



A Study on the Evolution of Tibetan Dwelling Form in Luhuo County from the Perspective of Cultural Ecology Theory

Ting Huang, Min Pan

School of Architecture, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, China

Email: 2573479071@qq.com

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Abstract

Luhuo County is located in the north-central part of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. With the change of time and the emergence of various influencing factors, the dwelling form of Luhuo County has also begun to evolve. The method used in the study is known as the Cultural Ecology Theory, which applies the view of “whole, system, and symbiosis” to explain the evolution of the dwelling form. The purpose of this paper is to study the evolution factors of the dwelling form in Luhuo County and to understand the changes brought by the evolution of the dwelling form to the living habits of residents. It is hoped that through this paper with cultural ecology theory, we can discover whether the evolution of the residential form in Luhuo County is scientific.

Subject Areas

Architecture

Keywords

Cultural Ecology Theory, Luhuo County, The Evolution of Dwelling Form, Conservation Research

1. Introduction

In the half of the 20 century, cultural ecology theory was first proposed by American cultural anthropologist J. H. Steward. Cultural ecology theory advocates the study of the principles of cultural production and development from the interaction of humans, nature, society, and culture, in order to explore a special mode of cultural development. Cultural ecology theory is an interdisciplinary

nary subject that contains theories of ecology, cultural anthropology, cultural geography, and urban sociology. Cultural ecology theory focuses on the application of the theory of “whole, system, and symbiosis” [1], which provides an important theoretical basis for the study of the adaptation process of Luhuo Tibetan dwelling form to the environment.

Luhuo County is located in the north-central part of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The Sichuan-Tibet 317 line runs through the whole territory from southeast to northwest. Luhuo County is the center of Kang Bei area which is an important transportation area, and it is a semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral area. Luhuo County has a vast territory, and there are multi-ethnic residents living in this place where most of the residents are Tibetan. With the constant changes in the relationship between nature and society, the dwelling form of Tibetan residents in Luhuo County has also evolved. Dwelling form includes two aspects: residential form and living style. The residential form takes place in the environment composed of residences and related spaces; the form of residence is directly determined by the living lifestyle, and has a certain restriction or promotion effect on it, both of which are at the same time affected by natural, social, economic, and cultural factors [2].

Most scholars study the evolution of Tibetan-style dwellings from the perspective of architectural ontology, but there are few studies on the evolution of Tibetan-style dwellings from the perspective of cultural ecology. This paper explores the evolution of Tibetan dwelling form in Luhuo County from the perspective of cultural ecology theory, taking the evolution of Tibetan dwelling form as the main research object, regarding cultural ecology theory as the research method, and focusing on the study of Tibetan dwelling forms from the perspectives of system, symbiosis, and ecological evolution. According to the relationship between cultural history and ecological environment to review the evolution of the dwelling form in Luhuo County, it is hoped that this paper can propose a protection strategy for Tibetan dwelling forms based on cultural ecology, and provide theoretical guidance and suggestions for the protection and development of dwelling forms from Luhuo Tibetan areas to other Tibetan areas on the plateau.

2. The Environment of the Evolution of Dwelling Form in Luhuo County

According to field visits, questionnaires and review of relevant local dwelling documents, it is found that the environment for the evolution of dwellings in Luhuo County should not only take into account natural factors, but also include economic and social factors.

2.1. The Rapid Development of Communications, Information and Other Industries Has Provided a Communication Platform for the Evolution of Dwelling Form

With the vigorous development of modern information technology, the com-

munication through electronic equipment has become more frequent in various regions of the country, and different cultures, architectural styles, living habits, customs which between different regions also have different degrees of communication and sharing. The Tibetan area in Luhuo County is also taking advantage of this revolutionary trend, and the exchanges with the central and eastern regions are becoming closer. Through the electronic communication network, we can understand the life style of different regions, and gradually absorb it in the process of continuous understanding. Combining with their characteristics meet to satisfy their own needs, thus promoting the evolution of the Tibetan dwelling form in Luhuo County.

