

The Influence of Horse Gang Culture on Traditional Fine Arts in Tengchong, Yunnan Province: The Case of Heshun Ancient Town Houses

Ludan Cao¹, Junwei Chen²

¹ Hankou College, Wuhan Hubei, 430000, China

² Changxin International Art College, Yunnan University, Kunming Yunnan, 650000, China

Abstract: The article discusses the far-reaching influence of horse gang culture on the traditional fine arts in Tengchong, Yunnan Province, especially taking the residential houses of Heshun Ancient Town as an example, and analyzes how the horse gang culture influences the formation and development of the local fine arts styles through commercial trade and ethnic integration. The study found that the horse gang culture not only promoted artistic exchanges between Tengchong and other regions, but also left unique cultural imprints in the residential architecture. The article also discusses the challenges faced by Tengchong's traditional fine arts in the process of modernization, and proposes corresponding conservation measures and inheritance suggestions in order to promote the conservation and development of this precious cultural heritage.

Keywords: Horse Gang Culture; Residential Characteristics; Traditional Fine Arts; Heshun Ancient Town.

1. Introduction

Tengchong, Yunnan is a region with a long history and rich culture, and has been one of the important birthplaces of horse gang culture since ancient times. As a unique trade culture phenomenon in Yunnan, horse gang culture not only promotes economic exchanges between regions, but also plays an important role in cultural exchanges and integration. Among them, Tengchong's traditional art, especially residential architecture, is deeply influenced by the horse gang culture, showing unique regional characteristics and ethnic customs. Among the traditional residential settlements in Tengchong, Heshun Ancient Town, as a representative area of Tengchong, not only embodies the essence of traditional wooden architecture, but also integrates the elements of horse gang culture, forming a unique architectural style. These residential buildings are not only an important place for local residents to live, but also an important carrier of Tengchong's traditional culture, with important historical, cultural and artistic values. The aim of the article is to explore the influence of horse gang culture on the traditional fine arts of Tengchong, Yunnan Province, especially on the residential buildings of Heshun Ancient Town. Through combing historical documents, fieldwork and case studies, the article aims to reveal the intrinsic connection between horse gang culture and Tengchong traditional fine arts, and to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the inheritance and promotion of this precious cultural heritage.

2. Preface

2.1. Overview

Heshun Ancient Town, located 4 kilometers southwest of Tengchong City in the southwest border of China, is a village settlement with a long history. As an ancient town established during the Ming Dynasty, it was once a major town of horse gangs on the ancient Silk Road in southwest China, and was known as the first town connecting China with Southeast Asia and South Asia. It is not only an important node for the

mingling of Chinese culture with Southeast Asian, South Asian and Western cultures, but also a bright pearl for the convergence of multiple cultures.

Most of the residents of Heshun Ancient Town are Shu people, Jiangnan people and Central Plains people who migrated here in the early Ming Dynasty, and they have prospered on this piece of land and formed a unique regional culture. The eight ancestral halls here, as a cluster of ancestral halls in the late Qing and Republican periods, are well-preserved, not only witnessing the historical and cultural changes of the clans, but also being an important visual presentation of their regional and historical cultures. The patterns on the ancestral halls are not only rich in artistic beauty, but also contain rich historical and cultural information, which is of great significance to the study of the influence of the horse gang culture on Tengchong traditional fine arts.

Through in-depth investigation and analysis of the architectural motifs of the ancestral halls in Heshun Ancient Town, we can see more clearly the migration, integration and change of the Confucian culture of the Central Plains in the border area, as well as the exchange and development of the Chinese culture and the extra-territorial culture. These patterns are not only the important carriers of the historical origin and life changes of the eight ethnic groups in Heshun, but also the visual embodiment of the local residents' historical memories, cultural concepts, family traditions, folk beliefs and aesthetic interests.

