

TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE IN HAKKA WEILONGWU: FROM THE VIEW OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF LANDSCAPE

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the relationship between Hakka vernacular architecture and its traditional environment knowledge. Generally speaking, many scholars and mass-media consider that Hakka vernacular architectures include codes of Central Plain's culture such as ying-yang, tianrenheyi, fengshui affluently, because the Hakka ancestors are the Han nationality from Central Plain. However, according to the author's fieldwork in Meizhou, one famous hometown of the Hakka, local inhabitants can also recognize their vernacular architecture, Weilongwu, with another environmental knowledge that derives from their ancestors', but not from the view point of the Central Plain's culture. In this paper, the author will introduce the traditional environment knowledge in Weilongwu and suggest using this new approach to analyze Hakka vernacular architectures from the view of anthropology of landscape.

Keywords: Hakka, Meizhou, architecture, Weilongwu, landscape, anthropology

1 INTRODUCTION

Since his first visit to Hakka district in the year of 2002, the author has been interested in Hakka vernacular architectures, and conducted fieldwork on them from the view of cultural anthropology. Unlike architect, cultural anthropology mainly focuses on inhabitant's cognition and use patterns around their architectures according to long-time fieldwork, but does not always deal with the materials and technologies when studying architecture. Especially, as rise of the structural approach and cognitive approach, many anthropologists start to explore how local inhabitants impute own cultural meaning to their architectures, and try to understand the various relationships between human cultures and architectures (Griaule 1965; Hugh-Jones 1979; Fernandez 1976, 1986; Lawrence and Low 1990). On the other hand, some Hakkaologists also focus on Hakka vernacular architecture still using this methodology now, and they emphasize that Hakka vernacular architectures include the code of Central Plain's culture such as Tianrenheyi (天人合一), yinyang (陰陽), fengshui (風水), because the Hakka are the orthodoxy Han nationality from the Central Plain. Actually, we can hear the local Hakka people explaining their architecture with the viewpoint of Central plain when we visit Hakka districts. For this reason, the opinion by Hakkaologists above is not untrue.

However, as the author started to do fieldwork in the border district in Guangdong, Fujian and Jiangxi province, it was found that the Hakka inhabitants in this district recognize and use their architectures with alternative environmental knowledge. Although these kinds of knowledge are gradually disappearing recently, they are still important for old men to repair the architectures or hold events in them (Kawai 2008). Therefore, based on his fieldwork the author believes that the Hakka's recognition on their architecture actually has diversity. And if one only focused on them with the viewpoint of Central Plain's culture, it can prevent us from understanding the wholly relationship between the Hakka inhabitants and their vernacular architecture. Actually, even if in the same Hakka district, the local inhabitants impute different cultural meanings to their architectures according to each life experience. For this reason, we have to focus on different kinds of environment knowledge as well as Central Plain's culture when studying Hakka vernacular architecture.

In view of the questions above, the author firstly will introduce the common explanation about the relationship between Hakka vernacular architecture and Central plain's culture which have been discussed often by Hakkaologists (Section 2); Secondly, using his field data, the author will illustrate that the Hakka inhabitants in Meizhou city recognize and use their vernacular with different environmental knowledge (Section 3). In this section, the author will focus on Weilongwu (圍龍屋) and show a few examples that some Hakka inhabitants can recognize and use their architectures with traditional environmental knowledge from their ancestors as well as with the view of Central Plain's culture. Finally, this new approach is suggested to analyze various relationships between the Hakka and their vernacular architectures.

2 HAKKA ARCHITECTURE AND CENTRAL PLAIN'S CULTURE

2.1 Academic Attention to the Hakka and Its Culture

China is a multi-national country including 55 minorities and the Han nationality. The Han nationality now commands an absolute majority (about 92 percent) in mainland China, but the languages and customs among the Han peoples are vastly diverse, since the Han nationality comprises of many sub-ethnic groups. The Hakka that this paper refers to is one of the sub-ethnic groups, which belongs to the Han nationality. According to incomplete statistics, the population of the Hakka in mainland China is about 40 million, and most of them live in the border area of Guangdong, Fujian and Jiangxi province.

It is considered that the first people who mentioned the "Hakka" had been literary during Qing dynasty period, and they had recorded the related word kemin (客民), keren (客人) or keja (客家). For example, a literary recorded keja in prefectural detachment of Yong-an the year 1687, and Xu Xuzeng (徐旭曾), who was an intellectual from Huizhou, described the word kemin and its origin, language, ethnic traits in Fengfu Essays of the year 1812. Especially, Xu Xuzeng sees kemin as the Han nationality originated from Central Plain, as who has language similar to Central Plain language, and as whose women are diligence. Therefore, his description about kemin is basically the same as Hakka image which is certified by today's people.

