Chinese Etiquette Culture in the Ancient Pingyao City

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Abstract: The organization and layout of the ancient Pingyao city are reviewed from the aspect of Chinese etiquette culture. The conclusion is that the city scale, city wall height and road width of the ancient Pingyao city were constructed by strictly complying with the principle of "three Li, three Zhi, three Gui (Li, Zhi and Gui are measurement units of ancient China)" respectively. In addition, the space of the old city layout, public buildings and dwelling courtyards were also deeply influenced by the etiquette culture. The Chinese etiquette culture and ideology has been complied with throughout the space layout design and the construction of the city, reflecting a theme of "five positions and four directions", "making the center outstanding", "strengthening the main axis", and "facing south as honor in the city's space organization and representation", which can be seen as a live fossil representing the influences of Chinese Etiquette Culture on city constructions in ancient China.

Keywords: Etiquette, Ancient Pingyao City, Space Organization and Representation

1. Introduction

Pingyao is one of the few ancient cities in China, which has best preserved its unique original city layout design and state of constructions. It does not only exhibit the common characteristics of the county-level city planning in ancient China, also embodies the core ideology of China etiquette culture. This culture has made great impact on the daily lives of all social classes at that time as well as the dynamic process of China’s ancient city planning theories. The research on the embodiment of the Chinese etiquette culture exhibited in the space organization of the ancient Pingyao city will lead to further comprehension on the dominant theory of city planning in ancient China.

The existing researches mainly focused on "the historical and cultural aspects of the ancient city", studies on the status quo of the city", and the protection and exploration of the ancient heritage", etc., among which Xiaoxie ZHENG, Kun SONG and Yukun ZHANG investigated the status quo of some historical heritage, including the space layout of public buildings and dwelling courtyard. Huaizhi LU and Hiroko TAMURA carried out their research on the overall layout of the ancient city, as well as the organization of streets and alleys, and the construction characteristics of the residential courtyards from the aspect of geomantic omen culture. However research of the influenceable culture on the space layout of Pingyao city was only from Chinese ancient geomantic omen culture. This article will try to explain the impact of the Chinese etiquette culture on the construction scale of the ancient Pingyao city in Ming and Qing Dynasties, as well as on the space layout of the overall city, public constructions and civil courtyards in the ancient Pingyao city.

2. Methods

Initially from 15th to 28th August in 2001, books and photos related with the appearance of the alleys and streets in ancient Pingyao city were collected and classified. In the period from 7th to 16th February in 2005, a field course investigation and measurement was carried out. Ten civil courtyards, the width and conditions of main streets and alleys, Civil Temple, City God Temple, Wu Temple and other public constructions were measured during this time. It was carried out on Fanjiachai No. 2, Shitoupo No.25, Dong’anxiang No.4 of usual types, Zhongshaxiangjie No. 56, Renjiyie No.37, Nanjie No. 8 of series type, Zhongshaixiangjie No. 107, Fanjiachai No.5 of parallel connection type, Zhongshuyuanjie No.11 and Huluxiangjie No.17 of complex form. The measurement included the area of courtyards occupation, inside constructions, gardens, vacancies, as well as the investigation of decorative characters on walls, bricks and poles.

In addition, as to the literature investigation, the research mainly referred to The Ancient Pingyao City and Civil Residence (Kun SONG 2000), Pingyao County Annals (Fade ZHANG et al 1999), and Pingyao summary (Zhongxin SHI 2000), as well as other reference papers published in professional works, journals and magazines from 1995 to 2005 such as A Survey of Shanxi Pingyao (Xiaoxie ZHENG 1996), The Research on Traditional Pattern of Ancient Pingyao City (Jingsheng LI 2000), Geomantic Omen and Architectural — Take the Example of Pingyao Ancient Town (Huaizhi LU 2004).

At last it concluded the representative characters which can be shown in Figure-3. It reflected the common representative characters influenced by the etiquette culture, by reviewing
space organization of overall city, public constructions and civil dwelling courtyards.

