

Integration and Witness: A Study of the Decorative Art Characteristics of Modern Jingzhou Historic Buildings

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Abstract: Historical buildings in China since modern times are the symbols and symbols of an era, and are the historical witnesses of the drastic changes in economy, culture, and science and technology at that time. Modern Jingzhou historical buildings have been influenced by both foreign architectural culture and traditional Chinese architectural culture, showing unique architectural aesthetic characteristics and decorative art styles. The article starts from the perspective of cultural fusion, analyzes and classifies the architectural types, and then explores the cultural fusion and decorative features of the architectural systems of “Chinese Essence with Western Utility” and “Western Framework with Chinese Adaptation”. Through research, analysis and comparative study of the Jingzhou South Gate Catholic Church and Tongzhen Silver Building, the unique decorative techniques embodied in the plan layout, façade modeling, detail decoration and material structure are explored, and the localized adaptation, diversified integration of decorations, and local eclectic decorative art features are summarized. It further provides reference for the protection and revitalization of Jingzhou historical buildings and the connotative development of the city.

Keywords: Cultural Integration; Architectural Decorative Arts; Modern Historical Architecture; Aesthetic Characteristics; Jingzhou

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1.Introduction

‘Yu divided the nine states, and there was Jingzhou at the beginning’. Jingzhou culture is an important part of the long-lasting Chinese civilisation^[1]. As one of the first batch of national historical and cultural cities and one of the excellent tourist cities in China, Jingzhou is famous for its long history and bright culture. It is also the third national-level protected area for large sites^[2]. Jingzhou in the precipitation of history has formed a unique splendid Jing-Chu culture, and in modern times, Shashi was opened as a commercial port, and this port city in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River was developed. This socio-economic, political, cultural and dramatic changes, modern Jingzhou region, port, commerce, missionary exchanges closely, a large number of foreign cultures and emerging ideas into the mainland, the architecture also appeared in the fusion of local and foreign cultures. These distinctive modern buildings, which are a fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, have important historical value, artistic value, social and cultural value and practical significance.

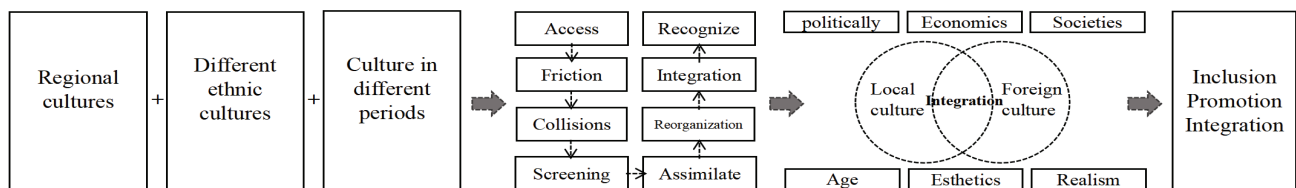
The relationship between protection and development should be properly handled, focusing on the continuation of the city's historical lineage, respecting and treating the old buildings in the city as well as treating the 'old people', preserving the city's historical and cultural memory, and letting people remember the history and nostalgia ^[3]. The value and connotation of Jingzhou's modern historical buildings is an important manifestation of historical continuity and cultural integration, some of which have been damaged and destroyed, and are therefore in urgent need of attention and protection. The inclusiveness and integration shown by Jingzhou in the face of foreign architectural art and culture is very prominent in the decorative features of modern historical buildings ^[4]. Through the architectural technology exchange and cultural integration, a variety of western architectural art styles have been integrated into the original aesthetic features of Jingzhou's architectural art, demonstrating the great inclusiveness of Jingzhou's local culture.

