

Research on Architectural Form and Social Function of Chikan Guild Hall in Zhanjiang

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Abstract: Guild hall, as a unique form of social organization in Ming and Qing dynasties, has far-reaching significance in Chinese history. This paper studies the architectural form and social function of Chikan Guild Hall in order to explore its important role in the social change of southwest Guangdong during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. From the perspective of interdisciplinary research, combining the theories of architecture, sociology, history and other disciplines, and using the methods of field research and literature analysis, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the architectural form characteristics, social functions and interactive relations of Chikanggu Commercial Port Guild Hall. The study found that the Chikan Guild Hall not only carries rich historical and cultural heritage, but also profoundly reflects the economic, political, cultural and other characteristics of the society at that time, with multiple functions such as natural community, economic community and spiritual community. At the same time, the interactive relationship between guild building and social change is discussed, and some suggestions on protecting and utilizing guild building are put forward. The research results provide a new perspective and method for deepening the study of guild hall architecture and social function, and also provide inspiration for the protection and utilization of cultural heritage in contemporary society.

1. Introduction

Guild hall, as a unique form of social organization in Ming and Qing dynasties, has far-reaching significance in Chinese history. Chikanggu Commercial Port was an important trade center in southwest Guangdong during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the guild Hall was a witness of the social changes and economic development in this historical period. Scholars' research on guild hall is increasing gradually, involving many aspects such as its historical origin, architectural form and social function. Wang Rigen ^[1] (1996) made an in-depth analysis of the flourishing process, social background, internal operation and cultural connotation of guild halls in Ming and Qing Dynasties. He pointed out that as the product of social changes in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the architectural form and social function of the guild Hall reflected the characteristics and needs of the society at that time. Liang Hongxin ^[2] (2020) believes that guild houses, as an important part of historical and cultural districts, not only promote the development of local business and trade, but also strengthen social integration and cultural inheritance. In addition, Mary Rankin ^[3] (2020), a foreign scholar and American scholar, mentioned the public domain in some parts of China in the

Ming and Qing Dynasties, including the role of civic organizations such as guild halls in the management of local affairs. In addition, some overseas Chinese scholars have also paid attention to and studied the historical form and social function of the guild hall.

Although scholars have made some achievements in the study of guild hall, there are still some deficiencies and gaps. First of all, the study of the architectural form of guild hall mostly stays at the description level, and lacks the in-depth exploration of the cultural connotation and symbolic significance behind it. Secondly, the research on the social function of the guild hall mainly focuses on a certain aspect or a certain region, and lacks a systematic and comprehensive discussion. In addition, the special research on Chikangu commercial port Hall is relatively few, which needs to be further strengthened. Through consulting historical documents, local records, inscription materials, etc., this paper sorts out and analyzes the historical evolution, architectural form and social function of Chikan ancient commercial Port Guild Hall. At the same time, through field investigation of the existing buildings of Chikangu Commercial port Guild Hall, combined with literature materials, the paper obtains first-hand information to verify and supplement the results of literature analysis.

2. Study on the architectural form of the Guild Hall of Chikangu Commercial Port

Chikangu Commercial Port, located in Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province, was an important commercial center and port in southwest Guangdong during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. As an important carrier of commercial activities at that time, Chikangu Commercial Port Guild Hall has its distinctive characteristics and unique style.

2.1. Building Layout

The building layout of Chikangu Commercial Port Guild Hall usually follows the principle of symmetrical center axis and two-front courtyard. The main axis of the hall building is the hall, the worship pavilion and the meeting hall, and other functional areas such as the wing room and the kitchen are distributed around the main axis. This layout not only reflects the traditional Chinese architectural etiquette thought, but also facilitates the internal management and operation of the hall.

For example, the Chaozhou Guild Hall is one of the representative buildings of the guild hall in the ancient commercial port of Chikan ^[4]. The hall was built in the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, covering an area of about 3854 square meters, the architectural layout is rigorous and orderly. There are three rooms in the front hall of the hall, and three rooms in the back of the council hall, which are successively set up the first door, the worship pavilion, the atrium, the courtyard corridor and the back hall. The left and right sides also have wing rooms and kitchen and other ancillary facilities. This layout form makes the internal space of the hall clearly hierarchical, clear division of functional areas.

2.2. Structural Characteristics

The building structure of Chikangu Commercial Port Hall is mostly brick and wood structure, which has high stability and durability. The beams, columns, brackets and other components in the hall building have been carefully designed and constructed, reflecting the superb architectural skills at that time. In addition, the hall building also pays attention to the realization of waterproof, fireproof and other functions to ensure the safe use of the hall in harsh environments.

