

The Origin, Development, and Characteristics of Multicultural Fusion in Quanzhou's Architectural Language

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Abstract: Unlike ordinary port cities, the historical particularity, cultural diversity, regional inclusiveness, and unique natural and human resources of Quanzhou in China have made its architecture unique in Chinese architecture. It is a typical paradigm of the long-term coexistence and mutual influence of Chinese traditional architecture and overseas culture. The research on the characteristics of the origin and development of Quanzhou architecture is helpful to the sustainable development of local cultural protection. This paper explores, organizes, and analyzes the development and characteristics of architectural language in Quanzhou.

Keywords: Architectural Language; Multiculturalism; Cultural Integration.

1. Introduction

The diversity of architectural language in Quanzhou originates from its rich historical and cultural backgrounds. As a historic port city, Quanzhou bears the historical relics and cultural traditions of multiple periods, and the planning and evolution of its building groups have also continuously changed with the vicissitudes of history, which has had a profound impact on the formation and development of architectural language. This diverse architectural language has continued to this day, creating a coexistence of new and old buildings in Quanzhou with distinct styles.

2. Origin and Development of Diversified Architectural Languages in Quanzhou

The building complex in Quanzhou can be specifically subdivided into four categories: traditional architectural style, western architectural style, Sino-western architectural style, and the architectural style that is in the transition from modern to contemporary. Each style has its own subdivisions and cultural origins. Therefore, further subdivision of different styles can help trace the origin of modern architecture in Quanzhou, thus better clarifying the origin of the diversified characteristics of these modern buildings in Quanzhou.

2.1. Traditional Architecture of Quanzhou

The formation of traditional architecture in Quanzhou is mainly attributed to three aspects. Firstly, from the historical perspective, the original residents of Quanzhou, the local ethnic group known as the Minyue people, developed a unique lifestyle and architectural style due to their reliance on the sea for survival. To avoid tidal floods and insects, they adopted the Ganlan-style residential architecture, which primarily utilizes stone as the building material and even incorporates unique oyster shells. (As shown in Figures 1 and 2)



Figure 1. Oyster shell house



Figure 2. Oyster shell house

On the other hand, the traditional architecture of Quanzhou was influenced by immigrants from the Central Plains. From the Qin and Han dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties, continuous wars and migrations brought the culture of the Central Plains, including architectural culture. The ancient Yue people accepted and further improved this architectural form during this period, forming the unique architectural appearance of southern Fujian, such as the Guan Shi Da Cu (Figure 3), Shou Jin Liao, Tulou, as well as being influenced by marine culture. It incorporates the characteristics of Central Plains architecture, such as courtyard-style layout and grand architectural scale. At the same time, it also combines the geographical environment and climate characteristics of southern Fujian, adopting wooden structures and unique decorative styles, showing the improvement and creation of Central Plains architecture by the ancient Yue people. For

example, Shou Jin Liao is a unique ancestral hall architecture in Quanzhou. It originated from the ancestral hall culture of the Central Plains but has been further developed and evolved in Quanzhou. Shou Jin Liao buildings usually adopt stone and wood structures, as well as exquisite painted and carved decorations, exhibiting a strong clan culture and artistic style.



Figure 3. Official traditional residence

2.2. Western-style Architecture in Quanzhou

Due to its geographical location in China, Quanzhou has engaged in foreign exchanges very early on. The main source of Western-style architecture in Quanzhou can be traced back to its history of opening ports and trading since the Tang Dynasty. Unlike other coastal cities such as Shanghai, Xiamen, and Qingdao, which were passively opened up for trade in modern times, Quanzhou's opening up was more proactive and had a longer history. The rise of Quanzhou Port began in the Tang Dynasty, flourished in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and declined in the Ming and Qing dynasties. During its heyday, Quanzhou was known as the "First Port of the East," attracting merchants from various countries for trade and cultural exchanges, which contributed to the blending of Quanzhou culture with overseas cultures. It was during this period that a large number of Western-style buildings and architectural elements were introduced. In modern times, Western missionaries, businessmen, and diplomats came to Quanzhou, bringing the influence of Western culture and architectural art, which is another source of Western-style architecture in Quanzhou. These Westerners built churches, hospitals, schools, and consulates in China, often adopting European architectural styles such as Gothic, Neoclassical, and Neo-Renaissance, which contrasted sharply with traditional Chinese architectural styles. Besides the influence of Western missionaries, businessmen, and diplomats, the construction of Western-style buildings in Quanzhou was also affected by other factors, including:

Official promotion: In the late 19th century, the Qing government began to implement the Westernization Movement, emphasizing the introduction of Western technology and culture. Quanzhou became an important city in this movement. Government-funded schools, hospitals, and other buildings also adopted Western architectural styles.