In addition, the ancient town of Heshun is also one of the most important overseas Chinese hometowns in western Yunnan, and the study of the architectural motifs of the clan temples can help us better understand Yunnan's historical ties with Southeast Asian and South Asian countries such as Burma, India, and Thailand, as well as the deep friendship of civil interactions between western Yunnan and these countries. These studies have an important supplementary value for the study of regional and diplomatic history. The clan patterns of Heshun Ancient Town not only have historical and cultural value, but also have high economic value. Through the research, design and application of these patterns, we can

better promote the visual image of Heshun Ancient Town and enrich its tourism products, thus creating more economic value.[2] We can also create more economic value.

2.2. Content and Significance of the Study

(1) Main elements of the study

The main content of the article focuses on the far-reaching influence of the horse gang culture on the traditional fine arts in Tengchong, Yunnan Province, especially analyzing it in depth with the example of Heshun Ancient Town Houses. By examining the architectural style, decorative arts and cultural connotations of the Heshun Ancient Town dwellings, the article aims to reveal how the horse gang culture has shaped and influenced the expression of traditional fine arts in this region. We will start from the architectural layout, choice of materials, and carving techniques of the dwellings, and combine them with historical documents and fieldwork to analyze the embodiment of the horse gang culture in Tengchong's traditional fine arts, as well as the influence of this culture on the local people's way of life and aesthetic concepts.

(2) Implications of the study

The article aims to reveal the profound influence of the horse gang culture on the traditional fine arts in Tengchong area, especially in the architectural art of the dwellings. Through in-depth analysis of the architectural style and decorative art of the dwellings in Heshun Ancient Town, we are able to better understand the process of mingling the horse gang culture with traditional fine arts, as well as the unique artistic charms produced in this process. It not only helps to enrich the theoretical system of Chinese traditional fine arts, but also has positive practical significance for the protection and inheritance of local cultural heritage and the promotion of the development of local cultural industry.

2.3. Article Research Survey Methods

(1) fieldwork

As a unique historical and cultural phenomenon in Yunnan, horse gang culture has not only reflected its far-reaching influence on trade exchanges, but also deeply penetrated into the development of local traditional fine arts. Take Tengchong Heshun Ancient Town in Yunnan Province as an example, its residential architecture and its decorative art are the vivid embodiment of the fusion of horse gang culture and traditional fine arts. In order to deeply investigate the influence of horse gang culture on Tengchong traditional fine arts, the article adopts the field investigation method, taking the residential buildings of Heshun Ancient Town as a case study, and conducts a field investigation for a few days. During the investigation, we recorded in detail the architectural style, decorative features, and use of materials of the ancient town's dwellings, and obtained first-hand information through in-depth exchanges with local residents, craftsmen, and cultural scholars. First, we traveled to Heshun Ancient Town in June 2024 to make preliminary observations and records of the local dwellings. Through the field visit, we found that the ancient town dwellings reflected the unique imprint of the horse gang culture in the overall layout, structural design, and decorative style. For example, the decorative patterns on the doors, windows, gables, beams and other parts of the dwellings are mostly taken from the natural elements and symbols commonly seen by the horse gangs during their business trips, such as landscapes, flowers, birds and cloud patterns, which are not only aesthetically pleasing,

but also symbolize the horse gangs' reverence for nature and their desire for a better life. Then, in June 2024, we conducted in-depth interviews with craftsmen in the ancient town. Through communication with them, we learned that the horse gang culture plays an important role in the inheritance and development of traditional fine art skills. When craftsmen make traditional artworks, they not only pay attention to the inheritance of skills, but also incorporate traditional art styles in the selection of materials and pattern design, etc. The traditional Tengchong art style is also deeply influenced by the horse gang culture, which makes these artworks not only have traditional characteristics, but also are full of the atmosphere of the times. Through this fieldwork, we have gained a deeper understanding of the influence of horse gang culture on the traditional art of Tengchong, Yunnan Province. We found that the horse gang culture not only provides rich materials and sources of inspiration for Tengchong traditional fine arts, but also influences the local people's aesthetic concepts and cultural identity in a subtle way. In the process of investigation, it is influenced by the subjective factors of the investigators, so it is not possible to conduct a large-scale sample survey, and it is necessary to combine with other methods of investigation to be used together.