2. Cultural Integration Perspective and Overview of Historical Architecture in Modern Jingzhou

2.1 Overview of the cultural integration perspective

Cultural integration is a process of cultural change and a new cultural phenomenon resulting from the contact of cultures of different regions, different nationalities and even different periods, which is especially obvious in modern architecture. Cultural integration is the process of cultural adaptation and integration, where two or more parties of culture take cultural contact as a prerequisite to reach cultural adaptation in friction or collision, and then go through the process of screening, absorbing and restructuring of cultural traits to form a new process of cultural needs and cultural identity ^[5] (Figure 1). The long-term dialogue, promotion and integration of different civilization forms and value systems is an important path for culture to enhance national identity and state identity ^[6]. Due to the historical background of Jingzhou's opening of ports, commerce and missions in modern times, as well as the novelty and aesthetic psychology of foreign cultures, especially in the artistic style and aesthetic characteristics of religious buildings, commercial buildings, public buildings, and residential buildings, which are particularly prominent, responding to the co-existence of the styles of East and West and the fusion of culture and art.

Figure1: Schematic diagram of the evolution of the cultural integration perspective



2.2 Overview of modern Jingzhou historical buildings

Jingzhou is the birthplace of the Chu culture, the former capital of the State of Chu, and a famous city of the Three Kingdoms, with excellent architectural heritage of various types and periods, such as city defense buildings, palace buildings, mausoleum buildings, residential buildings, and guild buildings. Into the modern era, after the opening of the port of Jingzhou social and economic components and other aspects of great change, internal and external problems in China at the time emphasized "the country first" and other inherent national architectural style, called for foreign material civilization to carry forward the spirit of China's inherent integration of East and West architectural strengths ^[7]. In this period, "Chinese body used in the West", "Western body used in" in the building is particularly obvious. By analyzing and summarizing the modern Jingzhou historical buildings, there are six categories, namely, commercial buildings, religious buildings, public buildings, industrial buildings, residential buildings, guild buildings (Table 1).

Table1: Classification of recent Jingzhou historical buildings analysisseason

No	Building Type	Representative Examples	Current Status
①	Commercial Buildings	Tongzhen Silver Building "Juxingcheng" Bank Laotianbao Silver Building	Good integrity, historical and artistic value Destroyed "Destructive" preservation, unsatisfactory utilization

No	Building Type	Representative Examples	Current Status
②	Religious Buildings	South Gate Catholic Church	Good integrity, historical and artistic value
		South Gate Catholic Church (Old)	Dangerous structure, historical and artistic value
		Old Christian Church on Zhongshan Road	Unknown status
		North Gate Catholic Church	Demolished
③	Public Buildings	Shashi Zhongshan Road Post Office	Good integrity, historical and artistic value, still in use
		Shashi Customs Building	Partially rebuilt after fire damage; lacks integrity
④	Industrial Buildings	Shashi Packing Factory	Good integrity, historical and artistic value
		Shashi Textile Factory	Partially renovated and repurposed
⑤	Residential Buildings	Sanyi Street Modern Historic Buildings	Good integrity, incomplete conservation, historical value
		Shengli Street Modern Historic Buildings	Demolished
		No. 15 South Gate Street Residence	Good integrity, historical and artistic value
⑥	Guild Halls	Shanxi-Shaanxi Guild Hall	Burned down
		Huangzhou Guild Hall	Demolished

3.Cultural Convergence and Aesthetic Characteristics of Jingzhou Historical Architecture in Modern Times

