Analysis of the Composition of Decorative Elements of Folk Houses in South Eshinan

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Abstract. Located at the junction of Hubei, Hunan, Chongqing and Guizhou provinces, Eshinan is one of the main settlements of the Tujia ethnic group. Its unique geographical environment and historical and cultural factors have created a culture with unique geographical characteristics. It occupies an important position in China's traditional ethnic culture. In particular, the composition characteristics of the decorative elements of the traditional folk houses of the Tujia people are the essence of the Tujia culture. In this paper, through studying the composition characteristics and principles of the decorative elements of Tujia traditional houses, we elaborate the construction technology of Tujia folk house characteristics and the artistic value thereof.

Keywords: Tujia; decorative elements; composition.

1. Introduction

Situated in the eastern part of Chongqing and the north-western part of Hunan, Southwest Hubei is located in the hinterland of the Three Gorges and belongs to the region of high mountainous terrain. This land is rich in folk culture and is a precious cultural heritage, which is most typical of the Tujia people, who have their own unique customs and religious beliefs, forming a rich and colourful ethnic folk culture. The most representative among them is Ba culture, which is the cradle of Ba culture. Here, the long-awaited Ba culture blends with the rich local culture.

Due to the limitations related to natural traffic and history and culture, the folk houses of the Tujia people in Southwest Hubei and their surroundings have preserved relatively intact folk culture. Among them, "hanging footstools" are the most typical folk buildings. Among the mountain streams and forests, the buildings are arranged in a disorderly manner, perfectly integrated with the surrounding natural environment, which is even more appropriate when observed from a close distance. The Tujia people call this unique national cultural phenomenon "three-dimensional nature" and "unity of heaven and man" under the idea of a simple and mysterious aesthetic concept. Between the green mountains and the green water, the Tujia footstools are scattered and beautiful like a picture scroll of a colony, which is amazing.

2. Architectural Characteristics of Hanging Foot Towers

Hanging footstools are the traditional dwellings of Miao (as in Guizhou), Zhuang, Dong and Tujia ethnic groups. As one of the traditional folk dwellings of Tujia in Southwest Eurasia, the Tujia forefathers created the colourful and unique architectural art of hanging footstools with their own industrious hands, which has left valuable spiritual wealth to people. As a special way of space combination, the hammock has a unique and profound artistic charm. Mr. Zhang Lianggao, a scholar who studies the architectural history of hammock buildings and Ba Chu culture, said: "The hammock buildings are based on its ancient and natural Ba culture and romantic and open Chu culture, and integrated with strong national characteristics and regional customs, so that people know at a glance that it is a series of dry-rail type of buildings, and after some comparisons, I think that it is the top of the traditional Chinese dry-rail type of buildings in terms of its structure and decorations" combination, the hammock has a unique and profound artistic charm.

Hanging footstool is the most complex building form of Tujia in Southwest E region which can show the folk architectural design style of Southwest E region. There are many types of suspended
footstools, among which single-hung, double-hung, four-hexed water type, two-hung house hanging type and so on are the more common forms. The basic elements of the building can be reflected, its main feature is that the building materials of the foot-hanging buildings are mainly wood-based, and they like to build together in groups. The design of local details also shows the folk culture of the Tujia people. Various decorative styles are embodied in the doors, windows, corridors, railings, eaves and firewalls of the buildings.

Due to the humid and rainy climate, there is enough timber, which has led to the formation of wood structure folk buildings represented by hanging footstools. There is not much difference in the basic form, and it is also in accordance with the conventional plan layout, but due to the humidity in the area, people put the lower level of the elevated storage of sundry things and livestock, which can also play the role of moisture-proofing. In the building, beams or pillars are made of wood for load-bearing, and mortise and tenon structure is adopted between the frame and the components, and the decorative form of the building focuses on reflecting the folk elements of the Tujia ethnic group in the south of Eshi.

3. **Decorative Elements of the Hanging Foot Building**

Tujia architectural decoration is mainly based on the decoration of architectural elements, such as ridges, flying eaves, columns, railings, walls, doors and windows. The design emphasises the harmony between the whole and the area, while the style strives for the unity of simplicity and refinement.

