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Unveiling the Traditional Philosophy Behind the Origins of the "Yikeyin" Residential Layout in Central Yunnan

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Abstract

This article explores the influence of Confucianism, Taoism, and folk culture on the layout of Yikeyin dwellings in central Yunnan, addressing three key objectives: (1) summarizing Yikeyin's layout features; (2) identifying the philosophical meanings embedded in its design; and (3) investigating why these philosophies influenced its architecture. Through historical analysis, field studies, and interviews, the study found that Confucianism emphasized family unity, hierarchy, and symmetry; Taoism promoted harmony with nature, particularly in courtyard design; and folk culture added symbolic elements like protection and prosperity. The study highlighted how these philosophies shaped Yikeyin's layout through symmetry, spatial organization, and courtyard design, and explained their influence through historical migration, path dependence, and craftsmanship. This research offers insights for preserving the cultural and philosophical heritage of Yikeyin architecture.

Keywords: *Yikeyin, Traditional Philosophy, Layout, Meaning, Central Yunnan, Path dependence*

1. Introduction

Yunnan Province, located in southwestern China, features a diverse terrain with significant altitude variations and a plateau climate. Compared to other areas in Yunnan, the central region has relatively flat topography. Influenced by the plateau climate, the region experiences distinct wet and dry seasons, small seasonal temperature differences, and large diurnal temperature variations. Yunnan is home to numerous ethnic groups, and historically, the central Yunnan region was predominantly inhabited by the Yi ethnic group. Since the Ming Dynasty, with population migration, the Han people gradually became the primary group in central Yunnan.

Yikeyin is a unique traditional vernacular dwelling form in the central Yunnan region. Its shape is compact and robust, resembling a large seal, hence the name "Yikeyin" (Seal) (Yang, & Zhu, 2009). According to Liu, and Liu (1996), Yikeyin was widely used in the central Yunnan region and is regarded by Chinese architectural scholars as a typical form of vernacular dwelling in this area. Unlike traditional Han dwellings in the Central Plains of China, Yikeyin emerged as a result of the cultural integration between the Han and Yi ethnic groups, with Han culture being the dominant influence (Jiang, 1997). The layout of Yikeyin incorporates three main traditional philosophical concepts: Taoism, Confucianism, and folk culture, with Confucian philosophy playing a leading role. Traditional Chinese philosophical ideas permeate all aspects of these dwellings. This paper focuses on the planar layout of Yikeyin, integrating it with traditional Chinese philosophy.

Despite Yikeyin's significant position in Chinese vernacular architecture, research on it remains limited for several reasons. Firstly, although many Chinese scholars have conducted extensive research on Yikeyin from different perspectives, there are very few related documents published in English in the international context. Secondly, systematic explorations combining traditional Chinese philosophy with layout of Yikeyin are very rare, and descriptions are often vague. Lastly, in the limited studies on traditional philosophy and architectural layout, there is no clear explanation of how traditional philosophy influences the architecture of Yikeyin.

This study aims to systematically explore the planar layout of Yikeyin in conjunction with traditional Chinese philosophical concepts and elucidate how these philosophical factors specifically influence Yikeyin.

2. Objectives

- 1) To summarize the layout features of Yikeyin;
- 2) To identify the meaning of Yikeyin layout based on Chinese traditional philosophy; and
- 3) To investigate the reasons why the Yikeyin residential layout is influenced by traditional philosophy.

3. Materials and Methods

The overall research method is qualitative, combining scientific theories, literature review, observation, and interviews to address research gaps and achieve the research objectives. The study was carried out in multiple phases. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review was carried out to synthesize existing studies to summarize the layout features of Yikeyin dwellings. Secondly, the observation was made by integrating traditional philosophical theories with architectural analysis, drawing on key texts from Confucianism, Taoism, and folk culture to understand their principles and apply them to the specific analysis of Yikeyin layouts. Finally, field research in central Yunnan villages, along with interviews with local residents, architects, and historians, were conducted to provide qualitative data to elucidate the underlying reasons for the philosophical influences observed in Yikeyin.

