

An Analysis of the Architectural Art of Ma's Manor under the Influence of Confucianism

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Abstract:

Confucianism has existed in China's feudal society for thousands of years, having far-reaching impact. The Confucian values of Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith are still respected today. Ma's Manor in Anyang was the former residence of Ma Piyao and his children, the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi in Qing Dynasty. As a bureaucratic mansion in the late Qing Dynasty, its architectural space, courtyard layout and decorative art were deeply influenced by Confucianism. Through the study of the architectural remains of Ma's manor, the author analyzes the Confucian philosophy contained in the architectural art of Ma's Manor, summing up the embodiment of Confucian ideological features in the architectural art of Ma's manor, such as the unity of utility and aesthetics, the importance of etiquette, the clear distinction between superiority and inferiority, the unity of Heaven and human, and the worship of nature.

Keywords:

Confucianism, Traditional Residence, Architectural Space, Architectural Decoration

1. An Overview of Confucianism and Ma's Manor

Confucianism, founded by the philosopher Confucius in the late of the Spring and Autumn Period, is an ideological theory formed on the basis of summarizing and inheriting the historical civilization of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. After Mencius, Dong Zhongshu and other ideologists' developing and innovating, a complete ideological system was finally formed. Confucianism occupied an important position in the feudal society of China. In the course of historical development, in order to meet the needs of rulers of different dynasties, new ideas and doctrines were constantly absorbed and developed, it created a whole system of governance theories for the ruling class and successfully applied to the practice of state governance, gaining a social history of more than 2,000 years of feudal rule in China and having a far-reaching influence on the material life, spiritual civilization, value orientation and thought leading of the posterity. Confucian thought is not only the class ruling tool, but also the main body of Chinese feudal culture, which has preserved the rich

national cultural heritage. The stigma of Confucianism is all demonstrated in the deep concepts of Chinese culture.

As the product of the material life and spiritual civilization in the feudal society, Chinese traditional folk houses show the strong imprint of Confucianism in the architectural layout, courtyard combination, and architectural decoration and so on. Henan province is located in Central Plain of China, as the material carrier of spiritual civilization; traditional residential architecture has gradually formed an architecture system full of Confucianism under the inherent idea of etiquette oriented. Ma's Manor is located in Xijiang village, Shuiye County, Anyang City, Henan province. The whole complex has orderly planning, well arranged facade, simple and elegant architectural style. It not only has the spacious and bright architectural features of the northern courtyard, but also has the decorative features of the Central Plains area, such as green bricks, grey tiles, five spines and six beasts, which is the most complete bureaucratic mansion in the late Qing Dynasty in Henan Province.

Ma's Manor is a large-scale courtyard-style residential complex of Ma Piyao and his family, assistant minister Ministry of War, governor of Guangdong and Guangxi in the end of Qing dynasty, which is composed of Central District, North District and South District. It covers an area of about 20,000 square meters and a building area of about 5,000 square meters, with a total of 21 courtyards [1]. Among them, central, north and south three areas have a total of six buildings. The Central District is the largest of the three districts and has four courtyards. The west three are all quadrangles, where Ma Piyao lives with his eldest son, Ma Jishen, his fourth son, Ma Jishou, and his third daughter, Ma Qingxia. In the North District, there is only two-way courtyard, which was originally the ancestral house of Ma family, and later was expanded by Ma Piyao's second son on the basis of the old house. In the South District, there is only a five-way courtyard, which is the residence of Ma Jimei, the third son.

2. The Value Orientation of the Unity of Utility and Aesthetics, Form and Function

The natural environment and human environment of each region together determine the form and function of the residential buildings in this region. Ma's Manor is the result of the interaction between the physical and geographical environment in Anyang and the specific social development stage in the late Qing dynasty. It is an architectural art with the unity of form and function. Architectural decoration is not only an important part of architecture, but also has its own aesthetic value. Different means of expression is also an important factor in different architectural styles.

From the material point of view, the architectural decoration of Ma's manor mainly has the following two characteristics: one is the local material, saving energy and time, the other is simple and natural and performs arts according to the material. Its architectural decoration is not only for the beauty of the surface of the building, it is a visual object of the building with aesthetic functions, but also with national culture, regional characteristics, religious beliefs, customs and other multiple functions. The art of architectural decoration not only reflects the essential features of architecture, but also is the historical witness of social changes. Homophony is also one of the expressive techniques of architectural decoration art of Ma's manor, such as the use of homophones such as chicken (ji), cloud (Yun), Lotus (He), etc. The appearance of such patterns in decoration symbolizes auspiciousness, good luck, happy family

harmony and so on. The homophony of *Hulu (Gourd)* and *Fulu (Fortune)* implies the good wishes of the owner of the house for happiness and prosperity.