The architectural art forms of modern Jingzhou historical buildings are diversified and integrated, reflecting the aesthetic value tendency with a certain rhythm formed by different time and space domains and different social groups in the actual social production and living practices. There are two main types of cultural and artistic fusion in modern Jingzhou historical buildings, one is the absorption of Western technology and decoration on the basis of traditional Chinese architecture as the main body, and the other is the absorption of traditional Chinese construction concepts, architectural layouts and decorative patterns, mainly based on Western architecture^[8]. Through the modern Jingzhou historical architecture cultural intermingling and artistic characterization, selected sample cases and field research for analysis, a total of three classifications are summarized (Table 2). The first is the architectural concept of “Chinese body and western use”, with “Chinese body” as the foundation to integrate foreign decorative elements, to adapt to the needs of the time, and to innovate the traditional Chinese architectural construction methods, the main representative building is the Tongzhen silver building and the No. 15 residential house on the South Gate Street of Jingzhou (Figure 2); The second is the architectural concept of “using western style in Chinese style”, which takes western architecture as the main design guideline and integrates traditional Chinese architectural decorative modeling, and the main representative buildings are the Catholic Church in Nanmen, Dongti Street (Figure3); the third is the architectural concept of “using western style in Chinese style” and “using western style in Chinese style”; the third is the architectural concept of “using western style in Chinese style” and “using western style in Chinese style”. The third is the system of continuous development and exploration of “Western style in Western style”, combining Chinese and Western styles, mixing Chinese and Western cultures, and exploring the development of ethnic architecture, the main representative building is the post office on Zhongshan Road in Shashi City. These cultural exchanges, collision and fusion of architectural products, has a very high artistic value and aesthetic value. These cultural and artistic fusion and aesthetic performance characteristics are mainly reflected in the architectural design concepts, architectural techniques, building materials, detailing practices, architectural decoration, etc., architectural detailing and decoration can be embodied in the roof, walls, beams and columns, doors and windows, carvings, etc. above.

Figure2: a Jingzhou Shashi Tongzhen Silver House b Jingzhou Nanmen Street No. 15 Residence



Figure3: Jingzhou South Gate Catholic Church



Table2: Classification of cultural intermingling and aesthetic characteristics of Jingzhou historical buildings in modern times

Construction Perspective	Aesthetic Characteristics	Representative Buildings	Specific Expressions
“Chinese Essence with Western Utility”	Sino-Western cultural fusion: Rooted in Chinese traditions, incorporating Western decorative elements, forming an eclectic style to meet contemporary needs.	Tongzhen Silver Building	Western-inspired façade with Art Deco elements. Hybrid blending of Chinese and foreign architectural details. Reflects social reform ideologies, revitalizing traditional Chinese architecture.
		South Gate Catholic Church	Simplified basilica layout. Localized adaptations: orientation, decorative motifs, construction details, and materials reflect cultural exchange.
“Western Framework with Chinese Adaptation”	Western-Chinese cultural fusion: Western architectural principles dominate, infused with traditional Chinese decorative motifs.	Shashi Customs Building	Colonial-style veranda architecture with simplified ornamentation. Incorporates traditional Chinese architectural techniques in details
Hybrid of Both Approaches	Sino-Western synthesis: Blending both cultures to explore a “national architectural style.”	Shashi Zhongshan Road Post Office	Peak of experimenting with “China’s inherent architectural forms”. Modern Western functional layout fused with traditional Chinese decorative details .

4. Decorative Art Characteristics of Modern Jingzhou Historical Buildings under Cultural Integration

Modern Jingzhou historical buildings can reflect the historical style and cultural characteristics, iconic and symbolic, record and carry the memory and emotion of local residents in a certain period of time, reflect the cultural exchange and mutual influence, and have a special commemorative significance or educational significance. The decorative art features of cultural integration of modern Jingzhou historical buildings are mainly manifested in the localization of architectural creation, diversification of architectural decoration, and eclecticism of architectural localization.

4.1 Building construction localization adaptation

4.1.1 Layout features

The Nanmen Catholic Church is located in a north-south orientation, with the south side as the main façade, contrasting with the brick and wooden houses of Jingzhou and the old city wall of the old Nanmen, but complementing each other. According to the Catholic tradition, the church is generally oriented east-west, and the west side is usually used as the main façade to ensure the needs of the liturgy, so it can be seen that the construction of this church was influenced by the traditional building methods of Jingzhou. The church belongs to the Basilica-style layout, with the main body of the building being rectangular in plan, the rows of columns dividing the plan into long spaces, a dome at the top, a nave in the center, and side porches on both sides. The whole is integrated with the local architecture to form a harmonious and integrated situation.