3.1 Framework

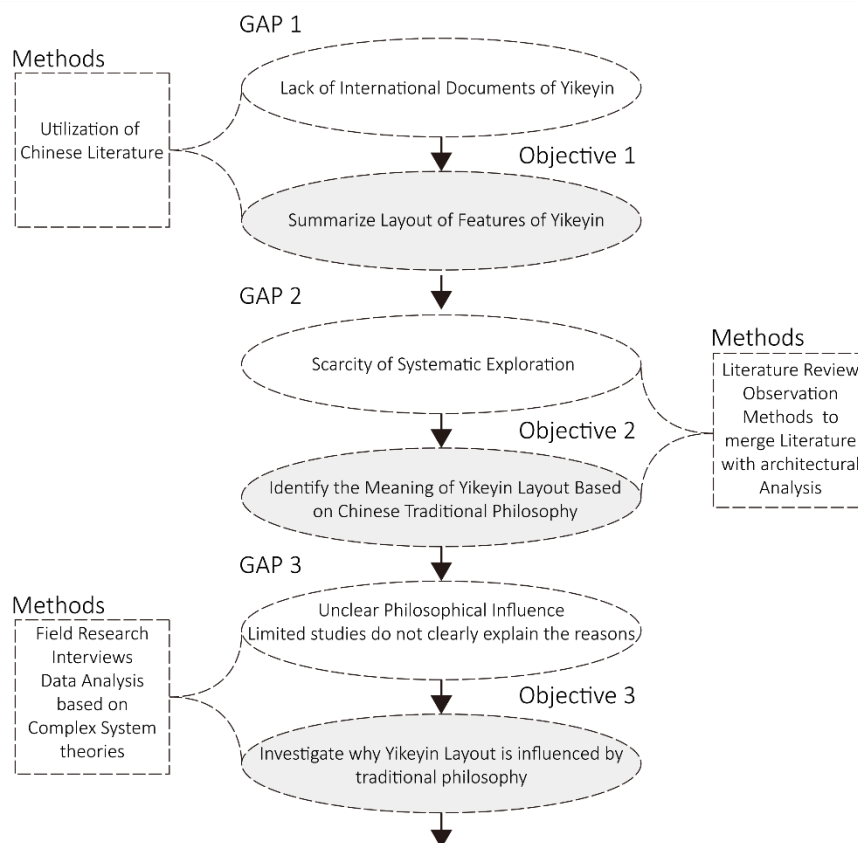


Figure 1 Research Framework
Source: Author (2024)

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Taoism and Confucianism Philosophy

Taoism and Confucianism are two significant philosophical systems in China, each with unique content and cultural impact. Confucianism emphasizes the Doctrine of the Mean, including concepts such as "Shang Zhong" (valuing balance and moderation), "Shi Zhong" (adhering to the middle path), "Zhong Zheng" (acting

with fairness and uprightness), and "Zhong He" (achieving harmony through balance), advocating for balance and highlighting the beauty of harmony and appropriateness (Yang, 2004). Additionally, Confucianism values filial piety and ethical education, known as "Li," which can be viewed as a hierarchical system to maintain social order and ethical behavior (Xiao, 2005; Su, 2007). In contrast, Taoism emphasizes "Wu Wei" (non-action) and "Tian Ren He Yi" (the unity of heaven and humanity), promoting alignment with nature and harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world (Hu, 2000). Unlike Confucianism, which focuses on human nature, Taoism advocates tolerance and respect for nature, emphasizing the natural essence and the harmony between humans and nature (Chen, 1990).

The Confucian emphasis on ritual and ethical concepts is reflected in architectural layouts and details. For instance, the symmetrical layout of palace buildings reflects Confucian ideals of balance and social hierarchy (Liu, 1994a). The design of Siheyuan (courtyard houses) strictly follows Confucian ethical order, highlighting hierarchical relationships and familial closeness (Chen, 2001). In contrast, Taoist philosophy's influence on architecture is mainly reflected in its respect for and integration with nature. The Taoist concept of 'Tian Ren He Yi' emphasizes harmonious alignment between heaven and humanity, evident in garden designs that mimic natural forms, focusing on the interplay of void and solid spaces to achieve harmony with nature (Chen, 2005).

The above discussion makes it clear that traditional Chinese philosophy has deeply influenced traditional architecture, gardens, and other spatial designs. As such, it is worth exploring whether Yikeyin, as a traditional vernacular dwelling, also reflects such philosophical guidance, similar to courtyard houses and palace complexes.

3.2.2 Previous Studies on Yikeyin Residential Architecture

Before the 1980s, research on Yikeyin was primarily descriptive. According to the researchers' literature review, Liu Zhiping was the first scholar to conduct foundational and descriptive studies on Yikeyin, including architectural sampling and data collection on aspects such as layout and structural composition (Liu, 1944b).

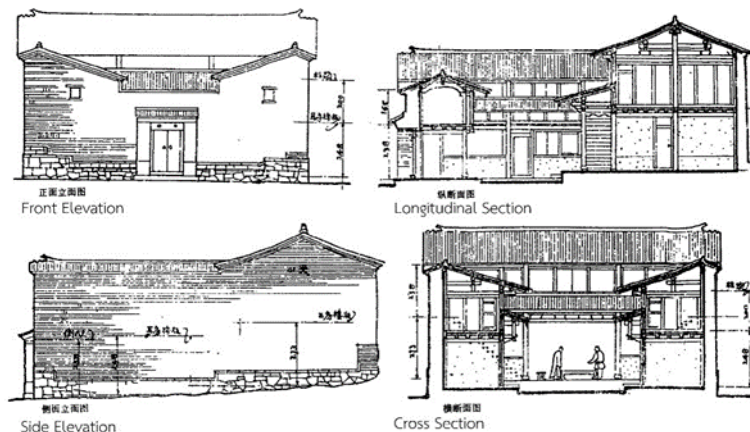


Figure 2 The Elevations and Sections of Yikeyin
Source: Liu, and Liu (1996)

