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Cultural Beliefs and Implication in Architectural Art at Quexiang Ancient Temple, Chaoshan, China

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Abstract

Unique folk beliefs are an important part of Chaoshan culture in China, and the typical characteristic of Chaoshan folk beliefs is polytheism. Buddhist and Taoist deities, as well as various local protective gods scattered in rural areas, can all become the main deities worshiped by the people of Chaoshan. People who have made significant contributions can also be the subject of deification and worship and placed in temples for worship. Therefore, the folk belief system in the Chaoshan region has given rise to various temples, which, under the influence of the belief system, exhibit exquisite decorative art and rich cultural connotations in their architectural styles. The main purpose of this study is to explore the belief system and architectural art expression at the Quexiang Ancient Temple. In the study, research was conducted by means of on-site investigations as well as interviews with residents and community organizations in the vicinity of Quexiang Village, and the collected data were analyzed in detail to carry out the study, revealing the close relationship between the construction of the ancient temple belief system in Chaozhou and the artistic expression of architecture. The research results show that the folk belief system of Quexiang Ancient Temple carries rich cultural connotations and is an important component of community culture, profoundly influencing community management in the Chaoshan region. The architectural art of the Quexiang Ancient Temple showcases various exquisite architectural decoration techniques in the Chaoshan region, gradually making it a proud, outstanding cultural heritage of the Chaoshan region.

Keywords: Chaoshan Area / Quexiang Ancient Temple / Belief System / Architectural Art

Citation

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ขอนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมความเชื่อ กรณีศึกษาวัดโบราณเขว่เซียง เมืองฉางชาน มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประมวลให้ทราบถึงบริบทของความเชื่อ ผ่านศิลปะการตกแต่งและความหมายแฝงที่ปรากฏบนโครงสร้างสถาปัตยกรรมท้องถิ่นเมืองฉางชาน กระบวนการศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกและการวิจัยภาคสนาม รวมถึงการเก็บข้อมูลจากคนในชุมชน องค์กรชาวจีนท้องถิ่นฉางชานและบุคคลที่เกี่ยวข้อง นำมาถอดความรู้ ความเชื่อ ที่เชื่อมโยงกับพลังของศิลปะพื้นบ้านที่ปรากฏในท้องถิ่น ผลการวิจัยพบว่าระบบความเชื่อพื้นบ้านของวัดโบราณเขว่เซียง มีความหมายแฝงทางวัฒนธรรมที่สัมพันธ์กับโลกทัศน์ของคนในชุมชนและเป็นส่วนสำคัญที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการจัดการชีวิตและประเพณีของคนในท้องถิ่น ศิลปะสถาปัตยกรรมของวัดโบราณเขว่เซียง แสดงให้เห็นถึงคุณค่าเชิงช่าง เทคนิคการตกแต่งที่สัมพันธ์กับระบบความเชื่อที่นับถือเทพเจ้าที่หลากหลาย ซึ่งบริบทเหล่านี้สะท้อนให้เห็นพื้นที่ภูมิโนเวศทางวัฒนธรรมที่เชื่อมโยงกับพื้นที่ความเชื่อในลัทธิเต๋า ลัทธิขงจื้อ และพุทธศาสนาแบบมหายาน แม้จะได้รับความเสียหายในยุคปฏิวัติวัฒนธรรม ทว่ามรดกทางวัฒนธรรมและศิลปะการตกแต่งที่ปรากฏอยู่บนโครงสร้างสถาปัตยกรรมดังกล่าว ยังคงความสำคัญทางจิตใจและได้รับการฟื้นฟูบูรณะ จนกลายเป็นต้นแบบของแหล่งเรียนรู้ทางมรดกวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญยิ่ง ทั้งในเรื่องศรัทธา ความเชื่อและความรักที่มีต่อมาตุภูมิ ซึ่งเป็นความภาคภูมิใจของคนในเมืองฉางชานและชาวจีนโพ้นทะเล

คำสำคัญ: พื้นที่ฉางชาน / วัดโบราณเขว่เซียง / ระบบความเชื่อ / ศิลปะสถาปัตยกรรม

วิธีอ้างอิง

พาน หยาง, ชูศักดิ์ สุวิมลเสถียร, ภูษา เรืองชีวิน และ ศรัญญา ประสพชิงชนะ. (2566). วัฒนธรรมความเชื่อและความหมายในงานศิลปะสถาปัตยกรรม วัดโบราณเขว่เซียง เมืองฉางชาน ประเทศจีน. *วารสารศิลป์ พีระศรี*, 11(2), 153-180. <https://doi.org/10.14456/sbjfa.2023.12>



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Introduction

Quexiang Village is located approximately 1 kilometer southwest of Longdu Town, Chenghai District, Shantou City, Guangdong Province. It currently has over 400 households and a population of about 2,300 people. At present, there are over 1,000 overseas Chinese living in Quexiang Village, making it a famous hometown for overseas Chinese in Shantou City, Guangdong. Due to its unique geographical environment and historical reasons, Que Xiang Village has nurtured a distinctive regional cultural form, in which a rich and diverse folk belief system and exquisite and magnificent architectural decorative art are reflected in Quexiang Ancient Temples.