In terms of structural characteristics, Chaozhou Guild Hall is also representative. The hall's front hall and council hall are using hard mountain roof, the roof is laid with green tiles, with good waterproof performance. The beams and columns of the hall are made of strong wood, and the

brackets are decorated with exquisite carvings, which not only enhances the stability of the building, but also enhances the artistic value of the building.

2.3. Decorative style

The decoration style of the Guild Hall of Chikan Ancient Commercial Port is mainly based on Lingnan architectural style, while integrating European architectural elements and tropical characteristics of South Asia. The decorative elements such as carving and painting in the building of the guild hall are rich and diverse, which reflects the superb artistic attainments and aesthetic concepts of the craftsmen at that time.

The decorative style of Chaozhou Guild Hall is particularly outstanding. The carvings and decorations of the hall are mainly concentrated in beams and columns, brackets, doors and Windows, etc. The patterns are mainly dragon and phoenix, flowers and birds, character stories, etc., implying good luck, wealth and peace. The color painting of the hall is mainly mural paintings and color paintings, the content is mostly landscape, flowers and birds, character stories, etc., bright colors, with strong Lingnan cultural characteristics.

3. Study on social function of guild hall

The guild hall originally appeared as a gathering place for officials based in Beijing. Later, in the process of continuous development, its functions were increasingly increased and standardized, and its basic functions were "offering sacrifices to God, harmony, charity, and convention" [5], and its functions were continuously expanded according to demand, as follows.

3.1. Natural community function

The house is first and foremost a natural community, providing a platform for immigrants to gather, communicate and help each other. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, with the development of commodity economy and the intensification of population flow, a large number of immigrants flooded into cities, and they were faced with barriers in many aspects such as language, customs and culture. The establishment of the guild hall provides a social space with a strong sense of belonging for these immigrants and becomes their "home" in a foreign land. Community autonomy can timely and accurately express the different interests and needs of residents, form the common will of collective choice through democratic consultation, organize and mobilize various resources within the community, cooperate in dealing with community public affairs, meet the social needs that are difficult to be met by the government and the market, and effectively solve the problems of community development [6].

One is the living function. Hostels provide temporary or long-term housing for immigrants. Since the immigrants first arrived in different places, often lack a stable residence, the guild hall has become their haven. There are rooms and dormitories in the hall for immigrants to live in. These accommodation facilities not only meet the basic living needs of immigrants, but also provide them with a relatively safe and stable living environment. For example, the Teochew Guild Hall in Chikan has a large number of real estate properties, including residences, shops, etc., which provides an important living security for Teochew immigrants.

The second is the communication function. Union hall is an important place for immigrants to exchange information and contact feelings. Various party activities, such as sacrifices, banquets, plays, etc. are held regularly in the hall, which not only enhance the cohesion among immigrants, but also provide them with the opportunity to exchange business information and market conditions. Through the hall, immigrants can keep abreast of market dynamics, grasp business opportunities,

and promote the development of business activities. At the same time, the hall has also become an important organization for immigrants to help each other and jointly resist foreign aggression. For example, the Minzhe Association Hall in Chikan often holds various gathering activities to strengthen the connection and cooperation among Minzhe immigrants.

Third, the function of mutual assistance. The club provides important mutual assistance and support when immigrants encounter difficulties and problems. There are often specialized institutions or personnel in the hall, responsible for dealing with disputes and lawsuits of immigrants and safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests. At the same time, the hall also provides assistance to poor or unfortunate immigrants by raising funds and setting up charities. These mutual assistance measures not only ease the living pressure of immigrants, but also enhance the cohesion and centripetal force within the hall.

3.2. Function of economic community

As an economic community, the guild hall plays an important role in trade activities, market network, economic mutual assistance and so on. By organizing business activities, promoting market exchanges, and providing economic support, the hall has made a positive contribution to the development of immigrants and the local economy.

First, business activities. The guild hall is an important platform for organizing business activities. The club often has a special business organization or personnel, responsible for coordinating and managing the business activities of members. The hall provides members with the opportunity to display and sell products by organizing fairs and fairs. At the same time, the club also provides business guidance and consulting services for members by collecting market information and analyzing market conditions. These trade activities not only promote economic exchanges between members, but also promote the prosperity and development of local businesses. For example, the Teochew Guild Hall in Chikan often organises fairs and fairs to promote the business activities of Teochew merchants.