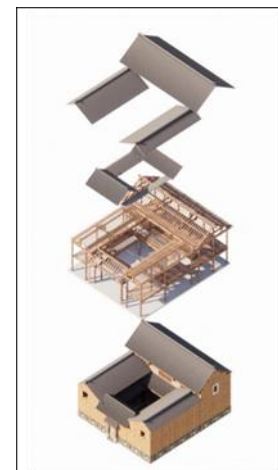


Figure 3 The Model illustration
Source: Author (2024)

From the late 1990s to 2010, subsequent scholars expanded Yikeyin research by incorporating cultural and social factors, building upon Liu Zhiping's work. During this period, research expanded beyond architectural phenomena to include interpretive analysis (Jiang, 1997; Yang, 1997).

Chinese literature provides numerous descriptions of the influence of traditional philosophy on Yikeyin, with the studies of Jiang (1997) and Yang (1997) often cited as primary sources. Since 2010, research on Yikeyin has significantly expanded, covering areas such as preservation, construction techniques, spatial composition, and decorative elements. While many studies highlight the influence of traditional philosophy, they tend to provide general overviews rather than detailed analysis, lacking the depth needed to fully explore the philosophical elements embedded within the architecture. Notably, some studies, such as those by Jiang et al., (2016), have attempted to provide a comprehensive interpretation of Yikeyin's layout, orientation, functionality, decoration,

and materials from both philosophical and cultural perspectives within a single paper. However, these studies often describe which aspects of Yikeyin are influenced by traditional philosophy, rather than explaining how specific elements reflect these philosophical concepts. This results in overly vague descriptions in the detailed analysis. It must be acknowledged, however, that these studies still offer valuable insights, and their qualitative results provide the foundational knowledge and sources for this study.

3.2.3 Theory of Path Dependence

Path dependence was originally introduced in economics to explain how certain choices persist due to the influence of historical decisions (David, 1985) and has since been widely applied in various disciplines (Goldstein et al., 2023). In behavioral science, it describes the impact of long-established habits on people's behavior (Barnes et al., 2004). In sociology, path dependence supports the continuation of social norms through the intergenerational transmission of "collective memory" (Wilson, 2014). In complex systems science, Cilliers (2002) introduced the concept of "system memory" to explain how systems learn and adapt by accumulating experience, while Holland (1995) proposed the 'default hierarchy' model, which demonstrates that systems initially rely on broad default rules and gradually introduce more specific exception rules as experience accumulates. These studies highlight the crucial role of history and context in shaping individual and collective behavior (Mahoney, 2000). These related theories were applied to explore why traditional Chinese philosophy has influenced the development of Yi Ke Yin architecture.

3.3 Field Research

- 1) Conduct architectural sampling at four sites within the central Yunnan region, gather and analyze detailed information regarding the layout of Yikeyin architecture, and verify the accuracy of existing literature on the subject; and
- 2) Conduct interviews with craftsmen involved in the construction of Yikeyin in the research locations, as well as with current residents who still live in Yikeyin buildings.



Figure 4 Field Research and Expert Consultation
Source: Author (2024)

3.4 Expert Consultation

- 1) Integrate data from field research and relevant information from the literature for further analysis, then consult relevant experts (vernacular architecture scholars, historians, sociologists) to verify the accuracy of the analysis results; and.
- 2) Combine theoretical research and engage with experts to discuss the reasons behind the influence of traditional philosophy on the formation of Yikeyin architecture.













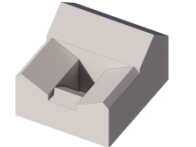


4. Results

4.1 Layout of Yi Ke Yin Residential Architecture

Based on the samples collected from the survey locations, Yikeyin layouts can be categorized into three types: the complete Yikeyin, the half Yikeyin, and the "I"-shaped main house unit (Table 1). Interviews with craftsmen revealed that the choice of layout was influenced by multiple factors such as the family's economic condition, the composition of family members, and the spatial conditions of the building site, with economic condition being the decisive factor. Regardless of the layout chosen, the craftsmen always referred to the complete Yikeyin as the architectural prototype during construction.

Using the concept of "Patterns" and "Adjustments" as defined by Rapoport (1969) for categorizing the vernacular architecture of central Yunnan, the complete Yikeyin can be seen as the "Pattern," while the derived layout types represent the "Adjustments." At the community level, these three types of layouts are always present simultaneously, collectively forming the spatial structure of the village.

Table 1 Categories of Yikeyin

Type	Yikeyin	Half-Yikeyin	"I" shaped main house
Photos of sample			
			
			
Analysis			
Schematic			

Source: Author (2024)

In terms of architectural layout, Yikeyin is a typical courtyard-style dwelling, characterized by its square and symmetrical shape, which provides a strong sense of enclosure and centrality. The layout can be divided into five main components: the main house, side rooms (ear rooms), the "倒座", the courtyard, and the staircases (Figure 5).

