



Research on the Characteristics of Traditional Commercial Buildings in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty Based on the Qianlong Southern Inspection Tour

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Abstract. Qianmen Street is an important section of the central axis of Beijing, and also a place where commercial building types converged during the economic boom period in China's history. It has undergone multi-stage protection and utilization measures in the context of historical street protection and renewal. Based on the commercial scene outside Zhengyang Gate presented in the Qianlong Southern Tour Map (Volume I), through literature research, image processing and analysis, this study summarized the characteristics of the traditional commercial buildings in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty, and deeply discussed the internal relationship between commercial formats and architectural layout, architectural form, decoration, etc. under the background of the times. The purpose is to systematically sort out the characteristics of the traditional commercial buildings in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty, and to provide information for the sustainable protection and utilization of the historic district.

Keywords: Qing Dynasty · Qianmen Street · Business types · Traditional commercial buildings

1 Introduction

With the launch of the *Regulations on the Protection of Cultural Heritage along the Central Axis of Beijing*, the historical and cultural relics connected by the 7.8 km long ridge of the ancient capital have once again become a hot topic of research. As an important part of the central axis, Qianmen Street was initially formed in the early Ming Dynasty, and the real prosperity began in the Qing Dynasty [3]. Therefore, the research on the characteristics of traditional commercial buildings in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty is mainly based on the content drawn in the “Qianlong South Tour Map”. The picture depicts the scene of Qianlong's first southern tour in the 16th year of Qianlong's reign (1751). It depicts the scene of Emperor Qianlong's opening from the Qianqing Gate after serving the empress dowager, going out of the Zhengyang Gate

through the Daqing Gate, going west along the West River and the street, turning out of the Guangning (An) Gate, passing through Gongji City, Lugou Bridge, Changxin (Xin) Store in Wanping County, and ending at the Huangxinhuang Palace in Liangxiang. Among them, the space studied by the research group is Qianmen Street, which starts from Zhengyangmen in the north and ends at Zhushikou East Street in the south, with a total length of about 270 m. The purpose of this study is to summarize the common commercial formats on Qianmen Street at that time from the recognizable shop signs in the images by processing the images in sections. Through the study of the store image, the characteristics of the architectural layout, architectural form and architectural decoration are summarized, and then the internal relationship between the commercial formats and the commercial building space will be analyzed. It is supposed to provide effective reference materials for the follow-up protection and utilization of Qianmen Street.

2 Causes of Qianmen Street

Qianmen Street was a commercial street formed by the government through investment promotion in the early Ming Dynasty. It was then called “Sitiao Langfang”, which was a row of shops built outside the city gate by the state. However, its real prosperity began in the Qing Dynasty. One reason was that after the Manchu Dynasty entered the Shanhaiguan Pass, the policy of separating the flag from the Han Dynasty was implemented, and commercial and entertainment venues were prohibited in the inner city where the Manchu people lived. Therefore, the shops originally located in Qipan Street (located in the southern section of Tiananmen Square within the current Qianmen Gate) were forced to move out, and most of them reopened near the Qianmen Gate. The second reason is that Qianmen is the only way for civil and military officials to enter the imperial court for office work, and there are conditions for feasting, shopping and entertainment along the way. The third reason is that most of the literati from other provinces, such as Han officials, literati and officials, live in the outer city of Beijing, and the guilds of provinces, prefectures and counties in Beijing are basically located in the area centered on Qianmen. Based on the above three reasons, the prosperity and development of Qianmen Street’s commerce and entertainment industry have been promoted both from the demand level and from the commercial passive implantation level. Therefore, the time scope of this study is mainly from the early Qing Dynasty to 1900 before the “Gengzi National Revolution”.

3 The Influence of the Background of the Times on Commercial Formats

It can be seen from “*On the Commercial Tax System of the Qing Dynasty*” that in the 18th year of Qianlong’s reign, the commercial tax accounted for 13% of the financial revenue of the Qing government, 7% more than that in the 3rd year of Yongzheng’s reign, which to some extent reflected the degree of commercial prosperity during the reign of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty [2]. According to historical data, the well-known shops in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty include pharmacies, shoe and hat shops, silk shops, tea houses, theaters, exchange shop, etc. [6].

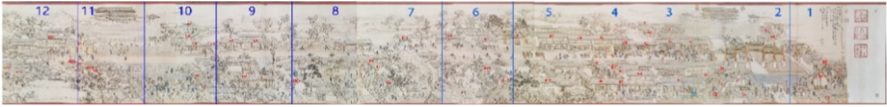


Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the division of the study section of Qianlong’s southern tour map (picture source: the Palace Museum)

According to the signboards of shops along Qianmen Street drawn in the “Qianlong South Tour Map”, the names of some shops can be inferred (Table 1). From the perspective of business types, it is highly consistent with the typical business types in Qianmen Street in the Qing Dynasty.