4.1.2 Elevation modeling features

The South Gate Catholic Church is a “Gothic” building, which usually has a soaring Gothic spire, pointed arches, helicoidal lines, and window panes with Biblical stories, as well as a majestic exterior and a vast interior. However, the whole building of the South Gate Catholic Church has been greatly simplified, without the complex forms of Western Catholic Church buildings, and the Gothic spire has been simplified into a bell tower. The façade modeling reliefs are also simplified and incorporate traditional Chinese tiles and auspicious cloud patterns (Figure 4). The windows and doors of the façade are arched structures, but the sense of hierarchy is compressed, and the rose windows are greatly simplified, with the forms borrowed from traditional Chinese door and window features.

Figure4: Southgate Catholic Church elevation modeling features



4.1.3 Architectural detailing and material construction

Nanmen Catholic Church is influenced by both Western religious culture and traditional Chinese architectural culture, and

there is a fusion of artistic features in architectural details and decorative elements, mainly reflected in the roof, doors and windows, carvings, interior decoration and material structure (Figure 5). Roofs, most of the roof forms of Jingzhou's modern historical buildings are sloped roofs, and the roof of the South Gate Catholic Church is a hard hilltop, or sloped roof, in the classification of traditional Chinese architectural roofs, which are suitable for the needs of Jingzhou's climate and easy to build. This shows that the Catholic Church was introduced to China and incorporated traditional Jingzhou residential architectural elements into the details of the building, harmonizing with the surrounding residential buildings and the ancient city walls. The windows and doors of the Catholic Church at the South Gate are rose windows, in line with "Gothic" architectural features, but the windows are reduced in size and simplified, and there are no tables of biblical stories on the windows. The pointed arches are simplified and replaced by wooden doors of traditional Chinese houses, decorated with traditional Chinese auspicious motifs. Material structure, Western church buildings are usually made of stone, supplemented by other materials, the South Gate Catholic Church is mainly a brick and wood structure. The rose window on the wall is made of wooden material to reduce the load bearing of the wall and also to reduce the self-weight, which is in line with the characteristics of Gothic architecture as well as the same material as the window of the traditional folk house in Jingzhou.

Figure5: Southgate Catholic Church Architectural Details and Material Structure



4.2 Diversified integration of architectural decoration

Decoration is an important part of the building, building decoration is generally reflected in the façade or components, whether it is in the Western architectural decorative style into the Chinese elements, or in the Chinese architectural decorative style into the Western features, basically take the eclectic style of the approach to the diversification of decorative elements into the background of the era, aesthetic tendencies, technological innovations, and the social outlook. Modern Jingzhou historical buildings with the Zhen silver building "foreign face" type of architectural decorative art is a typical representative of the integration of Chinese and Western. Not only in commercial buildings, but also in residential buildings, South Gate Street, No. 15 residential housing is also in the façade of the imitation of Western style, belonging to the traditional Jingzhou residents converted, the fusion of Chinese and Western decorative arts is perfectly presented.

4.2.1 Architectural detailing

The Tongzhen Silver Tower adopts a pagoda-style architectural pattern, and the Silver Tower as a whole has obvious Western

decorative elements, decorated with a large number of different columns, arches and scrolls, and other decorative forms used in Western classical architecture, as well as Chinese couplets, plaques, patterns and other decorative elements (Figure 6). This is a necessary process for Chinese and foreign architectural cultures to find a proper integration angle, and also reflects the acceptance and redesign of foreign architectural art and culture by the construction craftsmen at that time, which is more suitable for the needs of the times and aesthetic demands at that time. Columns, some of the columns of Tongzhen Silver Tower are the Corinthian columns of the three columns of ancient Greece, but they are obviously integrated with the characteristics of traditional Chinese architectural columns. The columns of Tongzhen Silver Tower are decorated on both sides of the door and support the triangular frieze, which no longer simply plays a load-bearing role, but is more of an artistic aesthetic and practical needs. Doors and windows of the Tongzhen Silver Mansion are decorated with arches and triangular friezes, and the mountain flowers are decorated with Western botanical patterns and traditional Chinese auspicious patterns. Carvings and patterns, with the Zhen Silver Tower building overall carvings and decorative patterns of the East and West, carvings are mainly in Western relief, patterns of Western and traditional Chinese decorative patterns. Couplets and plaques, plaques are an inevitable part of ancient Chinese architecture, mainly hung on the door screen as a decorative purpose, generally reflecting the name and nature of the building. Tong Zhen Silver House due to the type of commercial buildings and construction materials and other factors, the use of stone plaques and walls into a whole. The main door on the plaque engraved “with the Zhen” regular script characters, two to three floors between the plaque engraved “Zhejiang” two words clearly recognizable, the following three words have been blurred. The two plaques are surrounded by engraved plants, flowers, branches and grasses. There are three pairs of couplets in the building, and the couplets with the concept of doing business in good faith are written on the center pillar. The couplets on both sides of the main door are mainly store signboards, “Zhejiang Tongzhenlou Red Gold Shop”, which serves to maximize the purpose of advertising. There are also a pair of couplets on the outer most sides of the wall, depicting the business types of commercial silver building buildings.

