

The Secret Backdrop of Chinese Cultural Heritage Sites ---- A Case of Ancient Building Complexes on Wudang Mountain

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Abstract. It's interesting that Chinese experts always forgot submitting their World Heritage Applications with the type of Cultural Landscape; yet, traditionally, Chinese selected sites for structures of all kinds basing on an organic view of the cosmos, which binds individuals, families and society to the past, present and future, and links the physical aspects and the spiritual together. The World Heritage site, Ancient Building Complexes on Wudang Mountain served as an example to open out this secret background of Chinese cultural heritage sites. These architectural groups mainly consist of the royal temples and palaces built in 15th century. Being one of the most important monuments in China, their principle planning is not only precise in tangible way, such as the clear distinction between the major and minor parts, but also in its intangible way: Geomancy, Religious belief and historic period located the central place during the whole process of the construction.

The antique architecture group of Wudang Mountain is a huge architecture group that is representative of the royal temples and palaces built in the beginning of Ming Dynasty. The overall planning is strict with clear difference between the major and the minor parts and a proper order between the large and small parts. The architecture shows a careful selection on the environment and the shape of mountains and terrain. It attached importance to the collection of Qi and wind and a harmonious relationship with nature. This is the only one of the type in the Taoist architecture of China.

The Historical Origin of the Antique Architecture Groups on Wudang Mountain

Wudang Mountain, also named Taihe Mountain, is located in Danjiangkou City of Hubei Province. It is a tourist site of national level.

The architecture group of Wudang Mountain was first built during Zhenguan Reign of Tang Dynasty (627-649) when Tang Taizong demanded to

build Wulong Ancestral Temple. In the second year of Shangyuan (761), at the invitation of Huizong, a monk in Wudang Mountain, Tang Suzong demanded the construction of four temples. In the third year of Qianning (896), the "New Temple of Almighty Master" was built.

In the second year of Tianxi (1018), Song Dynasty, Song Zhenzong made an imperial decree to promote Wulong Ancestral Temple into Wulong Temple. In the year of Xuanhe, Song huizong believed in Taoism and demanded to build Zixiao Palace in Zhanqi Peak.

In the 15th year of Yuan Dynasty (1278), Hubilie confer a title on Zhang Liusun of "Jiangnan Taoist Tidian" and promoted Wulong Ancestral Temple into Wulong Temple. In the first year of Huangqing (1312), Yuan Dynasty, because of a Wuang Taoist Zhang Shouqing was successful in praying for rain, the grand princess financed Zhang Shouqing to build Tianyi Zhenqing Temple. Until now, the architecture of Wudang have made a quite big group.

In the beginning of Ming Dynasty, the Taoist architecture in Wudang Mountain has obtained unprecedented development. The whole construction could be roughly divided into 3 steps, namely the preparation, major construction project and the complementary project. After Jiajing, due to the economic recession, Ming Dynasty never had the capacity to expand the palaces and temples on Wudang Mountain. In Qing Dynasty, the architecture in Wudang Mountain was in a recessed state. In late Qing Dynasty, due to the social turmoil and natural and artificial damage, it became irreparable.

When the Peoples Republic of China was founded. It took a series of measures to protect the antique architecture groups in Wudang Mountain.

The Major Architecture in Wudang Mountain

The Ming architecture in Wudang Mountain includes 33 architecture groups: 8 palaces, 9 temples, 36 nunneries, and 72 rock temples, etc. These architecture groups have extended from Junzhou to Tiazhu Peak, scattering among the mountains with coverage of 800 li. The architecture groups are connected to each other by means of magical paths. Rarely seen in the history, it is the wonder in the architecture history of man.

The 8 palaces: They are Jinle Palace, Yingen Palace, Yunzhen Palace, Yuxu Palace, Zixiao Palace, Wulong Palace, Nanyan Palace and Taihe Palace. There are 2 palaces outside the mountain, 2 among the mountains and 4 on the mountains.

The palace construction stresses the "axis of royal power" in terms of layout. The layout shows very strong sense of rhythm and various functions; in other words, they are places to be viewed, to be pondered about, to carry out activities in and to reside in.

Tourists will feel the god has arranged the religious activities and taken charge of the environment, hence the direct feeling about the huge space will be transferred into some mysterious, inspirational and enlightened.

The 9 Temples: The 9 temples in Wudang Mountain are Tianxuan Temple, located on Laojun Rock, Yuanhe Temple, located on the western slope of

Phoenix Mountain, Fuzhen Temple, located on the prince slope of Shizifeng Mountain, Huilong Temple, located on Haohan Slope, Renwei Temple, located on Wulong Xianglu Peak, Weilie Temple, located on the eastern Slope of Zixiao Peak, Baxian Temple, located under the Prince Rock, Longquan Temple, located on the south of Tianjin Bridge of Jiudu Creek, and Taichang Temple, located on the northwest of Zhanqi Peak.

The temple is an architecture group only next to palace among the antique architecture groups in Wudang Mountain. The largest temples of the nine are Yuanhe Temple and Fuzhen Temple, which is decided by the religious functions.