The architectural decoration of Ma's Manor is a typical representative of the combination of practicality and aesthetics, and the unity of form and function, which coincides with the unity of *Beauty* and *Goodness*, the core of Confucius's aesthetic thought. Confucius advocated *Poetic education*, that is, the combination of literature art and political morality. Ma's manor combines architectural form and decoration with enlightenment, whether it is everywhere seen in leaky windows, wood, brick, stone, or tall gatehouses and archways, it is engraved with stories of traditional virtues such as loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, integrity and shame. From the hall to the living room, calligraphy and paintings, couplets and aphorisms are mostly hung, which not only makes the room full of humanistic atmosphere, but also plays a role in warning and educating future generations. The gate house of Ma's Manor is a combination of square and round, which contains the philosophy of *To Be Square and round*. Every piece of wood, brick and tile is a tribute to the aspirations of the clan for a better life.

3. The Architecture Layout with the Idea of Attaching Importance to the Etiquette System and a Clear Distinction between Superiority and Inferiority

The basic aim of the *etiquette system* in Confucianism is to take *etiquette* in feudal hierarchy system as people's code of conduct, and take feudal social ethics of *three cardinal guides and five constant* as the core to maintain social ethics and political system [2]. The feudal society applied the restraint of *Etiquette* to various behaviors of people's social life, which had a far-reaching influence on all aspects of people's social life in the long history of feudal society. As the origin and thriving place of Chinese ancient social civilization, Henan has become the most representative practice area of this concept. The traditional residential buildings, which are closely related to life, are deeply branded with the label of Confucian ideology and culture, and become the best carrier to embody the Confucian spirit of *Etiquette*.

Ma's Manor is a representative of traditional residential buildings in the north of Henan province. Overlooking the whole manor, its overall layout and simple decoration left a deep impression. Among the buildings in the Central District, each building attaches great importance to the construction principles of coordination, balance, stability and symmetrical layout, integrating the ethical spirit of benevolence, propriety and moderation in Confucianism and transforming it into all kinds of life scenes, such as benevolence, diligent study, sequence of honor and inferiority, etc., which forms the traditional virtue of benevolence, propriety, filial piety and so on in the heavy courtyard and family, and the strong atmosphere of Confucianism is shown in the existing buildings.

At the same time, in order to adapt to the feudal society's etiquette standard, it should reflect the ethical order between the monarch and the subject, father and son in daily life. Therefore, there are also strict requirements for the volume, orientation, combination, decoration and occupants of the buildings in Ma's manor. The central building complex of Ma's manor was built after he was a senior official in the region of Guangxu period. Over the past 130 years, it has experienced three different historical stages. Experiencing the vicissitudes of life, some small wooden buildings were damaged seriously, and the whole structure of the building was relatively intact.

There are four courtyards side by side in the East and west of the Central District, all of which face south. The courtyards and houses are planned symmetrically along the longitudinal central axis. According to the classics of *Qing Huidian* that the courtyard of the officials in the Qing Dynasty, the family temple is located in the east and the residence is located in the west; from west to east are the living area, the sacrificial area and the garden for recreation.

Among them, the living area is composed of three longitudinal quadrangles with compact layout; the middle one is the largest in building scale, followed by the east one, and the west courtyard is the smallest; the exquisite complexity of architectural decoration is also the most luxurious of the middle one, and the west is relatively the simplest, which fully reflects the ethical hierarchy concept of clear priority and inferiority in Confucianism. The layout of the three courtyards is basically the same as that of the single building, which is made up of four courtyards. In China's traditional residential buildings, a courtyard is the most basic form of one-row quadrangles, the four-row quadrangles belong to relatively high standard buildings, which shows the construction scale and grade of Ma's Manor. The middle courtyard of the living area was lived by Ma Piyao when he returned to hometown to visit his family. According to the folk custom of the eldest son living in the east, the east courtyard was allocated to the eldest son, Ma Jishen, while the west courtyard was inherited by the fourth son, Ma Jishou.

The combination of the traditional residential buildings and their courtyard uses the method of axial symmetry to set off the supremacy of the rulers, which is consistent with the Confucian idea of being in the middle and being upright [3]. It can be seen that China has formed a strong *center* consciousness as early as thousands of years ago, which has a significant impact on the layout and decorative art of traditional residential buildings. All the buildings in the middle, north and south districts of Ma's manor are arranged on the central axis from front to back in the layout of front door, middle hall and back building, in the pattern of front door. As a reflection of the Confucian idea of *center*, this layout is different from other traditional houses in Anyang and even Henan, where the gate is located in the southeast corner of the courtyard.

