

ICOA1894: THE PARADISE OF GODS AND MEN

Subtheme 02: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation

Session 3: Recreating Ideas of Memory

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Abstract: The Mountain Resort of palaces and gardens at Chengde with its Outlying Temples is the largest existing imperial palace-garden and temple complex in China, which was built between 1703 and 1792 in Chengde of Hebei Province.

By integrating elements of Han, Mongolian and Tibetan architectural art and culture the Outlying Temples crystallize the achievements of cultural exchanges and integration among different ethnic groups in the course of development of Chinese architecture. Important historical events of the Qing dynasty took place here, and the historical sites and objects have witnessed the consolidation and development of China as a unitary multi-ethnic state.

The Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples constitute a giant Mandala pattern, designed by Emperor Qianlong in Qing dynasty. It is not only the paradise of Tibetan Buddhism Sumeru, but also the democratic world of the various folk gods believed by the ethnic minorities; It is not only the political strategy of the stability of the frontier minority nationalities, but also the positive practice of the political ideals of the emperors and the people; It is not only a reflection of human understanding of the universe, but also a longing for a harmonious natural environment; It not only through the urban planning and design to establish a material space order, but also through the psychological guiding role at the same time to establish a human spiritual space.

Key words: *cultural heritage, reconciliation, imperial palace-garden*

1. Background

For thousands of years, the economic conditions and social system of China's various ethnic groups have been very different, resulting in the war of the frontier minority areas. In a multi-ethnic country, it is possible to maintain the unity of all ethnic groups by acknowledging this difference and making the corresponding system. Before the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), the court had always treated the border issues in the manner of the tributary, with little effect. To the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Kangxi (r.1661-1722) put forward effective policy of “temper justice with mercy”, which cannot abandon military conquest, also admitted that differences in the social system, learn minority culture, respect minority beliefs. The implementation of this policy led to more than two hundred years of peace in the Qing Dynasty, as well as the Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples that witnessed this process of national reconciliation.

2. The establishment of the Chengde Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples

2.1 The Mountain Resort

Chengde area is located in the middle area between farming area and nomadic area, which has warfare frequently since ancient times¹. Since the founding of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), China was further consolidated as a unified, multi-ethnic country, known as the "Jehol" of Chengde, with its important geographical location, unique mountains and rivers, climate, and other natural conditions won the second generation of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Kangxi's attention.

Because of China's ethnic minorities in northern China, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Mongolia, and northeastern provinces, there were a lot of people who came into Beijing for Emperor became smallpox victims due to climate discomfort².Therefore, in 1703, Emperor Kangxi decided to build palaces and affiliated gardens in Chengde where is the intersection area among Beijing, Inner Mongolia, and Liaoning. The Mountain Resort has become a large-scale imperial garden with the excellent incorporation of various styles throughout the country, though eighty-nine years construction presided by the emperor Kangxi and Qianlong.

After the completion of the Mountain Resort in forty-two years of the reign of Qing emperor Kangxi, seven emperors out of the ten emperors of the Qing Dynasty are in residence at here five months every year for handling government affairs and meeting with minority leaders, religious leaders, and foreign envoys. A series of diplomatic relations with the frontier minority in the imperial garden brought an opportunity for reconciliation.

2.2 Eight outer Temples

¹Shen, H. and Guozhi,L. (2003). *Qin Ding ReheZhi*. Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Press. Vol.1. p.5-6

²Shen, H. and Guozhi,L. (2003). *Qin Ding ReheZhi*. Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Press. Vol.4. p.219

It's not easy to extinguish the war that lasts for thousands of years, Emperor Kangxi knows peaceful dialogue without giving up force produce effect, but the force does not solve the problem, the ultimate solution is empathy, respect, and consensus. Therefore, Kangxi and Qian Long, through the construction of temples to recognize social system differences between each other, respect ethnic minority beliefs, learn from the ethnic minority culture, in order to get reconciliation.

