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Continuity of Tradition: A Study on Qingyuan Confucian Temples^①

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Abstract

A Confucian temple is a significant type of cultural architecture in the traditional Chinese society. Taking the Confucian temples in Qingyuan County (including two Confucian Temples in Songyuan and Zhukou towns) as the research subject, the paper probes into the historical evolution of these temples and analyzes the characteristics, social values and continuation powers in all periods of Confucian Temples in Qingyuan by conducting studies on the historical records and field surveys from the perspective of architecture, history and sociology. In the imperial times, the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town characterized by the complex of temple and education was the cultural core of the county, meeting the regulations of general Confucian temples in China and maintaining its local features in location and functional settings. In contemporary times, the traditional educational function of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town vanished. However, with the Confucian Temple in Zhukou Town, the sacrificial function has seen continuity up to now which is mainly affected by educational institutions and bottom-up mass beliefs.

Keywords: Qingyuan Confucian Temples; Location; Complex of Temple and Education; Cultural Core; Mass Beliefs

1. Introduction

The Confucian temples are the temple-type architectural clusters built in commemoration of Confucius and for the later generations to offer sacrificial rites which were once served as local academies. Existing researches focus on a national level which are thus incomplete in the study of regional ones, especially lack of the research on Confucian temples in Qingyuan. Taking the Confucian Temples (a heritage passed down from Ming Dynasty in Songyuan Town (Figure 1) and a recently built traditional temple in Zhukou Town (Figure 2)) located in Qingyuan County, a mountain area of south Zhejiang Province as the research subject, the paper analyses the historical evolution, location, functional layout and the temples' relationship with the city by conducting studies on the historical records and field surveys from the perspective of architecture, history and sociology, having illustrated the characteristics, social values and continuation powers in all periods of Confucian Temples in Qingyuan. Moreover, the paper has instructive significance to the protection of Confucian temples in Qingyuan.

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2. Historical Evolution of Qingyuan Confucian Temples

The temple in Songyuan Town was first built in Dutian Village in the Southern Song Dynasty (in 1197 when the county was built) and destroyed in the war at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. In the 14th year of Hongwu of the Ming Dynasty (1381), the Temple moved to the East of the County Jurisdiction and was relocated in Dutian in the 2nd year of Tianshun (1458). Then it was relocated again to the East of the County Jurisdiction in the 1st year of Long Qing (1567). In the 3rd year of Emperor Chongzhen(1630), some of the facilities for sacrificial and educational functions of the temple were relocated outside the East Gate of the city. In the 31st year of Emperor Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty (1905), the county academy was halted when the Imperial Examinations were abolished. Since 1907, the Confucian temple had been used for the education of new academies and other educational institutions. During the Cultural Revolution, some of the sacrificial facilities in the Confucian temple were damaged. In around 1980, most of the Confucian temple was demolished with only the Dacheng Hall and part of the Eastern Side Hall preserved up to now. In 2001, the Confucian Temple in Zhukou Town was rebuilt spontaneously by the local folks. (See Table 1 for details)

Table 1. Table of Historical Evolution of Confucian Temples in Qingyuan.

Time	Location	Historical event	Construction Content	State
1197AD	Dutian Village	Establishment of Qingyuan County		Destroyed in Yuan Dynasty
1381AD	Eastern County Jurisdiction	New state standards for Confucian temples	The architectural cluster of the Confucian temple	Destroyed in Ming Dynasty
1458AD	Dutian Village			Teaching management facilities used till Republic of China
1567AD	Eastern County Jurisdiction			Used till Republic of China
1603AD	Outside the Northern Gate	—	Shooting Range	
1630AD			The educational and sacrificial facilities of the Confucian Temple	
1822AD			The educational facilities became the Songyuan Academy	
1907AD	Outside the Eastern Gate	Education reform	The educational facilities was transformed	The main hall and partial east side hall preserved until now
1966AD		Cultural Revolution	The sacrificial facilities was destroyed	
1980AD		Modern city construction	Most of the old buildings was demolished	
2001AD	Zhoukou Town	—	Confucian Temple monomer	In use

The historical evolution has shown that: (1) Confucian temples in Qingyuan were suspended in the late Yuan Dynasty, possibly related to the “Huang Hua Uprising” in which the county government offices and other buildings were burnt down when Zhenghe County, Fujian Province revolted against the Yuan Army’s invasion to Qingyuan County and were again suspended in modern times, related to the Cultural Revolution and urban construction; (2) In the 13th year of Hongwu (1380), Qingyuan was reinstated as a county. The Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town was rebuilt in the next year (1381) whose standards and level of construction were apparently affected by the two state standards for Confucian temples officially specified in Hongwu Years of the Ming Dynasty and Jiajing Years of the Qing Dynasty(Wang Guixiang.(2012)); (3) In all periods of the imperial era, the construction of Confucian Temples in Qingyuan were related to the releasing time of decrees of the state, indicating that the standards for the local Confucian temples were generally managed and controlled by the state(Wang Guixiang.(2012)); (4) In the late Qing Dynasty, the educational reform resulted in the termination of the educational function, sacrificial rites were yet continued and revived in recent years.