Figure 1. Traditional Residential Settlement in Heshun Ancient Town



Figure 2. Traditional Laundry Pavilion in Heshun Ancient Town

(2) documentary research method

Through in-depth searching, systematic collection and fine analysis of a large amount of literature on the horse gang culture and its influence on the traditional fine arts in Tengchong, Yunnan, we not only managed to deepen our understanding of the historical lineage of the horse gang culture, but also learned that the architectural style and decorative art of the Heshun Ancient Town Houses, as an important carrier of the traditional fine arts of the Tengchong area, were deeply influenced by the horse gang culture. This research process not only reveals the specific embodiment of the horse gang culture in Tengchong traditional fine arts, but also further explores the social, economic and cultural

background behind this influence, so as to understand the artistic value and cultural connotation of the Heshun Ancient Town Houses in a more comprehensive way. In addition, by comparing the literature of different historical periods, it is also possible to observe the changes and development of the influence of horse gang culture on Tengchong traditional fine arts, which provides an important theoretical basis for the protection and inheritance of this unique local cultural heritage.

3. Overview of the Horse Gang Culture

3.1. Definition of Horse Gang Culture

The definition of the horse gang, as a transportation organization unique to the ancient southwest region of China, covers mule and horse transportation teams and their organizational managers. The formation and operation of horse gangs are deeply rooted in the geographical environment, historical background and economic development of the southwest region. In the long history, the horse gang by virtue of its unique transport mode and organizational capacity, become an important bridge connecting the southwest region with the central plains, Tibetan area and other places. The organizational structure of the horse gang is strict and orderly, usually including the leadership of the big pot head, the second pot head, the steward, etc., as well as a varying number of horse-driving personnel. The composition of the team of mules and horses also follows certain rules, the head mule, two mules, three mules and so on in order, forming a well-organized transportation team. This organizational structure not only ensures the efficiency of transport, but also ensures the safety of the transport process. Horse gangs in the transportation process, not only carries the goods, but also carries the culture, information and emotional exchanges. They traversed the lofty mountains and trekked on the rugged roads, bringing the specialties, culture and information from all over the world to the four corners of the world. The existence of horse gangs not only promoted the economic exchanges between Southwest China and its neighboring regions, but also promoted the integration and development of culture. Therefore, horse gangs were not only an important transportation organization in ancient southwest China, but also an important link between different regions and cultures.[1] Therefore, horse gangs were not only an important transportation organization in ancient southwest China, but also an important link between different regions and cultures.

3.2. Characteristics of the Horse Gang Culture

Horse gang culture, as a unique and profound cultural phenomenon on the ancient tea-horse road, embodies the survival wisdom of the people in the border area of southwest China in ancient times, the spirit of solidarity and cooperation, as well as the way of harmonious coexistence with nature and society. Its characteristics are mainly reflected in the following aspects: first of all, the horse gang culture has a strong spirit of adventure and adaptability. Horse gang people in the harsh natural environment and complex social environment, not only to have extraordinary courage and perseverance, but also have a wealth of geographic knowledge and survival skills to adapt to long-distance trekking and unknown challenges. Secondly, the horse gang culture embodies the collectivist spirit of unity and

cooperation. Whether it is a family-type horse gang or temporary formation of the horse gang, the members have formed a close cooperative relationship between each other to support each other and face difficulties together. This collectivist spirit not only enhances the cohesion and combat effectiveness of the horse gang, but also promote the economic and cultural exchanges between regions. Finally, the horse gang culture also contains rich folk customs and religious beliefs. Horse gang people in the long-term horse career, the formation of a unique song, clothing, food and other folk customs, as well as worship of the horse god, ancestor worship and other religious beliefs. These cultural elements not only enriched the life of the horse gang people, but also inherited the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.[6] These cultural elements not only enrich the life of horsemen, but also inherit the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.



