

Interpretation of the role of architectural colour in the design of buildings in Tibetan ethnic architectural culture

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Abstract: The Tibet Autonomous Region is located in the southwestern part of the Tibetan Plateau. Under the influence of factors such as climate, topography, local building materials, history and culture, religion and ethnic psychology, the city of Lhasa has developed a unique architectural style. In this paper, the role of architectural colour in the design of Tibetan ethnic architecture is interpreted through an analysis of some traditional and modern buildings in the Tibet Autonomous Region, in terms of understanding the role of architectural colour in conveying cultural information, creating a sense of architectural hierarchy and creating an architectural atmosphere.

Keywords: Tibetan architecture; Architectural colour; Architectural design.

1. Introduction

With the development of social economy and tourism, Tibet has become one of the popular attractions due to its unique humanistic scenery. Tibetan ethnic architecture is gradually appearing in people's view through short videos, friend circles and microblogs. The Tibetan ethnic architecture is also unforgettable due to its unique architectural style and vibrant architectural colours. The author explores and interprets the role of architectural colours in Tibetan ethnic architecture design by taking some of the buildings in Lhasa as examples.

2. The cultural message of colour

2.1. Origin of the colours

In Tibetan ethnic architecture we often see red, white, blue, green and yellow, with black used in some elements. There are a few prevailing statements about the Tibetan people's choice of these colours, as follows.

(1) The emergence of the native Tibetan religion of benzism was an important stage in the formation of colour in Tibetan national architecture. White, blue and red are used to represent the heavenly, earthly and human realms in the Benthic religion; (2) it is related to the fact that the early Tibetan people took inspiration from nature and gave colours their most natural and primitive symbolic meaning. Red symbolises the sun, white symbolises white clouds and snow, blue symbolises the sky, and green symbolises rivers and lakes; (3) after Buddhism entered Tibet, the Tibetan Tantras have what are known as six-word mantras. Each mantra has its own specific colour: the word "buzz" is white, the word "ma" is red, the word "ni" is yellow, the word "bai" is green, and the word "bai" is green. The word "buzz" is white, the word "ma" is red, the word "ni" is yellow, the word "bai" is green, the word "mei" is blue and the word "moo" is black.

2.2. 1.2 What the colours represent

In traditional Tibetan culture, white represents purity, loyalty, justice and good fortune, and is generally used as the base colour of buildings; black represents the expulsion of

evil and the repulsion of demons, and is later extended to resist invasion by foreign enemies, and is generally used on doors, windows and corridors; yellow represents royal status, and is generally used in the palace complexes of rulers; red represents dignity and transcendence, and is generally used in temples dedicated to serving the gods. The red colour represents the nobility and transcendence of the world. The combination of the different meanings represented by colours in traditional Tibetan culture and the functional role played by different building components in architecture has, to a certain extent, limited the colours of some of the building components, which has become a kind of conventional rule, and has in turn given rise to different colour interpretations of Tibetan ethnic architecture, constituting a unique architectural colour landscape group for Tibetan ethnic architecture. For example, black is commonly used for door frames and window frames, playing an allegorical role in keeping evil demons out of the house.

2.3. Cultural messages conveyed by colour

2.3.1. The region to which the building belongs



Figure 1. The Regency Lhasa Resort and Spa The colour scheme of the façade is the usual colour scheme of the dwellings in Shigatse

In Tibetan architecture, there are differences in the use of architectural colours in different areas of residential architecture and in different schools of religious architecture, and we can make a simple identification and judgment on the color contrast of residential buildings in some areas.

The colour contrast between the different regions of

Tibetan architecture. The majority of Tibetan houses are built in white, with large areas of the exterior painted white, with some differences in wall material and painting techniques between regions. The Regency Resort Hotel in the Chengguan district of Lhasa adopts the same colour scheme for its façade as the Regency (Figure 1). In the Sakya region of Tibet, the three colours of red, white and blue are used on the façade of the Sakya Monastery (Fig. 2), or in other words, the authentic Sakya houses have a three-coloured façade.



Figure 2. Saja Monastery The colour scheme of the building is red, white and blue

2.3.2. The category to which the building belongs

At the time of the establishment of the Tibetan Buddhist culture, there were a number of rules governing the use of colour in architecture. Later, as society developed, a specific system was formed, under which the meaning and hierarchy of colour in architecture was reinforced, and architectural colour was restricted to a strict hierarchy and gradually formed its own unique system and regulations, with colour and architecture coming together to express certain phenomena in contemporary society.