The Tujia is an ethnic group with a strong ethnicity, whose way of life and living customs are rich in characteristics, and whose decorative arts are also rich and colourful, occupying an important position in the culture of the Tujia ethnic group. Here, the spiritual and material culture of the Tujia people has rich connotations.

3.1 **Roof**

The architectural characteristics of the hanging-footed building can be seen from its unique roof form, the roof of the hanging-footed building set aesthetic and practical as a whole, by the tile piece of stacked and stacked, positive and negative interlocking tiles through the repetition of the combination of the hanging-footed building to create a good self-drainage system.

The roof decoration is centered on the roof ridge. The roof ridge is the watershed of the slope roof. It is the architectural component in the overall building of the stilted building and the architectural decoration elements that can be viewed from far to near, thus shouldering the role of highlighting the owner's identity. At the same time, it is also a tool to show the majesty of the stilted building.

Southwestern Eurasia requires very little roof insulation, and houses generally have only purlins, nailed rafters, and rafters between two types of tiles. Tile roofs generally appear to be flat, with no obvious bulges or folds, but most houses are situated between two peaks, creating a "bulging hill" that visually gives the impression of curvilinear changes. This type of roof is beautifully shaped and provides good light, ventilation and drainage. The ridge tiles are usually painted grey-green to accentuate the appearance and white paint is used to highlight the building's silhouette. The centre of the ridge is covered with pin tiles decorated with copper coins and lotus flowers. Fir bark is a common raw material for roofing, with the exception of shingles. Fir bark is very resistant to decay. Cedar bark is usually laid between the roof surfaces to block rainwater infiltration. The exterior walls of the house are then covered with thatch or shingles.

Simple decorations at the ends of the roof were made by stacking tiles, while complex decorations were achieved by hanging eaves decorations with finials at the ends of the roof and at the top of the eaves. Phoenix-shaped flying eaves were widely used on most ancient buildings, which not only added to the beauty and majesty of the building, but also signified the auspicious meaning of the phoenix.
Due to the high rainfall in south Eshi, most houses have eaves to protect the walls from the wind and rain. The eaves of most houses are slightly hollowed out, and those in good condition pay special attention to the decoration of the eaves. In addition to wood carvings and colourful paintings, special attention is paid to the spaces between the eaves, which is reflected in the thin wooden boards and nails.

3.2 Slab walls

Columns and columns, columns and square, columns and beams certainly support the whole big frame of the hammock, but there is no board wall enclosure, there is no door and window opening, there is no ground floor, the integration of the ceiling boards can not be called a standard hammock. Tujia people decorate the board wall materials need Fang, board, its installation method is roughly three kinds: one is a board a welding method, is a male board, a female board, a piece of even a piece of assembled male and female two boards are not flush on both sides. The second is the fall hall method, refers to the board on both sides of the flat, and square is not flat, mostly used to do the door of the board wall. Third, the flat seam, refers to the board and square together flat.

3.3 Windows and doors

In addition to providing basic lighting and ventilation, the doors and windows of traditional Tujia residences also serve a decorative function, demonstrating the residents' pursuit of peace and good fortune, as well as their hopes for wealth and prosperity. Door and window decorations are centred on the door and window fans, and most of the wooden lattices can be combined into various abstract patterns or carved into different door and window themes. Simple and bright modelling, primitive craftsmanship, and delicate and vivid patterns have kept the door and window decorations alive in traditional Chinese architecture. The windows of Tujia dwellings are well preserved, with unique and rustic folk characteristics since the Qing Dynasty. The doors of the Tujia hammock buildings are aesthetically distinctive. The doors of the halls are divided into "six-hexagonal doors", "double doors" and "ear doors", but the former is the common practice of the main halls, and some buildings do not have doors in the halls because in the minds of the Tujia people, the doors of the halls are the most important part of the houses. In the minds of the Tujia people, the main door of the hall is the "gas port", which is the gathering of wealth and popularity, so in order to retain wealth and popularity at the same time and to meet the daily function of entry and exit, they do not set up the door to set a higher threshold, called the "door of wealth".

Window forms are varied and complicated, mainly in the form of straight lattice window, sill window, flower window, branch window, horizontal batch of windows, etc. Flower window and sill window are the two highest rules in all the windows, which are beautifully carved and made with exquisite workmanship, commonly used in ancient buildings, modern Tujia hammock is mostly used in one-horse and three-arrow window, and superior conditions are used in one-horse, three-arrow and branch window in one, which is easy to use and flexible.