Figure 3. Heshun Ancient Town Ethnic Settlements Built on Mountains



Figure 4. Tengchong Traditional Ancestral Hall Modeling

3.3. The Connection between Horse Gang Culture and Tengchong

Between the horse gang culture and Tengchong, there exists a deep and close connection. Tengchong, as the border town of Yunnan, has been an important node and distribution center of horse transportation since ancient times. Horse gangs, as the main transportation force in the ancient yunnan region, its unique cultural forms and transportation methods, on the economic, cultural and social development of tengchong has had a far-reaching impact. The prosperity of horse gang culture in Tengchong is due to its unique geographical location and transportation conditions. Tengchong is located in the borderland, bordering with Myanmar, India and other countries, which is an important channel connecting the southwest inland with Southeast Asia and South Asia. Horse gangs traveled long distances to transport Tengchong's tea, medicinal herbs, silk and other commodities to various places, and at the same time brought back the goods from abroad to Tengchong, which promoted the economic exchanges and trade between Tengchong and

the neighboring regions. Under the cultivation of horse gang culture, Tengchong people have formed a unique business spirit and cultural character. They are hardworking, tough, brave, adventurous and innovative, and this spirit is fully reflected in Tengchong's commercial activities. At the same time, the horse gang culture has also enriched the cultural connotation of Tengchong, making it a multicultural area.

There is a close connection between horse gang culture and Tengchong. The prosperity of horse gang culture not only promotes Tengchong's economic development, but also shapes Tengchong's unique business spirit and cultural character. This connection not only reflects the important position of horse gang culture in Tengchong, but also shows the unique charm and vitality of Tengchong as a border town.[5] Tengchong's unique charm and vitality as a border town.

4. Influence of Horse Gang Culture on Tengchong Traditional Fine Arts

4.1. Artistic Exchange Brought about by Commercial Trade

As an important historical memory of the Tengchong area, horse gang culture has had a profound impact on Tengchong traditional fine arts. Among them, the art exchange brought by commercial trade is particularly significant. Horse gangs are not only the carrier of goods transportation, but also a bridge for cultural exchange. During the long journey, the exchange between the horse gangs and the artists and craftsmen from all over the world promoted the fusion and collision of different art styles. This kind of exchange makes Tengchong traditional art maintain its own characteristics while absorbing the essence of foreign art, forming a unique artistic style. This influence not only enriched the connotation of Tengchong traditional fine arts, but also enhanced its artistic value.[3] Tengchong Traditional Art The prosperity of commercial trade not only brought material abundance, but also promoted the exchange and integration of art between different regions. Horse caravans carried artworks and cultural products from all over the world, which made Tengchong traditional fine arts innovative and developed on the basis of absorbing diversified artistic elements. This kind of art exchange brought by commercial trade has enriched the expression and connotation of Tengchong traditional fine arts, formed a unique artistic style with regional characteristics, and injected new vitality into the inheritance and development of Tengchong traditional fine arts.[2] Tengchong Traditional Fine Arts