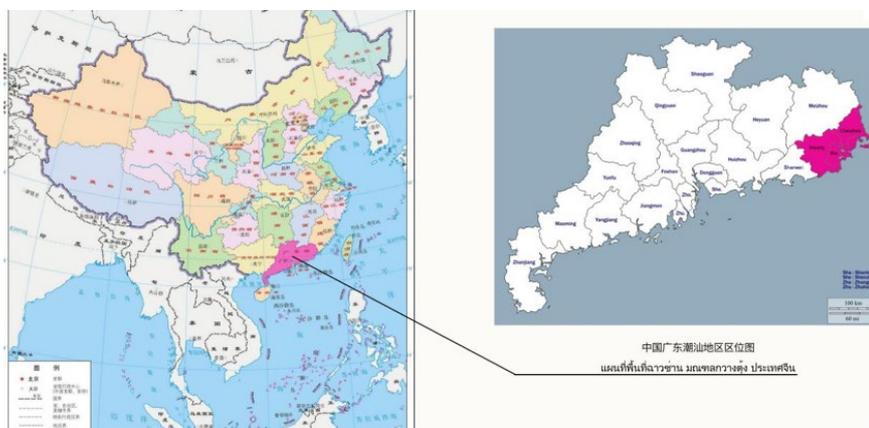


Figure 1

Map of Chaoshan, China

Research background

Unique folk beliefs are an important part of Chaoshan culture, and the typical characteristic of Chaoshan folk beliefs is polytheism. This folk belief system has given rise to various temples in the Chaoshan region. Almost every community and village in the Chaoshan region has temples. These temple buildings are fully functional, gorgeously decorated, and rich in cultural connotations. They serve as carriers of folk beliefs and also serve as a link to overseas Chinese. They bear important social functions and reflect the superb architectural skills and ethnic pride of the Chaoshan people, becoming a splendid and colorful cultural heritage. In this study, Quexiang Ancient Temple in Longdu Town, Chenghai District, Shantou City, Guangdong Province, China is taken as the research object. It embodies distinct folk beliefs, showcases magnificent architectural art, and reflects rich cultural connotations, maintaining kinship relationships both domestically and internationally.

Research objectives

To study the folk belief system of Quexiang Ancient Temple and how the community manages the Temple through polytheistic worship.

And to study the architectural decorative art of the Quexiang Ancient Temple, as well as the impact of the Temple on the local community

Research questions

How is the folk belief system of Quexiang Ancient Temple constructed?

How does the architectural decoration art of Quexiang Ancient Temple express itself?

Research methods

Literature analysis and theoretical research methods were applied to understand the research status of Chaoshan temples. Research results on Chaoshan temples were collected to provide a theoretical basis for this study. Using the field survey method, a field investigation was conducted on the Quexiang Ancient Temple in Longdu Town, Chenghai District, Shantou City, Guangdong Province, China, including on-site surveying, interview records, and collection of materials. The focus was on collecting detailed data and information related to the objects of worship, architectural scale, spatial scope, decorative graphics, and so on, of temples. Using image analysis method, the architectural decorative art of the Quexiang Ancient Temple, as well as the cultural characteristics and spiritual connotations were probed into.

1. Development history of Quexiang Ancient Temple

The Quexiang Ancient Temple contains 3 buildings. They are Quexiang Ancient Town, Tianhou Palace, and Lin's Ancestral Temple. By interviewing Lin Yuanxu, a member of the Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village who was 84 years old, the author learned that Quexiang Village had a development history of more than 400 years and there was no specific record of the earliest completion time of these 3 buildings. However, Quexiang Ancient Town is the oldest temple in the history of the village. The current Quexiang Ancient Town was built in the late Qing Dynasty. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, during the Great Cultural Revolution, the temples in Quexiang Village were damaged to different degrees. After the reform and opening up of

China, a large number of overseas Chinese came back to China to make investments and start up businesses. They made donations to repair the temples and ancestral temples in their hometown. Quexiang Ancient Town has its look today. The Tianhou Palace, where Mazu was worshiped, existed a long time ago. The current Tianhou Palace was rebuilt in 2010. The Lin's Ancestral Temple was rebuilt by the side of the old ancestral temple building. The grand celebration of the completion of the new Lin's Ancestral Temple was

2. The historical origin, type, and characteristics of folk beliefs in Quexiang Ancient Temple

The religious beliefs in the Chaoshan area of Guangdong Province can be roughly divided into institutional religions and folk beliefs. Because of their special geographical position and historical development, the Chaoshan people live at the mercy of the elements and seek living from the sea. With their big spiritual strength, they struggle with natural disasters and terrifying waves. When they have a fate that they cannot rule, they naturally believe that everything is destiny in the unseen world. Therefore, they believe in God. The strong desire to pray for the protection of God has made their beliefs visual and generalized. They build temples to worship effective, practical, and efficient gods. The folk beliefs in the Chaoshan area have a unique form. With their mysterious colors and profound and wide influence, they have gradually formed a traditional regional culture with a long history.

Polytheistic worship is the most outstanding feature of folk beliefs in Quexiang Village. In general, gods in the folk beliefs in the Quexiang Ancient Temple mainly have 3 sources. First, gods from other places. In the Song Dynasty, because of the big population pressure, a lot of people in the southern region of Fujian Province moved to the Chaoshan area to make a living, bringing folk beliefs of the southern region of Fujian Province. Mazu (妈祖) is a typical immortal introduced from Fujian Province to the Chaoshan area. Mazu is the God of the Ocean in China. She is also called "Empress and Heavenly Mother" (天后圣母). Mazu is worshiped in coastal areas such as Fujian, Guangdong, and Taiwan in China, as well as Southeast Asian countries. According to the legend, Mazu was born in Meizhou, Fujian Province, where it was said that the surname of Mazu was "Lin". (Ye & Lin, 2010: 255) Most villagers of the Quexiang Village belonged to the group with the surname of "Lin" who moved from Fujian Province. They live on the ocean for

generations. Therefore, they worship Mazu whose surname is also “Lin”. Second, gods created in the local area. “Three Mountain King” (三山国王) is a representative local god in the Chaoshan area. Three mountains refer to Jin Mountain, Ming Mountain, and Du Mountain in Hepo Town, Jiexi County, Jieyang City, Guangdong Province, China. Three Mountain King is the mountain god of these three mountains. The worship of the Three Mountain King is actually a kind of mountain god worship. According to legend, in the early years of the Sui Dynasty, there were traces of immortals descending to the world on the Three Mountains. Chaoshan people built a temple on Jin Mountain for worship. In the Tang Dynasty, the Three Mountain King became the local mountain god and gradually became one of the most widespread gods in the folk belief center of Chaoshan. In the Quexiang Ancient Town, the “Three Mountains King” is the lord god worshiped by villagers. (Ye & Lin, 2010: 259) Third, worship of ancestors. The worship of ancestors is a widespread phenomenon in the Chaoshan area. The worship of ancestors shows the blood and lineage relations in Chaoshan society. Chaoshan people firmly believe that they will be blessed and protected by their dead ancestors as long as they sincerely worship them. This is an “immortal relative relation” based on the close blood relationship of the clan. The Lin’s Ancestral Temple in the Quexiang Village is an important place for the worship of ancestors. Overseas Chinese who will move to foreign countries get incense, a statue of a god, or a memorial tablet from the ancestral temple in their hometown and bring them back to their place of residence for worship. They also regularly go back to their hometown to worship their ancestors.