1) Main House: The main house has a three-bay structure and is two stories high. The central space on the ground floor serves as the living room (hall), with bedrooms on either side. Above the living room is the family shrine for ancestral worship, flanked by additional bedrooms.

2) Side Rooms (Ear Rooms): These are located on either side of the courtyard. The ground floor of the left side room houses the kitchen and livestock room, with a bedroom on the second floor. The right-side room has a bedroom and storage room on the ground floor, and a bedroom on the second floor.

3) "倒座" (Dao Zuo): "倒座" (Dao Zuo) refers to the structure directly opposite the main house. It is a two-story building, with the ground floor serving as an entrance hall and the second floor used for storing crops and tools.

4) Courtyard: The courtyard is centrally located, square in shape, and enclosed by the main house, side rooms, and "倒座".

5) Staircases: There are two staircases, located at the intersections of the main house and the side rooms, providing access between the first and second floors.

In Yikeyin, there are no individual toilets; instead, public toilets are provided within the community for residents. According to interviews, the waste from these toilets is used as fertilizer for crops, making centralized public toilets practical for the collection and transport of waste.

A half Yikeyin lacks one side room, while the "I"-shaped main house has neither side rooms nor the "倒座". Additionally, in some Yikeyin dwellings, both side rooms have only one bay, known as "three rooms with two ears," with the left side functioning as a kitchen and the right side as a livestock room (Figure 6).

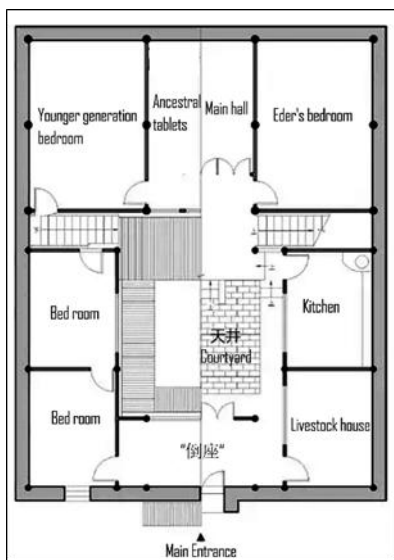


Figure 5 The layout of Yikeyin

Source: Modified from Yang, and Wang (2022)

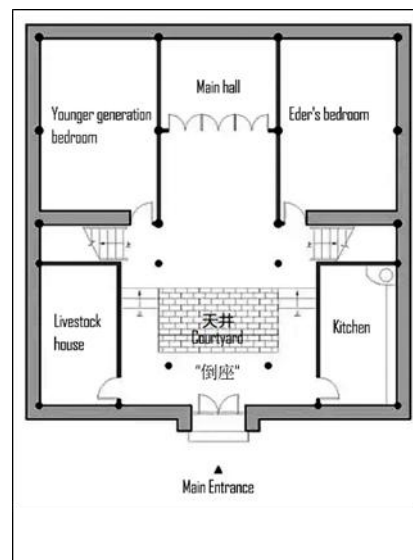


Figure 6 "Three rooms with two ears"

Source: Modified from Yang, and Wang (2022)

4.2 Reflection of Traditional Chinese Philosophy in Yikeyin's Layout

4.2.1 Reflection of Taoism

Taoism emphasizes reverence for nature and harnessing its power to improve living spaces, which is particularly evident in the courtyard design of Yikeyin. The courtyard enhances the connection between the building and nature by introducing natural light and ventilation, thus improving the living environment. Positioned at the center of the building, the courtyard serves as the core space for family life, social activities, and human interaction with nature.

Moreover, Taoism advocates respecting and conforming to nature. In ancient times, it was believed that "heaven is round and the earth is square," and the square layout of Yikeyin is a direct response to the square-shaped earth. According to interviews with craftsmen, ancient people viewed house-building as a way of borrowing space from nature; therefore, construction should be approached with respect and gratitude. Since space is derived from the square-shaped earth, the building should also adopt a square layout to honor and conform to nature.

The core principles of Taoist thought are "Tian Ren He Yi" (the unity of heaven and humanity) and "Wu Wei" (non-action). In architecture, these principles manifest in a more passive approach, with minimal interference in nature. In other words, the natural forces are followed rather than actively altered or controlled. This approach aims to achieve harmony and coexistence with the natural environment.

4.2.2 Reflection of Confucianism

In contrast to Taoist thought, Confucianism emphasizes human agency (Ye, 1995), using "Li" (ritual propriety) to regulate people's behavior and thereby establish social order. "Li" can be seen as a set of social rules built on a strict hierarchical system, and this rule is also reflected in the anthropomorphized architecture.

The structure of Yikeyin is strictly divided by hierarchy, with the spaces arranged from highest to lowest status as follows: the Main House, Left Side Rooms, Right Side Rooms, and "倒座" (Dao Zuo).

The rooms themselves are also clearly ranked in terms of hierarchy, arranged from highest to lowest (Figure 7).