3. Location Selection of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town

The Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town has experienced five relocations in its history, mainly in four locations: Dutian Village, East of the County Jurisdiction , outside the Northern Gate and outside the Eastern

Gate of the city (See Table 1).

The purpose of choosing a location for the Confucian temple was to boost literature, which was considered in three factors: (1) The environment. Shen Weilong, the county magistrate in the Ming Dynasty chose the location for the academy based on “the utmost tranquility from a remote location away from business”(Pan Shaoyi.(1877)).Yong Rujian, the county magistrate in the Qianlong years of the Qing Dynasty praised the surrounding environment as “a truly inspirational scene” and “the ever-flourishing spirit and rhythm of the landscape of Songyuan all converging here” on the geomantic omen (Wu Lunzhang.(1832)). (2) The building system from top to bottom. At the beginning of the construction of the county, its overall layout shared common planning features for ordinary counties in China under which the Confucian temple was chosen and built. Chen Ze, the county magistrate, began constructing the county from 1546 when the Confucian temple was relocated to the east of County Jurisdiction (centre of the county) and stayed there for nearly 70 years(Pan Shaoyi.(1877)). (3) The relationship with the development of the county. The centre and boundaries kept changing during the process of city development. The entire Confucian Temple was moved from Dutian Village to the city centre (1567). From 1579 to the late Qing Dynasty, the population of the county had increased by almost four times (from twenty thousand to eighty thousand) when the urban area within the encircling city walls could not meet the need of the city development(Yu Xu.(1996)). It was not convenient to accommodate the entire Confucian temple within the city so only the educational administrative institution closely related to the county jurisdiction was kept within the city centre. The shooting range was relocated outside the Northern Gate (in 1603) in need of an open space while the main body of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town was relocated to the East Gate (in 1630)(Pan Shaoyi.(1877)), resulting in the contradiction that the Confucian Temple, as the cultural centre of the city, was distant from the geographic centre of the city.

4. Functional Layout of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in the Late Qing Dynasty

Based on *County Records of Qingyuan* by Pan Shaoyi.(1877),(hereinafter referred to as County Records), the Confucian temple in Songyuan Town consisted of three functions as the Confucianism Bureau (management), the shooting range (sporting ground) and ritual and educational facilities (main body, also called Xuegong) which were distributed in three locations of the city.Besides, Ming Shan, the county magistrate, made county academy (the major educational part of the Confucian temple) to the new Songyuan Academy in the 17th year of Jiaqing (1822)because the private school transformed to the official one (Wang Dezha.(1984)).(See Table 2)

Table 2.Functional Layout of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in the Late Qing Dynasty.

Function group	Location	Architecture or structure
Shooting Range	Outside the Northern Gate	Shooting Ground
The educational and sacrificial facilities	Outside the Eastern Gate	Maninsan Wall,Screen door,Harvest-governing Gate,Half-Circular Pond,Prestige Officials Temple,Local Sages Temple,Land Temple,Loyalty and Filial Piety Temple,Dacheng Gate,Dacheng Hall,Two side halls,Terrace,Sage-enlightening Temple,Minglun Hall,Cloud-ascending Bridge,Gate of Morality and Justice,Confucianism Gate,Archways
Teaching management facilities	Eastern County Jurisdiction	Education and Discipline House,Kuixing Building,Lecture and Guidance House, Temple of Chaste and Filial Piety,Sutra Shrine

Based on the painting *Xuegong* (literally “learning palace”)(Figure 3) and related descriptions annexed to *County Records*, field surveys of existing Dacheng Hall and part of the eastern side, the functional layout (Figure 5) of the main body of Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in late Qing Dynasty can be recovered.

The layout of the Confucian temple has shown that: (1) In terms of the architectural level, the Confucian temple in Songyuan in the late Qing Dynasty conformed to the architectural characteristics of county academies in a period when the Confucian system was fully developed(Wang Guixiang.(2012)), resulting in a complex of official sacrificial rites and education, which incorporates such functions of management, learning,

sacrificial rites, book collection, deity belief, sporting ground, and the conveyance of Confucian values and views. (2) In terms of location, during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the education administrative institution, the shooting range and the ritual-educational facilities of the temple were separated. The main body of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town was located outside the Eastern Gate of the ancient city. (3) In terms of spatial characteristics, the ritual and educational function had given rise to the structure of temple on the left and academy on the right, the ritual procedures and the indoor display that were extremely similar to those in many other regions, indicating that regions probably followed similar sacrificial and ritual routines despite of their different architectural scales. Besides, as the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town was rather small, many memorial archways and gates were constructed to express the intentions of Confucian culture and enhance the spatial hierarchy, known as an architectural means to tackle the problem that the limited architectural scale of the Confucian temple when first built made it difficult for the temple to fully express the cultural connotations that a building like this should represent. (4) In terms of the functional development, the academy education had been gradually officialized ever since the Ming Dynasty when Songyuan Academy became a representative official academy in the Qingyuan area in Jiaqing years.