Second, market network. By building a market network, the guild hall strengthens the economic ties between different regions. Club members often come from different regions, and through the club platform, they can timely understand the market information and business dynamics of various places. The club also strengthens economic ties and cooperation between different regions by organizing members to conduct cross-regional business activities. The formation and development of these market networks not only promoted the prosperity of commodity circulation and trade, but also promoted the integration and coordinated development of regional economy. For example, the association in Chikan has strengthened economic ties and cooperation with the surrounding areas by organizing members to conduct cross-regional business activities ^[7].

Third, mutual economic assistance. The hall played an important role in mutual economic assistance. The museum provides members with economic support and security by raising funds and setting up funds. When members encounter financial difficulties or capital turnover problems, the club can provide loans, guarantees and other help to relieve their economic pressure. At the same time, the hall also realizes the optimal allocation of resources and the maximization of economic benefits by organizing members for joint investment and joint management. These economic mutual assistance measures not only enhance the cohesion and centripetal force within the club, but also promote economic cooperation and development among members.

3.3. Function of spiritual community

As a spiritual community, guild hall plays an important role in cultural inheritance, religious belief, social identity and so on. By holding cultural activities, promoting traditional culture and

inheriting religious beliefs, the hall enhances the members' sense of cultural identity and belonging, and provides them with spiritual sustenance and spiritual comfort.

First, cultural inheritance. Guild hall is an important carrier of cultural inheritance. There are often special cultural institutions or personnel in the hall, responsible for sorting out and preserving traditional cultural materials, organizing cultural activities and so on. By holding traditional cultural performance activities such as opera, dance and music, the hall has demonstrated the charm and style of traditional culture. At the same time, the hall also provides members with the opportunity to learn and understand traditional culture by setting up libraries and reading rooms. These cultural inheritance activities not only enhance the members' cultural identity and pride, but also promote the inheritance and development of traditional culture. For example, the guild hall in Chikan often hosts opera performances and cultural exhibitions, which inherit and promote the local traditional culture.

The second is religious belief. The hall played an important role in religious belief. There are often shrines or temples dedicated to gods in the hall for members to offer sacrifices and pray for blessings. The museum has carried forward religious beliefs and cultural traditions by holding religious ceremonies and disseminating religious teachings. At the same time, the hall also enhances members' sense of religious belonging and social responsibility by organizing members to participate in religious activities and social welfare undertakings. These religious activities not only meet the spiritual needs and psychological sustenance of members, but also promote social harmony and stability. For example, the convention Hall in Chikan has a shrine and a temple dedicated to the Queen of Heaven, for the Teochew immigrants to perform worship and blessing activities.

The third is social identity. Guild houses play an important role in social identity. As an autonomous organization and social group of immigrants, the guild provides members with a common identity and cultural sense of belonging. By organizing various social activities and public welfare undertakings, the hall has enhanced the cohesion and centripetal force among its members. At the same time, the hall also improves its social status and influence through interaction and cooperation with the local government and social organizations. These social identification activities not only enhance the cohesion and centripetal force of the hall, but also promote the harmony and stability of the society. For example, the guild hall in Chikan actively participates in local social welfare and charity activities, winning the recognition and respect of the local government and residents.

It can be seen that the guild organization, as a new thing that conforms to the economic development and population flow, objectively becomes a new mechanism to assist the imperial power, and thus can obtain the support of the government. On the other hand, the government can intervene by providing shade for the guild, thus controlling the direction of the development of the guild organization. At this point, the guild organization was formed and continued under the "collusion" of many factors ^[8].

4. The correlation between the architectural form and social function of guild hall

4.1. Influence of architectural form on community function

The architectural form of the guild hall, including its layout, decoration, scale and other aspects, has a profound impact on its community function.

First, the layout of the promotion of communication activities. The layout of the guild hall is usually based on the central axis symmetry and the front and back courtyard. This layout not only reflects the traditional Chinese architectural aesthetics, but more importantly promotes the communication activities within the guild hall. Taking the five major guild halls in Chikan as an example, the main axis of their buildings are foyer, worship pavilion and council hall, while other

functional Spaces exist in a subordinate relationship. This layout makes the internal space of the hall clearly hierarchical, which not only meets the needs of public activities such as sacrifice, performance, banquet, but also ensures the independence of private activities such as discussion. At the same time, the symmetrical layout of the center also strengthens the sense of solemnity and ceremony of the hall, which is conducive to enhancing the sense of belonging and identity of members.