3.4 Railings

The balustrade is one of the indispensable components of the Tujia footstools, with vertical wood for the balustrade and horizontal wood for the poles, which play the role of separation and protection in daily life. As the railings of the foot-hanging buildings are also made of wood, they have a lot in common with the decorations of the doors and windows, such as the symmetrical graphic arrangement of the upper and lower or left and right sides, and the patterns of the auspicious symbols are also very similar, all of which are decorated with wood carvings of the word "hui", the word "wan", the word "xi" grid and other words and patterns representing good luck.

The Tujia balustrade is one of the most striking decorative elements. The balustrades can be divided into straight balustrades and flower-decorated balustrades, depending on the degree of decoration. Straight balustrades are mostly circular or square flute patterns, and there are also simple straight forms with fewer carvings. Flower decoration railing is the most common, similar to the
composition of the door and window decorations, but taking into account the safety issues, flower decoration railing does not use too complex decorative patterns, generally more geometric decorations.

3.5 Hanging melon

The hanging melon is one of the characteristic contents of Tujia stilted building, which is generally located under the cantilever beam and used to bear the weight from the upper cantilever beam and purlin. Because it is a load-bearing part hanging in the air, it is easy to be observed, so the decoration of the hanging melon is usually done more meticulously, with lotus or melon-shaped as the main form.

The stilted building is supported by a suspended column foot and is given the name of 'melon' or 'melon column'. In this case, people use the 'melon' made of wood as decoration. Because the bottom of 'melon' is often carved, it is also called 'flower melon'. These 'melon pillars' have exquisite and unique carving decorations, such as gourd-shaped, butterfly-shaped, lotus-shaped, etc. The rich pumpkin and lantern patterns, as well as lotus, sunflower, flower baskets, etc., symbolize the reproduction and prosperity of future generations, and convey beautiful prayers for the prosperity of future generations and the prosperity of families.

3.6 Column base

It is usually known as the cornerstone or pillar, the mountainous area of Exi due to the rainy and humid all the year round, in order to better protect the integrity of the column, usually the column base will be made higher. At the beginning, the column base was only used as the function of protecting the column, so its decorative nature is not strong, with the improvement of social economy and people's aesthetics, only began to decorate the column base, first of all, there are variations in the shape, there are drums, quadrilateral, polygonal, melon, bucket, etc., and then in the side of the column base for carving flowers, animals, historical figures, landscapes and scenic views or myths and legends as the material.

The forms of the bases are various and have their own characteristics. In this case, people use the 'melon' made of wood as a decoration and give it a certain meaning. In order to prevent the pillars from decaying due to moisture, the ancients adopted a special method. The stone pillars were placed at the bottom of the pillars to isolate the bottom of the pillars from the ground. So as to effectively prevent moisture. In the wooden structure of the house, each pillar must have a column base, and can not exist a column base. Most of the column foundations used in ancient buildings are brick or wooden wall structures. The main components are clay and fine sand. This can not only reduce the settlement of the foundation, but also improve the bearing capacity of the foundation. The supporting effect of the column base has been further strengthened in terms of column bearing pressure. Therefore, if there is no column base, the whole building will lose its foundation, and it will not be able to resist the invasion of bad weather conditions such as wind and snow. From the late Shang Dynasty to the Western Zhou Dynasty, people began to use soil and stone to build buildings. There have been records of stone foundation in oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions, but its application was very late, and it began to appear in large numbers in the late Shang Dynasty. According to the famous ancient architect Liang Sicheng, the natural pebbles found in the housing sites unearthed in the Yin and Shang Dynasties in Anyang may be one of the oldest pillars in China. These sites have a history of about 3000 years.

4. Stilted floor building decoration color

The stilted building is simple and elegant, based on wood structure, and most importantly, the plain color and texture of natural materials are used to present the natural appearance of wood and stone. Bright colors, such as dark blue, red earth and loess, are used in special parts of the building and decorated with a small area of paint. In order to decorate the roof, roofing materials can be made
from local materials, made into green tiles, or covered with fir bark; the decoration of the ridge is curved. In general, the characteristics of architectural style is implicit and deep. Clever building materials are used to protect the terrain and vegetation, making the building integrated with the surrounding natural environment.