The 36 Nunneries: The nunnery is a Taoist architecture just below the temple. There are a lot of nunneries in Wudang Mountain. These nunneries were mostly built at the foot of the mountain. The construction funds came from various sources, namely donation, royal financing, reconstruction, expansion, etc.

There are 36 of them that have been enlisted, which is probably because of the psychology of Chinese people in pursuit of auspiciousness. The multiple of 9 is an auspicious number.

The 72 Rock Temples: The rock in Wudang Mountain is medium acid volcano rock, developed out of geological faults, and the rocks form numerous steep peaks. The Taoist named them 72 peaks and 36 rock temples out of the wish for auspiciousness.

Because it is very cold in the deep mountains and locks effective reservation, the rock temples are seriously damaged, among the 72 rock temples, only 1/3 exists today.

For the antique architecture groups of Wudang Mountain, besides the 8 palaces, 9 temples, 36 nunneries, and 72 rock temples, there are still large number of god temples, towers, cottages, pavilions, archways and bridges.

The Artistic Features of the Architecture in Wudang Mountain

The whole planning was divided into 3 parts: "earth", "immortal mountain" and "heaven".

The first place is "earth". At the first in the sequence of the overall planning, the purpose of this space was to stimulate and trigger man's tranquil idea of eluding the word that the religion promoted, so as to create a psychological field that is different from the exterior world and the Taoist space concept.

The second place is "Immortal Mountain". The form of this space of penetrating. Architecture, environment and immortal tales were combined into a continuous space that develops from the earthy realm to a visionary realm, so as to stimulate man's worship for god and denial of his own existence.

The third place is "heaven". The form of this space not only reproduces the power of the heaven and god in the 15 towers of Yijing, but also reflects the grandness of the prince reigning the world. Because the architecture was located in dangerous parts of the mountain, and the natural mountains all have a majestic beauty, the architecture and the environment elements combine to make a space that bears a strong beauty of form.

In the enormous space of the 800 li Wudang Mountain, directed by Tianzhu Peak, going southeast along the spine of the mountain, which is the axis

of the mountain, various palaces, temples, nunneries and halls extend in accordance with a sequence and rank classification. It reproduces a magical world from earth to heaven. In terms of time and space, and physical and spiritual sense, the unreal god and the earthly emperor have been combined, which is undoubtedly an innovative move.

Wudang Mountain Taoist architecture cannot only symbolize the Temple of emperors, but also unique like mountains and pavilions in the immortal land. It presents an unprecedented continuous space, in which architecture and environment are closely related and supplemented each other.

Considering the existing architecture of Wudang Mountain and its natural surroundings, the appearance of the remote mountains and rivers have been taken into consideration; for the near ones, the quality has been the consideration. The temples were built in an appropriate position. They not only show precise and smart sense of measurement, but also artistic handling techniques of the space. It also shows an acquiescent and magical beauty. With careful analysis, it's not hard to see that the architecture selection has been compared and examined in terms of Fengshui before coming to a final decision, which exactly conforms to the theory of "tendency is the feature when it's a thousand Chi away, the shape is the feature when it's a hundred Chi away, the shape stops when there is the tendency, that's how Qi comes to the complete."

"Backing Yin and facing Yang and backing the mountain and facing the water" is the basic theory of the Fengshui concept. Dragon, sand, hole and water are the more primary conditions for the selection of a site. However, the leading, entwisting, gathering and recycling of "Qi is the essence of Fengshui. In order to meet these requirements, Fengshui experts proposed three ways according to the geological environment of Wudang Mountain: site reselection, adjustment and reconstruction and limitation rectification.

The Taoist architecture in Wudang Mountain has mingled the preaching of Zhenwu's practicing in the overall layout planning. It stresses the relationship between the real and the unreal regarding the site selection and shape of architecture. The mountain and land shape were closely related, and immortal palaces were built that have an immediate relationship with the gods. In order to stress that give prominence to gods and immortals, the architecture and the environment formed an integrated unity. The natural features of land were taken into consideration. It not only purposely created an unreal sense by conforming to the running of the mountain in terms of the greater environment, the treatment of the parts also took artistic advantage of the natural features: no mountain rock or stone was changed. The spacing is appropriate and the height varies properly. The sense of real was stressed, which not only highlighted its own features, but also reflected the interior charm. It formed an architecture combination form that is primarily tranquil, and showed a creation rule that takes artistic advantage of natural features.

Conclusion

Wudang Mountain has a complicated terrain. The site selection of architecture, restricted by environment and Fengshui, shows a strong subjective view. At the

same time, influenced by the philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi, the architecture layout broke out the abstract concept and the ideal of complete balance of Confucianism.

It was designed in combination with the lines and the natural environment. The rhythm of each part conforms to the overall rhythm of the whole mountain. It has both rich verity and a strong sense of unity.

The independent architecture pursues coordination with the environment, which not only has strong regional feature, but also shows different styles and forms. Some forms, in combination with the terrain features, provided the functions necessary to the architecture. It's of important research value.

These architectural groups in Wudang Mountain mainly consist of the royal temples and palaces built in 15th century. Being one of the most important monuments in China, their principle planning is not only precise in tangible way, such as the clear distinction between the major and minor parts, but also in its intangible way: Geomancy, Religious belief and historic period located the central place during the whole process of the construction.

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