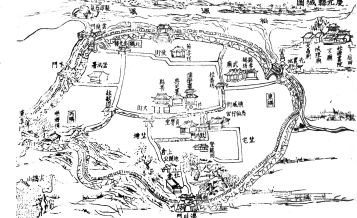
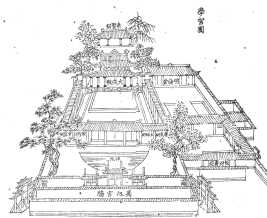


Fig.1.Dacheng Hall of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in Present Days.

Fig.2.Confucian Temple in Zhukou Town.

Fig.3.Xuegong (Learning Palace)Figure.

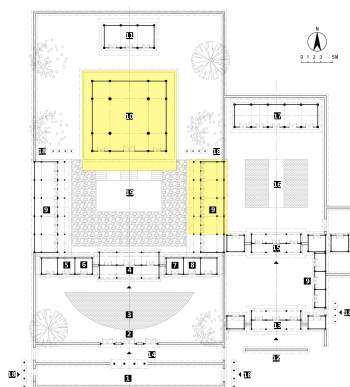
Fig.4.Qingyuan County (Late Qing Dynasty).

5. Confucian Temples and Qingyuan Society

Outside the Eastern Gate, a centralized cultural and educational area emerged surrounding the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town which was built first. Based on the *County Records*, around the Confucian temple were the Yuying Studio (built in 1664), Duifeng Academy (built in 1742), the Songyuan Academy and other schools. In ancient Fengshui, it was believed that the Confucian temple would build the best educational atmosphere. As recorded in *Records of the Steles Donated to the Construction of Danshuixue Confucian Temple* by Wu Xingcheng.(1871), “the Fengshui of the Confucian temple dictates the flourishing or deteriorating of the literary atmosphere. Without the gathering of the powerful literary reputation and the favour from the splendid mountains and rivers, a place would not be deemed auspicious.” The Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and its subordinate architectural complex as well as and the surrounding natural environment had given rise to the cultural and educational area, reflecting the social and cultural theme of honouring Confucianism and education.

In a city, a building system related to the Confucian culture always takes the Confucian temple as its core. A read-through to the types of public building (before 1877) in the *County Records* has shown that the public buildings and structures in the urban area that conveyed the education and culture of Confucianism mainly included: the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town, archways, temples and monasteries, schools and others. Statistics show that there were nearly 30 archways and buildings in the urban area, 22 of which were clearly related to the Confucian culture. There were 15 temples and monasteries in the city, with one specifically for praying for good scholarly performance. There were totally seven schools including four academies (including Songyuan Academy) and three community schools .(See Figure 6)

According to *County Record*, the types of buildings have shown that the knowledge of Confucianism was taught through schools such as the academies and community schools. A sacrificial rite was offered to Confucius in Xuegong and the government designated dedicated officials and institutions in the centre of the county to manage Xuegong; Government and local people transmitted its values through establishing archways and memorial temples of famous figures; Students offered sacrificial rites to Gods to boost their confidence in learning; Education fields were the major financial source for the county education. It can be seen that the embodiment of Confucianism in architecture was that the building system with the Confucian temple as its core was everywhere to be seen in the whole city, supported by the national education system, the sacrificial rite system for Confucius, the education fields system and the social and cultural order with the Confucian values and views at its core.



- LEGEND**
- Status Remains
 - Main Hall
 - Harvest-governing Gate
 - Hall-Circular Pond
 - Dacheng Gate
 - Prestige Officials Temple
 - Local Sages Temple
 - Land Temple
 - Loyalty and Filial Piety Temple
 - Side Hall
 - Ancestral Master Hall (Dacheng Hall)
 - Sage-enlightening Temple
 - Split Screen
 - Confucianism Gate
 - Screen Door
 - Gate of Morality and Justice
 - Cloud-ascending Bridge
 - Mingjun Hall
 - Archway
 - Terrace

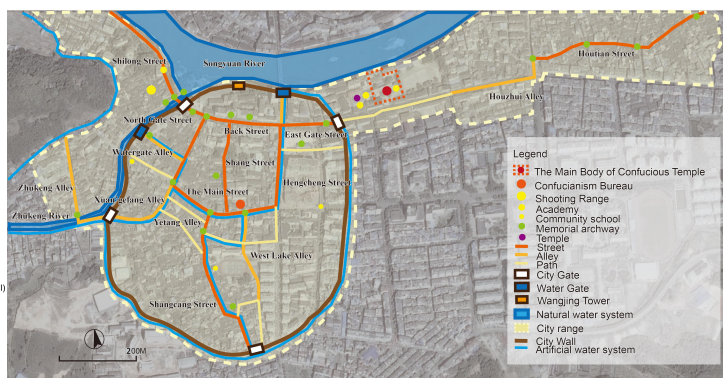


Fig.5.Recovered Functional Layout of Xuegong in the Late Qing Dynasty.

