A Study on the Space Characteristics of Ancient Ancestral Temples in the Taiping District of East China

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Abstract
The ancestral temple plays an important role in maintaining the lineage society in Huizhou, a historical region in East China's Anhui Province. The study, based on surveys and drawings of seven ancient ancestral temples in the Taiping district, analyzes the overall layout characteristics, the interior space arrangement, exterior morphological characteristics and the social meaning of the space. Focusing on the peculiarity of the forms of those ancient ancestral temples, this research can provide valuable information in regard to the diversity of architectural forms within the same cultural circle.

Keywords: Taiping district; Hui-style architecture; ancestral temple; space arrangement; social meaning

1. Introduction
The culture of Anhui, one of the three major regional cultures in China, enjoys great influence globally. The Hui-style architecture, which embodies the Anhui culture, has been put into the spotlight by researchers. Migrants from the Central Plains tended to live with their clansmen, and the clans, bonded by blood, have become a unique social structure in Huizhou, with the ancestral temples taking an important role in maintaining and enhancing the lineage society.

Taiping district, which mostly surrounds Huang Mountain, is located in the northwest of Huizhou. It sits in the transition zone between the Anhui cultural area and the Yangtze River cultural area (Fig. 1.), with its architectural style influenced by Hui-style architecture but also having apparent differences. So far, there have been few studies on these kinds of differences. Concentrating on the peculiarity of the forms of the ancient ancestral temples, this research can provide information for further studies in regard to the diversity of architectural forms within the same cultural circle.

Over the past few decades, there have been a number of researches done on the ancestral temples in Huizhou, focusing on the human element and architectural history. Those research articles that elaborated on the human element of Huizhou's ancestral temples include works from Lin Ji, Fang Chunsheng and Huang Shifu, respectively

Special Hall and Ancestral Hall: Development of Ancestral Hall in Huizhou in the Mid-Ming Dynasty; Cultural Interpretation of Ancient Ancestral Halls in Huizhou; The Religious Characteristics of Ancestral Hall Culture in Huizhou.

In addition, the architectural art of Huizhou's ancestral temples from an architectural history point of view has been briefly summarized through the monographs of Shan Deqi, Zhu Yongchun and Chang Bei, respectively

Anhui Vernacular Dwellings; Huizhou Architecture; Carving Art of Jiangnan Architecture: Huizhou Volume.

The institute led by Japanese professor Sugino Noboru has carried out a handful of researches on ancient ancestral temples in Taiping. However, the previous

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researches are mainly focused on summarizing the characteristics of Huizhou ancestral temples in general. The works based on detailed surveys and mapping data remain few at present. Moreover, the targeted area of the ancestral temples, in terms of research objects, is limited to the center of Huizhou. Studies on ancient ancestral temples in the surrounding area of Huizhou are still lacking. Thus, in this paper, the authors will delve deeper and take a look at detailed surveys and mapping data on the ancestral temples northwest of Huizhou.

2. Summary of Study Objects

Seven ancient ancestral temples were selected for the study, for the following two reasons: First, only seven ancestral temples remain in Taiping, with their construction dates ranging from the early days in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) to the Republic of China (1912-49) (Table 1.). Second, these ancestral temples have been poorly preserved. Only the Cheng Ancestral Temple is comparatively well preserved thanks to its location in a remote mountainous area. The rest have all been damaged to various extents, calling for urgent research and study. In short, a detailed study on Taiping ancient ancestral temples can fill in the blanks for this kind of study.