4 Research Method

4.1 Image Processing and Information Induction

The research team divided the part of the “Qianlong South Tour Map” involving the research scope into eight sections (A–H), numbered the visible shops in each section (Fig. 1), and processed the images of the shop buildings and signboards to form clear archives. After the completion of the image group file, the research team systematically sorted out all the shops that the business type can be identified, and the statistical information includes location, shop name, business type classification, plane layout, building form, decoration and other contents (Table 1).

4.2 Document Demonstration

While sorting out and analyzing the characteristics of commercial buildings in the paintings, the author analyzed and studied a large number of documents, including works, papers and other contents related to the commercial development in the Qing Dynasty, commercial buildings in Qianmen Street and other contents, in order to demonstrate the regularity and scientificity of the phenomena depicted in the paintings.

5 Research Results

5.1 Distribution of Shops in Qianmen Street in Qianlong’s South Tour Map

The business types shown in the figure are relatively comprehensive, which can be obtained according to the identifiable information in the signboard. The business types include exchange shop, silk shop, boot and hat shop, drugstore, wine shop and tea shop, facelift, jewelry and spices, famous cigarettes and other general merchandise. Compared with the business types recorded in the *Analysis of the Characteristics of Traditional Commercial Streets and Lanes in Qianmen District*, there are no meat shops, incense paper horses, cart repair shops, fortune telling shops, etc., According to the record in “*Daqianmen - Wang Yongbin’s Oral Life in Old Beijing*”, “*The ‘One Dragon’ shop was built by a Hui people during the Qianlong period. At that time, it was a very small shop,*

selling both raw mutton, raw beef, and cooked meat.” That is to say, there were meat shops in Qianmen Street [7]. At the same time, because there are temples in Qianmen Street, according to the general rule, there will be stores of incense sticks and paper horses nearby. There may be two factors leading to this phenomenon: first, the density of this type of shops is low, and second, the realism of the paintings is not enough. However, based on the current data, certain rules can still be summarized to some extent. For example, silk shops, pharmacies, boot and hat shops, tobacco, wine, tea and other businesses with a high frequency of occurrence are highly consistent with the typical businesses of the Qing Dynasty in the literature.

5.2 Basic Characteristics of Shops

Layout of Shops

The layout of the shops that recorded in the “Qianlong South Tour Map” is not very different from that of other buildings, mainly including courtyard style and independent style, while the patio style layout is rarely seen. This has a lot to do with the business mode of Qianmen Street. The business mode of Qianmen Street is mainly “family style”, whose main characteristic is the combination of business and residential. Over time there are three patterns, including “courtyard style” and “independent style” and “patio style”.

Courtyard style means that the rooms facing the street is an external shop, and the inner courtyard workshop is produced and sold by itself, or for residential purposes. The number of patio style shops is small. This style evolved from traditional courtyard style buildings, which is generally 2–3 floors in the shape of “back” or “day”. Independent type is widely distributed. Generally, it has two floors and no courtyard. The plane pattern of small bay and large depth, showing the phenomenon that the bottom floor undertakes the commercial function and the upper floor undertakes the residential function.

Height of Shop

Most of the commercial buildings in the Qing Dynasty were still single storey, but the number of two storeys high shops increased. The second paragraph of the twelfth volume of the “Kangxi Southern Tour” is from the overpass to Zhengyangmen, namely Qianmen Street. In which, there are only 2 two storeys high shops on Qianmen Street, which shows that during the reign of Kangxi, the shops on Qianmen Street were still mainly bungalows. But 5 can be seen in the Qianlong Southern Tour, and the appearance is more gorgeous. However, in general, the number of single layer shop is still more than that of multi-layer shop.

Architectural Form

The large wooden frames of the shop buildings in the Qing Dynasty were all based on the “carpentry work without dougong” in the *Qing Structural Regulations* [5]. Its plane layout is not different from other buildings. The street side of the residence sometimes will be directly use to be a business interface of a shop. While some shops will change the building space according to the needs of business activities. There are four types of common shops, namely, Pailou shop, Paizi shop, Chonglou shop and Zhalan shop. The first three kinds of shops are mainly presented in the painting, and the distribution

proportion is relatively average. Among them, compared with the soaring archway, the “pailou style” in the painting is more simple in scale and decoration. In addition, it can be clearly observed that the double floor shops is derived from the framework of the beat type pavement. It is worth mentioning that compared with the other three types of stores, the number of Zhalan stores is relatively small, which is not easy to find, and may be related to their applicable formats. Because the Zhalan store has better privacy and defensiveness, it is generally used as a pawnshop.

