

Research on Landscape Pattern about Labrang Monastery in Gannan area

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Keywords: Labrang monastery, landscape pattern, landscape characteristics

Abstract: In the process of localization, Labrang Temple was deeply influenced by the traditional local cultural ideas, which gradually formed a unique concept of spatial environment. In site selection, special attention was paid to the relationship of natural landscape. Through the accumulation of long-term survival experience, the characteristics of natural geographical environment conducive to survival were summarized and auspicious meanings were given. In this paper, the spatial environment of Labrang Temple is studied, the macro location and landscape elements of Labrang Temple are analyzed, and the characteristics of the landscape are summarized. This is good for understanding of the space environment of the Labrang Temple deeply, and it has a reference significance for the overall landscape pattern protection.

In the process of localization of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, it gradually abandoned the thinking of Indian geometric temple composition. Under the influence of traditional construction thoughts, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries gradually formed a free-form space pattern based on natural landscape elements [1]. As one of the six main temples of the Gelug Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the temple's spatial form of Labrang Monastery was formed and evolved under the limitation of natural landscape, forming a distinctive spatial order. The landscape pattern of Labrang Monastery is an important context characteristic.

1. Site Selection of Labrang Monastery

1.1. The Origin of Labrang Monastery Site Selection idea

The site selection of Labrang Monastery is directly influenced by the concept of Bka'-gdems-pa. The concept of "fronting water and with hills on the back" reflects the concept of environment-based site selection of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which deeply affects the landscape pattern of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and it is recorded in the teachings of various sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Gelug sect was founded on the basis of the Bka'-gdems-pa doctrine [2-3]. Before the construction of the temple, Labrang Monastery had sought the suggestion about the site selection of the temple from the classic book of the Bka'-gdems-pa. Based on the description of the site in the Scriptures and poems of Bka'-gdems-pa, the Jiamuyang I and his followers chose three places, which is NaipaLoumang, Xilaimu and Zhaxiqi [4]. Finally, Zhaxiqi was chosen by divination of lighting, where is the location of Labrang Temple now.

Some scholars believe that the prediction of the site selection of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries is an affiliated theory, but in essence, it is based on the natural environment, giving the natural geographical environment conducive to the construction and development of monasteries auspicious omen, and making it have a certain religious symbolic meaning. In the process of site selection of Labrang Monastery, the emphasis on landscape has condensed the survival philosophy of Tibetan people.

1.2. Site Selection is influenced by the Four Main Monasteries of the Gelug sect

From the plane form of the four main monasteries of the Gelug, the site selection of the monasteries abides by the rule of "backing mountains and rivers, building on mountains" [5]. The

monasteries are surrounded by mountains in the east, West and north, facing water (rivers) in the south, and the monasteries are located on the mountainside in the south. The monasteries, relying on the terrain as a whole, transit from valley plain zone to mountain area, form a magnificent space of mountains, rivers and monasteries [6]. The main reasons are as follows: Firstly, the site selection of monasteries is influenced by natural environment and climate, the natural environment of Tibet is bad, the resources of farming and pastoral areas are scarce and unevenly distributed, so monasteries often choose mountainous areas to alleviate the pressure of survival, while building monasteries in the south of mountains is for the consideration of windproof and resistance to severe cold; secondly, the location of monasteries is chosen at the mountainside. Moreover, the temple is surrounded by mountains on many sides, which is also due to the needs of the temple defense. The spatial pattern of “mountains, waters and temples” [7] formed by the four main monasteries of the Gelug sect relying on the natural geographical environment has become the spatial paradigm of the construction of the Gelug sect monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism since then.

2. Component Elements of Spatial Environment of Labrang Monastery

2.1. Natural Elements

2.1.1. The element of mountainous

The mountain elements in the landscape environment of Labrang Monastery mainly refer to the mountain system in the north of the monastery, including Woxiang Mountain, Mandala Mountain and Jiemu Mountain. Among them, Woxiang Mountain is named for its shape of sleeping elephant, and the massif of Woxiang Mountain spreads along the East-West direction; Mount Mandala is located in the northeast side of the monastery, shaped like a lotus, which is in line with the records of auspicious lotus in the book of Bka'-gdems-pa; Mount Jiemu is located in the northwest side of the temple, the mountain body trend to the south, shape like a triangle, symbolizing the treasure building [8]. The three mountain ranges are connected from east to west, forming the natural spatial boundaries of the east, west and north of the temple, which are endowed with the unity of religion and mountain worship of Tibetan people. Therefore, the natural mountain elements are endowed with important cultural context meaning in the Labrang monastery, which is one of the indispensable elements in the analysis of the landscape environment.

2.1.2. Water system elements

The Daxia River, also named as the Sangqu River, originates from the branch of Xiqin Mountain and flows through the Labrang monastery from west to east. It is an important source of living water in Labrang area. The river is tortuous and runs through the famous Sangko grassland.