Table 1. General Situation of Ancestral Temples in the Taiping District

| No. | Name         | Built Time                  | Scale | Plan Layout                  | Construction                           | Orientation  | Longitude | Latitude | Location       | Cultural Beliefs Level |
|-----|--------------|----------------------------|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|----------------|-----------------------|
| N1  | Cheng        | Early Qing Dynasty        | Large | Three Jiao with Seven-Bar Ancestral Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 11° North by West/Facing North | 119°15' | 30°57' | Gantang Street, Gantang Town | None                  |
| N2  | Li Ancestral | Qing Dynasty, Restored in Qing Dynasty | Moderate | Three Jiao, Five Doors, with Two-Storey Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 15° North by West/Facing North | 117°30' | 30°07' | Lingling Villages, Provincial Cultural Beliefs | National Cultural Beliefs |
| N3  | Li Ancestral | Qing Dynasty, Restored in Qing Dynasty | Large | Three Jiao, Seven Doors, with One-Storey Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 4° East by North/Facing East | 119°48' | 10°36' | Gantang Town | None                  |
| N4  | Wang Ancestral | Qianlong Era of Qing Dynasty | Large | Three Jiao, Seven Doors, with Two-Storey Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 27° West by North/Facing West | 119°17' | 30°07' | Baihe Villages, Sanyue Town | None                  |
| N5  | Qi Ancestral | Late Qing Dynasty         | Small | Three Jiao, Three Doors, with Two-Storey Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 5° West by North/Facing West | 119°52' | 10°38' | Gantang Villages, Gantang Town | None                  |
| N6  | Shangqing    | Republic of China (1922-49) | Small | Two Jiao, Three Doors, with One-Story Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 26° North by West/Facing West | 119°27' | 17°07' | Longgang Villages, Jinshan Town | None                  |
| N7  | Wang Ancestral | Republic of China (1812-44) | Small | Two Jiao, Three Doors, with One-Story Reasting Hall | Construction of Cobble-and-Tile and Post-and-Lintel Construction | 27° East by North/Facing East | 117°04' | 14°37' | Changping Villages, Tanglingao Town | None                  |

3. Overall Layout and Space Arrangement

3.1 Overall Layout

The ancestral temples have two types of location in a village: at the entrance or at the center (Fig.2.). Generally, a square is established in front of an ancestral temple, serving as a site for clansmen to gather. All the ancestral temples’ locations follow the rules of “feng shui” – the principle of fronting water and with hills at the back. For example, Qijia Ancestral Temple and Chey Ancestral Temple, both located in Gantang Town, front the Puxi River and have hills at the back. Qijia Ancestral Temple faces west while Chey Ancestral Temple is comparatively well preserved thanks to its location in a remote mountainous area. The rest have all been damaged to various extents, calling for urgent research and study. In short, a detailed study on Taiping ancient ancestral temples can fill in the blanks for this kind of study.
Chey Ancestral Temple faces south. Through the investigation, the authors found that the orientation of ancestral temples do not follow the customary form of facing south (Table 1.), but is influenced by the general layout and the surroundings.

### 3.2 Spatial Elements

Generally, the layout of ancestral temples takes an axisymmetric, regular rectangular shape. The main buildings and patios are placed alternately along the axis, with the main buildings connected by the corridors.

Every main building is called a "jin". Starting from the entrance, the buildings are called "first jin", "second jin" and "third jin" in this order. An ancestral temple with three main buildings is called a "three-jin ancestral temple", containing a front hall, an ancestral hall and a resting hall, starting from the front to the back. An ancestral temple with two main buildings is called a "two-jin ancestral temple", including a front hall and a resting hall (Fig.3.).

The first jin is a front hall covering two spans in depth. The ridged columns stand between the front corridor and back corridor. The front corridor consists of the entrance and the side rooms for storage or receptions (Fig.4.).

The second jin, the ancestral hall, is the place for the clansmen to discuss business. It is usually stretched across five spans in depth. The front corridor is in the first span, while the main hall occupies the symmetrically second and third spans. A Taishi Screen is located in the fourth span and a back corridor is included in the fifth span. One exception is the front corridor of the front hall of the Chey Ancestral Temple. It is two spans in depth, making the whole depth of the ancestral hall extend to six-span.