3. Categories and architectural forms of Chaoshan traditional buildings

In general, traditional architecture in Chaoshan can be classified into different types based on the level of form and size of the building area, such as Zhugan Cuo (竹竿厝), Xiashan Hu (下山虎), Sidian Jin (四点金), Erma Tuoche (二马拖车), and Sima Tuoche (驷马拖车).

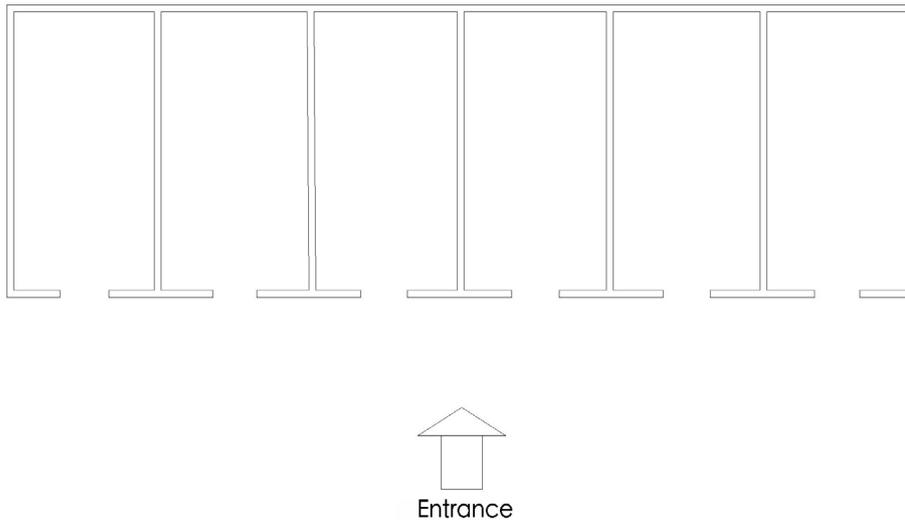


Figure 2
Plan of Zhugan Cuo

Zhugan Cuo is the lowest grade traditional residential form in the Chaoshan region. The layout is narrow and shaped like a bamboo pole, so it is called "Zhugan Cuo".

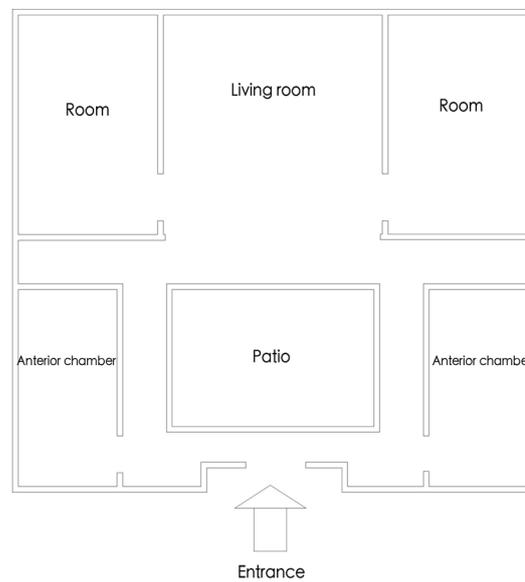


Figure 3
Plan Xiashan Hu

Xiashan Hu is a common form of courtyard in the Chaoshan region. The basic layout of Chaoshan traditional architecture, many higher-level architectural forms are derived from the development of Xiaoshan Hu. The Xiaoshan Hu main house is located in the middle of the three open rooms, known as the "hall". On the left and right sides are the "big rooms". In front of the main hall is a courtyard patio, with a wing room called "Shenshou" (like stretching the arms) on each side connected to the main rooms. The main entrance is located within the front enclosure wall, usually in the form of a concave gatehouse.

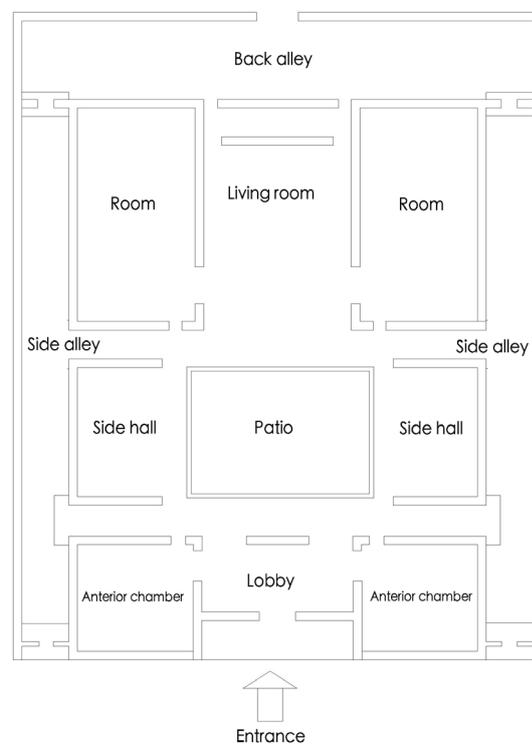


Figure 4
Plan of Sidian Jin

Sidian Jin is the most common form of courtyard in the Chaoshan region. The architectural layout is also based on the evolution of "Xiashan Hu". By adding a front hall to the front of "Xiashan Hu", it becomes "Sidian Jin".

