Urban Morphology and Housing Typology of Traditional Port Cities on Maritime Silk Road

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Dissertation Abstract

Situated on the crossroads of maritime trading routes for centuries, many traditional Asian port cities have been the hubs of overseas trade and cultural exchange throughout recorded history. Their civilizations and the lifestyles of people have been influenced by the specific driving forces – trading activities and culture blending. The evolutionary process of urban morphology and building typology are testimony to this. This paper is a study of Asian port cities and their most predominant traditional dwellings – that are subject to a typo-morphological analysis carried out from three aspects: the description of physical form expression, such as position, outline and internal arrangement, the analysis of formation and transformation process, and the exploration of the connotative non-physical elements. By selecting several port cities – Quanzhou, Malacca, Penang, Singapore, Hanoi, Bangkok, etc – as case studies, the two urban values – utility value and cultural value, as well as their interaction and transformation reflected in this process are discussed. The evolutionary modes of these port cities can be summarized into two categories – the self-assimilation type and the transplantation type.