The third jin, the resting hall, acts like a shrine to venerate ancestors. Memorial tablets of the recent three generations are revered on the first floor while the memorial tablets of distant ancestors are placed on the second floor, in the case of a two-story resting hall. The resting hall ranges across four spans in depth, with the front corridor included in the first span while the space of the second and third span makes the hall. The memorial tablets are placed on shelves in the fourth span.

The open space surrounded by buildings or walls is the patio. The ground is tiled by paving stones, which also ensures good drainage. Two side corridors are along the patio. For the three-jin ancestral temples, the patio in front of the ancestral hall is the "front patio" while the corridors on the two sides are the "side corridors of the front patio"; the patio behind the ancestral hall is the "back patio" and the corridors on the two sides are the "side corridors of the back patio".  

### 3.3 Analysis of the Plans

The ratio of the width and depth of the three-jin ancestral temples is more constant than that of the two-jin ones (Table 2.). The size of the ancestral hall is the largest among the main buildings, meeting the requirements for activities including gatherings and dealing with family business. The front patio is larger than the back one (Table 3.). In a larger ancestral temple, the front patio is wide while the back patio is smaller and narrower.

### Table 2. Plan Data of Main Buildings

| No. | Name             | Area (m²) | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Space (m) | Front Hall | Ancestral Hall | Resting Hall |
|-----|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| 81  | Chey Ancestral Temple | 33.9      | 13.8      | 6.42      | 3.89      | 3.28      | 3.20           | 3.40         |
| 82  | Su Ancestral Temple | 64.96     | 14.92     | 7.95      | 3.64      | 3.28      | 3.00           | 3.13         |
| 83  | Ong Ancestral Temple | 108.25    | 21.72     | 7.95      | 3.92      | 3.18      | 3.38           | 3.20         |
| 84  | Mu Ancestral Temple | 127.70    | 21.65     | 7.31      | 3.70      | 3.45      | 3.16           | 3.30         |
| 85  | Qi Ancestral Temple | 184.90    | 11.37     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |
| 86  | Xiating Ancestral Temple | 184.90 | 11.37     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |
| 87  | Meng Ancestral Temple | 27.60     | 11.27     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |

Fig.3. Examples of Two-jin and Three-jin Ancestral Temple

Fig.4. Space Composition

Table 2. Plan Data of Main Buildings

| No. | Name             | Area (m²) | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Space (m) | Front Hall | Ancestral Hall | Resting Hall |
|-----|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| 81  | Chey Ancestral Temple | 33.9      | 13.8      | 6.42      | 3.89      | 3.28      | 3.20           | 3.40         |
| 82  | Su Ancestral Temple | 64.96     | 14.92     | 7.95      | 3.64      | 3.28      | 3.00           | 3.13         |
| 83  | Ong Ancestral Temple | 108.25    | 21.72     | 7.95      | 3.92      | 3.18      | 3.38           | 3.20         |
| 84  | Mu Ancestral Temple | 127.70    | 21.65     | 7.31      | 3.70      | 3.45      | 3.16           | 3.30         |
| 85  | Qi Ancestral Temple | 184.90    | 11.37     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |
| 86  | Xiating Ancestral Temple | 184.90 | 11.37     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |
| 87  | Meng Ancestral Temple | 27.60     | 11.27     | 5.28      | 2.84      | 2.52      | 2.30           | 2.40         |
The structure of the ancestral temples is limited by the use of wood. In general, the larger the scale, the more bays there are. Take the front hall as an example. Small-scale two-jin and three-jin ancestral temples are often three-bays wide, a medium-scale one is five-bays wide and the number of bays of a larger-scale ancestral temple is seven. However, the number of bays in the width of the main buildings is not the same in every ancestral temple. The number of bays in an ancestral hall is always the lowest in order to have more space. The central bay is the widest, with the width gradually becoming smaller from the middle to the sides.