3. The Ancient Pingyao City Overview and Historical Evolution

The ancient Pingyao city is located in Pingyao County, in the middle of Shanxi province (Figure-1). It was first set up in the West Zhou Dynasty (827~782 B.C.). This area belonged to the Jin Kingdom in the Spring and Autumn Period (770~476 B.C.) and to the Zhao Kingdom in the Warring States Period (475~221 B.C.). The name was called Zhongdu or Jingling in the West Han Dynasty, and changed to Pingyao in the North Wei Dynasty. It is still utilized today. At the early stage of its construction, the county centralized on the local Yamen (the government office in feudal China), resembling a “T”-shaped structure. The scale of the old city was small, only about 0.5 km², surrounded by walls built with the earth by tamping.

In Yuan Dynasty (Figure-2 Location Drawing in Yuan Dynasty), the city walls in directions of the east, the north and the west were linear and in the south were curvy. There are 6 city gates totally among which two gates are in the east-west directions separately and one in the north-south direction. The main street traffic system of the ancient city appears in “3” shape, while the vertical axis lies in Nanda Street, and thus the whole city appears symmetrically in the space layout.

In the Hongwu 3rd year of the Ming Dynasty (1370), the city walls were expanded and rebuilt for the military defense purpose. Since then Nanda Street was the axis, accompanying with the City God Temple, Civil Temple and Jifu Temple lined symmetrically. (City God Temple, Civil Temple and Jifu Temple situated symmetrically along the ancient city’s axis-Nanda Street.) However half of the city was still vacant or for farming use, so the architecture density was low.

During the reign of Jiaying-Daquang of the Qing Dynasty, Pingyao became the financial center of China. Most of the dwelling houses and commercial buildings that are still in existence today were built during that time. Since then, the space layout of the ancient city gradually developed and the construction of the inner city summarized its historical scale. In the period of Ming & Qing Dynasties, the wall had been reconstructed and repaired for 26 times, ten of which in the Ming Dynasty, focused on the renewal of city walls and watchtowers. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the city’s construction slowed down and its space layout design was basically finalized.

The space layout of Ancient Pingyao City was neat, tidy and integrated: along the axis of Nanda Street and centered around Jinjing Mansion, four main streets, eight back streets and seventy two tortuous alleys weaved into a street
network of the ancient city. The four main streets represented the shape of “E” with three streets entrenched east-west (from south to north are Dongnanmenmen street and Xinanmenmen street, the street of City God Temple and Yamen Street, and Dongdi Street and Xida Street respectively) and the axis street of Nanda Street in south-north direction. Seven of the eight back streets (Beida, Zhenwu, Zhanmadao, Shaixiang, Zhaobinian, Xindao, Leijiaoyuan Streets) are in the south-north direction, and Guandimiao Street, in the north of the city, is in east-west direction. Important etiquette buildings, such as Civil Temple, City God Temple and Qingxu Taoism Temple are lined east of the central axis, while Meridian Temple, County Yamen and Jifu Temple (corrupted) in the west, Guangong Temple lies in the north of the extension line of the central axis (Figure-2)\(^{30}\).

4. Chinese etiquette culture and its influence on the city planning theory of ancient China

The traditional Chinese etiquette culture originated from theocracy and diadem of the ancient Xia and Shang Dynasty. For thousands of years, it has profoundly influenced all-rounds of daily life of each social class and societies as well as the construction of cities -the symbol of diadem.

First, it can be viewed from the aspect of city scale. The grade and scale of ancient cities were mandatory to meet the criteria set by the “etiquette” presented in national regulations which were inapplicable at that time. As regards to the regulations of the state construction by the etiquette culture, the construction scale should be as follows: the kingdom’s capital occupies the largest area, of nine square li\(^{19}\), the capitals of dukes are seven square li, cities of fiefs are five square li, and cities of county are only three square li. As described in Kaogongji, the city wall height of the kingdom’s capital is nine Zhi, the dukes’ is seven Zhi, the fief cities’ is five Zhi and county cities’ is three Zhi\(^{20}\). In addition, there are also number limitations and width ranking for roads inside cities pursuant to the etiquette hierarchy system. The road was categorized into four levels of nine, seven, five and three Gui accordingly, among which merely the main streets of the kingdom’s capital are nine Gui, while that of a county are three Gui\(^{21}\) (Table 1). Secondly, there are four remarkable characteristics in the city space layout design influenced by the etiquette doctrines.