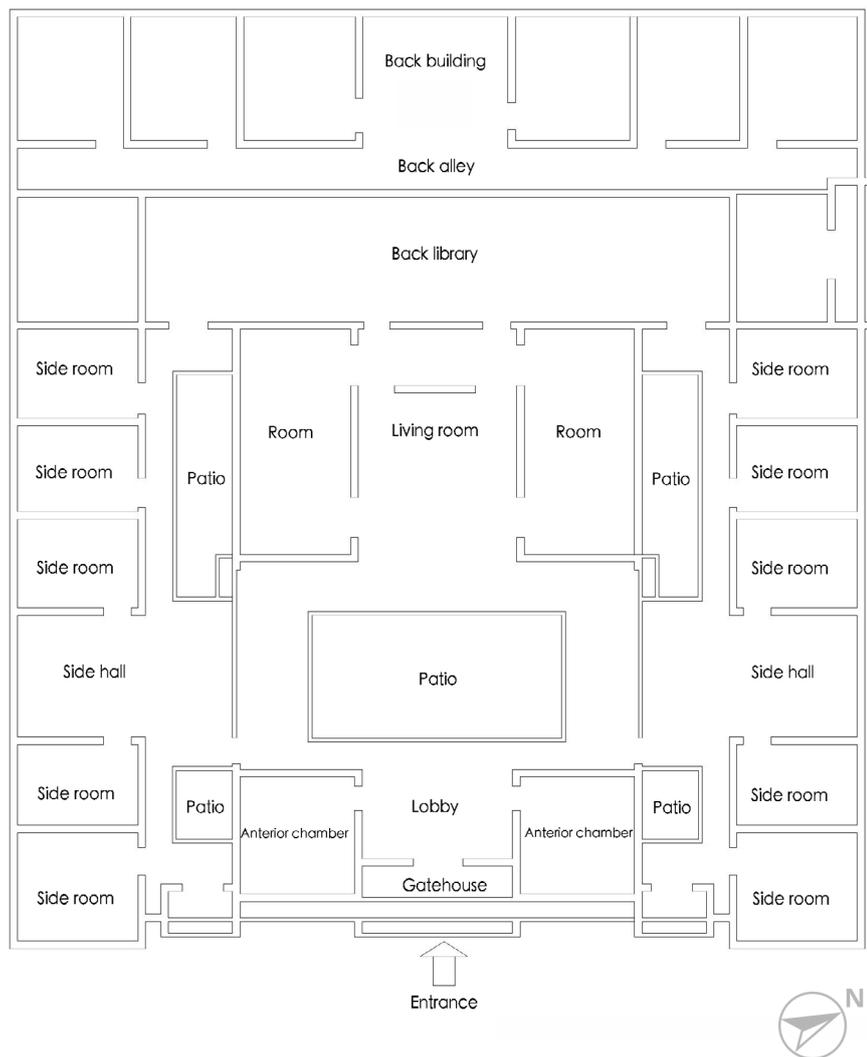


Figure 5
Plan of Erma Tuoche

Erma Tuoche consists of a two-story building connected to the rear compartment, plus two paths leading from the house. There are three main entrances in the front, one being a main gate and the other two being side gates. It belongs to families of high status and position, and is owned by wealthy families.