3.4 Analysis of the Sections

The structure of the main buildings is a mixture of column-and-tie and post-and-lintel construction, while the roof takes the style of flush gable roof. The grounds of each building gradually get higher from front to back, and the same goes for the roof. The entering ground is elevated about two to three steps in comparison to the ground of the front square. For a three-jin ancestral temple, the ground of the ancestral hall is one step higher than the ground of the front hall. The ground for the resting hall is obviously elevated, making the clansmen look up to the memorial tablets. The floor elevation of the back corridor in the front hall equals the elevation of the side corridor along the front patio. There is little disparity between the floor elevation of the back corridor in the ancestral hall and the side corridor along the back patio (Tables 4., 5.). These make the patio half-surrounded by the side corridors and the back corridor with a "U" shape, emphasizing the importance of the ancestral hall and resting hall. Generally, the roof of the resting hall is the highest among the main buildings, showing admiration for the ancestors. The scale of a two-jin ancestral temple is rather small, with its resting hall only a step higher than the front hall, which is similar to the layout of local dwellings.

Double roofs are often adopted in the buildings, and are an important characteristic of Hui-style architecture. The double roofs, after maintaining the integrity of the external roof shape, can be used in various situations in dealing with the internal space. There are multiple shapes of double roofs, including Chuanpeng (arched awning of a boat) xuan (arched roof with two king posts), Yizhixiang (one joss stick) xuan (arched roof with single king post), Hejing (crane neck, recurve bow-shape) xuan, Renzi (inverted-V-shape) xuan (Fig.6.). The Chuanpeng xuan is often used in the eave corridors, and occasionally the Hejing xuan. Renzi xuan is usually adopted in the hall. However, not all the ancestral temples follow this pattern. In the Chey Ancestral Temple, Renzi xuan is placed at the front and back corridors of its ancestral hall, while in the Qijia Ancestral Temple, Renzi xuan is also adopted in the back corridor of its front hall to make the back corridor look deeper. The depth of the eave corridor is determined by its spatial attributes. For example, the back corridor of a front hall and the front corridor of an ancestral hall are wider than the back corridor of an ancestral hall and the front corridor of a resting hall (Table 2.), which illustrates that the front patio is wide, while the back one is relatively narrow.

4. Spatial Analysis of Each Part

The following is a detailed analysis of the characteristics of each Taiping ancient ancestral temple.

4.1 Front Hall

The front hall of large- and medium-scale ancestral temples covers 1/8~1/6 of the entire building (Table 2.). In order to give a feeling of spaciousness, the eave columns at the back corridor of the front hall are not aligned or are reduced in number. A splayed gate is often used at the entrance. The front eave is higher than the back eave (Table 4.). The ratio of the height and depth of the front corridor is bigger than the one...
for the back side. The front corridor becomes narrow in a short distance while the space for the back corridor is widened. In the Su Ancestral Temple, the ratio of height and depth of the front corridor of the front hall reaches to 3 (Table 6.) and the height of the internal space is about 7m, which differentiates itself from other ancestral temples.

The double roof of the front corridor of the front hall adopts the Chuapeng xuan, but the double roof of the back corridor of the front hall varies in its shape: Chuapeng xuan is used in the Cheng Ancestral Temple and the Wang Ancestral Temple; Hejing xuan is used in the Su Ancestral Temple; Renzi xuan is used in the Qijia Ancestral Temple but the Wong Ancestral Temple only has a plank sheathing. The front hall of the Shouqigong Ancestral Temple is only one span in depth with a Chuapeng xuan at the top.

4.2 Front Patio and Side Corridors of the Front Patio

The ratio of width and depth of the front patio of large- and medium-scale ancestral temples is close to 1, which means its shape is similar to a square. The front patio of large-scale ancestral temples is over 300m². The Qijia Ancestral Temple and Shouqigong Ancestral Temple, both of whose depth is far less than its width due to the limitations set by its location, are around 40m² (Table 3.). The ground of the patio is as high as the ground of the side corridor or one step lower (Table 5.), making the patio easy to reach. Rainwater gathers in the patio and flows away through the drainage. The side corridors are all one span in depth. The depth of the side corridors of large- and medium-scale ancestral temples is nearly 2.5m, while the small-scale ones' are less than 2m. The Qijia Ancestral Temple takes a unique form: There are no eave columns in the corridors and a Chuapeng xuan is built directly on the tie beams.
The side corridor is also the widest in the central bay and the width gradually becomes narrower from the middle to the sides. All side corridors have shed roofs, mostly with a Chuanpeng xuan, but for smaller-range corridors like those in the Shouqigong Ancestral Temple, Yizhixiang xuan is used. In the Wong Ancestral Temple, plank sheathing is still adopted, following the style of the back corridor of its front hall.