“Five positions and four directions” is a crucial criterion for the construction of ancient cities. “Five positions” refers to the northern, southern, eastern, western and central positions; “four directions” refers to east, west, south and north directions separately\(^{22}\). The city is surrounded by four city walls and constructed in square. The longitudinal central axis orients from the right south to the right north. In addition, the city array is primarily in square, and the road system appears to be a crisscross network. According to the etiquette principle, there exist hierarchical differences in directions, i.e., “so uth” is superior to “north” and “east” superior to “west”\(^{23}\).

“Making the center outstanding” is another etiquette doctrine that originally emerged in the construction theory "est ablished from the center”. “Center” symbolizes the top rank in hierarchical society where the worship and defense are held. Consequently it is suitable for the establishment of nations and palaces, which meets the "center priority theory" in the etiquette culture. The whole process, including location selection and city planning, is developed around the center.

“Strengthening the main axis” refers to the important planning measure for the space organization in line with the “symmetry” principle. In the course of Chinese ancient city planning, buildings with equal functions should be arrayed symmetrically, such as the ancestral temples and state worship buildings, civil buildings and military buildings, and temples for Buddhism and Taoism etc. According to the ancient orientation theory, the direction of the “east” is nobler than the “west” thus buildings situated on the east side of the axis are considered to be superior to its symmetrical counterpart on the western side. As a result “ancestor is always on the left hand and the state on the right hand”, “civil in the east and military in the west”, and “Taoism in the east and Buddhism in the west”, reflecting the layout concept “Strengthening the main axis” under the etiquette planning ideology.

“Facing south as honor” is another important characteristic of the etiquette planning principle. The orientations of the main city entrance, the entrance of public buildings, the up-right wall side’s entrance, the entrance of the residential courtyards and the entrance of principal room all applies this principle.

All aforementioned principles (Table-2) are employed for the city space layout organizations as well as for the public building constructions and dwelling courtyard constructions of ancient cities.

5. Space organization and representation of the ancient Pingyao city in Ming and Qing Dynasties from the aspect of Chinese etiquette culture

The influence of etiquette culture on the city’s space organization and representation (Figure-3) could be concretely explained from the following four aspects: the city’s construction scale, space layout and organization, space layout of public etiquette buildings and dwelling courtyards in Pingyao.

(1) City scale of the ancient Pingyao city in Ming and Qing
Dynasties

The Pingyao city is square in shape, enclosed with walls 6162.7 meters round, with the east wall 1478.5 m, the south 1713.8 m, the west 1494.3 m and the north 1476.1 m. The ancient city occupies an area of 2.25 km² in size, which equals to 3 square Li (a measurement unit of length in ancient China). Since the implementation of “Junxianzhi” in Qin dynasty, Pingyao has been the county seat all along. County city lies in the lowest rank of the ancient county system (there are four ranks in total from the capital city to county seats, which apply 9 Li, 7 Li, 5 Li and 3 Li separately). From the aspect of size, Pingyao equals to the 3 Li level, complying with the etiquette order. The average height of the city walls is 10 m, the base width 8~10 m, and top width 3~6 m, outside the tops; there are 3,000 battlements of 2 meters high and 0.53 meters wide, each bearing a watch window (25 cm • 17.7 cm). Sixty-meter- high Parapets were constructed in the internal rim of city walls. There is a platform and mansion on each corner of the square wall. Every 40 m~100 m there is a platform, on which a watchtower is built, 71 watchtowers in total (72 if the Kuixing Hall in the southeast corner is included). According to city construction criteria in etiquette, the county city wall is 3 Zhi (i.e. 10 m). The average height of the Pingyao city wall is 10 m, just as the etiquette stipulated. He existing layout of the width of the Nanda Street is 5.1 m, the Dongda Street 5 m, the Xida Jie Street 5.1 m, the City God Temple Street 5.2 m., the Yamen Street 5.2 m, and the Dongnannmentou Street with Xinanmentou Street 5 m, leading to a average width of 5.1 m (Table-3). According to the city construction regulation of etiquette, County Street should be 3 Gui (5.4 m) wide, and the main streets of Pingyao basically satisfy the “3 Gui” regulations (Table-1). It could thus be concluded that the road arrangement in the ancient Pingyao city is consistent with the etiquette planning theory.