On the other hand, the western missionaries started to pay attention to the Hakka since 19th century. Especially, Basel Missionary Society started regarding the Hakka as an important target for propagation, some missionaries such as Ernest Eitel, Theodore Hamberg, Rudolph Lechler narrowed down to propagate among Hakka districts of eastern and north Guangdong. This is why Basel Missionary Society is called as "Hakka Church" nowadays (Constable 1994: 161; Tang 2002). As some scholars noted, Basel Missionary Society played an important part toward shaping ethnic category of Hakka (cf. Iijima 2007). This had two aspects. Firstly, after Taiping Rebellion (太平天國起義) and the Hakka-Punti feuds (土客械鬥), Hakka were rejected regardless of whether they were directly involved in the rebellion or not, and many Hakka turned to Basel Missionary Society for support (Constable 1994: 159). Secondly, in order to propagate easier, the Basel Missionary Society paid more attention to Hakka language, and stressed the idea that "the Hakka is the purest and most excellent Chinese" for stirring up the intensified internal wars and destroying the unity of Chinese (Nakagawa 1989). Subsequently, George Campbell (1912), a British missionary insisted, after investigating the Hakka's family trees (族譜), that the origin of the Hakka was in the Central Plains located in the seat of ancient Chinese dynasties

As we have seen, the western missionaries had already suggested two points of view during the 19th century and the first four decades of the 20th century: that the Hakka "is the most legitimate Han Chinese" and that it has "its origins in the Central Plain". These viewpoints advocated by western missionaries influenced Hakka scholars. Especially, Luo Xianglin (羅香林), the founder of Hakkaology, emphasized the Hakka's genealogy and language originated from Central Plains and suggested the immigrant roots of the Hakka ancestors in his book *Introduction of Hakka Studies* (Luo 1933).

Many Hakkaologists were greatly influenced by Luo's theory about immigration roots of the Hakka ancestor later. Yet the idea which the Hakka originated from Central Plains itself was never new, because his opinion basically was taken over the thought by Basel Missionary Society. The author considers that one of the important contributions by Luo was to systematize the relationship between Hakka culture and Central plains, apart from his explanation about immigrant roots of the Hakka ancestors. Some Hakka folk cultures were seen by Luo to be associated with the ancient Han cultures in Central Plain, which shaped the basis of the

imagination of Hakka culture in contemporary usage (Kawai 2011). For example, Hakka vernacular architectures and its related folkway such as fengshui were associated with Central Plains. In this way, Luo Xianglin tried to demonstrate that the Hakka is of a pure Han nationality

This kind of cultural view which is suggested by Luo Xianglin in the early 20th century basically has not changed till now. Although some authorities of Hakkaology such as Fang Xuejia (1994), Xie Chongguang (1995), Chen Zhiping (1997) started to criticize the theory of “the Hakka – Central Plain origin”, they merely pointed out that the Hakka was not part of the Han race immigrated from Central Plains, still insist that the Hakka is a “cultural group” who succeeded to the orthodox Central Plain’s culture (Xie 1995: 12, Fang 2006: 1). From this reason, when many scholars in China and Japan started to engage into studying typical Hakka vernacular architectures such as Tulou (土樓), Weiwu (圍屋) and Weilongwu since 1980s, most of scholars lean to emphasis their cord of Central Plain’s culture. Then, how Hakkaology explain Hakka vernacular architecture with the viewpoint of Central Plain’s culture?

2.2 The Codes of Central Plain’s Culture in Weilongwu

Weilongwu is one of the typical Hakka vernacular architectures, which is sometime called one of “Chinese five traditional architectures” by architect in China. So-called “typical” Weilongwu is elliptic apartment house, and its spatial structure can be divided into three parts: housing space in central part, big pond in foreground, and huatai (化胎) and closed dragon houses (圍龍閣) in background (Figure 1). As Figure 2 shows, a square housing in central part has some different kinds of spaces. It includes three kinds of public space called inner hall (上廳), central hall (中廳), outer hall (下廳) and two kinds of private space lived by lineage members called central houses (中堂間) and side houses (橫屋間) in the both sides of the public space. Among them, inner hall is considered as most important space by lineage members, so they generally put their ancestral plates, the Earth God (土地伯公) and the Godless of Mercy (觀音).



