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Hui Opera and Buildings with Wood Carvings—Interpreting Opera House Wood Carvings During the Rise and Fall of Hui Opera

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Abstract

Hui opera originated in Shipai town, Anhui Province. Yangzhou served as the origin of this art form, and Hui opera was spread by Huizhou merchants. However, stories from operas were seldom depicted in wood carvings used to distinguish and adorn buildings. Kunqu opera was an early original style, showcased in over one hundred operas, which rivaled Hui opera. This competition facilitated the flourishing of both opera styles, leading to the creation of buildings adorned with wood carvings that unified the two styles into an aesthetically pleasing system of opera wood carvings. When the rural culture of Huizhou intersected with the urban cultures of Yangzhou and Suzhou, the art forms of opera and wood carving in buildings merged to create an expression that has been referenced and used as an influence, capturing the deep-rooted meaning of these cultures through the aesthetic aspects of the buildings. Historical transformations depicting changes over time can be used to illustrate the rise and fall of opera in this era. The evolution and performance of Hui opera's style are dynamically presented and preserved in material form by buildings adorned with wood carvings, effectively capturing this art form in time.

Keywords

Hui opera, Kunqu, Huizhou merchants, Wood carving building, Opera wood carving

1. Introduction

Huizhou was known as “Xin’an” in ancient times and was a mountainous region in the hinterland. Since ancient times, this area has been known for its standards in etiquette and thought, and quite a few famous people have come from Huizhou. The rich traditions of the people in this area have formed the unique Huizhou culture. Huizhou bordered Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze River), which had a developed economy in terms of commodities, thus attracting many merchants to conduct business. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, there were two main routes that facilitated cultural exchanges between Huizhou and Jiangnan. “One route reached Zhenjiang city and Yangzhou city from the north via Nanjing, and the other route reached Suzhou city and Hangzhou city from the south to the east.”1 Hui opera was spread to the whole country along these two routes, and the artists constantly learned techniques from other operas and improved Hui opera. The dissemination of Hui opera also influenced the architecture of this area. There are many famous buildings with wood carvings in Huizhou, representing the best of Huizhou wood carving art. What is their connection with Huizhou merchants, Hui opera, and buildings with wood carvings, and what kind of inspiration can this connection offer us?

2. Hui Opera and Buildings with Wood Carvings

2.1 Overview of the Development of Hui Opera

In the book entitled *Informal Discussion on the Rise and Fall of Hui Opera*, Hong Fei wrote, "The flourishing of the Huizhou opera troupe started in Shipai town of Anqing prefecture (Bao Shichen)" (Hong, 1984). Hui opera took shape in the former Anqing prefecture and was centered in Shipai town. Based on Shipai tunes and Erhuang tunes, it later became popular in the Huizhou region. During the Wanli years of the Ming Dynasty, Fu Yan, the county magistrate of She County mentioned in the *She Chronicle*, "It is the custom in Huizhou that people like to set a drama stage for watching operas (Chen, 2017)." Zhao Jishi in the Qing Dynasty recorded his ancestors' experience in watching the local Hui opera performance in *Jiyuanjisuoji*: "In the 27th year of Wanli, Xiuning embraced its spring season and a total of 109 stages were built with children performing stories, decorated with gold beads that competed for resplendence. It was so beautiful (Zhao, 2008)." Kunqu also became popular in Huizhou and Anqing. During the Chongzhen years in the Ming Dynasty, Ruan Dacheng, born in Huaining of Anqing in Jinling, owned a family troupe consisting of quite a few opera performers born in Huaining who enjoyed great popularity in Jiangnan for Kunqu singing. Kunqu died during the Qing Dynasty, and many opera performers returned to the local region, enabling the Hui opera to integrate into Kunqu once again. Wang Chang'an said, "There has never been a case for a singing form centering on Huizhou dialect or tune to be finally condensed into one genre." In this case, the opera popular in the Huizhou region originated from other regions accompanied by the boom of customary activities in Huizhou. Later, with the strong support of Huizhou merchants, wherever there were Huizhou merchants, there were Huizhou troupes, hence starting to exert an impact on the whole country.