Commercial demand: With the commercial development of Quanzhou, some wealthy merchants began to introduce Western architectural styles to showcase their status and business strength.

Cultural exchange: In the late 19th century, some Chinese students began to study in Europe and America. They accepted Western education and culture and brought back Western architectural concepts and styles after returning to China, promoting the development of Western-style architecture in Quanzhou.

2.3. Sino-western Architectural Style

Sino-western architectural style can be called overseas Chinese architecture. Regarding the definition of overseas Chinese architecture, Professor Chen Zhihong from the School of Architecture, Huaqiao University believes that "overseas Chinese architecture is a cultural phenomenon formed during the process of overseas Chinese people's communication, migration, and settlement at home and abroad, featuring cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries." Architectural forms such as the modern arcades, fan zai lou (a type of building with a mix of Eastern and Western architectural features), and small Western-style buildings are all examples of Sino-western architectural style. For instance, the arcade is a fusion of traditional local street house forms and foreign architectural elements. Some traditional Da Cuo (a type of large traditional Fujianese house) have also been incorporated into the construction process. This type of architecture not only reflects the inclusiveness and strong absorptive capacity of Quanzhou's architecture, but also represents the overseas Chinese people's deep emotional attachment to their homeland and ethnicity. This Sino-western architectural style has become one of Quanzhou's characteristic architectures and continues to be inherited and extended.

2.4. Style Variation and Excess in Modern Architecture of Quanzhou

The style variation and transition of modern architecture in Quanzhou mainly occurred in the first half and mid-20th century. During this period, Quanzhou underwent turbulent social changes and wars, and its urban construction and architectural styles also experienced dramatic transformations. In the first half of the 20th century, Quanzhou began to be influenced by Western modern architectural styles, and architecture started to exhibit simplified and geometric characteristics. For instance, the new campus of Quanzhou First Senior High School adopted a modernist style, featuring a simple and clean architectural form with distinct lines. However, due to the limited professional expertise of architects and engineers at that time, the quality of the buildings was not high, and the structures and materials were unstable, leading to the excess and variation in architectural styles. Overall, the style variation and transition of modern architecture in Quanzhou reflected the inadequate development of the architectural industry and society. Nevertheless, with the passage of time and social progress, Quanzhou's architectural styles have gradually become more diversified and mature. These buildings with different styles are all important components of Quanzhou's urban culture, showcasing its history, culture, and modern development.

3. Details Characteristics of Quanzhou Architectural Style

3.1. Red Brick Decorative Style

A prominent decorative feature of modern architecture in Quanzhou is the extensive use of red bricks, which has created a unique red brick architectural culture in the city. These red bricks are often used for the roofs of buildings, such as red brick houses, red tile roofs, and so on. Unlike the bright red color with strong visual impact seen in northern palace architecture, the red bricks used in Quanzhou have a hue that falls between red and yellow. Instead of giving a "majestic"

and "solemn" impression like palace architecture, the red brick buildings here tend to evoke a sense of warmth, comfort, and accessibility.

3.2. Diversified "Foreign-style Buildings"

European classical elements are one of the most common elements in the design of "foreign-style buildings". In the "foreign-style buildings" of Quanzhou, European classical elements are manifested in the colonnades, classical sculptures, and arches on the building facades. For example, on Taiwan Street in downtown Quanzhou, there are many elegant "foreign-style buildings" with exquisite designs of colonnades and arches, which form a sharp contrast with the surrounding traditional Fujian architecture. The diverse elements included, such as neoclassical elements like Greek-style columns, variously shaped floral decorations, and niches, as well as Baroque elements like niches, reliefs, and floral decorations, and Renaissance elements like symmetrical decoration, arched portals, and floral tiles. These elements have been carefully utilized in the "foreign-style buildings" of Quanzhou, giving the overall architecture a refined and elegant character.