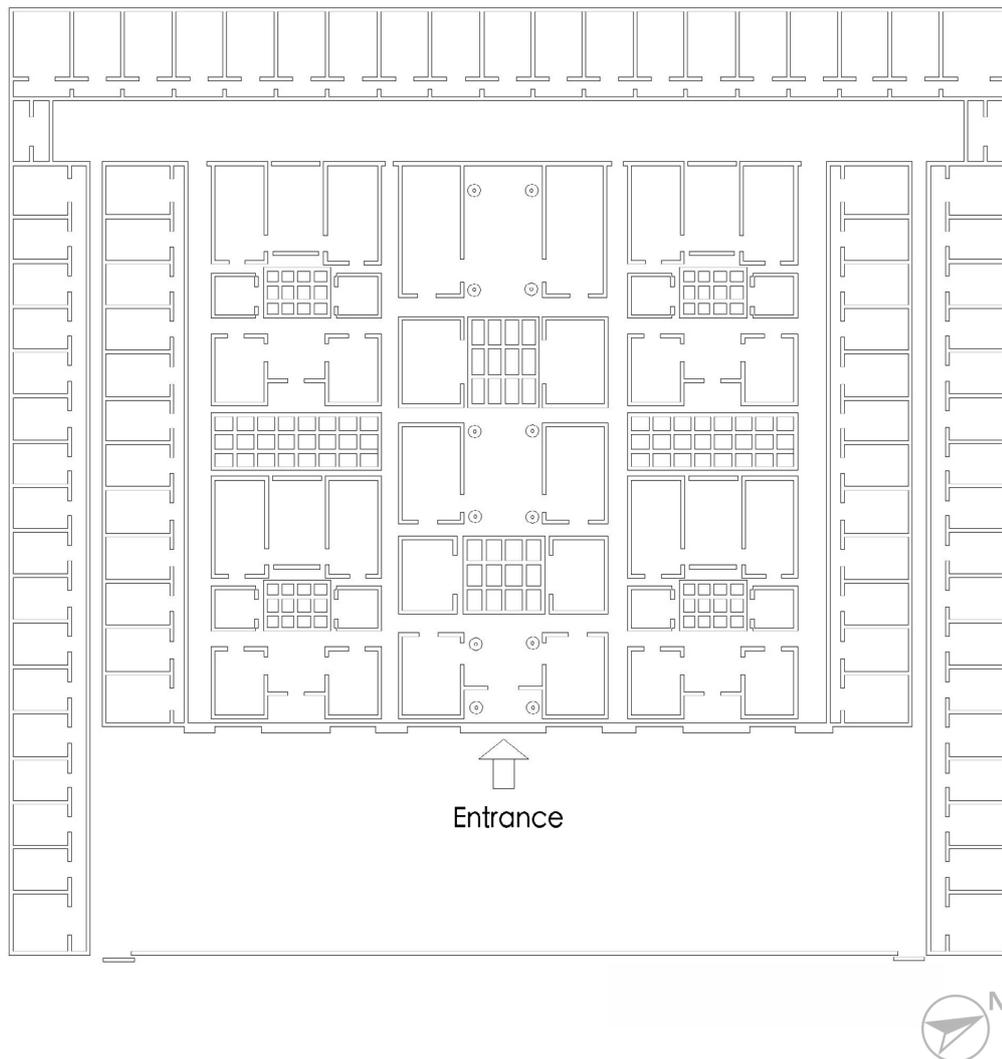


Figure 6
Plan of Sima Tuoche

Sima Tuoche is an expanded architectural form based on the two-horse carriage, and it is a large-scale and cohesive unit. The main building of the horse-drawn carriage is located on the central axis and is mostly composed of three bays and five rooms. It is known as the "folk palace" in the Chaoshan region, and only super-rich tycoons can afford to build such a large-scale structure.

4. Analysis of the architectural structure of Quexiang Ancient Town.

Que Xiang Ancient Town is based on the traditional architectural form of "Xiashan Hu" and has gradually evolved through years of renovation. This building is 12.3 meters long, 10.6 meters wide, with a wall height of 3.2 meters and a ridge height of 5 meters. The total floor area is approximately 130 square meters.