2.2. The Upgrading of Building Materials Provides a Material Basis for the Evolution of Dwelling Form

Driven by innovation and technology, focusing on green development and high-quality development, Western areas of Sichuan Province have promoted the gradual realization of innovative, green, and cyclical development of the building materials industry in the whole region by technological transformation, technological innovation, and resource recycling. With the continuous renewal of building materials, Tibetan residents in Luhuo County have more choices of building materials in the process of housing construction, and their dwelling form has also changed.

2.3. Development of Tourism

Luhuo County is rich in tourism resources with one provincial nature reserve and two county-level nature reserves, as well as attractions such as Kasa Lake, Zongta Grassland, Yiri Valley, Earthquake Relics, Sarcophagus Tombs, Red Army culture Relics and other scenic spots, tourism has become one of its main industries. On the one hand, it has promoted the economic development of Luhuo County. On the other hand, the industrial structure has also led to a shift from a single-structure industry to a multi-structure industry, which has also facilitated the shift of Luhuo Tibetan residents' occupation to the service industry. In order to meet the needs of tourists, the residential style has been recreated and the dwelling form has changed.

2.4. Support from "Rural Revitalization" Policy and the Development of Urbanization

Urbanization is an important symbol of modernization. Compared with other regions in China, the economic development of ethnic areas is relatively lagging, and urbanization has become a necessary means for ethnic areas to get rid of poverty. With the national "Rural Revitalization" and "New-type Urbanization" construction, Luhuo County is gradually establishing new towns and cities, the population is gradually moving to the towns and cities, the development of education and various industries are being emphasized, thus new types of residential housing have emerged and the lifestyle of the residents has changed.

2.5. Promotion of Natural Disasters

Luhuo County has experienced powerful earthquake disasters, and residents' houses will also suffer significant damage during the earthquake, with collapse and huge breakage of residential dwellings. In order to avoid the personal safety of residents, building clustered residential settlements also has an impact on the evolution of residential forms. Secondly, in order to protect the sustainable development of the ecology, prevent excessive farming and grazing, maintain the balance of grass storage, and excessive use of land, and secondly, indiscriminate logging is strictly prohibited, so that the early construction of houses with wooden structures lacks raw materials, and the construction cost becomes high, thus promoting the evolution of dwelling form.

3. The Evolution of Dwelling Form in Luhuo County from the Perspective of Cultural Ecology Theory

This paper will describe the evolution of the dwelling form in the three stages.

3.1. From Black Tent to White

According to the Chinese Residential Architecture Series "Tibetan Residents", the plateau people used animal skins and branches to build a simple canopy to build a simple canopy in the ancient times tens of millions of years ago, thus the tree branches and animal skins formed the earliest prototype of the black tent [3]. Deer, tiger and leopard skins are used as tents as recorded in the Tibetan Book of History of the Pillars [4], which proves that the large number of animal skins in the Mesolithic Age greatly improved the construction technology of leather tents. The emergence of textile weaving technology and the improvement of wild animal domestication skills are the most fundamental reasons for the emergence of black tents. For thousands of years, the nomadic production mode of grassland herdsman choosing grass and water to live has determined frequent migration and no fixed place to live. Tent, which is easy to set up and dismantle, convenient and practical to live in, has become the best choice for herders in the long-term production and living practices. The black tent is usually made by the herdsman themselves, men are responsible for twisting threads and women are responsible for weaving. The size of the tent depends on the economic conditions and family population. It takes about a year to make a black tent, and takes two to three years for a larger size and more attention to the weaving process. The material used to make black tents is the long thick hair of yaks, which is very hard and strong and durable for making tents. The black tents in pastoral areas are often divided into "Yin" and "Yang" tents. According to the traditional Tibetan customs, there are some special rules in the "Yin" and "Yang" tents. The black tent weaving technology is a rich cultural heritage created by the herdsman, and it is also the crystallization of the wisdom and labor of the herdsman.

However, with the changes of the times, the descendants of most Tibetans are becoming more and more unfamiliar with these traditional Tibetan cultures.

