

Viewing the Differences between Chinese and Western Cultures from the Perspective of Religious Architecture

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Abstract: Religious architecture is an important component of Chinese and Western culture. By comparing the design characteristics, functions, and meanings of religious architecture between China and the West, as well as the impact of Chinese and Western culture on religious architecture, we can reveal the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. In Chinese and Western cultures, there are differences in the status and importance of religious architecture, which affect the style, materials, and structure of buildings. The design characteristics of Chinese and Western religious architecture also show significant differences, including the comparison of architectural characteristics between churches and temples, differences in architectural style and artistic elements, and differences in building materials and structures. By comparing the differences in religious architecture between China and the West, one can gain a deeper understanding of the differences and integration between Chinese and Western cultures.

Keywords: Religious architecture, Chinese and Western culture, differences, design features, functions and meanings.

1. Introduction

Religious architecture, as an important component of Chinese and Western culture, carries the spiritual connotations of religious beliefs and cultural traditions. There are significant differences in religious architecture between Chinese and Western cultures, reflecting the unique characteristics and values of the two cultural traditions. By comparing and studying religious architecture between China and the West, we can gain a deeper understanding of the differences and blending phenomena between Chinese and Western cultures.^[1]

2. The Position of Religious Architecture in Chinese and Western Culture

2.1. The importance of Chinese and Western cultures on religious architecture

Religious architecture holds an important position in both Chinese and Western cultures, but there are differences in the degree of emphasis placed on religious architecture between the two cultures.^[2]In Western culture, especially under the influence of Christian culture, churches are regarded as the core venues for religious ceremonies and religious activities. Churches play an important religious and social role in Western society, serving as places for believers to gather, worship and pray, preach and educate, and celebrate holidays. Church architecture not only emphasizes the embodiment of religious rituals and art, but also carries the symbolic significance and collective memory of Western culture. In traditional Chinese culture, temples are also highly valued as places of religious belief. Temples also have important religious and social functions in Chinese society. In addition to being a place for believers to worship and practice, temples also undertake tasks such as social welfare activities, education and cultural inheritance. Temple architecture has been endowed with many cultural meanings in Chinese culture and has become an important component of traditional

Chinese culture.^[3]

2.2. The Impact of Religious Architecture on Chinese and Western Culture

Religious architecture not only receives attention from Chinese and Western cultures, but also has a profound impact on them. In Western culture, church architecture has influenced the development of Western architecture through its magnificent architectural style and artistic elements. Church architecture emphasizes a grand and solemn atmosphere, often featuring architectural features such as arches, domes, and spires, combined with artistic elements such as sculpture, murals, and colored windows, emphasizing the spiritual impact on believers. The influence of this religious architecture can be traced back to ancient Roman and Gothic style churches, which had a profound impact on the development of Western architecture. In traditional Chinese culture, temple architecture has influenced the evolution of Chinese architecture through its unique architectural style and cultural imagery.^[4]The temple pays attention to the overall harmony of the building, adopts traditional architectural elements such as double eaves, arch of wooden architecture and cornices, and strives to integrate with the natural environment. Temple architecture not only embodies the aesthetic pursuit of Chinese architecture, but also represents the religious beliefs, philosophical ideas, and values in traditional Chinese culture.

3. Comparison of Design Characteristics between Chinese and Western Religious Buildings

3.1. Comparison of architectural characteristics between churches and temples

In Western culture, church architecture emphasizes a grand and solemn atmosphere. Churches usually adopt a large architectural volume, with towering spires, spacious interior spaces, and long aisles. The layout of church buildings is

often centered around the central main altar, surrounded by side altars and benches. The interior decoration of the church is also very exquisite, with common artistic elements such as murals, colored windows, and sculptures. In addition, the church also emphasizes the use of acoustic effects and light to create a solemn and sacred atmosphere. In traditional Chinese culture, temple architecture pursues harmony with the natural environment. Temples usually adopt traditional architectural features such as double eaves roofs, cornices and arch of wooden architecture. The layout of temples is often set against the backdrop of mountains and rivers, located at the foot or top of the mountain, and the architecture is combined with the mountains and rivers. Inside temples, there are usually multiple halls and Buddha statues for believers to worship and practice. Temple architecture emphasizes the overall harmony of the building, pursuing the combination of nature and humanity to create a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.^[5]

3.2. Differences in architectural style and artistic elements

In Western culture, church architecture often adopts styles such as Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance. Gothic church architecture is famous for its pointed arches, spires, and spires, with representative works including Notre Dame in France. Romanesque church architecture is famous for its thick stone walls, vaults, and domes, with representative works including the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy. During the Renaissance, church architecture focused on imitating and recreating classical architecture, pursuing harmonious proportions and symmetrical layouts. In traditional Chinese culture, the styles of temple architecture mainly include the Tang style, Song style, and Ming and Qing style of Buddhist temples.^[6] Tang style temple buildings are famous for their features of double eaves, arch of wooden architecture and cornices. The representative works are the Great Cien Temple in Shanxi. Song style temple architecture emphasizes simplicity and smooth lines, with representative works such as Lingyin Temple in Zhejiang. The Ming and Qing style temple architecture is famous for its fine carving, rich color painting, and glazed tile decoration, with representative works including the Summer Palace in Beijing.