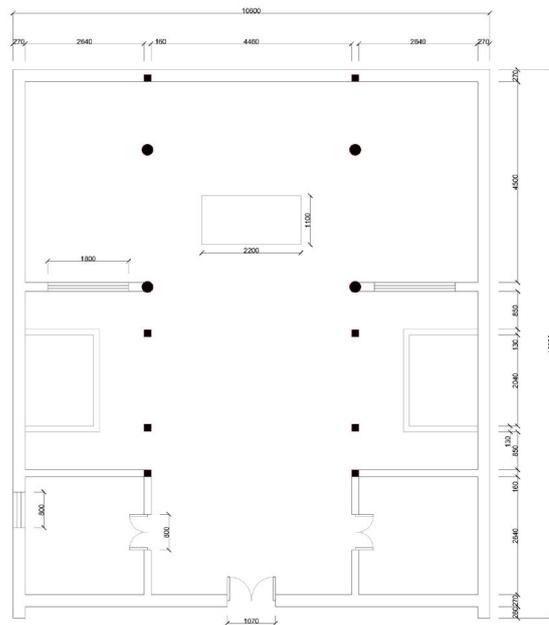


Figure 7
Layout of Quexiang Ancient Town

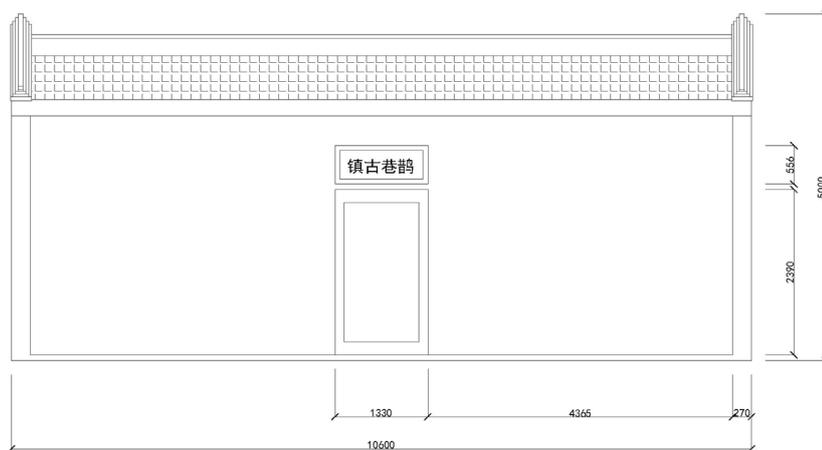


Figure 8
Front elevation of Quexiang Ancient Town

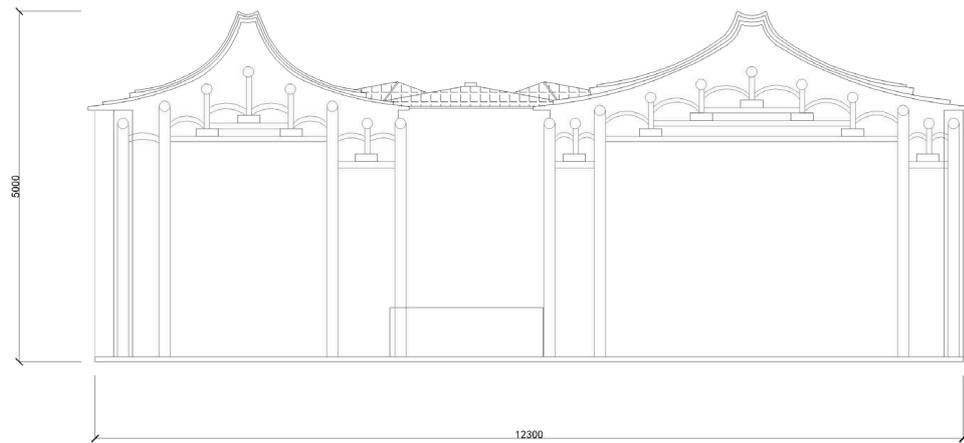


Figure 9
Sectional drawing of Quexiang Ancient Town

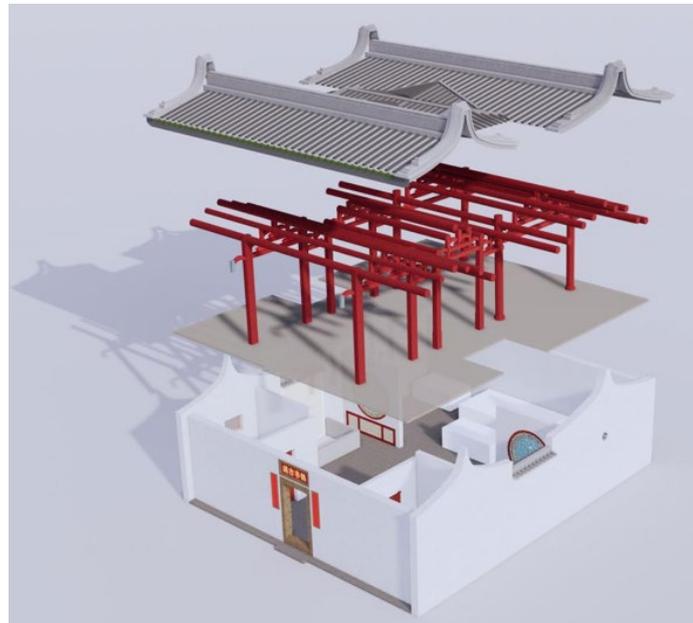


Figure 10
Analysis of the structure of Quexiang Ancient Town

The entire building is decorated in a simple style, with a two-tiered five-ridge and two-slope hard mountain roof at the top. Apart from the wooden ridge heads of the first and second tiers, the exterior facade of the building has almost no elaborate architectural decorative components. The roof also lacks gray sculpture and embedded porcelain decorations, with only simple floral, fruit, insect, fish, and bird patterns painted on the main ridge belly and the waist belly of the wooden ridge walls on both sides for simple decoration.

The gable wall is the most prominent traditional architectural decorative feature and symbolically rich architectural component in the Chaoshan region. In the Chaoshan region, based on the relationship of the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth (金、木、水、火、土), the mountain wall is roughly divided into five forms: metal star ridge, wood star ridge, water star ridge, fire star ridge, and earth star ridge. Their morphological characteristics are as follows: Metal is round with wide feet, Wood is round with a straight body, Water is flat with waves, Fire is pointed with wide feet, and Earth is flat with a graceful body. (Chaozhou City Construction Bureau, 2007: 208) The architectural style of the mountain walls in Quexiang Ancient Town is wooden, which is closely related to the Lin clan in the village. In traditional Chinese culture, "Lin" (林) belongs to the wood element in the Five Elements.

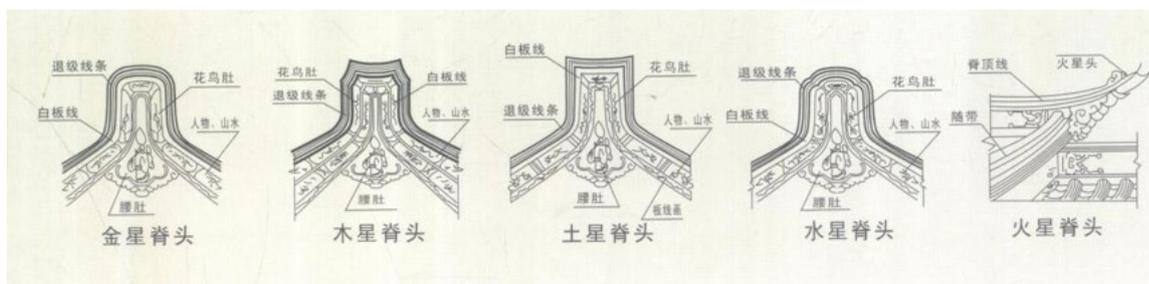


Figure 11

Traditional Chaoshan Five-Star Ridge Shape Diagram

Note. From Chaozhou Ancient Architecture, (p. 208), by Chaozhou City Construction Bureau, 2008, Copyright by Chaozhou City Construction Bureau.

The front facade of the hall is only equipped with a wooden double door entrance, approximately 1.1 meters wide and 2 meters high. Above the door is a stone plaque with the temple name "Quexiang Ancient Town" (雀巷古镇). The porcelain couplet of "distant singing of a lot of magpies, long alley and road" (鹊盛鸣声远，巷深云路长) is inlaid on both sides of the door, expressing the vitality and vigor of life, as well as praising the spirit of courage and determination in the face of difficulties and obstacles. On both sides of the couplet, two vases are embedded on the wall in the form of relief, and flower patterns are painted around the vases in a colored form.



Figure 12
Entrance of Quexiang Ancient Town

The interior of the temple is laid out in a two-story layout, with storage rooms on either side of the entrance hall for storing related objects used in temple rituals, celebrations, and other activities. Two courtyards are left on either side between the entrance hall and the main hall, and the walls of the courtyards are decorated in the traditional layout of a green dragon on the left and a white tiger on the right, in the form of gray sculptures. "Left green dragon and right white tiger are traditional directional layouts in Chinese Feng Shui. Traditional Chinese architecture is best oriented with the back facing north and the front facing south, with the green dragon representing the east and the white tiger representing the west." The space between the ceiling and the main hall is decorated with a circular wooden carved partition.



Figure 13

In the courtyard of Quexiang Ancient Town, there is a gray sculpture of a green dragon on the left and a white tiger on the right

The entire temple is supported by 12 pillars, which bear the structure and weight of the temple. Except for the 4 wooden circular pillars in the main hall, the rest are local bluestone square pillars. Each stone pillar is engraved with the names of people who donated to help build and repair the temple, as recognition and praise for their contributions.



Figure 14

Stone pillar in Quexiang Ancient Town

On the central altar of the main hall, there are enshrined the statues of the main deity, the Three Mountain King, as well as the statues of his first and second wives. Additionally, there are also statues of the revered deity, Emperor Shen Nong, and the deities Zhao Gong and his wife. In front of the altar, there are five incense burners, each corresponding to five different types of deities. On both sides of the main altar, there are two smaller altars, each of which enshrines the statues of God of Blessing and Virtue and Huagong and his wife. From the entrance hall to the altar in the main hall, plaques of “Clever and Upright” (聪明正直), “The Purple Air Comes from the East” (紫气东来), and “Majestic and Grand Gods” (生灵赫濯) are hung on the ceiling of the temple in it. Among them, “Clever and Upright” implies that the descendants of the Lin’s family in Quexiang Village can be clever, kind, and upright; “The Purple Air Comes from the East” originates from the related legend of Laozi, founder of the Taoism, and stands for the good luck and happiness in Quexiang Village; and “Majestic and Grand Gods” shows that the gods worshipped in Quexiang Ancient Town are majestic, grand, omnipotent, and effective.