The Hui troupe was popular in the period from the 41st year of Qianlong to the 19th year of Daoguang (1776-1839), a period of approximately 63 years. The book entitled *Informal Discussion on the Rise and Fall of Hui Opera* written by Hong Fei mentioned approximately 30 opera scripts, including the Erhuang opera, Anqing Clapper, Qingyang tunes, and others. Together with Kunqu and half-Peking and half-Hui opera scripts, the number of opera scripts that were compiled for the Hui opera reached approximately 40. In the book entitled Entry of Hui Troupe into Beijing and Transformation of Hui Opera in the South, Liu Sha mentioned that there were approximately 23 pieces of mixed Kunqu and Peking opera performance, approximately 45 Erhuang tunes. "At that time, the Shipai troupe that was able to sing high octaves did not join the ranks of Hui Troupe into Beijing" (Liu, 1990). There were approximately 80 Erhuang opera. Various tunes were blended. Therefore, the Hui opera is an opera genre that "is tolerant to diversity like the ocean receiving various currents".

2.2 Historical Origin of Huizhou Buildings with Wood Carvings

Carvings in Huizhou originated in the Song Dynasty, and Huizhou was known for its wood, stone, and brick carvings (commonly known as the "three carvings"). During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Huizhou merchants dominated the business world for as long as 200 or 300 years and built luxurious, unique, and exquisitely decorated houses in their hometowns. Moreover, coupled with the uniqueness of three types of carvings, a large school of Chinese architectural art - Huizhou architecture took shape. Wood carving was used in Hui-style architecture, such as beam frame, beam bracket, bracket arch, sparrow space, breast boards, balustrades, columns, windows, and partition boards. In particular, the breast boards around the interior hall and rooms are the most important part of wood carving decorations. These wood carvings are not painted, showing the natural color and texture of the wood, and the fine carvings enable the whole building to exude a folk art flavor. Quite a few renowned "buildings with wood carving" in Huizhou have the best Hui-style wood carving art, which not only reflects the aesthetic interest of Huizhou Confucian merchants but also demonstrates the influence of opera among ordinary people in Huizhou at that time.

At that time, Lu Village "Zhicheng Hall" was known as "the first building carved in wood in Huizhou". Lu Bangxie was the owner of the building, which was built after 1826. The building contains the largest number of wood carved pieces on the stories of different characters. Specifically, there are 92 pieces. Aside from stories about famous scholars such as "Taibai Drunkeness" and "Shepherd Su Wu", there is also the opera script of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms with exquisite carving techniques, making it a museum of carving art.

Close to the Lu village building, Hong village "Chengzhi Hall" was another high-quality building with wood carvings built by Wang Dinggui, the large salt merchant and a rank-5 Tongzhi, in the 5th year of Xianfeng in the Qing dynasty (1855). The hall beam was carved to depict the *Banquet of Emperor Suzong of Tang Dynasty,* and the back

hall beam was carved depicting the *Birthday Party of Guo Ziyi* and *Nine Generations in the Same Hall*. The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was carved on the left and right sides of the Shang-shaped gate, and many other plays were engraved on the beam.

For Jiyu Hall, the Tachuan Qing Dynasty residential house built in the Qianlong years, all the essence is concentrated in the waist plates, in which 4 waist plates are carved with "Yue Fei's mother tattooing characters on his back", "Mrs. Tang breastfeeding her mother-in-law", "Shepherd Su Wu", and "A promise is weightier than one thousand bars of gold", thus expressing the Confucian ideology of loyalty, filial piety, moral integrity, and righteousness which were decorated with golden rims.

The Huizhou buildings have exquisite wood carvings that usually tell stories such as "eight immortals crossing the sea", "two immortals of harmony and reunion", "Magu's birthday congratulations", and "Gods of Happiness, Salary, and Longevity", to reflect the people's aspiration to live a beautiful life. There are also large and long pieces with numerous characters, such as "three saints' birthday celebration" and "Guo Ziyi's birthday congratulations", to express auspiciousness, filial piety, and household harmony. Many buildings with wood carvings show the stories of "Yue Fei's mother tattooing characters on his back", "The 24 stories of filial piety", "Generals of Yang Family", and "Romance of the Three Kingdoms". The Huizhou region prefers these historical allusions and Confucian classical themes. Wood carvings are used to publicize the values of "loyalty, filial piety and righteousness" with a clear intention of moral education. Born in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Hui opera became powerful so quickly that it appeared in buildings with wood carving in the Qianlong years, which was a reflection of the business success of Hui merchants. This also reflected Hui merchants' gracefulness and inquisitiveness in learning. They built schools, constructed buildings, did good deeds, and practiced righteousness, displaying their talents in various fields of Huizhou and playing a pivotal role in regional culture. Wherever Hui merchants and Hui opera performers traveled, they interacted with the local people and influenced each other's cultures; the modified cultures that arose from this interplay also impacted Huizhou.