Figure 1: Weilongwu in Meizhou

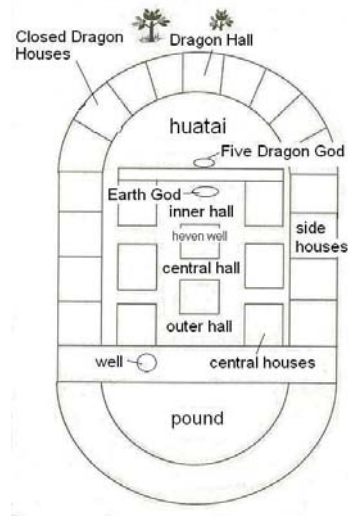


Figure 2: Spatial structure of Weilongwu

Among the Chinese traditional architecture, the most characteristic parts of Weilongwu maybe are huatai and closed dragon houses in background. Huatai is the semicircular place which gradually rises and it is often called as ‘dragon’ by indigenous people. In addition, so many egg stones are spread on the huatai, and a god called the Five Dragon God (五方五土龍神) is put in the front side of it. On the other hand, closed dragon houses close the semi-circle huatai. The lineage member can live in closed dragon houses, but can’t live in its middle house called dragon hall (龍廳). Because dragon hall is a sacred space, lineage members generally put ritual items in this room.

The range of Weilongwu extends in Meizhou district and its contiguous districts such as the west parts of Longyan city and the east parts of Heyuan city. So, most of studies on Weilongwu cite Meizhou city as example. Weilongwu has been studied by many Hakkaologists from the field of cultural anthropology and architect as well as history, philosophy, ecology, the art of divination till now. Yet despite every academic field, scholars who study Weilongwu generally have done short time fieldwork at least, and according to these field data they have pointed out that Weilongwu includes a lot of codes of Central Plain's culture. There are three main arguments:

1) There is rich nature such as trees, ponds, rivers in the surrounding of Weilongwu. So, its condition represents an oriental thought tianrenheyi(天人合一) which means the harmony between mankind and nature. Because the Hakka make points of the harmony between mankind and natures, they are likely to use the theory of fengshui as well. Especially, the Hakka make points of the Formative School (形勢學派) of fengshui, which judge the good conditions between natures and living spaces using the theory of “dragon (龍)”, “hole (穴)”, “spot (局)”, “water (水)”. Additionally, the Hakka always use two main items called luopan (羅盤; one kind of compass which has good and bad number) and lubanchi (魯班尺; one kind of measure) when practicing fengshui.

2) Weilongwu are symmetric with respect to traditional central line(中軸線), and there are dragon hall, huatai, the Five Dragon God, inner hall (or ancestral hall), the Earth God on the line. Because the traditional central line is one of typical structural part of Central Plain's architectures, it represents Central Plain's culture. In addition, the landform of Weilongwu is gradually higher from foreground to background, that is to say, its spatial meaning is gradually more important from foreground to background, then this spatial structure represents that Weilongwu is related to the orderly idea of Confucianism.

3) Weilongwu includes the thought of yin-yang (陰陽) and Five Elements (五行)。For example, semicircular huatai which is located in background of Weilongwu represents yin (陰, for it is also called “yin city” among folk society) and semicircular big pond which is located in foreground of Weilongwu represents yang (陽), so the both can form a figure of taiji (太極) together. On the other hand, the Five Dragon God which is located on the front side of huatai has five different icons, so they represent the Five Elements.

This is why most of studies by Hakkaologists tend to make points of the relationship between Weilongwu and Central Plain's Culture. That is to say, many scholars have been emphasizing that Weilongwu is including the cords of Central Plain's culture such as tianrenheyi, fengshui, traditional central line, Confucianism and the thought of yin and yang. In addition, this kinds of perspective on Weilongwu is advertised and spread among folk society through by mass-media, elementary education and exhibition of museum. For this reason, we can hear in fact that the local people explain their own architecture with the viewpoint of Central culture.

In this sense, we can say that the arguments by Hakkaologists above are suitable to reality of Hakka society on one side. Yet the author is gradually aware of that the inhabitants can also recognize their vernacular architecture with another environmental knowledge derived from their ancestor as he goes on long-term fieldwork in some Weilongwu, and that the explanation based on Central Plain's culture is only one way of recognizing the architecture on the other hand. Moreover, according to his long-term observation, despite local Hakka people is likely to explain Weilongwu with the view of Central Plain's culture at beginning, the environmental knowledge derived from ancestor plays more important role in their actually life.

