Preliminary Study on Memorial Archways in Ancient Huizhou of China

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Abstract During Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), many memorial archways were built in ancient Huizhou. They were regarded as culture symbols of Chinese ancient architectures. Owing to the natural and man-made disasters, many of them vanished with time. Today, in total 129 memorial archways scatter in the ancient Huizhou district. In this paper, the origin, development and culture connotation of Huizhou memorial archways are discussed with examples of existing ones. At last, several risks to these memorial archways are presented, which can be categorized as natural reasons, including weathering, flood and landslide etc., and man-made reasons such as demolition, influences of adjacent modern constructions. Several risks were illustrated with example of Tangyue Memorial Archway group, which indicates the urgency of conservation.

Keywords: Huizhou, memorial archway, Tangyue, risks

Introduction

Ancient Huizhou is located on the board of Anhui, Zhejiang and Jiangxi Provinces, has been enjoying the fame of beautiful natural scenery and rich culture relics. The ancient government of Huizhou consists of six counties and one city (Fig. 1). Ground cultural relics, including memorial archways, ancient residences and ancestral temples, are called “Three Unique in Ancient Buildings”. Especially the memorial archways, with their delicate and unique designs, reflect the past glory of Huizhou.

Figure 1: Map of ancient Huizhou, China (AD 1502)

Owing to the natural and man-made disasters, many memorial archways vanished without record. Today, totally 129 memorial archways, which include 101and half in She County, 14 in Jixi County, 8 in Xiuning County, 3 in Qimen County, 2 in Yi county and half in Wuyuan County, scatter in the ancient Huizhou area since Song dynasty. Here, the half means foundation relics in Zheng Village of She County or frame relics in Wuyuan County (Bian 2003).
Historical Study and Evolution

Residence door, which is seemed as embryonic form of memorial archway, originally act as partition and yard entrance. Then, some of residence doors evolved to symbols to distinguish different district when they were built in the entrance of streets or lanes. Later, some of them evolved to decorative and iconic buildings without their original function. Finally, they became mature as commonly accepted memorial archways in Song Dynasty.

The current concepts of memorial archways in Huizhou also appeared from Song Dynasty. Among 129 historical relics of memorial archways, the oldest memorial archway is “Chengxiang Zhaoyuan Memorial Archway (Premier and Number One Scholar)” in Huaitang Village, Fujie town, She County. It was erected in the 1st year of empire Gongdi Deyou of South Song Dynasty (1275 AD). Besides this one, relatively older existing memorial archways are “Jinzheng Memorial Archway” in Jixi County (Song Dynasty, 960–1279 AD) and “Zhenbai Li Memorial Archway” in Zheng Village, She County (Yuan Dynasty, 1271–1368 AD). Most of Huizhou memorial archways were built during Ming and Qing Dynasties owing to the flourishing culture education and brilliant achievements of Hui Merchants at that time. A typical example is the luxury “Xuguo Octagon Memorial Archway” in She County in honor of fame. Another type is memorial archway for women’s chastity, which occupies most of memorial archways in Ming and Qing Dynasty.

Wei (2006) studied specifically on archways for women’s chastity. There are 39 memorial archways for women's chastity of existing memorial archways. Fig. 2 illustrates the quantity of existing memorial archways constructed in every century. During 14th century to 19th century, each memorial archway was built in honor of only one person. But for the last archway built in 20th century, totally 65078 persons were honored. Dimension of archways were tabulated in Table 1.

![Figure 2: Quantity and built time of memorial archway for women’s chastity](image)

Table 1: Dimensions of memorial archways for women’s chastity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Built time</th>
<th>14th century</th>
<th>16th century</th>
<th>17th century</th>
<th>18th century</th>
<th>19th century</th>
<th>20th century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>6×4.3</td>
<td>10×9</td>
<td>10×6.7</td>
<td>8.9×6.75</td>
<td>7.3×4.65</td>
<td>6.6×6.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Architectural Characteristics and Culture Features

The basic structural elements of memorial archways are columns and horizontal beams, which are unchanged despite different styles and complicated structures. This is a typical architectural characteristic of memorial archway in view of building technology. Some of them were carved with complicated patterns, elegant and refined, while the others are simple and unembellished.

Flexible layout plan of columns, together with free combination of roofs, can provide broad development for diverse styles. A representative memorial archway consists of foundation, column, architrave, board, brace and roof (optional) sections, as illustrated in Fig. 3. When it comes to architecture styles, columns going through roof and hipped roof were mostly adopted for memorial archways. The archways can also be divided to timber, stone and brick classes according to their materials and stone archways are predominant ones. Memorial archways were erected for different...
purposes, which can be seemed as their social functions. Usually, there are memorial archways in honor of fame, morality, chaste, or iconic signs for tomb, road or just an entrance to street. One memorial archways can also exhibit several purposes, which is called gross memorial archway, while it is called chief memorial archway for single purpose. In summary, you can’t find same memorial archways in Huizhou.

Memorial archways of Huizhou are closely related to the local culture, economic and Confucian metaphysics and ethics. In political aspect, in order to maintain its feudal rule and spiritual needs, ruling class built memorial archways in honor of people who excelled in administration, imperial examination system or military achievements. In economic aspect, memorial archways are reflections of prosperous society and economic development. It’s a way for rich merchants to show off their fortune and attract passers-by for better selling. In cultural analysis, buildings of archways possess mysterious religious features and Confucian ethics, which act as functions of religion education and retaining of feudal human relationship. From this aspect, the memorial archways played a positive role in honoring the family, encouraging the young people to work hard and maintaining the clan’s economy at that time.