3. The Boom of Opera and Independence of Yangzhou Wood Carvings

During the Sui, Tang, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the wealth of Yangzhou was highly concentrated, and the salt merchants in Yangzhou were as rich as the emperor. The two emperors Kangxi and Qianlong visited Yangzhou several times, and the gardens on both sides of Slender West Lake were connected into the same plot; hence, "the garden was so luxuriant that it ranked first in the world". The garden architecture of Hui merchants in Yangzhou was developed considering the temperament and interests of the people, and buildings with wood carved beams and painted pillars are the most valuable architectural structures. Adequate opera stages were built, and full-scale operas were performed to entertain emperors traveling to southern China. Therefore, Hui tunes (Anqing Erhuang) were able to go downstream to the east and enjoy burgeoning growth with Yangzhou as their center. stated Jiang Chun (born in She County), who "mastered the salt industry in Huainan and Huaibei, experiencing ups and downs for 50 years", and who hired the famous performer Hao Tianxiu in Anqing to beef up his outsider troupe named "Chuntai Troupe". According to Volume 7 *Luxury of Mrs. Wang* in *Classified Notes of Qing Dynasty: Luxury Category*, "Wang Shigong, was one of the eight major salt merchants in Huainan and Huaibei. He employed many opera performers in his family troupe and often asked the troupe to perform for fun (Xu, 2010)." Meanwhile, salt merchants also established Kunqu family classes with the emergence of "Yangzhou 7 internal troupes" in the history of Kunqu. Over 30 masterpieces were recorded in the *Yangzhou Pleasure Boat* Annals which included *Xiaoguang Sword*, *Records of Daughters*, *Map of Xichuan*, *Bend of a River*, *Can Xiang, You Dian*, *Yi Jian*, *Drunken Bodhi*, *Water Margin*, *Pipa Records*, *Qingfeng Dam*, *Peony Pavilion*, *The History of the Three Kingdoms*, *and Jade Dragon* (Li & Pan, 2014). Government-run, family-run, and folk opera troupes were quite active. Quite a few operas of Hui troupes were adapted from the scripts of Luan Tan and far exceeded the original Anqing Erhuang opera, indicating that Yangzhou Luan Tan made major contributions to the Hui opera. Under the support of Hui merchants, opera creation and performance became increasingly prosperous and active.

Although there was a rich convergence of northern and southern operas, there are almost no traces of opera-themed wood carvings in the existing salt merchants' former residences before the Tongzhi period, such as the Street South Study, Wang Lumen's Residence, the former Residence of Bao Shiliang, and the residence of Zhang Liangji.

We can examine the development of wood carvings in Yangzhou from the surviving Ge Garden, one of the four famous gardens in China. During the Kangxi period, An Qi, one of the chief salt merchants in Huainan and Huaibei, purchased the "A Clan Garden", including today's Ge Garden. During the Jiaqing years, Huang Zhigun, the general

agent of the Yangzhou salt merchants, purchased the "A Clan Garden" and reconstructed it. During the Guangxu years, prefecture chief Liu Guinian purchased the former garden of Huang Clan. Although the owner of Ge Garden changed several times, it can be seen from the current style that the Han School Hall was the ceremonial reception hall of the Huang clan. The two rooms in the corner of both sides are used to receive guests or perform operas. Mr. Huang once raised an opera troupe of 200 or 300 people. Although it was not as prosperous as during the peak of the Qianlong era, opera is no less popular than in those years.