Table—3 Status Quo Questionary on the Main Arteries in Ancient Pingyao City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Road Name</th>
<th>Breadth</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Road Surface</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Road Name</th>
<th>Breadth</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Road Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nandajie street</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shajie alley</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>City God Temple Street</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Zhebian street</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yamen street</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Xindajie street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Soi way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dongdajie street</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>Hibay 12</td>
<td>Lejiangen street</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>Shibuyan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Xindajie street</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>Hibay 13</td>
<td>Zhanmiao street</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>Stone way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dongnannmentou Street</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>Soi way 14</td>
<td>Goundajie street</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>Soi way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Xinanmentou Street</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>Hibay 15</td>
<td>Zhunwanzao street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>Stone way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nandajie street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>Hibay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: the unit of Breadth and length in the table is m

(2) City space layout of ancient Pingyao in Ming and Qing Dynasties

The ancient Pingyao city faces to the south with city walls surrounded in square. Around the city there are six gates, two gates each in the east and west; one gate each opened in the south and north. The “E”-shaped main streets lines straight from north to the south. The whole city remained regular layout in the straight direction. This is another evidence to show its compliance with the “five positions and four directio
ns” in the etiquette city planning theory.

Jinjing Mansion was built at the central heart of the city. It is the unique multi-storied building in Pingyao30. The central location of the city is Jinjing Mansion fully embodies “making the center outstanding” concept of the etiquette planning theory.

The “E”-shaped main road system give prominence to the Nanda Street, the central axis of the symmetric layout; furthermore, north of it, is the Guandi Temple, entrenching the axis to the far north. Thus the Nanda Street combined with Guandi Temple in the extension line northward consists of the symmetric central axis throughout the city. Most of the important public buildings are lined symmetrically along the axis. County Yamen and City God Temple, Civil Temple and Meridian Temple, and Qingxu Taoism Temple and Jifu Temple are lined respectively on the north side of the streets. On the contrary, City God Temple symbolizes the place of the God’s rule, which is superior to the man-governed of County Yamen. It can be obviously noted that the representation of etiquette reflected in the county space layout is “City God Temple on the left hand and County Yamen on the right hand”. Pingyao Civil Temple occupies 35.8 thousand m², obviously larger than that of the Pingyao Meridian Temple with only 3.2 thousand m² in size. The Wexing Hall and Kuixing Hall, as traditional civil buildings, are arranged south of Civil Temple and at the southeast corner of the city. Zhenwu Temple and Luohan Temple, as of the traditional military buildings, are arranged south of the Meridian Temple at the southwest corner. Hereof is a good example representing “civil buildings on the left and military buildings on the right”, which requires symmetric layout. Qingxu Taoism Temple located north of the east section of Dongda Street. As recorded, the original Jifu Temple is a Buddhism temple which is situated north of Xida Street31. These two temples were set up symmetrically along the virtual axis describing the etiquette decree of “Taoism in the left and Buddhism in the right”.

The “E”-shaped main artery is located on the south side of the city. The South Gate (Yinxun Gate) is the primary entrance of the ancient city. The four primary public etiquette buildings mentioned above are all located in the north side of the east-west direction main streets of the “E”-shaped main artery, with entrances to south (Figure-3-1). The above descriptions plainly explain that the city space layout of Pingyao represents the etiquette construction characteristic of “facing south as honor”.

(3) Space Layout of the public Buildings

Pingyao Civil Temple, remembers Confucius, is the public ceremony place to spread the etiquette culture. The organization construction group completed in the Kangxi 14th year of Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1675). It is located in the south of City God Temple Street, is with magnificent scale and occupies an area of 8,240 m². Its primary area consists of four courtyards. The overall layout is rectangle in shape with the long side to south and short to west. Generally they are laid out symmetrically along the south-north longitudinal axis. The layout in all directions is cautiously planned. The main components of south include: Lingxing Gate (the main entrance at the southern end of the temple area), the first courtyard (in the
### Figure 3 Special Analysis Drawings for the Influence of Etiquette Culture on the City Layout, the Public Buildings and the Dwelling Courtyard of the Ancient Pingyao City

The space layout of Civil Temple is symmetrically designed east-westwards along the south-north-ward axis. From south to north along the central axis, are Lingxing Gate, Dacheng Gate, Dacheng Hall, Minglun Shrine and Zunjing Shrine at the northern end. From the point of view of the architectural unit construction of these gates, halls and shrines are on the main axis, they themselves were constructed in symmetry of left and right. Reviewing the construction of the whole courtyards of Civil Temple, shrines and wing rooms are face to face, and the east-west symmetry is also applied in common decorations, roads and plants. Therefore, the layout space of Civil Temple completely complies with the principle “strengthening the main axis”. Dacheng Hall, Minglun Shrine and Zunjing Shrine, the three key single buildings along the axis of Civil Temple buildings, all face to the south, as well as the main entrance of Lingxing Gate. To sum up, the whole Pingyao Civil Temple completely follows the etiquette principle of “facing south as honor” (Figure-3-2). It can be concluded that all space layout in Civil Temple which is the most important public buildings reflect the etiquette construction representations.