Figure6: Architectural Details of Tongzhen Silver Building



4.2.2 Elevation Design and Construction Materials

Tong Zhen Silver Building building is three stories high with four friezes, the uppermost has a decorative hilltop, the main façade of the building is a symmetrical layout, the second to third floor of the middle columns are engraved on both ends of the honesty and integrity in business business business alliance as well as the center of the Chinese-style plaque. The upper part of the doors and windows of the first floor is of arched coupon structure, and the decorative patterns also show symmetry.

The wall columns on the façade cleverly offset the load on the side, and the overall building is similar to the traditional Chinese pagoda building, which is very characteristic. The main body of the building is made of reinforced concrete, the exterior walls are made of green bricks, the main street façade is made of Meiyu stone masonry and carvings, and the roof is flat. The building as a whole shows a baroque style and adopts a queer architectural form, with a clear hierarchy in the overall structure and exquisite materials, which meets the requirements of rational conception and visual aesthetics as a type of commercial building.

4.3 Localized eclectic presentation of the building

The most important thing about eclecticism is that it does not stick to the architectural characteristics of a certain era and does not focus on any one style, but integrates a variety of classical architectural forms in pursuit of novelty, which is also called “set of imitation”, which can be interpreted as a synthesis of styles from different eras and different sources^[10]. Against the background of changes in the Western architectural landscape and the awakening of nationalist consciousness, the first generation of Chinese builders used Western architectural research methods to study traditional Chinese architecture, exploring the eclectic architectural forms of modern Chinese nationalism. In modern Jingzhou architecture, Shashi Zhongshan Road Post Office was designed by Xi Fuquan, the first generation of Chinese architects. At that time, the overall design of the building was based on modernist concrete frame structure, basically conforming to the functionality and usage requirements of modern buildings in terms of space usage, adopting large-area windows for lighting, and adopting simplified classical Chinese architectural patterns in the façade, which belonged to the nationalist “eclectic” form of modern architecture. It belongs to the nationalistic “compromise” of modern architecture. As one of the outstanding representative buildings of the Republican period, Shashi Zhongshan Road Post Office is of great research and memorial value. The decoration of the façade has Chinese characteristics, such as the blocking columns of the street staircase, the holding drum stone, the base of the flagpole with auspicious cloud pattern, the roof with lotus pattern, and the architectural decorative components and line footings that reveal the details of traditional Chinese architecture everywhere.

Conclusion

The modern historical buildings in Jingzhou have unique artistic aesthetic characteristics of inclusiveness, diversity and eclecticism in the fusion of foreign and local cultures. The architecture of modern historical buildings in Jingzhou with the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures has an important value and practical significance for us to study the history, architectural art, and social culture at that time, and this process of generating buildings from contact, collision to fusion reflects the great inclusiveness of Chinese culture. However, in the investigation and research, we also found that part of the building protection is not ideal and other problems, respect and good treatment of old buildings in the city, preserving the city's historical and cultural memory is the responsibility of each of us. Nowadays, in the context of comprehensively advocating the strengthening of the protection of historical architectural heritage and the promotion of the great national spirit, we hope to make due contributions to the effective protection and rational utilization of Jingzhou's modern historical buildings.

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Conflict of Interests

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