The importance of the Daxia River to the Temple is reflected in two aspects. Firstly, as far as functionality is concerned, Daxia River is not only the main source of living water of Labrang Temple, but also an important part of the defense system of Labrang Temple, that is, the natural barrier of external defense. Secondly, from the perspective of spatial form, the mountains and waters behind the Labrang Temple, surrounded by mountains on the north side of the temple, and the Daxia River on the south side define the boundary of the temple. Furthermore, the north of the Daxia River is the Labrang Monastery complex, and the south side is the monastery forest and Zhanfotai [9]. The Daxia River plays a role in separating the two parts of the space.

2.2. Artificial Elements

The artificial elements of the temple are also an important part of the space environment of the Labrang Temple. Artificial elements mainly refer to buildings and structures, including Sutra halls, Buddhist halls, burdens, monks' houses and lamp assistant facilities, as well as sun-drying Buddhist terraces on the Henan side of Daxia river. These elements together with natural landscapes constitute the space environment model of “mountain-water-temple” of Labrang Temple, creating a mysterious and grand religious atmosphere.

3. Characteristics about Landscape Space Environment of Labrang monastery

3.1. The idea of Samsara

Samsara is a very special thought in Buddhist world outlook. First of all, the reincarnation should be understood based on the temporal category, which refers to the cyclical repetition between the past, the present and the future; secondly, reincarnation also needs to be expressed in the spatial category. Buddhism holds that the reincarnation of the universe is eternal, so the corresponding spatial structure will not change accordingly; and the reincarnation of life, in fact, changes, such as the six-way reincarnation often mentioned.

The samsara of landscape spatial pattern in Labrang Temple is embodied in the following two aspects:

Firstly, the cyclical nature of the spatial pattern of the landscape in Labrang Temple is reflected in the natural image of the landscape elements. The winding Woxiang Mountain in the East and West and the circuitous Daxia River in the south of the monastery constitute a magnificent scene of natural reincarnation. The water of the Daxia River flows continuously from west to east, implying that the reincarnation will never stop.

Secondly, the establishment of temple worship corridors. The worship corridor is a circular line for worship by monks and believers. The public worship corridor of Labrang Temple includes two kinds: the large worship corridor located at the boundary of the temple and the worship corridor located in the central square of the temple [10]. The layout of public worship corridors in Labrang Monastery adopts the layout mode of public worship corridors in the four main monasteries of the Gelug School. The public worship mode is produced under the circumstances of the evolution of the internal space structure of Tibetan Buddhist temple buildings and the increasing number of monks. The formation of public worship in monasteries is a direct reflection of Buddhist samsara.

3.2. Hierarchical Relationship

Labrang Temple landscape spatial pattern shows the hierarchical characteristics under the vertical spatial dimension. The hierarchical characteristics of the temple landscape pattern is based on topography and landform, and takes the natural mountains and waters as the boundary.

The topography of Labrang Monastery can be divided into three levels of topographic differences, gradually decreasing from north to south. Most of the important core buildings such as Buddhist halls and sutra halls are located in the northern part of the temple, where the terrain is higher. Most of the living-buddha's houses, monks' apartments are located in the lower terrain in the southern part of the temple.

Daxia River is located at the bottom of the vertical space sequence of Labrang Temple, which is the first level of the space sequence of the temple. Labrang Monastery Monastery monks' apartments are located on the first and second terraces, and the building scale is relatively low, which is the second level in the vertical spatial sequence of temple. The majority of Buddhist buildings are located on the second or third terraces, which is the fourth level of the vertical spatial sequence of the temple. The top level of the vertical spatial sequence is the spatial boundary which formed by a series of mountains in the north.

3.3. Centripetal Layout

The overall shape of Labrang Monastery is "conch", which is consistent with the prediction of the monastery before it was built. The whole monastery is centered on Wensi College [11]. Through the central square in front of Wensi College and the radial road system around it, the other colleges and Buddhist buildings of the monastery are arranged around Wensi College. The buildings of every college is also centered on the main building of the college. It can be seen that the layout of monastery buildings presents a concentric circle pattern of spatial composition. The closer to the core of spatial composition, the higher grade the building is, vice versa.

4. Conclusion

The landscape pattern of Labrang Monastery reflects the religious culture. Landscape elements play an important role in the site selection and the spatial form of Labrang monastery. Tibetan Buddhist culture endows the landscape with cultural symbols, so the layout of Tibetan Buddhism has formed a unique spatial order under the restriction of natural landscape, which has great significance for understanding and protecting the macroscopic spatial pattern of Labrang Monastery.

Acknowledgements

This paper is supported by the PhD Research Fund of Weifang University (2018BS13) and the Science and Technology Development Plan of Weifang (2018GX005).

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