For example, there are three rooms in the front hall of the Chaozhou Guild Hall, with a square pavilion in the middle, and three rooms in the back of the council hall, with the first door, the worship pavilion, the atrium, the courtyard corridor and the rear hall in turn. This layout makes the interior space of the hall open and bright, which facilitates communication and interaction between members. During festivals or important events, the public space in the hall can become a place for members to gather and discuss affairs, thus promoting the transmission and sharing of information within the hall.

Second, decoration strengthens cultural identity. The decoration of the hall is also an important part of its architectural form, which not only reflects the aesthetic pursuit of the hall, but also strengthens the cultural identity of the members. The decoration of guild hall often includes a variety of art forms such as wood carving, brick carving, stone carving, etc. These decorations are not only exquisite, but also have far-reaching implications, and are often closely related to the faith, history, culture and other aspects of the guild hall.

Taking Chikan five Guild halls as an example, Chaozhou Guild Hall has superb architectural art level, exquisite decorative arts such as porcelain carving, brick carving and wood carving, among which the giant wood relief "golden branches long leaves, silver trees bloom forever" is the iconic decoration of the guild hall. These decorations not only show the wealth and status of the Teochew guild Hall, but also strengthen the cultural identity and sense of belonging of the Teochew merchants. Through the appreciation and taste of these decorative arts, members can more deeply feel their own group and cultural traditions, thus strengthening the loyalty and cohesion of the club.

The third is the bearing of scale on community function. The scale of the hall is also an important aspect of its architectural form, which directly determines the community function that the hall can carry. Larger halls are often able to accommodate more members and activities, thus assuming more social responsibilities and functions. In contrast, smaller halls may primarily serve specific small groups or regional communities.

Among the Chikan Guild halls, the Chaozhou Guild Hall and the Hokkien Guild Hall are larger in scale, which not only have perfect architectural facilities and public space, but also undertake various social functions such as sacrifice, education and charity. These halls have played an important role in the socio-economic life of Chi Kan Bu, serving as cultural centres and activity centres for the local community. However, some smaller-scale guild halls may mainly serve the gatherings and sacrificial activities of merchants in the same township, and their community functions are relatively limited.

4.2. The reaction of social function on architectural form

The social function of the guild hall also promotes the change of its architectural form. The increase of economic activities promotes the expansion of the scale of guild hall, the change of social needs promotes the diversification of functions of guild hall, and the strengthening of cultural identity promotes the development of decorative arts of guild hall. All these changes reflect the dynamic interaction between the architectural form and social function of the guild hall. As some scholars have said, "the traditional geographical social organizations such as guild halls and public offices are also undergoing transformation: the organizational function is transforming from closed

to open, the management function is developing from feudal patriarchy to bureaucratic democratization, and the orientation function is transforming from old-fashioned to pioneering and enterprising." [9]

First, the increase of economic activities promotes the expansion of the scale of the hall. With the increase and prosperity of economic activities in the area where the guild hall is located, the economic community function undertaken by the guild hall has become increasingly prominent. In order to meet the needs of more members and activities, clubs often need to expand in size and add facilities. The increase of economic activities directly promoted the change of the architectural form of the guild hall.

With the prosperity of sugar trade and other economic activities, the activities of Teochew merchants and other merchants in Chikan are becoming more and more frequent, and the demand for the guild is also increasing. In order to meet these needs, the Teochew Guild Hall and other clubs continue to expand and renovate building facilities, increasing public space and service facilities. The expansion of this scale not only improves the carrying capacity and service quality of the guild, but also further strengthens the status and role of the guild in the social and economic life of Chikan Bu.

Second, the change of social demand promotes the diversification of hall functions. With the development and changes of society, the social needs undertaken by the hall are also constantly changing and adjusting. This change of social demand directly promotes the diversified development of the functions of the guild hall, and then affects the architectural form of the guild hall. For example, with the rise and development of education, the hall began to assume the educational function, providing learning places and financial support for the children of the same township. The increase of this educational function prompts the hall to make corresponding adjustment and improvement in the architectural form. Some clubs began to set up schools, colleges and other facilities to meet the learning needs of members and children of fellow townspeople. At the same time, the architectural style and decorative arts of the hall are often closely related to educational culture, reflecting the respect and pursuit of knowledge and culture.

For another example, with the rise and development of charity, the guild began to assume the function of charity relief, providing help and support for poor members and fellow townspeople. The increase of charity function also promotes the corresponding adjustment and improvement in the architectural form of the guild hall. Some clubs began to add facilities such as charity warehouses and kindness halls to store food and materials for helping poor members and fellow townsmen. At the same time, the decorative art of the guild hall is often closely connected with charity assistance, reflecting the care and support for the vulnerable groups.

