-storied building in the front, the main hall in the center, the main building with three or more stories in the rear part, and the horizontal buildings on both sides connecting the front and the rear buildings to form a whole. Standalone earth buildings, on the other hand, are mostly enclosed by earth walls with the same height all around and all other facilities are surrounded by the earth walls. A mansion-styled building covers a wider area. For example, "the Yijing Building in Shangyang, Gaobei, Yongding covers an area of 11,300 square meters"^④. However, the Chengqi Building, Yongding's largest standalone earth building located in Gaotou Township, covers an area of just over 5,000 square meters.

As for geographical locations, as limited by specific areas and in order to maximally utilize the limited space, the round buildings have emerged based on the traditional square buildings. Assume that the round building has the same circumference as a square building, the area of the round building is 1.273 times that of the square building. In addition, In Yongding where there are many mountains, most of the wind from the mountain valleys is fiercer and has a rotten smell of the mountains. Round walls are more likely to diffuse the wind. In Yongding, therefore, in mountainous areas and places with their backs to coves, the earth buildings are mostly round, while in the relatively flat areas of the townships, the buildings are mostly square. Today, there are 20,000 earth buildings in Yongding, mainly square buildings, and the over 360 round buildings are basically built by making full use of the geographical conditions.

As for the topography, limited by specific environmental conditions, many earth buildings have made flexible variations according to the actual conditions on the basis of strict central axis and without impacting the people's living conditions. Therefore, there have been earth buildings of more than 30 variations, such as low front and high back, combination of the square and the round, polygon, ellipse and half-moon, etc. according to the topography. The Shunyuanyuan Building in Gaodong, Gaotou Township of Yongding, was built in 1839. Located in a delta near a stream, it is designed into an irregular pentagon by making full use of the space according to the special topography of being steep in the north and narrow in the south and close to the stream.^⑤

3. Results and Discussion

Yongding earth buildings are mostly built by individuals, so they incorporate personal factors and vary due to the differences in economic conditions, aesthetics and creativity of different individuals.

Earth buildings are obviously affected by economic strength. As mentioned earlier, the mansion-styled earth buildings, large in scale and beautifully decorated, are mostly owned by the rich and the powerful, while most of the buildings built by ordinary people are limited to residential functions. For example, the Yonghao Building in Fushi, Yongding, beautifully decorated, covers an area of more than 8,000 square meters and was completed after 18 years. Upon its completion, decoration technology is exquisite. When it was completed, more than 100 squires including members of the imperial academy presented screens for congratulation, which shows the economic and social influence of the building's owner. However, the ordinary earth buildings are mainly limited to residential purposes, with both the scale and the decoration being "satisfactory" but not "magnificent".

Obvious differences between people's aesthetic tastes are also embodied in the earthen buildings. The Yanxiang Building, which was built in 1880 and is located in Xinnan, Hukeng of Yongding, is designed to be "round outside and square inside", implying "no rule, no accomplishment", an important concept of the traditional culture. Besides, many couplets such as the entrance couplet "Accumulate virtues for reproduction, collect books for self-cultivation" clearly embody a scholarly feature. The building is also called the "most scholarly" earthen building. The "Fuzi Building" (Fuzi means the Chinese character for wealth) located in Zhongchuan, Xiayang of Yongding was built according to the character "富", which clearly embodies the pursuit of "wealth". It is worth noting that personal aesthetics is not necessarily related to one's own origin and occupation. For example, Yanxiang Building was built by grandchildren of an influential merchant named Su Guxiang. Although it is commonly known that merchants are "only interested in profits", this building shows the flavor of the traditional Confucian culture. Hu Zhanxiang, the builder of the Fuzi Building, was a tribute student and worked as a teacher in many places. However, this building embodies the pursuit of wealth, which is a rebellion against the Confucian principle of "The gentleman speaks of righteousness and not benefits".

The subjective initiative of the individuals has also resulted in continuous improvement in many functions of the earth buildings. The earthen buildings have been approaching perfection during the creation of many individuals, which embodies a kind of "dis-uniformity". The earth buildings adopt the civil structure and the fire prevention function is therefore very important. In this regard, Yongding Earth Buildings can be described as "the Eight Immortals crossing the sea, each showing their magic powers". The Zhencheng Building epitomizes the fire prevention functions by absorbing the advantages of different schools. First, the wooden door is wrapped with iron sheet, which can prevent fire. Second, a water tank is also installed above the door. Once someone attacks with fire from the outside, people in the building can fill water into the water tank from the second floor, and the water flows along the door to effectively extinguish the fire. Third, the wooden floor of the earth building is paved with thin green bricks. Once the wooden floor catches fire, the green bricks on top of it will collapse to extinguish the fire, which is effective fire prevention. Fourth, the whole building is divided into eight trigrams, each being independent and separated by green bricks so that even if one trigram catches fire, other trigrams will not be affected.

4. Conclusion

"Harmony" and "Uniformity" are two important philosophical concepts in the pre-Qin period. There are clear records in Guo Yu and Zuo Zhuan^⑥. Confucius inherited and developed this, proposing that "The gentleman aims at harmony, and not at uniformity. The mean man aims at uniformity, and not at harmony." "Harmony but not uniformity" is an important criterion of Confucius' ideal personality and is recognized as a typical representative of Chinese philosophical wisdom. This paper discusses the "Harmony but not uniformity" of Yongding earth buildings. On

the one hand, it aims to explain that architectural design should give full play to subjective initiative and embody its own style between the tradition and the reality, which should just be a kind of creation and development instead of blind imitation. On the other hand, it also states that one, as an individual, should retain his personality that differs him from the others on the basis of principle.

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