Figure 15
Internal structure of Quexiang Ancient Town

5. The architectural decorative art of Quexiang Tianhou Palace

The Tianhou Palace is located 30 meters to the left front of the Quexiang Ancient Town. The exact time of the temple's initial construction cannot be determined, but the renovation of the Tianhou Palace was completed in 2010. The Tianhou Palace in Que Xiang is 4.4 meters wide, 8.1 meters long, and approximately 5 meters high. It is a typical traditional bamboo pole house architecture in the Chaoshan region. Compared to Quexiang Ancient Town, Tianhou Palace was built relatively late. With ample funds raised by overseas Chinese and villagers for renovation, it hired famous craftsmen from the Chaoshan region and used various traditional architectural decoration techniques from the Chaoshan region, such as porcelain inlay, stone carving, and porcelain mural, to decorate. The overall architectural decoration effect is magnificent and stunning. The most magnificent and exquisite part of the architecture decoration of the Tianhou Palace in Quexiang is the overhanging porch ridge supported by four stone pillars. The top is adorned with exquisite craftsmanship of inlaid porcelain art. Above the ridge is a double

dragon playing with a pearl design, with a large green pearl in the center. On both sides are two gracefully curved blue dragons riding on auspicious clouds. In the middle of the spine belly, there are more than 8 blooming flowers as decoration, and on both sides are two vivid phoenix birds spreading their wings as if about to take flight. This set of embedded porcelain art has distinct levels, fresh and gorgeous color matching, and showcases the auspicious meaning of the dragon and phoenix bringing good luck and prosperity.

The art of embedded porcelain originated in Chaozhou. It is an architectural decorative art that uses well-cut porcelain pieces to be embedded on the ridges and eaves of buildings. Since the Tang Dynasty, the ceramics industry in Chaozhou has experienced rapid development. During the Song Dynasty, there were hundreds of kilns coexisting on the Bijiasan (笔架山) Mountain in Chaozhou. The prosperity of the ceramics industry has driven the birth and development of the art of embedded ceramics.

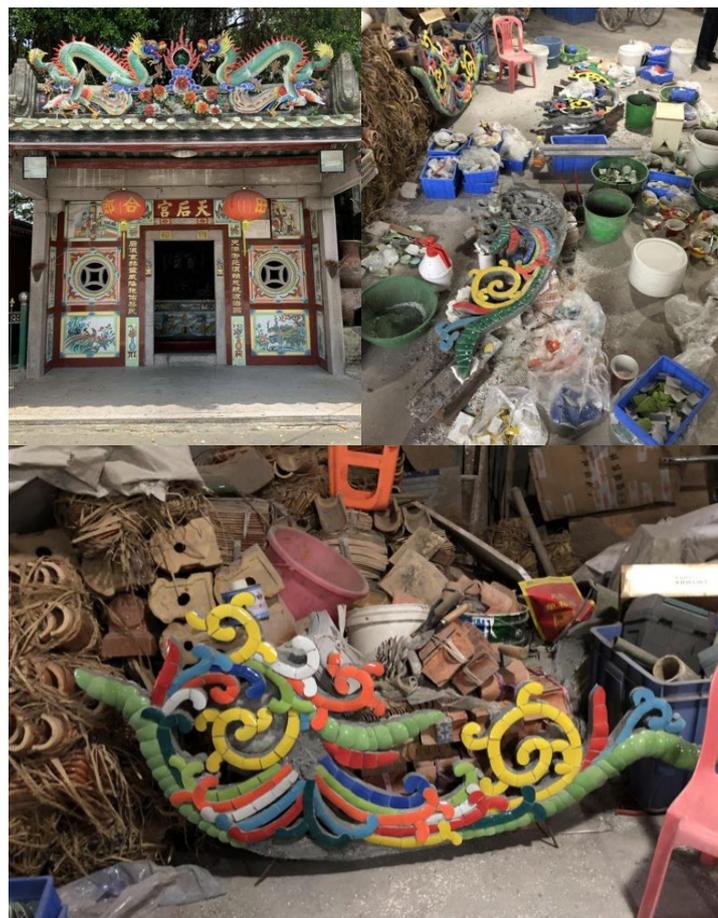


Figure 16
Embedded Porcelain Art and Craft Process of Tianhou Palace

The main hall and gate hall of the Tianhou Palace are both designed in the shape of Mu-star ridge, decorated with inlaid porcelain flowers, gray molded longevity peaches, and porcelain panel murals with themes of figures, flowers, and birds. The lobby walls are divided into three sections in equal proportions. They are decorated with exquisitely painted porcelain panels in soft tones. The upper section features traditional story scenes, while the lower section depicts auspicious flowers and birds. The middle section is adorned with two hollowed-out copper coins, symbolizing good fortune and abundant wealth.



Figure 17
Interior of Tianhou Palace

In the Quexiang Tianhou Palace, Mazu, Empress and Heavenly Mother, is independently worshiped. Above the altar, a wooden plaque with a “quiet sea” (海国安澜). On the left and right sides, couplet plaques of “Tian Ji Miao Mang Xu Lai Ci Hang Du Hai Guo, Hou Yi Huan He Ling Wei Jiang Shi You Li Min” (天際渺茫須賴慈航渡海國，后儀寰赫靈威降施佑黎民) are hung, respectively. The meaning is that the sea and the sky are vast but Mazu is compassionate and blesses the villagers to overcome the wind and waves, sail safely on the sea, and smoothly reach their destination with her powerful strength. It shows the unique marine culture and overseas Chinese cultural connotations of Quexiang Village.