The Cedarwood Hall of Ge Garden is carved with bats meaning "fortune". The floor cover of Nanmu Hall is carved with magpies on plum trees. Yiyu Hall is carved with the main pattern of pine, bamboo, and plum, the so-called "Three Friends in Cold Weather", supplemented by the pattern of Glossy Ganoderma Ruyi Jadeware. The pine, plum, and bamboo are intertwined and then intersected at the top in clusters and layers. The exquisite carvings reflect the high standards of the time, and all of them are based on poetry and rituals, conveying the interpretation of poetry and ritual. Careful observation reveals that Yangzhou architecture generally uses the abovementioned subject matter and prefers to use the pictures of the "Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou" as the decoration patterns, indicating that, Yangzhou Hui merchants admire the innovative and unique creative ideas of the Yangzhou school of painting. From the surviving residence of Wang Shigong during the Qianlong period, it can be seen that the Hui merchants brought the architectural features of Huizhou to Yangzhou, with rainwater sinking into the "patio" from all sides, integrating the theme of "four streams of water converging in the patio" with the exquisitely carved wooden sculpture balconets, but without the opera wood carving of Huizhou residences. To a certain extent, the architects brought by Huizhou merchants were changed by the elite "Scholar Culture" of Yangzhou.

We now refer to the development of the Yangzhou opera. However, comparing with that of Huizhou and Suzhou, opera woodcarvings in Yangzhou are rare, which is a peculiar phenomenon that demonstrates its relative independence.

4. Kunqu Opera and Buildings with Wood Carvings under "the Dispute between Hua Tunes and Ya Tunes"

Kunqu occupies a unique position in the development of Chinese operas and is respected as the "ancestor of all operas", as operas originated in the 14th century (the end of the Yuan Dynasty) at the south point of Taicang, Suzhou, and reached its highest popularity during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. In the middle of the Qianlong period, there was a "Dispute Between Hua Tunes and Ya Tunes" between Kun troupes and Hui troupes, but in Suzhou and Yangzhou, the families of officials still raised Kun troupes, and Kunqu was still in a dominant position in the opera community. From mid-November of the 45th year of the Qianlong reign (1780) to the autumn of the 47th year of the Qianlong reign (1782), a survey of the opera in Yangzhou and Suzhou was conducted. "According to comprehensive studies, the number of plays obtained by the Yangzhou Lyric and Music Bureau, plus those obtained by the Suzhou Weavers, excluding copies, was around six or seven hundred in total for the two regions" (Peng, 2016). Bountiful plays provide inexhaustible sources for composing operas and creating wood carvings. After the early Qing Dynasty, Suzhou wood carving decorative art started to be extensively adopted in building decoration. With the prevalence of folk opera performance, opera stories have become a common decorative theme of buildings with wood carving. In Jia Dao years, opera wood carving on waist plates of residences flourished.

A representative building with wood carvings in the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty is the Humble Administrator's Garden. The existing buildings in the Humble Administrator's Garden were mostly rebuilt in the 9th year of the Xianfeng Emperor of the Qing Dynasty (1860 AD) when it became the garden on the site of King Zhongwang's Residence of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The site of King Zhongwang's Residence and Humble Administrator's Garden formed a relationship of residence and garden. According to Li Hongzhang's letter, at the site of King Zhongwang's residence, there were three or four gardens and two or three drama platforms, which were unknown in that era. The main building in the west, the 36-Mandarin Duck Pavilion, was a place for the garden owner to invite guests and listen to operas. There are opera-themed wood carvings such as *Shepherd Su Wu* and *Guan Yu Reading the Spring and Autumn Annals*. The Hong Kaoliang Museum of the Humble Administrator's Garden is the dominant building in the east, where all the floor-to-ceiling long window apron boards and plywood are carved with boxwood carving, with a total of 48 reliefs of opera texts, respectively engraved with *The Golden Jade Ruyi* and *The Romance of the Western Chamber*. *The Romance of the Western Chamber* contains scenes such as "Zhang Sheng jumping the wall to meet Ying", "listening to the zither", "Ying salutes the moon", "interrogating Red Maid", "Farewell at the long pavilion", and "help clear troubles". Obviously, Suzhou opera-themed wood carving tends to display the integrity

and continuity of literary works. Wood carvings are refined, richly layered, and lifelike, such as the brushwork of the "Wu School of Painting" with elegantly drawn characters, smooth lines, and the depiction of the central character's demeanor, dynamics, and costume, which can be described as "a triumph of grace and charm".