The traditional architecture of Southwest Hubei is the cultural treasure in the history of Chinese architecture - Tujia footstools. The traditional architecture of Southwest Hubei is represented by Pengjiazhai in Xuanen County, which is a cluster of hanging footstools built by several generations to form today's cluster of hanging footstools integrating spatial beauty and formal beauty.

The Pengjiazhai foot-hanging buildings are of various forms, and are of the pierced-dipper wooden structure. At the beginning of the construction, it was considered that the vernacular architecture should meet the requirement of affordability. After that, it is to take materials from the local area, choose suitable materials, and make an overall control on the materials, colours and texture of the building. Xuanen County has a lot of forestry resources, and the timber of the hammock is mostly made of local cedar and bamboo, with the original colour of the original wood, and the ground floor is made of local grey stones and stone bricks as the foundation, which makes the construction materials of the Tujia hammock simple and pure.

Therefore, the overall colour of Pengjiazhai Hanging Foot Towers is dominated by logs and yellow-brown, with a warm tone and low brightness, which is a "weak contrast" with the overall natural environment.

5. Stilted building decoration techniques and processes

The architecture of hammock buildings is decorated in a variety of ways, with timber as the main building material in most buildings, while affluent families will use exquisite stone and brick carvings for decoration. Common plants, auspicious birds and animals are usually used as the background, while myths and legends and totem poles are placed in the background decoration. In the carving decoration, wood carving is the most common, followed by stone carving and others such as brick carving. Brick carvings are seldom seen in the decorations of Tujia houses, and are only used in the mansions of rich people.

Taking advantage of the rich forest resources in the area, species such as fir, spruce and camellia that are resistant to bending and warping are selected. Wood carving has a variety of techniques. Stone and wood carvings are simple and straightforward, with beautiful and smooth lines. They are commonly used in building components such as beams, railings, doors and windows, and other decorative parts. Due to the difficulty of processing stone, plus the price of stone is generally high. Mainly used for door pillows and columns and other decorative parts of the cornerstone. Carved decorative parts of different and have a specific meaning. For example, the door pillow stone is generally made into a square or drum-shaped, etc., which is engraved with "three suns to open Thai" and other symbols of good luck and good luck pattern. And the stone column base is usually engraved with rich and colourful auspicious patterns, such as lotus blossom.

6. Connotation intention of stilted building decoration

In the traditional stilted building design, the material texture and process characteristics are very prominent. It can not only express natural images but also shape characters. As an art, architectural decoration must show its unique artistic charm based on its cultural connotation. As a material carrier, its function is to meet the needs of people’s life, so it has become a symbol system carrying a specific social concept and aesthetic taste. Although it involves a variety of themes of residential decoration, but in general, they are the pursuit of peace and auspicious and rich and happy prayer.

By consciously dealing with and using the attributes and characteristics of certain things, people have formed the concept of auspiciousness. In order to convey the meaning of auspiciousness, people adopt symbolic techniques, and use homophonous and pictographic techniques to express non-self-
meaning content. These means not only enrich people 's cultural life, but also have a variety of concrete presentation methods. In summary, they can be summarized into the following categories:

6.1 Animals

Chinese home decoration commonly used animals, including lions, unicorns, phoenixes, birds, deer, fish, butterflies and so on, when people use animal motifs to decorate these animals, generally improve the image of the animal, highlighting the auspicious components of the pattern, deletion or cover up the other side of their ruthlessness and ferocity.

The unicorn is a legendary animal of physical and mental health, symbolising the offspring of kindness and wisdom. The deer is a symbol of the god of longevity and is often seen with the god of longevity praying for a long life. The word "deer" is pronounced the same way as "roku", signifying happiness and good fortune. The crane is also a god of longevity, and is considered to have an immortal spirit. Bats are also regarded as a symbol of happiness because of their similarity in pronunciation to the word "fortune". In many window decorations, five or more bats can be found, symbolising "five blessings" and "many children, many blessings" respectively.

6.2 Plant patterns

The plant motifs are numerous and cover a wide range of varieties such as curly grass patterns, plum blossoms, orchids, weeping willows, bamboos, golden melons and fruits, pomegranates, peonies, lotuses, lotus blossoms, peonies, danggui, lilies, green pines, danggui, peach blossoms, and evergreens.