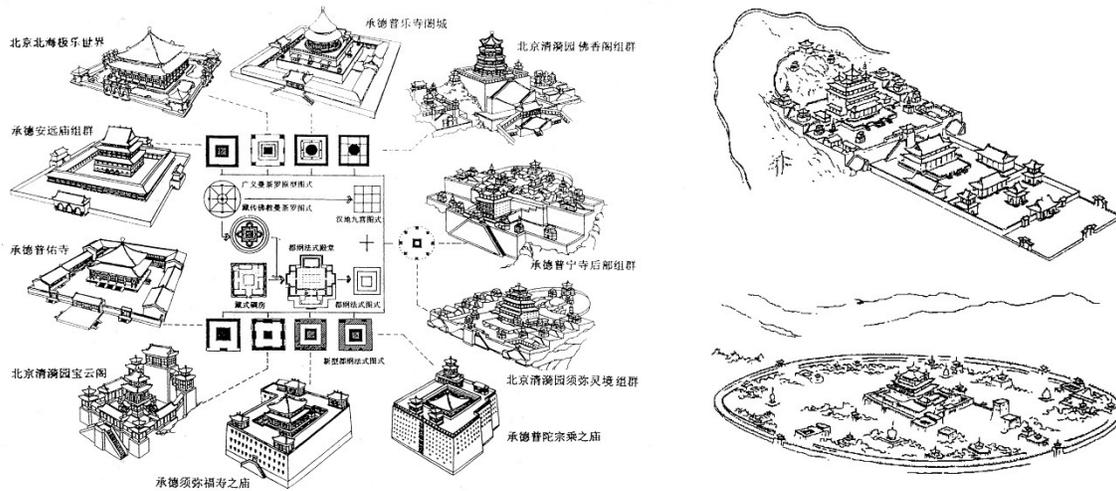


Fig.1 – Mandala Patterns of Temples (By WU Xiaomin). Fig.2– Pu Ning Si and Sameye Monastery (By WU Xiaomin).

In the 52nd year of the Kangxi reign(1755), after the Qing government put down the splittist rebellion of Galdan Department of Junggar tribe, the first temple-- Pu Ren Si (the Temple of Universal Benevolence) was built by the tribes of Mongolian to congratulate the Emperor Kangxi's birthday. Since then, the Qianlong ordered to build Pu Ning Si (Temple of Universal Peace) on the model of the Sameye Monastery in Tibet in commemorating the victory of pacifying the rebellion of Dawazi tribe; In Ili rebellion, Gulzha temple was destroyed, Emperor Qianlong ordered to build An Yuan Temple (Temple of Appeasing the Borders) by imitation of Ili Gulzha Temple, Bodhisattva Tara(Green) in An Yuan Temple is helping eliminate evil give people happiness of gods, Xinjiang people are here to pilgrimage ever since.

After that, the north-western minority tribes became more and more stable and then built the temple of Pu Le Si (Temple of Universal Happiness). The temple of Potaraka Doctrine is modelled after the Potala Palace in Lhasa, while Xu Mi Fu ShouZhi Miao (Temple of Sumeru Happiness and Longevity) was built in the form of the Trashilumpo Temple in Xigaze to welcome Panchen VI to Chengde. A series of twelve grand imperial temples were built on the northeast of the Mountain Resort. They integrate the architectural elements of Han, Mongolian, Tibetan and other ethnic groups, and the typical Tibetan Buddhist Mandala plane layout and the human temple seven-hall style layout are also skilfully integrated.



Fig.3– Pu Ren Si (The Mountain Resort Museum). Fig.4– An Yuan Miao (The Mountain Resort Museum).

2.3 Folk temples

Since the beginning of the building the Mountain Resort by Kangxi to completing the construction of the twelve Tibetan style temples by Qianlong in the northeast of the garden, Emperor Qianlong also built a large number of Chinese temples, Taoist temples, and folk gods and other religious sites, and ordered the repair of the former dynasty folk temple. During the Republic of China, some of the data showed that there were more than one hundred and thirty temples in the Chengde area, except for the imperial temples. This respect and advocate the practice of multi-god worship, not only to balance the dominant position of the Huang Jiao, but also to promote the integration of all ethnic groups, and achieved the harmony between the gods and the people.



Fig.5 – The Mountain Resort with its Outlying Temples (Chengde, China. National Art Gallery of the United States.)

3. The Construction of Mandala Patterns

The Mandala is the concept of an abstract place in the religious theology about the most basic spatial composition of the universe, and its core is centred and enclosed. It has a symbolic and guiding role, as the book "Golden Flower's Secret" co-published by psychologists Jung and Richard Willheim in 1929, said "The Mandala is the centre. It is the representative of all the roads that are leading to this centre, leading to the path of self – consciousness".

According to the prototype of Mandala, the centre represents the self-consciousness, the circle is the universe (sky), the square is the perception of the direction (the ground), the triangle represents the protection (stability) and the cross is the communication and connection. Then the merger is between heaven and earth in the universe (also their own inner world) to establish a stable sense of order, in the protected (circle) environment with the outside world to communicate. Space structure said the Mountain Resort is the centre (·), and the surrounding temples on the mountain to form a circular (○), wrapped in the centre of the space. The road leading to the Mountain Resort is both the road to the centre of the universe and the road leading to the self-consciousness.

4. Conclusions

Chengde, a city that has been valued for its strategic importance, has grown up because of a garden, has become peaceful because of hundreds of temples. Political increasingly stable, the religious identity of the Northwest minority gradually strengthened, the scale of the magnificent decorative Tibetan temple constantly built in the Chengde undulating hills, under such a trend Chengde turned into a religious sacred place, also became another political centre in the Qing Dynasty, and a Mandala space pattern closely integrated by religious ideology and political implication in the architectural layout design. Every section of the history here tells the role of economic, cultural, ideological and emotional communication and integration between the various ethnic groups is cannot replace by any military means, each building has witnessed the people of all ethnic groups through mutual respect to achieve reconciliation.

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