As a more mature drama genre, Kun opera has a set of procedures and techniques for its performances. Its dance opera also incorporates traditional folk dances and court dances in many ways to create many dance performances that accurately depict the culture, which has greatly influenced the Hui opera. Hui opera also absorbed many one-satire act operas, including *Peony Pavilion*, *Iron Crown*, *Jade Hairpin*, *Water Margin,* and *Kite Mistake,* during the Daoguang period. Therefore, there are many classic stories in the buildings with wood carvings of both places, such as *Jiang Gan Steals Book*, *Zhou Yu Beats Huang Gai*, *Meng De Stabs Dong Zhuo*, and *Borrowing Your Enemy's Arrows with Grass Boats* in Wangshi Garden (Qianlong), *Jingde Beats Royal Relatives in the Golden Palace*, *Su Qin Lobbies Six Kingdoms by Carrying a Sword on his Back*, *Guo Ziyi Defeats the Soldiers on a Single Horse*, *Song Taizu Sends off Jing Maiden for 1,000 Miles*, *Tao Sanchun Watches over the Melon in the Field*, *Xi Shi Washes Yarn and Meets Fanli in West Mountain* in Jingxiu Hall (Qianlong), and *A Story of the White Rabbit* and *Fifteen Strings of Cash* in Shijian Hall (Qianli in West Mountain). Wood carvings with the same themes can be found in the Huizhou opera wood carvings, demonstrating that the two places are closely connected and referenced in terms of subject matter, aesthetics, and technology.

5. Huizhou Opera Wood Carvings during Opera's Transformation

Hui opera with Kunyi Tunes underwent constant development after incorporating tunes such as Qin Tunes, forming a complete Erhuang system. In Jiangsu, the integrated development trend of Anqing Erhuang, Yangzhou Luantan, and Kun Tunes began to emerge. Later, a grand event occurred when four major Hui troupes entered Beijing. In the 55th year of Qianlong (1790), the Hui troupe named after "Sanqing" entered Beijing. Ever since then, all troupes have worked hard and started to thrive with more performers being traded and absorbed among each other. The Sanqing Troup excelled in singing such Kun operas as *Token Theft*, *Parade*, and *Interrogating the Red Maiden*. The Sixi Troupe performed representative operas such as *Peach Blossom Fan*, *Broken Bridge*, *Thief Order*, and *Peacock Fur*. The Chuntai Troupe performed *Hero List*, *Lake Travel*, *Borrowing Umbrella* (Two acts of *Legend of the White Snake*), *Wild Goose Hunting* (One Act of *Tianmen Formation*, a story about Mu Guiying, female heroine). The Hechun Troupe (Yangzhou Troupe) was famous for its martial arts performances, mainly incorporating the martial arts performances of Hui Opera and performing operas such as *Night Visit*, *Capturing Daji*. Numerous Hui troupes traveled to northern and southern China, thus boosting the development of the Hui opera in their hometown.

All art forms undergo a process of rise and decline, and the same is true for the Hui opera. In the eleventh year of Daoguang, Tao Shu, Governor-General of Jiangnan and Jiangxi Provinces adopted the salt ticket policy, thus depriving Huizhou merchants of the privilege of their salt industry monopoly, the Huizhou merchants gradually declined. In the 20th year of Daoguang (1840), Peking opera flourished, and Hui opera declined. At the time of its decline, Hui opera returned to its hometown, while some dramas of Peking opera were also brought back by Hui opera artists. Hui opera is still prevalent in some parts of Huizhou on a small scale. This period was the most prosperous period for opera wood carving. There were many opera subjects in the Huizhou buildings with wood carving in Yi County, including the carving of *Romance of Western Chamber – Zhangsheng Climbing Over the Pink Wall* and Fengyi Pavilion – Lv Bu and Diao Chan in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the lattice door of Zhicheng Hall (Daoguang) in Lu Village. Examples in Hong Village include stories of Romance of Three Kingdoms, including *Dong Zhuo Enters Beijing*, *Three Generals Battle Lv Bu*, *Dingjun Mountain*, and *A Battle at Changbanpo*, Additionally, examples in the Yinan villa of Nanping Village included *Liu Bei Invites the Groom* and *Visiting the Cottage Three Times to Seek Help from Zhu Geliang*. The *Collection of Figures in Wood Carving in Huizhou of China* written by Yu Hongli recorded *Mu Guiying Breaks the Tianmen Formation*, *The West Wing - Passing Invitations*, *The Legend of the White Snake – Flooding of Jinshan Temple*, *The Legend of the White Snake – Traveling around the Lake and Borrowing an Umbrella*, and *Daguayuan*. Dong Hongquan's *Huizhou Wood Carving* recorded Dingzhichunqiu, *Red Jade Inscription Poem*, and *The Story of Kirin*, which truthfully recorded all popular operas at that moment.