3 HAKKA ARCHITECTURE AND TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Because the traditional environment knowledge of Weilongwu has diversity in each village and lineage, three lineages will be selected to explain the knowledge: 1). L lineage in X community located in Meizhou city, 2). N lineage in Y village located in suburb of Meizhou city, 3). O lineage in Z village in Meixian. Although N lineage and O lineage don't belong the same clan, both environmental knowledge basically corresponds to each other.

3.1 The Case of L Lineage

First, X community is consisted of some local lineages and immigrants, but only L lineage has Weilongwu among them. The most members of L lineage, however, are not living in it, and are living in modern houses built nearby Weilongwu or are going to outside city to find work. Therefore, most of young members of L lineage don't understand the cultural meaning of Weilongwu, and only some elder man over 60 years can explain their environmental knowledge with the author in the three ways as follow:

The first is related to flow of qi (氣; a kind of energy of nature). According to their explanation, mountains behind Weilongwu look like the shape of animals, and qi is originated from these mountains and goes straight to dragon hall → huatai → the Five Dragon God → inner hall (ancestral hall) → heaven well → ponds, that is to say the center line of Weilongwu. This is why, they lay meandering water pipes on purpose from heaven well to the pond to lose less their qi, that is to say money (wealth).

The second is about huatai and the Five Dragon God. L lineage considers that huatai is a concentrative place of qi. So if sowing the plants there, they will grow up very fast. On the other hand, the Five Dragon God represents the thought of Five Elements, and its five different figures arranged from left to right respectively represent wood → fire → earth → metal → water (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: the Five Dragon God



Figure 4: the Earth God (below)

The third is about measuring instrument. They always use luopan and lubanchi when building or rebuilding their architecture. Especially, the traditional center line of Weilongwu must be corresponded with meridian using luopan. On the other hand, houses of Weilongwu must be measured using lubanchi. Yet lineage members do not always measure the all length of houses, despite they must measure the all length of tomb.

The case above demonstrates that the cognitions and use patterns by L lineage are related to Central Plain's culture, and similar to the explanation about Weilongwu by Hakkaology to some extent. But, the case of L lineage never represents the all examples of traditional environment knowledge on Weilongwu in Meizhou. Because some Hakka people in Meizhou actually can explain their architecture with another view.

3.2 The Case of N Lineage and O Lineage

There are three Weilongwu in Y village. Two of three are owned by M lineage and the other is owed by N lineage. Yet now M lineage seldom uses their two Weilongwu: one had already become a storehouse, the other is rented by workers from outside. M lineage seldom held any ritual events there. On the other hand, N lineage still uses Weilongwu. Although most of members built modern houses nearby to live, N lineage sees their Weilongwu as has affluent historical culture derived from their ancestors, so try to conserve this one.

Concretely speaking, members of N lineage exhibit their ancestor's picture and explain their achievement, at the same time, held ritual events here every festival. In addition, they repair the architecture through raising the money among / outside lineage members.

Irrespective of N lineage or O lineage, advocates of repairing Weilongwu and organizing ritual events all are old men. Old men over 60 years decide affairs related to Weilongwu, and they always manage according to the way derive from their ancestors. Therefore, they can explain the traditional environmental knowledge systemically. In addition, elder women and their daughter-in-law understand parts of the knowledge, because they participate in detail work such as preparing meals or ritual instruments in ritual time. Some explanations of their environmental knowledge as stated by old men and women over 60 years and their daughter-in-law of N lineage and O lineage are as follow.

Firstly, according to the explanation by N lineage, "the most important thing that they pay attention to Weilongwu is the spatial relationship between ancestral plates, the Earth God, the Five Dragon, altar and heaven well." Among them, the Earth God (Figure 4) is the most important. They believe if the place of the Earth God is bad, lineage members will meet with misfortune. M lineage and O lineage all have these thoughts, expect M lineage. Then, why the Earth God is so important in Weilongwu? Some old men of N lineage explain as follow: Because the Earth God represents the earth, the earth brings up crops, so if the earth doesn't exist, ancestor and their descendants don't exist in the world, the Earth God is the origin of all lineage members. According to this idea, they must put ancestral plates above the Earth God to demonstrate the meaning that ancestors are grew up by the earth. In addition, because the Earth God represents "earth", ancestral plates represent "person", including the heaven well which is put in the front of these two, they can represent the perfect world consisted of "heaven- person- earth (天人地)" (Kawai 2008: 173). This is why lineage members must put incenses, water and offerings to pray ancestors in the front of heaven well, ancestral plates and the Earth God when they perform ancestral worships.