Figure 5. Tengchong Traditional Residential Settlement



Figure 6. National Cemetery Room Beam Upward Styling

4.2. Impact of Ethnic Integration on Art Styles

As a unique historical and cultural heritage of Yunnan, horse gang culture has had a profound impact on Tengchong traditional art. In the investigation of the houses in Heshun Ancient Town, we can see that the shadow of the horse gang culture is integrated with the traditional art style. This fusion is not only reflected in the decoration of residential buildings, but also in the painting, carving and other art forms. The Dai, Lisu, Han and other ethnic groups have intermingled with each other in the long-term historical process and formed unique art styles. These styles not only reflect the unique charm of each ethnic group, but also integrate the adventurous spirit and pioneering consciousness of the horse gang culture, which together construct the colorful and unique charm of Tengchong traditional art.[4] Heshun Ancient Town As a cultural treasure of Tengchong, Yunnan, Heshun Ancient Town's residential architecture not only reflects the deep heritage of Han culture, but also absorbs elements of South Asia, Southeast Asia and even Western culture in the process of ethnic integration. This multicultural fusion is particularly significant in the art style, manifested in the decorative art of residential architecture into the traditional patterns and colors of various ethnic groups, forming a unique art style. As an important bridge between Yunnan and the outside world in ancient times, the horse gangs promoted cultural exchanges and fusion among different ethnic groups, which is fully reflected in the art performance of the Heshun Ancient Town, making the Tengchong traditional art present the unique charm of multiculturalism and communion.[7] This makes Tengchong traditional art present a unique charm of diversification and communion.

4.3. Artistic Characteristics of Heshun Ancient Town Houses

As a typical representative under the influence of horse gang culture, the houses in Heshun Ancient Town show unique artistic characteristics. These dwellings not only carry the wisdom and emotion of the forefathers of Heshun, but also reflect the intermingling of regional cultures. First of all, Heshun houses have fully integrated the elements of horse gang culture in their architectural design. Its architectural layout emphasizes symmetry and harmony, which not only reflects the traditional aesthetics of the Central Plains culture, but also integrates the practical features of the Bianyi culture. This integration makes the Heshun houses in the appearance of both simple and elegant, without losing the regional characteristics. Secondly, the decorative art of Heshun houses also reflects the influence of horse gang culture. The carving, painting and other decorative techniques of the dwellings are not only skillful, but also thematic, mostly based on the historical legends and folk customs in the horse culture, showing the unique charm of the horse culture. Finally, the

architectural style and choice of materials of Heshun houses also reflect the practicality of horse gang culture. Most of the dwellings are built with ground materials, which not only reduces the cost, but also enhances the durability of the building. At the same time, its architectural style also fully considered the local climate and geographic environment, making the houses both beautiful and practical. The houses of Heshun Ancient Town are the outstanding representatives under the influence of horse gang culture, and their unique artistic characteristics not only show the wisdom and creativity of the ancestors of Heshun, but also embody the regional culture mingling and inheritance.[2] Its unique artistic features not only show the wisdom and creativity of Heshun ancestors, but also reflect the intermingling and inheritance of regional culture.



Figure 7. Heshun Ancient Town Library Lapis lazuli tile house



Figure 8. Heshun Ancient Town Horse Gang Culture Exhibition Hall

5. Conclusion

Through the in-depth study of the residential buildings of Heshun Ancient Town in Tengchong, Yunnan, it is not difficult for us to find the far-reaching influence of the horse gang culture on the local traditional fine arts. As one of the important birthplaces of the horse gang culture, Heshun Ancient Town not only embodies the essence of traditional wooden frame architecture, but also integrates the elements of horse gang culture, forming a unique artistic style. The

formation of this style is not only from the prosperity of commercial trade, but also thanks to the communication and integration between ethnic groups. However, with the acceleration of modernization, Tengchong traditional fine arts are facing unprecedented challenges. How to protect the tradition while promoting its innovation and development has become an important issue in front of us. Therefore, we need to strengthen the research and protection of Tengchong traditional fine arts, deeply excavate its cultural connotation, and explore its combination with modern art, so as to innovate in the inheritance and inherit in the innovation. In addition, we should actively promote Tengchong traditional fine arts so that more people can understand and appreciate this precious cultural heritage. By organizing exhibitions and carrying out cultural exchange activities, we can make Tengchong traditional fine arts go to the world and contribute to the inheritance and development of Chinese culture. In conclusion, the influence of horse gang culture on Yunnan Tengchong traditional fine arts is far-reaching and lasting. We should cherish this valuable heritage, and strive to promote its protection and development, so that it can shine with new luster in the new era.

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Appendix:

1. Investigative tools: use of cameras, cell phones and other tools.