4.3 Ancestral Hall

An Ancestral Hall is mostly used by the people. Its area accounts for 1/4 in large-scale ancestral temples and 1/3 in middle- and small-scale ones. The central bay of an ancestral hall is at least 4.5m wide (Table 2.), wider than the central bay of the front hall and the resting hall. An ancestral hall is separated into two spaces by a Taishi Screen. The front is made up of a front corridor and a main hall. Removing two columns behind the hypostyle columns in the central bay, the hall becomes the most spacious and dignified space in the whole ancestral temple. The height-depth ratio of the main hall differs little (Table 6.). The diameter of the two hypostyle columns is the biggest in the hall, with exquisite carvings on the column bases, emphasizing its importance. Behind the Taishi Screen is the place for worship. Side doors are set in the front or back corridors, and side doors are set both in the front and back corridors in the Qijia Ancestral Temple (Fig.5.). The side doors can offer convenience as plenty of activities are held in an ancestral hall.

Generally, the front eave of an ancestral hall is higher than the back eave. Front corridors are deeper than back corridors and the height-depth ratio is smaller. A Renzi xuan is above the main hall, which is under a 5-purlin beam. The ridged columns of the double roof align optionally in the vertical direction (Fig.6.), which reflects the flexibility of double roofs when dealing with space.

4.4 Back Patio and Side Corridors of the Back Patio

The width-depth ratio of the back patio fluctuates little (Table 3.). The area of the back patio is much smaller than the front patio. In large-scale ancestral temples, the area of the back patio is even 1/3 that of the front one. Generally, the whole ground of the back patio is lowered to set a water tank. In the Wang Ancestral Temple, the back patio is lowered quite a lot, while in the Qijia Ancestral Temple the ground is nearly the same height with the corridors, which calls for drainage.

The side corridors are over 2m in depth, built with stone steps towards the resting hall (Table 5.). Stone railings are built along the side corridors and in front of the resting hall. There is no railing for the central bay, making it possible for people to see the memorial tablets of ancestors in the resting hall from the ancestral hall directly. The column caps of the stone baluster are carved with lotus or lion figures. In the Wang Ancestral Temple, a rare roofed single-arch bridge, floored with tiled granite, paves the way from the ancestral hall to the resting hall.

4.5 Resting Hall

The area of a resting hall covers 1/7~1/6 of the whole area in large- and medium-scale ancestral temples (Table 2.). Generally, the side rooms of a resting hall are redesigned as staircases. But, there are more rooms on the sides of the central bay in the Qijia Ancestral Temple, whose layout is more like...
local dwellings. Other than the Qijia Ancestral Temple, some columns in the resting hall of the other ancestral temples are removed in order to have a larger space, while preventing columns from blocking the view. The second floor of a resting hall takes the same approach to enlarge its space. Eave columns are not aligned to the columns in the first floor. The layout of the resting hall on the second floor in the Su Ancestral Temple takes a "U" shape as extra rooms are placed from the next to the end bay on the two sides (Fig.5.). This layout is rare in other Huizhou ancestral temples.

The height of the first floor in a resting hall is over 4.5m (Table 4.), with a Chuanpeng xuan over the front corridor. For one-story resting halls, whose space is similar to the ones for ancestral halls, the hall is under a Renzi xuan, which is a 5-purlin beam; for two-story resting halls, double roofs are not usually built on the second floor, except for the Wang Ancestral Temple.