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the theme and content of operas ranged from literary stories to myths and legends. Series stories about Ne Zha in *Journey to the West* in "Chengzhi Hall" of Hong Village (Figures 1 and 2) *especially, are among the most popular ones.* Figure 1 shows a person dressed as a "dragon". This is rarely seen in opera-themed wood carvings in China. Dragons frequently appear as animal patterns. This is an image of a dragon king. Next to the dragon king is a child's image, very much like Nezha in the opera, with a bun on his head, two hair bands dangling

from his ears, and a lotus leaf waistcoat draped over his upper body. He is holding a fire-tipped spear to stab the dragon king, who is angrily opening his mouth wide and raising his fist to complain to an old man with a bulging ball of flesh on his head, which indicates that he is immortal. The characters are connected in the picture to form the play *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King*. In the middle of Figure 5, Nezha and a great general are fighting. It is not easy to tell which battle it is, but in the upper right of the picture, a divine figure standing on a cloud appears. His appearance hints that there is a story related to them in the story of Journey to the West; that is, the Great Green Bull, the mount of Tai Shang Lao Jun (The Very High Lord) ran away and turned into the One-horned Bull King. Nezha was unable to defeat it even with all his tricks and finally invited Tai Shang Lao Jun to subdue the Great Green Bull and ride off on it. This engraving reflects a play called *Nezha Battles the One-Horned Bull*. From these two wood carvings, we can understand how the story of the gods and goddesses played out on the stage and in the wood carvings. Riding on the mists and clouds and the rushing sea may have been better represented in the visual arts, and the performance on the stage at that time may have had many constraints. From the wood carving of "Chengzhi Hall", we can see that the late Qing dynasty opera wood carvings are interspersed with characters and scenery without leaving too much space, the characters are realistic and imaginative, and the carvings are exquisite, with gold powder and red and black paint on the exterior, presenting a gorgeous appearance.

Figure 1. Nezha Conquers the Dragon King.

Figure 2. Nezha Battles the One-Horned Bull.

6. Flowing Opera Art and Solidified Buildings with Wooden Carvings

Hui Opera experienced a rise and decline, and the changes in the opera genre reflected the burgeoning growth of the Hui repertoire. Miscellaneous opera, Kun opera, Hui opera, Peking opera, and Huizhou buildings with wooden carvings built in various periods can be said to directly reflect the great fusion of opera repertoires. However, opera encompasses opera music, singing, and rhythmical parts in its performance, full of spirituality. Buildings with wood carvings are material in nature, so we can only see the plot, characters, and costumes, while the musical tunes and percussion noises cannot be preserved.

The nonstop flow of opera from south to north and from west to east has an impact on local buildings with wood carving. These buildings, which originally display art statically, have demonstrated the capacity to carry dynamic changes. Opera is a performing art, while various types of music genres' own performing styles as well as singing, reading, and performing are presented dynamically. However, in the past, it was passed on orally to inherit the art, so it is likely to have changed and disappeared. Though operas experienced vicissitudes, buildings with wood carving

remained intact, thus reflecting the glory and prestige of operas in the past.

The stylized performances, opera costumes and facial makeups of opera are well suited to the performance of carving. The stylized performance actions involved in sorting out hats and beards, raising the sleeves, and "Zou Bian" (actions in operas) are always carved into a similar action image. Of course, wood carving does not completely imitate the action of the opera and will carve the characters into S-shaped action images based on the needs of picture composition, matching wood carving aesthetics with opera aesthetics through sophisticated skills such as openwork, relief carving, hollow carving, flat carving, round carving, and line carving, jointly expressing personality traits and personality psychology, thus forming a complete aesthetic system.