4. Characteristics of Multicultural Integration

4.1. "Inclusive" Multicultural Mindset of "Welcoming All Rivers"

Unlike other cities that were forced to open their ports for trade, Quanzhou has been independently engaged in foreign exchanges since the Tang and Song dynasties. This tolerant attitude towards foreign cultural bases has been continuously inherited since the ancient Yue people of Quanzhou accepted the culture of the Central Plains in the north. The author believes that this tolerant mindset has also been a subconscious existence in the minds of Quanzhou people from ancient times to the present. Therefore, this city has always maintained an open mindset to accept any new things and new cultures. Whether it is multi-ethnic or Sino-foreign, it has always been able to integrate these diverse cultures well. This is similar to the Scandinavian style in Northern Europe, which finds a balance between intricate arts and crafts, Art Nouveau, and minimalist modernism. However, unlike the formalization of postmodernism, it draws inspiration without being blind, constantly absorbs and integrates, and finally develops its own style. This is where the two different cities in the Western and Eastern worlds share similar approaches but with unique outcomes. Quanzhou, on the other hand, developed earlier and integrated more thoroughly.

4.2. Under the Influence of Multi-Religious Cultures

Ancient Quanzhou was known as the "Oriental Jerusalem". In this open city of Quanzhou, not only cultural, humanistic, and economic exchanges were important, but religion also played a significant role. No other place in the world has simultaneously witnessed such a rich religious culture as Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, and more, all coexisting without interference. These religious cultures have also influenced their religious architecture, shaping the religious buildings of Quanzhou. For example, the mosque built during the Zhenguan period (627-649) of the Tang Dynasty is known as the oldest Islamic religious building in China, witnessing the glory of the

Maritime Silk Road during the Song Dynasty in Quanzhou. Kaiyuan Temple, influenced by Buddhism, also bears traces of other religious cultures in its decorative details. Its reliefs and paintings exhibit a distinct Hindu artistic style, and some of the murals inside the temple also incorporate elements of foreign cultures. The diverse religious culture of Quanzhou has brought a rich variety of features and styles to the city's religious architecture. Besides the mosque and Kaiyuan Temple, Quanzhou has many other religious buildings such as Christian churches, Buddhist temples, and Taoist temples, all reflecting the characteristics and styles of different religious cultures. Under the influence of religion, Quanzhou's architecture presents a wide range of distinctive features and styles. It not only integrates elements of Eastern and Western cultures but also absorbs the essence of different religious cultures, adding unique charm to the diversity and pluralism of Quanzhou's historical and cultural heritage.

4.3. Keeps Pace with the Times

Besides embracing diversity as its main theme, Quanzhou also emphasizes the ability to keep pace with the times and renew itself. From the colonial-style verandahs, imitation Western-style buildings, and a few Western classical styles in the early modern architecture period of Quanzhou (from the 1820s to the early 20th century) to the new trends of thought, modernist architecture, and national-style architecture in the later period (from the early 20th century to the 1930s), Quanzhou's architecture has continuously updated its materials, craftsmanship, and construction methods with the progress of the times. The development of Quanzhou's architecture has kept pace with the times, whether it is the traditional Da Cuo-style architecture developed from the Central Plains or the Western-style architecture influenced by the opening of the port for trade. Throughout the process of development and integration, Quanzhou's architecture has always maintained its own characteristics. Quanzhou is not only diverse in architectural culture but also reflects this spirit of embracing all rivers and encompassing everything in terms of humanities and society. Its unique cultural heritage and atmosphere have shaped its distinctive cultural landscape and charm, and this subtle degree of tolerance also reflects the cultural freedom and confidence of the people of Quanzhou.

5. Conclusion

The continuous development process from traditional to modern architecture in Quanzhou is also a process of constant integration between Chinese and Western cultures. The influence of these two cultures is mutual and fluid. However, with the decline of China's national power in modern times, cultural exchanges have mostly exhibited one-way dissemination and influence. Yet, it is not difficult to discover from Quanzhou's traditional architecture that the city has always had a high degree of tolerance, embracing all rivers like the vast ocean. Quanzhou's architecture remains an open and inclusive cultural phenomenon, attracting the integration and dissemination of many foreign cultures into the city. Overall, whether it is the changes of the times or the continuous evolution of architectural styles, Quanzhou's architecture has demonstrated the diversity and tolerance of the city's culture, constituting an essential component of its history and heritage. This inclusive and open cultural atmosphere has also provided significant cultural support for the development and prosperity of Quanzhou.

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