3.3. Differences and Similarities between Building Materials and Structures

In Western culture, church buildings often use materials such as stone, bricks, and glass. These materials are not only durable, but also reflect the solemnity and eternity of the building. The structure of churches often adopts forms such as arches, domes, and spires to support the weight of the building and provide internal space. The use of this structural form enables the church to have a grand internal space and a towering architectural image. In traditional Chinese culture, temple buildings often use materials such as wood, tiles, and colored paintings. These materials can reflect the natural harmony in traditional Chinese culture. The structure of the temple is often in the form of arch of wooden architecture and beam column to support the weight of the building and increase the stability of the building.^[7] The use of this structural form enables the temple to integrate with the natural environment and showcase the characteristics of traditional Chinese architecture.

4. Differences in Function and Significance of Religious Architecture between China and the West

4.1. Differences in Religious Rites and Place Use

In Western culture, churches are the main places where Christians engage in religious ceremonies, worship, and prayer. Inside churches, there is often a main altar used for mass and other religious ceremonies. The church also has benches for believers to sit down on, allowing them to concentrate and participate in worship and teaching of doctrines. In addition, churches are often used as venues for important occasions such as weddings and funerals. In traditional Chinese culture, temples are places for Buddhists to engage in religious ceremonies, worship, and practice. Temples usually have multiple halls inside, offering Buddha statues and other religious shrines. Believers burn incense and kowtow in the temple to express their piety and reverence. The temple is also a place for Buddhists to practice and meditate, providing a peaceful and peaceful environment that helps people cultivate their character and character.^[8]

4.2. The relationship between architectural layout and religious beliefs

In Western culture, the layout of church architecture often revolves around a central main altar, surrounded by side altars and benches. This layout reflects the monistic worship of God and the emphasis on simple faith in Christianity. Believers gather together in the church to participate in religious ceremonies and prayers to express their reverence and gratitude towards God. In traditional Chinese culture, the layout of temple buildings is often set against the backdrop of mountains and rivers, and the site is located at the foot or top of the mountain. This layout reflects the pursuit of natural harmony in Buddhism, seeking peace of mind and integration with nature. The halls inside a temple are usually arranged in a linear pattern to worship Buddha statues and perform religious ceremonies. The layout of religious buildings is closely related to religious beliefs, reflecting believers' understanding of religion and their pursuit of holiness. The layout differences between Chinese and Western religious buildings reflect the differences in the expression of sacredness and religious experiences in Chinese and Western cultures.

5. The Influence of Chinese and Western Culture on Religious Architecture

5.1. Evolution of Religious Architectural Styles in the Context of Chinese and Western Cultures

In Western culture, religious architectural styles have gone through stages such as the classical style of the Roman Empire, the medieval Gothic style, and the Renaissance style.^[9] Classical style church architecture is influenced by ancient Greek and Roman architecture, emphasizing the pursuit of symmetry and proportion. Gothic style church architecture pursues verticality and spatial expression, emphasizing the use of pointed arches. During the Renaissance, church

architecture returned to the imitation and recreation of classical architecture, pursuing harmonious proportions and symmetrical layouts. In traditional Chinese culture, the evolution of religious architectural styles mainly experienced the development of the Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The temple architecture of the Tang Dynasty emphasized the characteristics of solemnity and grandeur, emphasizing symmetry and stability. The temple architecture of the Song Dynasty placed greater emphasis on simplicity and harmony, emphasizing the smoothness of lines and natural expression. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, temple architecture utilized more carving and painting techniques, pursuing architectural decoration and exquisite details.

5.2. The Influence of Chinese and Western Culture on Religious Architectural Art

In Western culture, religious architectural art emphasizes the expression of divinity and the experience of faith. The church architecture creates a solemn and solemn atmosphere through artistic elements such as murals, colored windows, and sculptures. These artistic elements are not only interpretations of religious scriptures and doctrines, but also spiritual impacts and inspirations for believers. The artistic expressions of Western religious architecture are rich and diverse, with strong religious connotations and artistic value. In traditional Chinese culture, religious architectural art emphasizes the pursuit of natural harmony and the expression of humanistic spirit. Temple buildings often use techniques such as wood carving, ceramic tiles, and color painting to decorate the walls, beams, columns, and halls inside and outside the temple. These artistic elements fully demonstrate the aesthetic concepts and philosophical ideas of traditional Chinese culture. The artistic expression of Chinese religious architecture emphasizes the overall layout and meticulous details, reflecting the unique charm of Chinese civilization. The influence of Chinese and Western cultures on religious architecture is mutual, and has had a positive impact on the artistic expression, style evolution, and spiritual connotation of religious architecture. The evolution of religious architectural styles in the context of Chinese and Western cultures, as well as the influence of Chinese and Western cultures on religious architectural art, not only enriches the diversity of religious architecture, but also promotes the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures.^[10]

6. Conclusion

The importance, design characteristics, functions and

meanings, as well as the influence on art of religious architecture vary between Chinese and Western cultures. In the comparison of design characteristics between Chinese and Western religious buildings, churches and temples exhibit unique architectural styles and artistic elements, reflecting the aesthetic concepts and values of Chinese and Western cultures. Finally, the influence of Chinese and Western cultures on religious architecture is reflected in the evolution of architectural styles and the development of art. It not only presents the unique charm of each culture, but also promotes the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures.

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