Secondly, some old men of N lineage explain that it's inevitable for ancestral hall to put dragon desk (龍桌), the ancestor's desk in front of the ancestral plates. For, if there is no desk, ancestors can't judge to descendants, so to speak, ancestors can't bring good fortunes. In addition, the Five Dragon God and huatai also are essential for ancestors, for the Five Dragon God and huatai in the back of ancestral plates represents the ancestor's chair. The old men say that ancestors wouldn't feel comfortable until they have chair to sit. Additionally, N lineage has alternative way of explanation about the Five Dragon God and huatai. Namely, huatai represents womb, the central icon of the Five Dragon God represents vagina, and the both are the source of life energy. Local Hakka people see the Five Dragon God and huatai as the concentrative point of life energy irrespective of N lineage and O lineage: 1). lineage women always go to the Five Dragon God and huatai to pray when they got ill or can't be blessed with child; 2). lineage old men arrange inviting a lion dance (舞獅) to their Weilongwu, especially to the Five Dragon God and huatai to get life energy with them firstly and let lions visit each house of lineage members to distribute the energy lately.



Figure 5: Heshenglao Ruler

Thirdly, N lineage and O lineage use alternative ways to measure direction and length of Weilongwu, other than luopan and lubanchi. 1) With regards of the way of measuring direction, they sometimes decide the direction of Weilongwu according to the method of "folk direction". Although they also say that the most ideal is Weilongwu facing south, all of them are not facing south. Because they didn't measure direction with compass, or luopan, and they select the direction where the sun rises at the top as "south", so there are little

difference from scientific direction. 2) With regards of the way of measuring length, they make points of using the heshenlao (合生老; to combine “life” and “old”), other than lubanchi. Then, what is the heshenlao? This measuring way is consisted of five standards, “life (生)”, “old (老)”, “sick (病)”, “death (死)”, “suffer (苦)”: the first chi (about 303 cm) represents “life”, the second chi represents “old”, the third chi represents “sick”, the fourth chi represents “death”, the fifth chi represents “suffer”, the sixth chi represents “life” in return, the rest can be done in the same manner. Among them, the “life” and “old” start from second circulation are called heshenglao. It’s a lucky number (see Figure 5). Because heshenglao means they can live a happy life in the next world.

Elder men of N lineage has advised the author that the most important places to measure with heshenglao are gate and bed leg locations, because gate is the place where energy can enter and bed is the place where lives are created.

It is clear that N lineage and O lineage’s traditional knowledge about Weilongwu tends relating to their life view. Of course, lineage members can explain the architecture with the viewpoint of Central Plain’s culture, but just as the example of huatai and the Dragon God the local people’s cognitions on Weilongwu are overlapping. Thus Central Plain’s culture only consists one part of this “fault”. Moreover, through doing long-time fieldwork in Weilongwu we can also understand that Central culture and its codes only are one kind of explanative model, and their life view derived by their ancestors plays important role in every ritual events of the architecture.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The author herein has presented the examples of traditional environmental knowledge in Weilongwu. We can deduce from these examples that local Hakka people’s cognition on the architecture has variety and multiplexing, namely, they recognize their architecture from the point of life view as well as Central Plain’s culture. In addition, former knowledge is more important than latter in the actual representation in Weilongwu. The author believes that this affords some new perspectives on the studies of Hakka vernacular architectures including Weilongwu. Until now, most studies almost only pay attention to the Central Plain’s culture when discussing the relationship between Hakka vernacular architecture and its culture, and explore how the Hakka impute codes of Central Plain’s culture to their architectures all the way. As it is pointed out in this article, of course, local Hakka people actually use the viewpoint of Central Plain’s culture to explain their architecture. For this reason one can’t deny the arguments by Hakkaologist. Yet if our scholars address the cultures of Hakka architecture only from the view of Central Plain, we will miss the truth nature of the architectural culture of the Hakka. Furthermore this view will forge the prejudiced imagination on Hakka architecture.

In recent years, an academic field called as ‘the anthropology of landscape’ starts to pay attention to 1) bias of academic writing on environmental culture, and 2) its estrangement from local traditional environmental knowledge (Hirsh 1995; Stewart and Strathern 2003). Just as this article indicated obviously, this kind of situation is also applicable to the examples of Hakka vernacular architecture. In order to overcome the present situation, we should go on to pay more attention to the variety and multiplexing of environmental knowledge on Hakka vernacular architecture. A foreseeable extension of this viewpoint would be to include comparisons with other wider districts to explore more various kinds of knowledge on Hakka vernacular architectures.

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