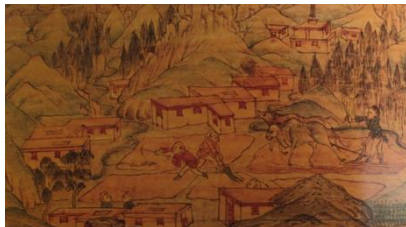


Figure 3. Depiction of Tibetan dwellings in a Qing dynasty stationery box

The sutra has this to say: "Xi" means gentleness and is represented by white; "Zeng" means development and is represented by yellow; "Huai" means power and is represented by red; and "Fu" means viciousness and is represented by black. represents fierceness and is represented by the colour black. The author believes that the use of red and yellow is related to this rule in the scriptures. Another theory is that Guru Tsongkhapa directly motivated the use of yellow in architecture. For a long time therefore colours such as red and yellow could only be used in monasteries, palaces and other high-class buildings.

The majority of Tibetan dwellings are white in colour, but in the early days they were indicated by a red (Fig. 3) or black ribbon on the eaves to show the class of the building.

3. Creating architectural layers

The relevant parameters involved in a colour are: lightness, hue, warmth and coldness, colour intensity, etc. The brightness of the different colours has an important place in creating a sense of colour hierarchy. The contrast between the four levels of lightness - black, white, red and yellow - is

reflected in several different types of architecture. The red border of the marble wall contrasts with the blue sky and the white wall underneath, and if the building has a gold roof, the building has a richer sense of hierarchy. At the same time the black window frames contrast with the white walls. The black, white and red colours form a precise complementary effect, creating a mutually constraining yet mutually reflective relationship.



Figure 4. The use of red and white on the façade of the Brada Palacer

The Tibetan people use the interpenetration of colours, in which they also make a lot of subtle colour interpolation, using the non-stop interpolation and expression of two colours to create a more subtle colour for, on the basis of the distribution of large blocks of colour and then increase the fine architectural layers, take the Potala Palace (Figure 4) as an example: the colour of the Red Palace of the Potala Palace is a large area of dark red, but in the area near the roof, there is a very eye-catching white band; and in the White Palace with large white walls in the east, the same dark red band appears in the windows and gables and other parts; and in the Red Palace and the White Palace, the dark red band appears. an extremely eye-catching white band of colour appears; while in the White Palace, which has large white walls in the east, the same crimson band of colour appears in the windows and gables, etc.; and in both the Red Palace and the White Palace, the crimson bordering the daughter wall of the Ma, again with white dots forming a band of decoration. This approach allows the colours to intersperse with each other while maintaining red and white as the basic colour palette, adding visual impact and a sense of architectural hierarchy.

In addition, the sunshine in Tibet is longer and the light is stronger, with warm colours in places that are exposed to the sun and cold colours in places that are not exposed to the sun. Warm colours produce a sense of proximity, forwardness and expansion; cold colours produce a sense of distance, retreat and contraction. The warm red and white tones, together with the cool red and white tones, and the shadows cast on the walls by the sun at different angles through different buildings, create a different kind of irregular architectural hierarchy.

4. Creating an architectural atmosphere

Bright colours give the impression of lightness, dark colours are heavy, placing bright colours at the top and dark colours at the bottom can maintain a stable balance.

Through my previous visits to some of the temple buildings, I have found that most of the interiors appear quieter and more mysterious than the outdoors, which is not only related to the small window openings due to the Tibetan climate, but also to the use of colour in the interiors. Externally the strong natural light of Tibet is used along with bright colours to create a positive, bright and refreshing colour intention with high

brightness tones. Instead of using light colours that enhance the reflection of light indoors, thicker reds and yellows are used instead to reduce the reflection of light indoors and increase the contrast between the architectural atmosphere indoors and out, highlighting the thick, long-standing architectural atmosphere indoors. In addition, the Tibetan people's use of green and blue is also very clever, and they play a decorative role in the architecture is often seen in the detailed patterns, or in the red for the body of the pillar on the column, in the doors and windows on the short rafters of the eaves, or in the narrow and long ornamental band on the wall, so that those hot colours do not cause anxiety, making the red in the building and frescoes come alive.

5. Conclusion

Through the author's interpretation and investigation, we can see that the use of these colours in Tibetan architecture is not arbitrary and random, but has gradually formed some relatively fixed rules and patterns in the course of historical development. In addition, there are agreed norms for the use of colour in the corresponding architectural parts and forms that cannot be changed at will. These norms also apply to Tibetan ethnic architecture, and it is this systematic approach to architectural colour that gives Tibetan ethnic architecture a stable colour identity and a high degree of ethnic regional identity. In addition, despite the diversity and hierarchy of Tibetan ethnic architecture, there are rules and practices for the use of architectural colours in different classes and types of buildings, which have been passed down from generation to generation and are an important factor in distinguishing between classes and types of buildings. All of the above highlights the orderly, regular, programmatic, idealised and systematic nature of colour in Tibetan ethnic architecture. It is the emergence of this pattern of colour composition that has led to a harmonious and distinctive architectural form that is in harmony with the needs and aesthetics of the Tibetan people. It is also the combination of these factors that has created a strong identifiable identity for Tibetan ethnic

architecture that distinguishes it from other regions, creating a unique urban-rural look.

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