1) Main House: The Living Room (central room on the first floor), the Ancestral Shrine (central room on the second floor), the Left Bedroom (on the first floor), the Right Bedroom (on the first floor), and the Left and Right Bedrooms (on the second floor).

2) Left Side Rooms: The Kitchen (near the Main House), the Livestock Room (near Dao Zuo), and two Bedrooms on the second floor.

3) Right Side Rooms: The Bedroom (near the Main House), the Storage Room (near Dao Zuo), and Bedrooms on the second floor.

The Living Room, as the center for family gatherings, symbolizes the entire family and carries the family's honor and fortunes. Confucianism promotes filial piety and respect for elders; thus, the Ancestral Shrine holds a position second only to the Living Room, and the Left Bedroom on the first floor is reserved for elders, while the other bedrooms are arranged according to the age of the children. Additionally, the hierarchical system even extends to the orientation of the rooms. According to the influence of the "Zhao Mu Zhi Zhi" on architecture (Yang, 2005), the left side is of higher status than the right, and this rule even influences gender distribution. The left side represents males, while the right side represents females. This concept is also reflected in the room functions within Yikeyin, where, according to craftsmen, women are only permitted to live on the right side of the Main House or in the Right-Side Rooms.

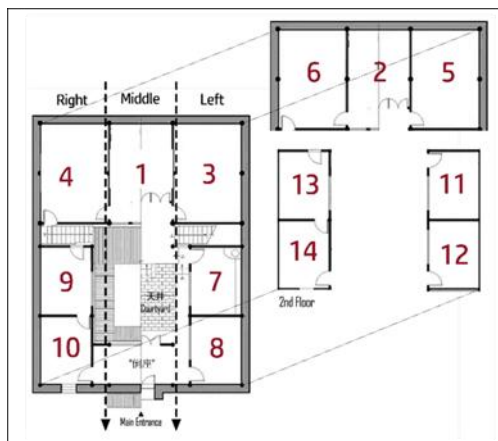


Figure 7 Rooms hierarchy
Source: Author (2024)

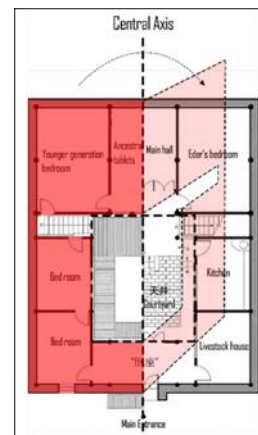


Figure 8 Central axis symmetry
Source: Author (2024)

Confucianism advocates the Doctrine of the Mean, emphasizing that one should act with propriety, fairness, and moderation, avoiding extremes. This philosophy profoundly influenced the formation of traditional Chinese aesthetics, which values centrality and promotes the beauty of harmony and order (Xia, & Tang, 2009).

In Yikeyin architecture, this concept is reflected through both formal symmetry and the orderly spatial layout. The square floor plan follows the principle of central axis symmetry, with the main hall at the center and the left and right sides symmetrically arranged (Figure 8), embodying the ideas of "Shang Zhong" (valuing balance) and "Zhong He" (achieving harmony through balance).

Yikeyin is not only a physical dwelling but also a material expression of Confucian thought. Its symmetrical layout demonstrates the importance of family and social order, while the spatial arrangement reflects the Confucian ethics of hierarchy and familial respect. This design integrates Confucian principles of ethical order, social norms, and moral cultivation into the architectural form, making Yikeyin a physical embodiment of harmony and order.

4.2.3 Reflection of Folk Culture

The term "Yikeyin" in Mandarin refers to a large square seal (一颗印). The seal symbolizes authority and also serves the function of warding off evil. According to craftsmen, during the Ming Dynasty, central Yunnan experienced frequent wars with high death tolls, leading to many vengeful spirits. Building houses with a square layout resembling a large seal was intended to suppress these spirits and ensure the safety of the area. This is said to be the origin of the name "Yikeyin." Although the authenticity of this explanation has not been verified, this belief is widely known among the public.

Ancient Chinese society was predominantly agrarian, and the emergence and development of folk culture were closely tied to daily life and agricultural activities. In Yikeyin dwellings, specific rooms were designated for housing livestock, which reflects the high regard for animals as a source of productivity. On the one hand, providing dedicated space for livestock helps protect private property. On the other hand, according to the concept of "six prosperous livestock" (六畜兴旺) (Guan, 1985), livestock symbolizes prosperity and development, representing a hopeful blessing for the future.

In different regions of central Yunnan, under varying social conditions and cultural backgrounds, the specific construction practices of Yikeyin dwellings exhibit subtle differences. However, these differences appear as "Adjustments" and do not disrupt the fundamental "Pattern" of the Yikeyin.