The Suzhou building with wood carving was built by architects of the Xiangshan School, who excelled in complex and delicate traditional Chinese building techniques, combining architectural techniques with the art of building, with zigzagging corridors and bridges, stacking eerie stones, and beautiful shapes. The architects of the Xiangshan School were also influenced by illustrated prints, woodblock prints of Suzhou Taohuawu, and the "Wu School of Painting", of which Qiu Ying, a representative of the Wu Men School of Painting, was a lacquer worker. The wood carving of Suzhou Wangshi Garden, mainly Yang carving lines that are light and simple, while the wood carvings of Humble Administrator's Garden are elegant and gentle, bearing resemblance to the wood carving of *The West Wing* illustration by Chen Hongshou, a painter of the Ming Dynasty, who always depicted the regional cultural heritage of Jiangnan. Moreover, the richness and beauty of Kunqu and all kinds of styles have been added so that buildings with wood carvings of the Suzhou School are exquisite and elegant; this is combined with the garden scenery, which is full of tranquility and reminds one of a distant mind as well as the literati sentiment. For the ancient Huizhou residents, from the East and West Jin dynasties to the Song and Yuan dynasties, the Central Plains scholar clans moved south to avoid the war and lived in the depths of the mountainous areas of Huizhou. Scholars respected the conservative clan culture of "Cheng-Zhu Theory", so the art maintained the Han and Tang temperament of being sober, spirited, and clumsy. In addition, the architects of Huizhou School were deeply influenced by the local art culture of Huizhou seal carvings, Huizhou engraved books, "Xin'an Painting School" and Huizhou prints. The influence of Huizhou engraved books in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties was so great that it almost monopolized the market in Jiangnan, and Huizhou engravers were famous for their meticulous work and carving skills. Line employed in this art are flexible and slender. The characters have distinctive personalities and vivid postures, and the landscape, trees, houses, and buildings are full and layered, with a particular focus on rendering the overall scene of perceptible movement, embellishing works with rustic picturesque scenery. Huizhou buildings with wood carvings characterize the Huizhou attributes of rustic richness, hidden in the deep mountain mist and rain and filled with secluded self-satisfaction. As pastiches of various cultures, Huizhou buildings with wood carvings reflect the richness of the culture and show amazing artistic talent.

Chinese gardens focus on the fun of natural changes, while "the buildings and terraces glow together, displaying bright and beautiful red and green colors" (Qian Yong), "The carved railings are curved, fragrant, and foggy" (Lu Jianzeng), and "The lotus flowers are fragrant, the willows are new, and the curved railings are beautifully carved" (Wu Qi) shows ancient people's understanding of all creatures through "the mixture of nature worship and art form", which reflects their inner ideals and the highest realm shared by art and culture. This realm is the realm of life. The operas express human emotions and stage performances of the ups and downs of life. All meetings and partings, sorrows and joys, the sweetness and bitterness of life and waxing or waning of fortune were presented on stage. After taking off the heavy make-up. Ultimately, we must return to the realm of life with "a mixture of emotion and art", so this is mixture of nature, emotion, and art, which is the tradition cared about by Chinese culture.

Emphasize the tradition of Chinese culture, adhering to poetry and calligraphy etiquette. As the saying goes, "ritual and music in every family, poetry, and calligraphy for everyone". The intense "secluded" sentiment of the ancient people and the pursuit of the goal of a secluded life all revolve around this beautiful goal, reflecting both the deep-rootedness of Chinese culture and expressing dissatisfaction with reality. When Hui opera declined, the Qing Dynasty was already precarious, witnessing unprecedentedly intensified ethnic and class conflicts and increasingly declining national strength. Civilian buildings with wood carvings that praise loyal heroes in art reflected the dissatisfaction of the people because of the corruption of the Qing Dynasty. Natural craftsmanship can be imitated, but natural craftsmanship is no match for man-made art.

7. Conclusion

Buildings with wood carvings, therefore, there is an art form that combines art with technology and represents an

integration of architecture, opera, painting, and literature, with wood as its materials, it employs knives instead of pens and embeds itself with both local color and the Han culture. The history of an opera is told through the construction of a building with woodcarvings. Opera stories in word carvings flow from east to west and from south to north on the fixed buildings, allowing people to see the flow of operas and the thought processes. Wood carvings of operas on buildings beautifully embody the ideas of the owners and craftsmen. Operas and buildings with wood carvings are treasures in the ancient cultural history of China and are inseparable from their cultural history.

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