Thirdly, the strengthening of cultural identity promotes the development of the decorative arts of the guild hall. As a gathering place of merchants in different places, guild hall often carries profound cultural identity and emotional bond. This strengthening of cultural identity directly promotes the development and innovation of the decorative arts of the guild hall. Taking Chikan Five Guild houses as an example, the decorative art of the Teochew Guild House and other guild houses is not only exquisite but also profound, which is often closely connected with the Teochew culture. The decorative arts such as wood carving, brick carving and stone carving in the hall not only show the craftsmanship level and aesthetic pursuit of Chaozhou merchants, but also reflect the inheritance and promotion of Chaozhou culture. The development and innovation of this decorative art not only enhances the cultural atmosphere and artistic charm of the hall, but also further strengthens the members' cultural identity and sense of belonging.

4.3. Specific case study: Five major guild halls in Chikan

As a typical representative of guild buildings in Ming and Qing dynasties, the correlation between architectural form and social function has been fully reflected. Chaozhou Guild Hall, Minzhejiang Guild Hall, Guangfu Guild Hall, Gaozhou Guild Hall and Lei Yang Guild Hall, all have the basic characteristics of middle axis symmetry and front and back courtyard, but they are different in architectural details and social functions, which together constitute the rich and colorful guild culture of Chikan Ancient commercial port. The following is a detailed analysis of the five major guilds in Chikan through field research and literature, as shown in Table 1.

To sum up, there is a close correlation between the architectural form and social function of guild hall. The architectural form of guild hall not only affects the play of its community function, but also promotes the diversified development of its function to a certain extent. At the same time, the evolution of the social function of the guild hall also reacts to its architectural form, prompting the guild hall building to constantly change and adjust to meet the new social needs. The existence of this correlation makes the guild hall play an important role in the social and economic life of the Ming and Qing dynasties and become an indispensable part of the society at that time.

Table 1: The architectural form and social function of the Guild Hall of Chikangu Commercial Port are different

guildhall name	Construction time	Architectural position	Architectural form	Social function
Chaozhou Guild Hall	The year 1793	Fujian Street	The basic features of the courtyard are symmetrical in the center axis and two-front and two-back courtyards, with rigorous layout and clear hierarchy	Sacrifice, education, charity, etc
Minzhe Guild Hall	Qing Qianlong period	73 Democracy Road, Chi Kan	The courtyards with central axis symmetry and front and back two entrances are the basic features, but compared with Chaozhou Guild Hall, the scale is smaller and the layout is more compact.	These include sacrifices, gatherings and mutual assistance
Guangfu Guild Hall	Qing Jiaqing period	Hokkien Street, Chi Kan	The basic features of the courtyard are symmetrical in axis and two-front courtyard, but compared with other halls, it pays more attention to practicality and functionality	Sacrifice, business exchange and mutual aid
Gaozhou Guild Hall	The year 1853	25 Ko Chau Street, Chikan	The basic features of the courtyard are symmetrical in the center axis and two-front and two-back courtyards. The layout is rigorous and the momentum is magnificent.	Sacrifice, education and charity
Lei Yang Guild Hall	Qing Jiaqing period	6 Kwan Miu Street, Chi Kan	Siheyuan type brick and wood structure, compact layout, complete functions.	Sacrifices, gatherings and mutual aid

5. Conclusion and enlightenment

Through the in-depth study of the architectural form and social function of the guild hall of the ancient commercial port of Chikan, the important role of the guild hall in the social and economic

life of the southwest of Guangdong in the Ming and Qing dynasties is revealed. As a complex of natural community, economic community and spiritual community, guild hall has a close interactive relationship between its architectural form and social function. As Xia Xueluan said^[10], "the goal of community construction is to rebuild the organic connection between people and groups within the community, rebuild the vitality and value of the community itself, and activate citizens' attachment, identification and pride to the community." The research results not only broaden the vision and depth of guild hall research, but also provide inspiration for the protection and utilization of contemporary cultural heritage.

The study of the museum as an example can further deepen the historical research, excavate more historical documents and local Chronicles, and expect to make breakthroughs in the following aspects; First, to expand interdisciplinary research and analyze the interactive relationship between guild building and social function from more dimensions such as architecture and sociology; Second, strengthen field research to obtain more first-hand information; The third is to pay attention to the contemporary value, and explore the application of the hall in the protection of cultural heritage and community construction; The fourth is to promote digital and intelligent research, using modern information technology means to digitally restore and display the hall building. Through these studies, we can more comprehensively understand and protect this precious historical and cultural heritage.

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