Building Decoration

Due to the difference of functional attributes, the decoration of shops is different from that of residential palaces [1]. The shop storefront is more extroverted, so the partition fan placed in the inner eaves of the house is usually placed between the outer eaves columns. Because it is exquisite and light, it makes the space open and close flexibly. Zhaohuang is one of the best decorations for shops to reflect differentiation on the basis of similar architectural forms. It can not only display the business content, but also play an important role in decoration. In the painting of The Qianlong Southern Inspection Tour, there were totally 82 signboards, none of which were the same in form.

Other

Almost all the shops in the painting are selling in the direction of the bay, which is more open, but there are also occasional cases of selling in the direction of the gable. The shops in the picture mainly sell liquor, tobacco and tea, and there is no shop operation. This layout is different from the common “front store and back yard” layout.

5.3 Relevance Between Business Types and Corresponding Commercial Buildings

The image of traditional commercial buildings is influenced by comprehensive factors based on the background of the times. These factors include trade environment, policy guidance, social thoughts and business culture [4]. According to the statistics of the characteristics of the shops that can identify the business types in the paintings (Table 1), the business types are related to the scale, layout and form of their buildings.

Typical business types, such as silk shop, drugstore, tobacco, wine, tea, boots and hats shop and silver shop exchange shop, are generally larger than other shops, mainly with 3 bays, occasionally with 2 bays and 4 bays of shops.

The shops with the layout of “front shops and back houses” are suitable for porcelain shops, tea shops, boots and hats shops, pharmacies, exchange shop and other businesses. Because the prototype of the front store and back house model is a courtyard style residential building, and the reverse seats or gates facing the street are generally transformed into shops, this type of business usually requires large business space, or requires the back house to preserve important commodities.

The pattern of “Downstairs store and upstairs dwelling” is seldom seen in this painting. This mode is generally 2–3 floors, which are used to distinguish business areas from office or residential areas. It is often used in antique stores, jewelry stores, calligraphy and painting stores, foreign goods stores, etc. [4]. These types of businesses do appear in the statistical list with a low frequency, which further demonstrates the correlation between the business types presented in the paintings and the architectural characteristics.

Table 1. Business Distribution, Types and Corresponding Forms

Shops	Bay /room	Depth /room	Height /floor	Layout /style	Form /style
Silk shop	3	1	1	D3: Independent	—
	3	1	1	D5: Courtyard s	Paizi
	2	1	1	H8: Independent	
Herbal medicine shop	3	1	2	B4: Courtyard	Chonglou
	2	1	1	G3: Independent	—
	3	1	1	H3: Courtyard	Paizi
Tobacco, wine, tea	2	1	1	B8: Courtyard	
	3	1	1	B12: Courtyard	
	3	1	1	G4: Independent	
Boots and hats shop	3	1	1	B3: Courtyard	Paizi
	—	1	1	H16: Courtyard	
Draft bank	4	1	2	A7: Courtyard	Chonglou
Beauty shop	2	1	1	B10: Courtyard H5: Independent	
Wine Shop Tea House	2	1	1	B9: Independent	
Jewelry spice	1	1	1	B5: Independent	
Restaurant	2	1	1	H7: Independent	Paizi
	2	1	1	H9: Courtyard	
Writing brush	3	1	1	B6: Courtyard	
Porcelain	3	1	1	H1: Courtyard	
Leather and fur	>4	1	1	C2: Independent	
Others	3	1	1	D2: Courtyard	Paizi

Note: The classification of this business type is based on the classification in the Analysis of the Characteristics of Traditional Commercial Streets and Lanes in Qianmen District.

6 Conclusions

Qianmen Street is the epitome of Beijing's architectural culture, merchant culture, pear garden culture, guild hall culture and folk culture, is one of the important components of Beijing's central axis, and is an unavoidable problem in Beijing's protection of historical and cultural blocks, urban renewal, and cultural confidence building. Therefore, through in-depth analysis of the commercial building image in Qianlong South Tour Map, this study summarized the distribution of commercial forms and the characteristics of commercial buildings in Qianmen Street during this period. At the same time, through comparison with the Poetic Map of Spring in Beijing, it explored the change of commercial building form from 1751 to 1767. Although the realism of the painting is limited, through research, it is found that the phenomenon reflected in the picture is highly consistent with the literature research. Therefore, the research results on the characteristics of commercial buildings in the painting can reflect the commercial building

image at that time to some extent, and can provide some reference for the continuous protection and renewal of the historical and cultural block.

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