5. Elevation and Entrance
The smaller the scale of an ancestral temple, the simpler the entrance is. The gate of a large-scale ancestral temple is built in the Wufeng-style, three-bays wide, which is typical in Huizhou. The wooden part of the gate is exquisitely sculpted. For a medium-scale ancestral temple with five bays, the gate also tries to adopt the same style; for small-scale ancestral temples with three bays, the gate has a one-bay-width. A simple white marble gate without door shelter starts the Shouqigong Ancestral Temple (Fig.7.), which is typical of local dwellings.

The side elevations of ancestral temples are simple but with various kinds of skylines. There are three kinds of gable which looks like a horse's head; crest wall – an inverted-V-shape gable which looks like a crest; hump wall – a curving gable which looks like a hump (Fig.8.). The side elevation possesses obvious features of its time. In the Ming and early Qing Dynasty, the crest wall was frequently adopted. In the Qing Dynasty, the Ma Tau wall and crest wall tended to be adopted together. Occasionally, the hump wall was adopted. In the early half of the 20th century, the style tended to be simpler, with the Ma Tau wall adopted more frequently.

6. Social Meaning of Space
The original feature of an ancestral temple lies in its ritual function, gradually becoming a gathering place of clansmen. The traditional clan system can be preserved and the clanship can be enhanced by worshipping ancestors and managing clan affairs together. The whole ancestral temple is separated into two areas by a Taishi Screen. The area in front of the screen is the public space for clansmen to manage their affairs, and is defined as the "earthly" territory. The space is open and bright. It serves as an outward public area. The area behind the screen is the holy space for clansmen to worship the memorial tablets of their ancestors. The space is comparatively private, usually requiring it to be enclosed. It is defined as the "sacred" territory. The space is dark, deep and the atmosphere tends to be solemn. It serves as an inward private area (Fig.9.).
7. Conclusions

Through the research and comparative study of the space of the seven ancient ancestral temples in the Taiping district, conclusions can be drawn as follows:

The general layout of three-jin ancestral temples follows the spatial sequence of traditional Huizhou ancient ancestral temples. In two-jin ancestral temples, the ancestral hall and the resting hall are merged into one building, which possesses the distinct spatial features of an ancestral hall; they still keep the essence of ancestral temples.

Seven ancestral temples have their own distinct features: the Chey Ancestral Temple is large and was built earliest, with only its ancestral hall left. However, it is still magnificent, highlighted by its thick beams and exquisite decorations as well as the Renzi xuan over the transition space and hall space. The detailing has distinct characteristics of the time, such as the use of a bucket-arch in certain parts. The Cheng Ancestral Temple is a typical representative of large-scale three-jin ancestral temples which use local materials. The Qijia Ancestral Temple is a small-scale three-jin ancestral temple. Its uniqueness is that a covered single-arch stone bridge, paved with tiled granite, is built on the path in the back patio. The Su Ancestral Temple is a medium-scale three-jin ancestral temple. The space is high, with delicate paintings inside. These features are different from other ancestral temples. The Jiaji Ancestral Temple is a small-scale three-jin ancestral temple, which is influenced by local dwellings in some aspects, including the construction of the threshold, the layout of the resting hall, the scale of patio and so on. The Wong ancestral temple was built last. The small-scale two-jin ancestral temple has rectangular shaped beams and simple decorations. The Shuqigong Ancestral Temple is a small-scale two-jin ancestral temple with many characteristics of local dwellings.

The orientation of ancestral temples does not follow the rule of facing south, but is influenced by the specific location and surroundings. The construction of ancestral temples is usually limited by the natural environment, financial resources, and the social environment of the time, etc. It diversified under certain conditions. The richer the clan, the more luxurious and larger the ancestral temple is. While on the contrary, the poorer the clan, the more simple and smaller the temple is. Small Ancestral Halls are similar to dwellings. That is to say, a smaller scale ancestral temple can be considered as a combination of local dwellings and ancestral temples.

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