

Preliminary Exploration of the Decoration in Traditional Hakka Houses in Gannan, China

Lin Guo, Hong Li

School of Fine Arts, Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, Jiangxi, China

**Corresponding Author: 1057198659@qq.com*

ABSTRACT. *In the traditional Gannan Hakka houses, there are mostly woody-brick and rammed-earth structures, whether they are hall-house styles or enclosed-yard styles. A common construction method is to use a frame structure made of wood to form the basics and to combine the patterns and colors on the decorative surface to form a space as a whole. From the inside to the outside, on the roof, walls, eaves, doors, windows and other architectural structures, the houses are properly decorated with art forms, such as wood carving, stone carving, brick carving, and painting. These decorations includes legendary lucky animals, romance legends, drama stories, landscapes, flowers and birds, and calligraphy, etc. While ensuring material needs, it also meets the spiritual pursuit of the people.*

KEYWORDS: *Gannan hakka, Traditional house decoration*

1. Introduction

The walls of residential buildings can be divided into: gable walls, eaves walls, internal walls, and external walls. Walls can be used to divide and

Dividing space can also be used as a barrier function, and also plays a role of concealment and protection. The decoration on the wall adds a decorative function to the wall. The ancient Chinese architectural decoration has experienced development for thousands of years, and it is quite mature by the Ming and Qing dynasties, and most of the existing traditional dwellings of the Hakka in Gannan were also built for this period, so many auspicious decorations are also retained on the walls. The decoration of the wall surface is generally concentrated on the eye-catching places such as the wall core, wall frame, wall edge, wall top, etc. The large area of the wall retains the original color of the raw materials or is used for simple decoration such as painting (Figure 1). Specifically, the main auspicious decorations are gray plastic, murals, wall books and brick carvings.



Fig.1 Representative Wall Decoration

Such as brick carvings, they often appear on the gable gimmicks, shadow walls, door wall openings, transparent windows, and the walls of exterior walls.

The main purpose of floor decoration is to play a role of anti-slip, moisture-proof, mud-proof, easy-to-clean but also more comfortable and more beautiful through decorating the floor. The simplest way to decorate the ground of Hakka traditional houses in South Jiangxi is to compact the soil. If you pay more attention to the point, floor tiles, slate, or pebbles will be laid on the ground. Decorations with auspicious meaning are often found on the ground of the residential courtyard. Cobblestone or stone pieces are often used to build various meaningful ground flowers. For example, the graphics of coins, the graphics of flowers, and the fabled characters such as Fushou are common subjects (Figure 2). Even if there is no parquet, the cobblestone flooring in these courtyards, after the irrigation of rainwater, green grass grows naturally in the soil in between floor layout materials, full of vitality is endowed by nature, and therefore has the effect of decorating the road surface in a natural way.



Fig.2 Representative Floor Decoration

2. The Decoration on the Door and Window

The door of the traditional Hakka house in Gannan is divided into the main door of the building and the door of the house. The door of a residential building is like a person's face. It is the primary image people see when entering and leaving the building. It often reflects the different functional properties of different residential houses and the wealth and reputation of the owner. The term “door-to-door pair” reflects the nature of door faces in residential buildings. Most of the door decorations of traditional Hakka houses in Gannan are focused on the door. Some are single-slope roofs that are picked from the wall. They are simply covered with wooden tiles on the wooden structure. The more complicated ones include the East Asian hip-and-gable roof and the hanging-mountain top. Some even have more than one roof as multiple roofs. The door cover is structured as a wood-like flat decoration with rich decoration elements, including flowers, birds, insects and fishes, immortals, myths, performing arts, and chanting characters. The artistic expression of the door has been greatly exerted. Good examples are the old house of Doctor Lu, Tianpeng in Luwu Village, Nankang District, and the prefectural-style houses (with a hundred rooms) in Donglong Village, Ningdu District, they are connected with brick doors and door faces. These house maintained the style of the wooden-structured door, which there are two vertical columns on the left and right with horizontal crosses between the columns. There are bucket arches on the rafters to support the roof. Nowadays some bucket arches are simplified.

The shape of the door head normally is with the beam and column part below in more square shape, and a wider top is raised with the eaves on the top. The partition composition of the door head is flexible, and the part below the roof can be simple and complicated. The auspicious decoration on the door is in the form of brick

carving. The carving method is flat carving, that is, the decoration is kept on a horizontal plane, and the theme is mostly praying and exorcising evil (Figure 3).



Fig.3 Representative Decoration of the Brick Door

In addition, the doors of the houses in the traditional Hakka houses in Gannan are mostly rows of grid doors, and there are also separate wooden doors, but they are less seen. Lattice doors refer to the doors connected in rows, some in four and some in six, all are in even numbers for easy use. The basic form of the lattice door is a rectangular frame made of wood. The frame is divided into an upper lattice core and a lower skirt plate. There is a cymbal ring plate between the two, also called a waist plate. The grid part is used for daylighting, and the skirting board and cymbal ring board are solid wooden boards. The upper part of the heart is made of patterns such as diamond flowers and ice flowers, and the middle is the waist plate. The waist plate is engraved with character stories or insects, fish, beasts, flower vases and the like. The doors and windows are highly decorative overall [2] (Figure 4).