The pine tree is known as the "granddaddy of all trees" and symbolises prolonged life. The pine tree is also often seen as a symbol of fortitude and willpower, as it grows strong and upright without its crown being dried out by frost. It is also regarded as the embodiment of justice and sanctity. Bamboo is respected for its indomitable, long life and tranquility, and its image of jade and ice is admired. Orchids, with their elegant fragrance and flawless flowers, symbolise the purity of a gentleman. Plant imagery is often combined with characters, birds and animals, increasing the complexity of the image and enriching the humanistic connotation of the image.

6.3 Character motifs

The Eight Immortals, ladies, longevity stars, Guandi, Zhong Kui and so on often appear in the figure patterns, while the Eight Immortals are mysterious figures who are said by folklore to be the eight immortals of Taoism, and their mysterious identities are even more breathtaking. Most of these images of immortals come from myths and legends or folklore works, and have a close connection with real life. In China's folklore, the stories of the Eight Immortals have been passed down for more than a thousand years. In the art of opera, the story of the Eight Immortals is also very widely expressed in stage art. In the decorative theme, the storyline with deep meaning is often used, such as "The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea" and "The Eight Immortals Wishing for Longevity", in order to show the mysterious charm of the Eight Immortals crossing the sea.

The image of the Eight Immortals is widely found in folklore, and it can be used to refer to gods and other deities, as well as being used as auspicious motifs in various forms of art. In the decorative patterns of folk houses, this symbol is widely used to symbolise the mystery and sanctity of the Eight Immortals, and to signify good fortune and longevity. In addition, there are also historical politicians and military figures, as well as members of the Tujia ethnic group in the general population, such as farmers, fishermen, hunters, teachers, students, children, etc. They not only play the role of moral education, but also the role of the Tujia people. They not only play the role of moral education, they also provide information and knowledge about their history and life. In their interactions and exchanges with other ethnic groups, the Tujia people have also always maintained an open and tolerant attitude, and they have continued to absorb the essence of other ethnic cultures and integrate them into their own. This integration is also reflected in the architectural decoration of Tujia buildings,
which are inscribed or painted with various themes such as "The Three Kingdoms", "Feudal Gods", "Water Margin" and "Journey to the West".

6.4 Text Patterns

Among the written motifs, "Fortune", "Happiness", "Luck" and "Longevity" are used most frequently, and the swastika is used most frequently. Most of these images of gods and goddesses come from myths and legends or folklore works, and have a close connection with real life. This kind of motifs can be seen everywhere in the wood carvings in Southwest Hubei, and their artistic value is self-evident.

The most revered of all is the character "Fortune", which means "Five Fortunes". The Chinese like to use Fortune as a daily ritual, affixing beautiful symbols of good fortune, prosperity and longevity to everyday objects. "Hei" means happiness. According to folklore, Wang Anshi, the prime minister of the Song Dynasty, was recruited as a son-in-law by the rich and powerful after taking an examination in Beijing, and on the wedding day he was coincidentally informed that he had been awarded the top prize in the exams, which made Wang Anshi very happy. In the wedding day to add to the joy, let him create his own double happiness font, making the atmosphere of celebration greatly increased, from this beginning, "double happiness" font has become one of the symbols of the New Year's Eve festivals decorations. The character "Wan" is not what we think of as "Wan", but the swastika (pronounced "Wan") is an ancient religious amulet symbol that appeared in the history of India, Persia, Greece and other ancient countries. It has been used for thousands of years in certain ancient religions such as Buddhism and Brahmanism. The Wan symbolises sturdiness, going with the flow, protection from evil and good fortune, as well as a symbol representing eternity.

7. Conclusion

Eshinan hammock perfectly preserves the simplicity and sturdiness of the southwestern ethnic minorities. Blending with the romantic Chu culture, it shapes a unique architectural language and artistic style, showing special wisdom. The exquisite decorative art reflects the decorative art talent of the Tujia people. This study aims to investigate the decorative elements of traditional Tujia architecture. The content includes their decorative features, architectural and cultural communication methods, and constituent elements. It aims to discover, protect and develop the unique national characteristics and cultural connotations of the Tujia people and integrate them into new cultural symbols. Injecting new vitality, the precious culture of the Tujia people once again shines in the long river of history.

References