In terms of layout, the functional composition of the rooms remains unchanged, but there are slight variations in the dimensions of the rooms and courtyards. For example, in the southern parts of central Yunnan, the width of the side rooms is wider compared to other areas. Interviews with local villagers revealed that they believe the combined shape of the two side rooms resembles the character "冂", which resembles a coffin and symbolizes death, bringing bad luck. As a result, they adjusted the width to make the side rooms resemble the character "日" (Figure 9), which avoids such connotations. This adjustment has been confirmed in interviews with other scholars and craftsmen (Yang, 2005). Such modifications stem from local folk beliefs, as no similar taboos have been found in areas outside southern central Yunnan.

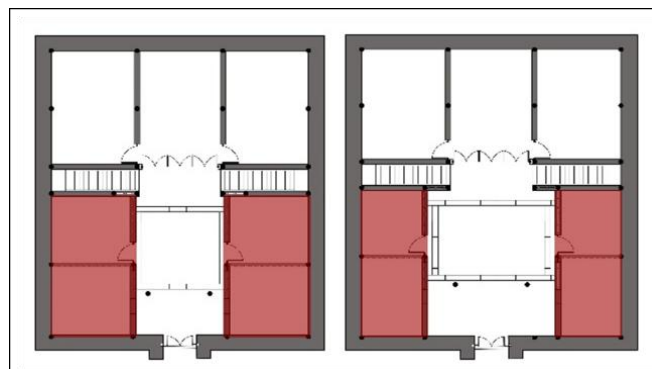


Figure 9 Adjustment of the dimensions of side rooms

Source: Author (2024)

4.3 Summary of the Influence of Traditional Philosophy on Yikeyin

Based on the research findings above, it can be seen that Confucianism's influence on the layout of Yikeyin almost encompasses all aspects of its "model," manifesting in a more direct and concrete way. In contrast, the influence of Taoism is more subtle and abstract, while folk culture has relatively little impact on the "model" of Yikeyin.

Traditional philosophy is not the decisive factor in the formation of the layout and form of dwellings in central Yunnan. In the balance between material and non-material factors, material conditions are the primary consideration for homeowners. As a result, although craftsmen take the complete "Yikeyin" model as a blueprint when constructing houses, they must make adaptive "adjustments" according to the financial situation of the homeowners. This leads to the evolution of Yikeyin into variants such as "half Yikeyin" and the "I-shaped" main house.

Table 2 Influence of Chinese Traditional Philosophy on Yi Ke Yin

Philosophical Influence	Key Concept	Impact on Yikeyin	Manifestation
Taoism	“Tian Ren He Yi”	Integration with nature	Courtyards for natural light and ventilation
	Heaven is Round, Earth is Square	Cosmological symbolism	Square layout showing respect for nature
	Family Unity	Spatial composition for family	Layout serves the whole family, not individuals
Confucianism	Rituals and Ceremonies	Spaces for rituals	Ancestor halls and worship areas
	Balance and Harmony	Symmetry in Yikeyin	Balanced layout and partitioning
	Centrality and Order	Hierarchical and stable design	Central main house, symmetrical layout
	Seniority Hierarchy	Rooms arranged by seniority	The central room is highest in status, followed by the left, then the right
Folk Culture	Six Prosperous Livestock	Importance of livestock in daily life	Dedicated spaces for livestock, symbolizing prosperity
	Avoiding Evil Spirits	Protective symbolism	Seal-shaped building to ward off evil
	Side Rooms Dimensions	Avoid shapes associated with death	Adjusted room size to prevent "coffin" shape

Source: Author (2024)

4.4 Reason for the Influence of Traditional Philosophy on Yikeyin

Based on the results of the literature review, the interviews (with villagers, craftsmen, and experts), and the theoretical research, the reasons behind the influence of traditional philosophy on Yikeyin can be summarized into three groups: historical event, path dependence, and mediums of influence.

4.4.1 Historical Event

Historically, the main indigenous population of central Yunnan was the Yi ethnic group. In 1381, the Ming Emperor, aiming for full unification, sent troops to Yunnan to eliminate the remnants of the Yuan Dynasty. After the war, a large number of soldiers remained in Yunnan, and as various industries developed, more Han people migrated to the region. This inevitably led to conflicts with the local Yi people, which ultimately resulted in the Han replacing the Yi as the dominant ethnic group in central Yunnan (Hao, 2014). Before the Ming Dynasty, a small number of Han people had also migrated to the region, but they were largely assimilated by the local ethnic groups (Hao, 2014). It was only with the migration of a large enough population that the introduction of

traditional Chinese philosophy to central Yunnan became possible. The cultural impact of large-scale population migration due to war far exceeded that of spontaneous migration.

From a historical perspective, a significant amount of Han culture, including traditional Chinese philosophy and architectural techniques, spread to central Yunnan through population migration. Although conflicts arose between the newcomers and the indigenous population, there was also a degree of cultural integration. Vernacular architecture was no exception. Yikeyin is considered the result of long-term evolution rather than a sudden mutation, with its spatial layout prototype potentially rooted in traditional Yi ethnic dwellings (Jiang, 1997). Subsequent research on the origins of Yikeyin through sample comparisons and historical analysis has confirmed this view (Yang, & Wang, 2022).