However, they also played a negative role in restricting many women’s freedom and twisting both their hearts and minds. This reflected typical women’s life in feudal society and culture characteristics of clans and merchants in Huizhou. In old times, most of married men had to do business far away from Huizhou for several years. Their wives were left at home alone. Memorial archways were erected to praise those women who stuck faithfully to their husbands, achieved success in children’s education or dedicated to the feudal society. This set examples to maintain feudal systems and normal human relationships based on Confucian ethics.

In modern society, as a physical solid culture symbol, memorial archways exhibit important academic values to study political, economic, clan and culture education systems of Huizhou in Ming and Qing Dynasties.

**Case Study**

Tangyue Archway Goup, which locates in She County, consists of seven archways as one of the most famous archways groups in ancient Huizhou. As shown in Fig. 4, the archway group was arranged in a curved line and built to propagate feudal orthodox ideas of loyalty, filial piety, moral integrity and righteousness. These archways are listed as follows.

“Shangshu Memorial Archway”, which was originally constructed in 2nd Tianqi year of Ming Dynasty (1622 AD) and renovated in Qing Dynasty (1795 AD). The memorial archway is in praise of Xiangxian Bao for his contributions during Jiajing Period. The replaced columns were left beside the original one (Fig. 5). “Xiaozui Memorial Archway for Bao Fengchang”, which was constructed in 2nd Jiaqing year of Qing Dynasty (1797 AD), is in praise of Fengchang Bao for his fealty to parents.
“Wushi Jiexiao Memorial Archway”, which was built in 52nd Qianlong year of Qing Dynasty (1787 AD), is in praise of Wenyuan Bao’s wife whose surname is Wu. Wu is Bao’s second wife and become widow since 29. She brought up young son as step mother and remained a chaste widow until died. “Yixing Memorial Archway”, which was constructed in 25th Jiaqing year of Qing Dynasty (1820 AD), is in praise of Shufang Bao and Jun Bao (father and son) for their great contribution and donation in terms of salt taxes, military supplies, and hydraulic construction projects and so on. “Wangshi Jiexiao Memorial Archway”, which was constructed in 34th Qianlong year of Qing Dynasty (1749 AD), is in praise of Yanzhong Bao (father) and Shousong Bao (son). They were kidnapped by rebels and strove to die for each other. And “Xiaozuo Memorial Archway for Bao Can”, which was originally built in Yongle year of Ming Dynasty (1420 AD) and renovated in 14th Qianlong year of Qing Dynasty (1749 AD), is in praise of Yanzhong Bao (father) and Shousong Bao (son). They were kidnapped by rebels and strove to die for each other. And “Xiaozuo Memorial Archway for Bao Can”, which was originally constructed in 13th Jiajing year of Ming Dynasty (1534 AD) and renovated in 14th Qianlong year of Qing Dynasty (1749 AD), is in praise of Can Bao for his fealty and great contribution to country of his grandson. The archway group possesses several historical materials of Bao’s clan which vividly illustrates typical lives in ancient Huizhou.

Figure 4: Tangyue archway group (Bao, S M and Bao, L 2008)

Figure 5: “Shangshu Memorial Archway” and demolished columns

Risks to Memorial Archways

Many memorial archways vanished in the past several hundred years for natural or man-made reasons. And the existing ones are still under the threat of destruction. Since memorial archways are
all standing outside and exposed in the air. They are directly affected by rain, wind and alternating temperatures. Such as weathering process together with worsen climate increase the vulnerability of archways. As a mountainous district, memorial archways sometimes are jeopardized by natural disasters, such as floods and landslides and the like.

With the development of local economics, some constructions such as new houses, electricity transmission towers, agriculture development and the expansion of irrigation systems influenced the original features and eco environment of memorial archways. And even worse thing is that some people are ignorance and unawareness of the importance and vulnerability of archways.

During the site investigation of Tangyue archway group, many degenerations and damaged locations were found and typical examples were shown from Fig. 6 – Fig. 10. The numbers in the figures identify the locations of the archways. Dark red rusts were found on the face of stone material. Some growing plants and moss were also observed on the surface of Memorial archways due to outside conditions (Fig. 6). Nearly 2mm width crack was found near the foundation of “Shangshu Memorial Archway”. Similar crack was also found in the column of “Xiaozhi Memorial Archway for Bao Fengchang”. Large area of peeling off of column end is detrimental to the structural safety for whole structure (Fig. 7). Brace is connected to foundation by steel anchors, which is important to the global integrity. However, some of them were lost or substituted by lime, as shown in Fig. 8.

![Figure 6: Rust, growing plant and moss](image1)

![Figure 7: Cracks and flakes](image2)

![Figure 8: Missing steel anchors for brace connection](image3)

Cement and lime materials were used which made their appearances are dissimilar from original stone material. Unknown epoxy material was also injected as repairing method. This can bring impairment to original features (Fig. 9). Around 7mm gap was observed between column and lateral
brace for “Xiaozi Memorial Archway for Bao Fengchang”. This may due to farm irrigation near foundation, as shown in Fig. 10. Doodling was also found on the memorial archway surface.

![Figure 9: Inappropriate repair materials](image1)

![Figure 10: Settlement of memorial archway and doodling](image2)

**Concluding Remarks**

This paper presents a brief description of memorial archways in ancient Huizhou. Many memorial archways were built during Ming and Qing Dynasty. They are combining results of the Huizhou’s long history, clan organization system and economic circumstance. Some risks to memorial archways were also analyzed with example of Tangyue Memorial Archway Group. The risks originated from nature and man made damages indicates many efforts are still needed to preserve these relics.

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**References**