Many Tibetans born in the 1990s have never seen a Tibetan black tent, and children younger than this don't even know what a black tent is. Many Tibetan pastoral areas have also begun to set up tents made of white cloth. In the process of fieldwork in Luo Huo County, we also found that the residents who now live in tents mostly live in white tents; black tents are now mostly places for cattle and sheep to be penned or piles of debris, which means that the traditional tents are gradually disappearing. (Figure 1)

3.2. From White Tents to Government-Issued Tents

With the progress of textile technology in Tibetan area, a kind of white cotton cloth Tibetan-style tent has appeared on the grassland, mainly cut and sewn by hand with white cotton cloth, with different sizes, such as axe-blade shape, hiatus top shape, quadrilateral, hexagonal and so on. The large ones can accommodate dozens of people, and the small ones can be enjoyed by one person alone. White tents are cool, breathable, and easy to make, so they are very popular. With the rise of the tent market, white tent production cycle is short, put less energy compared to the black tent, people in the nomadic process more inclined to white tent; secondly, the Tibetan region tourism trend is increasingly prosperous, white tent shape, style more diverse, therefore, in the development of tourism in Luhuo County, white tent more popular with tourists, thus promoting residents more choose to live in the white tent. Secondly, affected by the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, the national leaders came to observe the earthquake damage, during which they inspected the hardship of the residents' life, thus the government made the tent distribution, the government issued the tent with better quality compared to the tent formulated by the market, and more favored by the residents. (Figure 2)

3.3. From Tents to Settlements

With the improvement of living standards and the change of concept as well as



Figure 1. Black tent and white tent.



Figure 2. Government-issued tent.

the support of policy, more herdsmen have settled down, and the use of tents has also begun to change. It has become the main reception facility on the grasslands and a tool for people to relax and camp. In addition, settlements are divided into two categories. One is wooden houses, which are mobile and live in which are warm in winter and cool in summer, but are prone to fire in dry environments. After the logging policy, the materials used to build wooden houses are also building materials to replace wood; the second type is the resettlement sites that are homogeneous with other areas, and the Tibetan characteristics are not very strong. The lifestyle of the inhabitants has also changed, as the settlements are mostly inhabited by the elderly and children, with the elderly aging in the settlements, the children going to school in the settlements, and the middle-aged and young people being nomadic or working outside, which has begun to diminish the ethnic identity of the Tibetan residents. (Figure 3)

4. Problems in the Evolution and Protection of Luhuo County's Dwelling Form in the Perspective of Cultural Ecology

4.1. The Process of Residential Evolution Is Characterized by Uncoordinated Regional Development and Large Disparities

Cultural ecology theory emphasizes the concept of system and coordination. The uncoordinated regional development of Luhuo County is mainly due to the different economic development conditions, natural geographical locations, education, development of communication technology and residents' own ideology. Luhuo County spreads out from the center of Luhuo town, the quality of residential buildings is distributed from high to low, and the lifestyle also transitions from good to poor. Therefore, Luhuo County should pay attention to the



Figure 3. Wooden mobile homes and residential settlement sites.

coordinated development, not only to pay attention to the steady development of the dwelling form of the residents in the urban center, but also to pay attention to the guarantee of the residential and living quality of the residents in the agricultural and pastoral areas.

4.2. Unilateral Pursuit of Material Development, Lack of National Characteristic Culture

During the construction process of Luhuo County, it focused more on the construction of urbanization, and did not pay enough attention to the protection and inheritance of national culture. In terms of the protection and inheritance of ethnic culture, there is no set of effective protection measures. In the process of moving to the resettlement sites, the ethnic cultural relics have not been effectively protected. As a result, the urbanization construction of Luhuo County is in full swing and the living style of Luhuo County is completely new, but the elements and traces of the national characteristic culture will gradually weaken.

5. Conclusion

With the change of the times, the living patterns of residents in the Tibetan areas of Luhuo County are also evolving. From the perspective of cultural ecology, this paper emphasizes the cultural ecology theory of “integrity, coordination, and symbiosis” [5] and explores the evolution of the dwelling form in Luhuo County, which is influenced by communication information, construction materials, tourism, natural disasters and related policies and other factors. The dwelling form of Luhuo County has changed from black tents to white tents and then to settlements, and it has also led to changes in the way of life of the residents. At the same time, we have also seen the existing problems in the evolution so far. The regional development of Luhuo County is not coordinated, and the material pursuit and civilization inheritance are not synchronized. Therefore, in the face of the evolution of dwelling form, we should not neglect the overall development and the preservation and transmission of our own ethnic culture.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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