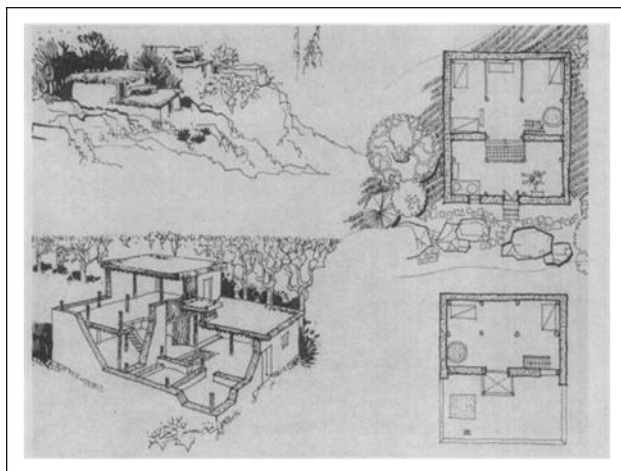


Figure 10 Yi ethnic dwellings and plan
Source: Jiang (1997)

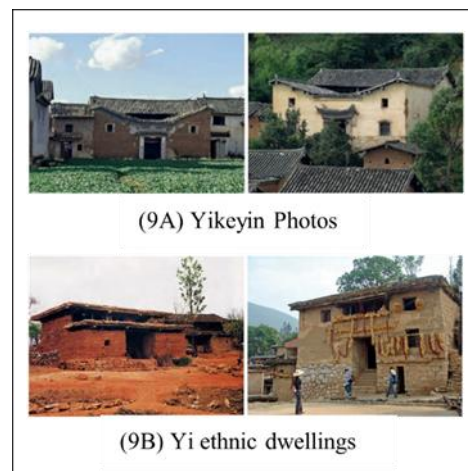


Figure 11 Comparison of two dwellings
Source: Yang, and Wang (2022)

4.4.2 Path Dependence

When people encounter new situations, their choices are often influenced by past experiences (Cilliers, 2002). If these experiences continue to adapt to new environmental changes, they will be carried forward. In complex systems theory, this behavior is described as "Default" (Holland, 1995), while in economics, it is referred to as "Path dependence" (David, 1985).

When Han people migrated to this region, they compared the new housing requirements with their previous building experiences. Craftsmen, when constructing houses, would typically rely on the models they were most familiar with. This behavior is similar to a designer's personal style; when new design challenges arise, the designer tends to adjust their existing designs rather than abandon them entirely. Similarly, when craftsmen build houses in new environments, they do not calculate the optimal design for the changing environment but follow their usual practices. As one craftsman stated, "The way my master taught me to build houses is the way I teach my apprentices." Through oral transmission, they not only inherited the construction techniques but also learned the symbolic meanings of traditional philosophy embedded in Yikeyin architecture.

Most people were not designers, scholars, or sages; they did not consciously preserve architectural culture, critically inherited traditional philosophy, or sought to improve it. It is precisely this adherence to established practices that has allowed Yikeyin architecture to endure for centuries. This path dependence subtly ensures the continuation of tradition.

4.4.3 Mediums of Influence

Interviews with craftsmen revealed that the symbolic meanings of traditional philosophy within Yikeyin are mostly known within the craftsmen's circles, which shows significant limitations. This is closely related to the construction process. As social division of labor becomes more specialized, homeowners, after contracting craftsmen, rarely participate in the actual construction process (Wang, 2013). They primarily act as decision-makers and supervisors, focusing on construction quality and costs. As a result, they gradually lose the ability to

recognize the traditional philosophical meanings embedded in the architecture. This was confirmed in interviews with homeowners, as very few could identify the traditional philosophical meanings in Yikeyin. However, it is important to emphasize that traditional philosophy still permeates many aspects of everyday life, meaning it has not completely disappeared.

It is undeniable that the symbolic meanings of traditional philosophy in architecture are indeed being gradually forgotten. Craftsmen, as the primary transmitters of these symbolic meanings, face increasing challenges as modernization progresses. The space for traditional craftsmen to survive has significantly diminished, and the number of practitioners has sharply declined. In the master-apprentice oral tradition, there is a high chance that the symbolic meanings of traditional philosophy may be lost or misunderstood during transmission.

5. Discussion

First, we need to discuss whether there is any force capable of breaking the straightforward layout guided by the traditional philosophy of Yikeyin.

It is undeniable that as technology, building materials, and people's needs evolve, the traditional philosophy behind Yikeyin is gradually being lost, and its original layout has undergone significant changes. Traditional craftsmen have been replaced by modern construction workers, while new techniques and materials have turned once culturally rich, regionally distinct dwellings into mass-produced commodities. As a result, Yikeyin has gradually shifted away from traditional philosophical principles to emphasize efficiency, functionality, and cost.