Fig.6.Distribution Map of the Cultural and Educational System in late Qing Dynasty.

After the separation of the temple and the education resulting from the abolition of the imperial examinations by the Qing Government in 1901, the new academies borrowed or renovated some of the educational facilities of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town for their educational purpose while the sacrificial function failed to stand its ground due to negligence of management. However, for the scholars who were nurtured by Confucianism, the Confucian temple remained a predominant sanctuary to them. The example from Wu Fuze.(2010) shows that Kong Fanhao, a sacrificial official in the Period of the Republic of China, escorted the sacred statue of the Couple of Confucius to Qingyuan County so as to escape the battling against the invading Japanese army in 1940 and held a sacrificial rite to Confucius next year in the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town.

During the Cultural Revolution, the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town suffered a man-made damage. After the Culture Revolution, the economy was stagnant and everything awaited revitalisation when the population of the whole county (in 1977) doubled that in the late Qing Dynasty (Yu Xu.(1996)). Faced with another shortage of usable lands within the county surrounded with mountains, the fastest and most direct way was adopted to build new cities, namely to demolish the old buildings and build new buildings with new functions on the original sites to satisfy the material needs arisen from the livelihood of the contemporary citizens. In such a social context, most buildings of the Confucian temple were entirely demolished around 1980.

Ever since 2000, the city has been expanding by exploiting mountains and lands and the pressure of material livelihood of the people has been relieved. The safeguarding, repairing and sacrifice of the Confucian Temple in Qingyuan has been gradually revived. In terms of the government, the Qingyuan Cultural Relics

Bureau conducted surveying, mapping and repairing on the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town in 2009. The Qingyuan Construction Bureau is also preparing for the safeguarding, managing and development planning for the Confucian temple and its surrounding area in 2017. In terms of folks, they spontaneously initiated the building of Confucian Temple in Zhukou Town 20km away from the city centre. The formality of the buildings for the Confucian Temple was a traditional courtyard house with a wooden structure and clay walls. Inside the building there was a main hall and a courtyard with a statue of Confucius in the centre of the hall, a statue of Hua Tuo and another one of Zhuge Liang on each side of the hall. The Confucian Temple shared a similar architectural space and function to the Guanyin Temple nearby rebuilt in 1989. However, it was different from traditional Confucian temples, related to the confusion of building formalities resulted from the halt of the sacrificial system during the Cultural Revolution. It has met the demands of the contemporary people so most citizens will go there to burn the incense and pray for blessings before their children take important exams, as a continuity to the sacrificial function of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town.

6. Conclusion

The historical evolution has shown that although the sacrificial mechanism was once suspended because of wars, economic declines or national incidents, the sacrifice and construction of Confucian temples yet started the development when all influencing factors vanished; The location selection, scale and function of Confucian temples in Qingyuan have shown that the Confucian temple in Songyuan Town met the regulations of general Confucian temples in China. Meanwhile, it was individually characterized by separated functional groups, the main body far from the city center, symbolic architectural techniques for major construction parts and official academies because it was influenced by regional natural environment, urban development and cultural demand.

Social values of Confucian temples in Qingyuan have shown that the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town itself was a complex of temple and education; The Confucian Temple and its subordinate architectural complex and natural environment had given rise to the cultural and educational area; Besides, a social culture and education system had been formed with the Confucian temple as the core and based on its relationship with other important cultural buildings or structures. In modern times, the traditional educational function of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town vanished. The new education continued to use the buildings of the Confucian Temple to implement education leading to the contemporary architectural integration of the Confucian temple and the regional schools. In contemporary times, with the Confucian Temple in Zhukou Town, the sacrificial function has seen continuity up to now. In conclusion, in the imperial times, the continuity of the Confucian Temple in Songyuan Town had fully expressed the traditional social and cultural theme of honoring Confucianism and respecting education which was affected by national sacrificial, economic and educational systems as well as social values of the Confucian culture. In contemporary times, the continuity of the Confucian Temple is mainly affected by bottom-up mass beliefs and educational institutions. Such a continuity is powered by the inherent recognition of Confucian culture by the local people.

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