#### 4) Space layout of dwelling courtyard

In the ancient Pingyao city there are a large amount of traditional residences dwelling courtyards with a history over a hundred years. More than 400 are completely preserved. Bases for typical courtyards are rectangular in shape with its width along east-west and length along south-north. Along the direction of the central axis, it generally consists of several accesses and suites of yards.

In accordance with the survey and study on Pingyao ancient city by Professor Song Kun of China Tianjin University Architecture Department, the space organization of the civil courtyards can be categorized into four types of usual form, series form, parallel connection form, and complex form. On-spot investigation on ten courtyards was carried out within the research, and it is fund they were covered on above mentioned four forms. Among them, Funjia Street No.2, which was established in Qing Dynasty in an usual form, is so typical and distinct to be a study sample that the on-spot
investigation is carried in detail particularly.

Fanjia Street No.2 is a two-access courtyard with long distance in the north-south and short distance in the east-west. The southern side of house includes: courtyard gate in the southeast, the Daouzu (the room next to the gate) and forecourt. There are three wing rooms respectively on both sides in east-west direction. The northern side of house consists of five main rooms and pole gallery in front. The central courtyard is the only living public space. The layout reflect the characteristics “five positions and four directions” in etiquette construction methodology. A public outdoor yard was set up in the center of Siheyuan, with the entrances of all the rooms around point to the main courtyard, which shows strong center directivity and a sense of enclosure. Looking out upon the whole house, the roof of all the living rooms surrounded appear to incline from outside to inside, which shows strong central aggregation feeling. These all reflect “making the center outstanding” concept. The courtyard is laid out symmetrically with the south-north central axis. Along with the axis from south to north are the Daouzu, forecourt, tassel door, main courtyard, pole gallery and the main rooms in order. The east and west wing-rooms are in the conformed architectural form and their layout appears to be central-axis symmetry. All the construction methodologies represent the etiquette construction characteristic “strengthening the main axis”. This courtyard is located in the north section of the street, while the entrance faces to south. The main rooms are facing south too. They apply the etiquette construction rule “facing south as honor” (residences and courtyards are adjusted to the local conditions, so it can not guarantee that all the courtyards can be constructed with the north location and south orientation. However, this direction is the optimal construction orientation for dwelling courtyards.) The residences are classified with the main rooms to be the superior class and are used by the eldest in the family. According to the etiquette class concept “superior in the east and inferior in the west”, the wing-rooms were constructed to accommodate married children and their families according the rule “the elder’s room in the east and the younger’s room in the west”. The traditional etiquette concept is fully represented in a small courtyard (Figure-3-3).

6. Conclusion

The space layout of Chinese ancient cities is influenced by the culture of geomantic omen and Chinese etiquette culture. Previous researches of Pingyao city are mainly concentrated from the aspect of geomantic omen culture. However, the research is a first try to analyze the presentation and characters of the city construction scale and the space layout of ancient Pingyao city. The new cognition of this research is that not only the city construction scale and space layout of the overall city, but also public constructions and civil courtyards are influenced by the Chinese etiquette culture. It is somehow the most completed and integrated research until nowadays, especially as a systematical research both on the overall space layout and the civil courtyards space layout. It’s obvious that the ancient Pingyao city is profoundly influenced by the China etiquette culture, from the city construction scale and the space layout of overall city, public constructions and civil courtyards in detail.

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13) The former-mentioned as 8), 74-76.
15) The former-mentioned as 11), 44-45.
17) The former-mentioned as 8), 77-82.
18) The former-mentioned as 8), 751-796.
19) “Li” is a measuring unit in ancient China. A Li is about 500 m.
20) “Zhi” is a measuring unit in ancient China. A Zhi is about 10 m, 9 Zhi is about 19 m.
21) “Gui” is a measuring unit in ancient China. A Gui is about 1.8 m.
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