Population migration can also be regarded as a significant factor in the transformation of Yikeyin. Since these vernacular dwellings reflect individual owners' values, newcomers from different cultural backgrounds often choose designs that align with their own traditions rather than local ones. This trend leads to more heterogeneous architectural forms and weakens Yikeyin's cultural identity. Over time, as external and local cultures interact, traditional architectural styles are revised or replaced, gradually diluting their original philosophical concepts and cultural significance.

The next issue worth discussing is the ultimate fate of Yikeyin. In other words, is Yikeyin destined to be eliminated by modernization along with the traditional philosophy it embodies fading into oblivion?

Indeed, the progress of modern civilization is gradually replacing old traditions. However, as described by the theory of path dependence, in the process of evolution, certain traits, even if no longer fully suited to the current environment, are not immediately discarded (Wang, 2022). Instead, they continue to exist along the evolutionary path for a considerable period. We can still observe some traditional layout elements of Yikeyin or Half-Yikeyin appearing in contemporary self-built houses in central Yunnan. (Figure 11) (Figure 12)

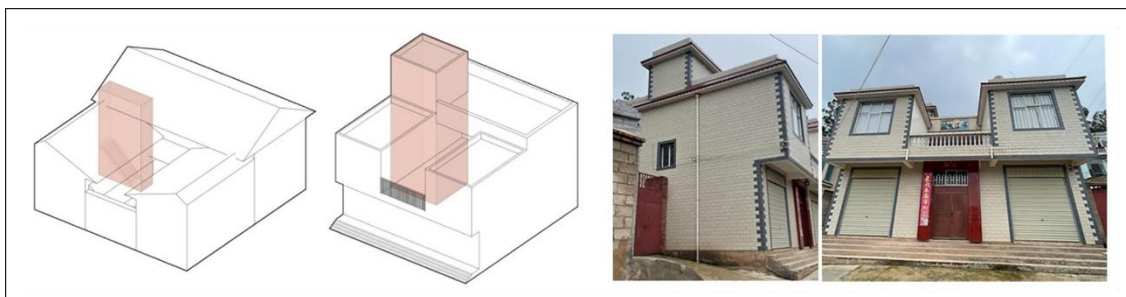


Figure 11 Contemporary Dwelling in Central Yunnan

Source: Author (2022)



Figure 12 Contemporary Dwellings in Central Yunnan
Source: Author (2024)

Finally, we would like to discuss whether or not the contributions of this study can extend to contemporary residential design or spatial design in urban areas.

As traditional architectural forms and the philosophies behind them gradually fade away, it is more effective to apply the knowledge of Yikeyin to contemporary design rather than relying solely on static preservation, thereby better safeguarding this cultural heritage. Although this study does not directly propose protection strategies, its findings offer creative inspiration for designers. One notable phenomenon is that designers often extract elements from traditional architecture for use in modern commercial space design, demonstrating that traditional architecture still holds contemporary value. The systematic analysis of Yikeyin's traditional layout not only provides cultural references for rural development but also enriches modern spatial design with regional characteristics and cultural depth. By integrating the spatial order of traditional layouts with modern design concepts, these cultural elements can be revitalized in the new era, breathing new life into tradition.

6. Conclusion

This study systematically explores the influence of Confucianism, Taoism, and folk culture, as traditional Chinese philosophies, on the layout of Yikeyin dwellings in central Yunnan. Through an analysis of historical context, architectural research, field studies, and expert consultations, it becomes clear that these philosophical systems have impacted the spatial organization and design of Yikeyin to varying degrees.

Confucianism was found to play the most prominent role in Yikeyin's layout, emphasizing family unity, social hierarchy, and harmony. This was reflected in the symmetrical design, spatial arrangement, and the clear hierarchical division of rooms. Taoism's influence, on the other hand, appeared to be more abstract, primarily seen in the integration of architecture with nature, especially in courtyard designs that harmonize the dwelling with the natural environment. Finally, folk culture was found to have a relatively smaller impact on the overall structure, but provided significant symbolic meanings, such as avoiding certain shapes and valuing prosperity through livestock.

Additionally, the historical migration of Han people to central Yunnan during the Ming Dynasty facilitated the introduction of these philosophical influences. The phenomenon of path dependence ensured the continuation of these design principles, as craftsmen followed established building practices passed down through generations. However, interviews revealed that the symbolic meanings of traditional philosophy within Yikeyin are mostly confined to the craftsmen's circles, and with modernization and the decline in the number of traditional craftsmen, these meanings are gradually fading.

Overall, Yikeyin represents a unique product of cultural integration and philosophical influence, shaped by historical circumstances and ongoing adaptation. Although traditional philosophy continues to play a role in the architectural form of Yikeyin, social and economic changes are threatening its existence. Ongoing research and preservation efforts are essential to safeguarding the cultural and philosophical heritage embodied in Yikeyin architecture. Furthermore, the insights gained from this research can inspire contemporary designers to integrate the cultural connotations and regional characteristics from traditional philosophy more effectively into modern spatial design. By doing so, contemporary architecture can gain a deeper layer of cultural significance while still meeting modern demands and technological advancements.

7. References

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