6. The decorative cultural connotation of the Lin's Ancestral Temple

The Lin's Ancestral Temple was newly built in 2017. It is a magnificent building with the shape and structure of "Xiashan Hu". According to President Lin of the Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village, because the old Lin's Ancestral Temple is relatively small, it can no longer meet the functional requirements of ancestor worship and the ceremony for the god pageant each year. It cannot show the family glory of a big family and the luck for wealth of the Lin's clan in the Quexiang Village. And then, the Lin's Family Association in Chenghai launched an initiative for crowdfunding and fundraising. They raised more than RMB2.8 million from people of the Lin's at home and abroad, all of which was used for the rebuilding of the new Lin's Ancestral Temple. With a strong source of funding, the new Lin's Ancestral Temple has a new look with exquisite buildings and gorgeous decorations. The exterior facade of Lin's Ancestral Temple has the form of stone reliefs. It is carved with plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and auspicious birds and beasts. The most gorgeous part in the ancestral temple is the building components with golden paintings and wooden carvings. With skilled techniques, woodcarvers combined circular carving, openwork carving, and relief carving; and carved vivid animal and plant images on the wooden framework of the building, and painted them with bright and strongly contrasting colors, showing a dazzling visual effect. On both sides of the entrance hall in the building, numerous traditional story stone carving paintings are inlaid. (Huang Ting, 1997: 175) In the main hall, the plaque of "Yongsi Hall" (永思堂) is hung. On stone pillars on both sides, the couplets of "Zhong Xiao You Sheng Tian Di Lao, Gu Jin Wu Shu Zi Sun Xian" (忠孝有声天地老, 古今无数子孙贤) are carved. The meaning is that loyalty and filial piety are vivid and colorful virtues and a lot of descendants have the wisdom and ability of such virtue from ancient times to present. The meaning of the entire couplet expresses praise and admiration for the virtue of loyalty and filial piety and emphasizes that this virtue is everlasting, should be advocated by all the members of Lin's clan, and shows the strong cultural connotation of filial piety.



Figure 18
*Gold lacquer wood carving and stone carving
craftsmanship of Lin's Ancestral Hall*

7. The impact of Quexiang Ancient Temple on local community management and community culture

Quexiang Ancient Temple is managed and operated by Lin's Family Association and the Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village. The village's decision-making, worship of deities, ancestor worship, and overseas contacts are closely linked to these folk organizations. The Lin's Family Association and the Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village play important roles in the cultural formation and management services of the local community. The Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village has established detailed institutional regulations, responsible for the management and operation of the temples and ancestral halls in Quexiang Village. Temple management is an important aspect of financial management. Professional financial personnel are needed to manage the daily expenses of the temple, funds raised through donations, and expenses for activities. The Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village has also established corresponding management systems and conducts financial transparency to the public. In addition to specific daily management affairs, the most important tasks of the Lin's Family Association and the Senior Citizen Association of Quexiang Village are the annual grand ancestral worship activities. Before the ancestral worship activities begin each year, the Lin's Family Association actively coordinates and communicates with overseas Chinese to welcome them back to their hometown to participate in the ancestral worship activities. Through activities, funds are raised for the maintenance and operation of temples and ancestral halls, and connections are made with overseas Chinese clans, satisfying the psychological needs of overseas Chinese to return to their roots and honor their ancestors, reflecting a strong sense of ethnic pride.

The Quexiang Ancient Temple is an important carrier of folk beliefs in Quexiang Village. It is closely related to the formation and development of community culture. The Quexiang Ancient Temple has developed into a public building in the community. It is an important place for Quexiang villagers to worship gods and ancestors, gather their ethnic groups, pray for blessings and good luck, and eliminate and avoid disasters. It has diversified social functions. The temple activities of the Quexiang Ancient Temple show the traditional culture of the local community. Because of the existence of the Quexiang Ancient Temple, community order is maintained, traditional culture is inherited, the spirit of charity is carried forward, and the lineage relation is maintained. The Quexiang Ancient Temple promotes the formation and development of community culture.

Conclusion

Table 1

Relationship between the belief system, architectural decoration, and cultural connotation structure of the Quexiang Ancient Temple

No.		Research Object	Belief System	Architectural Decoration
Quexiang Ancient Temple	Quexiang Ancient Town	 <p>The worship of mountain gods, with the Three Mountain King as the main deities. Instead of referring to three different immortals, it is rather to the spirits that govern the three peaks of Jinshan, Mingshan, and Dushan. It is a typical local religious belief in deities.</p>	Wooden mountain wall, with a blue dragon sculpture on the left side of the ceiling and a white tiger sculpture on the right side.	Under the influence of a polytheistic belief system, the ancient temple in Magpie Lane showcases a beautifully decorated architectural style with rich cultural connotations. The ancient temple in Magpie Lane has maintained community order, inherited traditional
	Tianhou Palace	 <p>The worship of the sea god with Mazu as the main deity belongs to Taoist immortals.</p>	Wooden mountain wall, roof with embedded porcelain, porcelain panel painting.	culture, promoted the spirit of charity, maintained clan relationships, and promoted the formation and development of community culture.
	Lin's Ancestral Hall	 <p>Ancestor worship, with the Lin clan as the main body, generally refers to the ancestors of the Lin clan.</p>	Roof embedded with ceramics, gold-painted wood carvings, stone reliefs, stone carvings.	

The Quxiang Ancient Temple is built on the basis of the traditional architectural form of the Chaoshan region, using the unique Chaoshan traditional architectural construction principles. In the long process of development and change, it has gradually integrated diverse architectural art styles, combining with the folk belief system of polytheism. It showcases superb architectural decoration skills, forms distinct cultural symbols, and conveys rich cultural connotations. The Quexiang Ancient Temple is a specific carrier of folk beliefs in Quexiang Village, and it is also a spiritual home for overseas Chaoshan overseas Chinese. These overseas Chinese never forget their hometowns while living abroad. They actively participate in the construction and management of temples through initiatives to raise funds, promoting the widespread dissemination of Chaoshan traditional culture and arts both domestically and internationally. The ancient temple in Quexiang has gradually developed into a precious cultural heritage in the Chaoshan region, thanks to its rich and diverse belief system and exquisite architectural art.

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