Take the four-row courtyard in the middle district of Ma's Mansion as an example, it is elevated from south to north, step-by-step. The front hall and back hall are symmetrical, and the main entrance is opened to the south. The center of the courtyard is located on the central axis. It is arranged in order as the courtyard gate, the secondary gate, the hexintang, the Jingchengtang and the Xiushentang. The courtyard gate not only represents the master's class and social status, but also plays an important role in guiding the theme of the entire courtyard, and is the most important image part of the courtyard for public display. The secondary gate plays the role of series connection, and also has the function of setting off the status of the Ma's family. The main building of the two-row courtyard is the hexintang, whose main function is to entertain guests. And the main building of the three-row courtyard is the Jingchengtang, which is the living room of Ma Piyao's mother. In the end of the central axis, it is the four-row courtyard, Xiushentang, the residence of Master Ma Piyao [4]. It is not difficult to see that all the buildings on the central axis occupy an important position in the whole courtyard, either for the elderly and important people in the family to live, or for the reception of guests to carry out important activities. This kind of design arrangement not only reflects the traditional idea that the middle

is the most important in ancient society, but also reflects the hierarchy system of Confucianism incisively and vividly.

4. Embodiment of Ethics and Enlightenment in Architectural Decoration

The characteristics of Ma's manor can be found in the architectural remains of Ma's manor, such as the typical characteristics of settling down, strong family concept, worshipping sacrifice and attaching importance to education. For example, the tradition of worshipping sacrifices in the Ma family made the Ma family choose a large part of space to build the Ma family temple in the living environment, and the family temple is located in the middle of the best and most central location.

The architectural decoration of Ma's Manor is also the embodiment of Confucian ethics and enlightenment. Firstly, under the influence of Confucianism, the architectural layout and use of Ma's manor paid great attention to the architectural order of the ancestors of heaven and earth, the three cardinal principles and the five constant principles, and the hierarchy of superiority, which were fully reflected in architecture and architectural decoration. This feature is also one of the main features of the decorative art of traditional Chinese folk houses. In the early Ming dynasty, the houses of officials and people were not allowed to carve shapes of the sages and sages of the ancient emperors and empresses and the images of the sun, the moon, the dragon, phoenix, lion, unicorn and rhinoceros. If violating, it will be regarded as treason and violating the code of ethics, which is the embodiment of ethics [5]. Under the influence of Confucian culture, the architectural decoration of Ma's Manor is like an educational book of visual aesthetic art. For example, the couplet on the square of the four-row courtyard on the middle road of central district reads: *First-class people is loyal and filial piety, and they have two things that is read and plough the fields.* The couplet on the main building of the four-row courtyard on the east of central district reads: *The sages is passed down to all generations and provide education without distinction. People are the foundation of the whole country and they will bring peace and stability to the country.* All the writing contents of these couplets and plaques, as well as some educational patterns and decorations embody the ethical and educational connotation and characteristics of the architectural decoration of Ma's Manor.

5. Architectural Art Concepts of Harmony between Man and Nature and Advocating Nature

Confucius paid attention to the spiritual pursuit of harmony between man and nature, and absorbed the positive aspects of advocating conforming to nature in Laozi's thought while constructing his philosophical system. Confucian view of heaven and man is a kind of ideological view of the unity of heaven and man. Dong Zhongshu's *Three Strategies of Heaven and Man* also mentioned that human beings can survive in nature only if they conform to nature. In a long historical period, in various social practice activities, human beings should not only adapt to the influence brought by the natural environment, but also comply with the norms of social etiquette. Therefore, the real harmonious life form advocated by Confucianism is the harmonious unity of human, society and nature.

In the process of construction, Ma's manor fully integrated human and natural environment, at the same time pursuing the unity with society, nation and regional

culture, in terms of site selection, architectural style, architectural decoration, color and application of materials. It takes the local natural environment of Anyang as the basic criterion, paying emphasis on adapting to local conditions and using local materials, focusing on building a harmonious relationship between architecture and the natural environment, and meeting the real life needs of Ma Piyao and his family.

The construction of courtyard space is to meet the needs of people's outdoor sports and closing to nature. Each courtyard of Ma's Maison is enclosed to the outside and open to the inside. On the one hand, such architectural practices can avoid external interference and make the interior safe, independent, quiet and free; on the other hand, it is open to the interior, making the sunshine, rain, snow, flowers and trees in nature more connected with people's daily life. The courtyard space of Ma's manor is the concrete expression of the unity of heaven and man and the worship of nature. Therefore, from Ma's manor, we can see a unique view of Confucian concept of architectural art, that is, the harmony of *human, society and nature*.

6. Conclusions

The cultural value of Chinese traditional folk houses is a bright pearl in Chinese architectural cultural heritage. As a witness of history, Ma's manor was the material carrier of the local spiritual culture at that time, and its architectural culture was a part of the cultural heritage of Anyang and even Henan. It conveys cultural ideas in the form of materialization and illuminates historical development in the form of construction techniques and decorative arts. The Ma family not only regards the education of Confucian culture as the ladder for their descendants to join the imperial examination, but also takes it as the basic idea of cultivating one's morality and integrity. The cultural thoughts of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith advocated by Confucianism, through the transmission of architectural art, have formed the unique architectural cultural image and value of Ma's manor.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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