Fig.4 Various Door Decorations

There are also two types of windows in traditional Gannan Hakka houses: house windows and wall windows. The basic shape of the house window is roughly the same as that of the door, divided into two categories: lattice-fan window and single-seat window. The lattice window and the lattice door are exactly the same in style, but the installation parts are different, as the lattice window is only the upper half of the lattice door, that is, the lattice heart and the ring plate. Most of the windows are square windows and rectangular windows, and there are many styles of internal division. Some entire windows are checkered; some are divided into upper and lower sections. For example, the lower section of the bedroom window uses solid wooden boards to ensure the privacy of the bedroom. The upper section is relatively sparse, as it must ensure lighting and ventilation. The tops are full of patterns, such as wicker-shaped rhombus, ice flower, I-shaped, double I-shaped, etc., these patterns appear to be simple and regular, elegant and beautiful, emphasizing the combination of decoration and use. It is particularly worth mentioning that in the Youyi Hall in Bailu Village. There a thin mica sheet is embedded in the space of the window, which not only blocks the view but also has a certain lighting function. The silver light passing through will give an extremely precious visual effect. Some of the boards under the window are whole boards, of which have some woodcarvings in

the form of flowers, insects, fish, characters and so on. The continuous row of windows set off between large wooden walls (or columns), contrasting with each other, appears to be particularly detailed and delicate [2] (Figure 5).



Fig.5 Various Window Decorations

The window on the wall refers to those windows on the inner wall of the residential house. The function of this type of window is to make the space on both sides of the courtyard communicate with each other. These windows give a connection but also a separation function and also play a decorative role. Wall windows are often made of ventilated checkers because the upper window are towards outdoor of the courtyard. To prevent the erosion of rainwater, more bricks and stones are used.

3. The Decoration on the Pillar Foundation

Because the Hakka area locates in southern part of Jiangxi province, China, which is in a subtropical region, a humid monsoon climate. There are heavy rainfalls in spring and summer, in the design of the pillars, in order to prevent the flooring pillars from dampness and decay. In terms of the material, woods and stones are mostly used. The pillars are made of wood and the foundation is made of stone, which isolates the leg of the column from the floor and protects the wooden pillars from the moisture of the ground. At the same time, the load on the wooden pillars is evenly transmitted to the ground. There are two types of column foundations. One is a single-layer column foundation, which is a drum type, a basin type, a cover-bucket type, and a pedestal type. The other is a multi-layer column foundation, which is composed of two or more different types. The single-layer column foundation is formed by overlapping. Some pillar foundations are decorated with light patterns such as simple patterns or lines, while others are carved with various decorative themes that incorporate Taoist thought, folk beliefs, and reflect local customs and era backgrounds, such as sea pomegranate flowers and peony flowers, Baoxiang flowers, ground lotus, overturned lotus, yarrow, dragon-phoenix pattern, lions, the eight immortals and also music, calligraphy and painting are all commonly used subjects. (Figure 6)



Fig.6 Various Pillar Foundation Decoration

In addition to the decoration of the above-mentioned parts, there are many decorations in the places such as sunk panel, beam and lighting wall, etc.. The beams are generally made in a slightly solitary shape, resembling a crescent moon, and the sides are also cut into a slightly rectangular shape. Some of them have decorative lines on them, and their cross sections are relatively thick. Among the pillars, the sparrow brace is used as a support. Most of the engravings on them are hollow and carved with fine workmanship and realistic shapes. Some are carved with other square shapes and carved into other shapes, so that the sparrow brace basically loses the role of the connector and is purely serving as decorative purpose. Among the few ancestral halls such as Youyi Hall in Bailu Village, there are diagonal beasts between the pillars and the protagonists [1].

4. Conclusion

Traditional Hakka houses are an important part of the Hakka culture in Gannan. The study of the decoration of traditional Hakka houses in Gannan is to further study the architecture and culture of Hakka in Gannan. This study also want to facilitate the understanding, usage and inheritance of Gannan Hakka traditional culture more actively.

Acknowledgement

This project is supported by Funded the Key Project of Jiangxi Province Culture Planning Project in China (No.YG20181491).

This project is supported by Social science planning Project of Jiangxi Province Culture Planning Project in China (No.18Y849).

References

- [1] Wan Younan (2001). The emergence, development and disappearance of Hakka cabins in Gannan. *Southern cultural relics*. vol.000, no.004, pp.29-40.
- [2] Wan Younan (2004). Field survey of the “Panshiwei” Hakka residential buildings in Gannan--Also on other arc-shaped “weiwu” residential buildings in Gannan . *Huazhong Architecture*, vol.22, no.4, pp.126-131.
- [3] Tang Xiangyan (2007). Study on the building type system and interior of Hakka local buildings in Gannan. Jiangxi Nanchang University.
- [4] Zhang Baixiu (2005). On the harmony between man and nature: Taking Tongling as an example. *Journal of Tongling University*. vol.2005, no.04, pp.109-110.
- [5] Zeng Shufang (2018). Exploring the Culture of Hakka Enclosed Houses in Gannan . *Wen Yuan (Secondary School Edition)*, vol.000, no.11, p.398..
- [6] Warren J.Worthington (1998). *Taylor5.context:New Buildings in Historic Settings*. Oxford: Architectural Press.