

# CULTURAL RESONANCE IN HOMESTAY DESIGN: A STUDY OF HUI-STYLE ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

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**Abstract:** In the rapidly advancing landscape of modern society, there is a discernible resurgence of interest in antiquity, with individuals increasingly drawn to the allure of bygone eras. As material saturation becomes a prevailing reality, the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment takes center stage, emphasizing its paramount importance. The amalgamation of fashion and morality in people's attire and culture signifies a contemporary quest for a harmonious blend of modern style and timeless virtues.

The profound and rich characteristics of Chinese culture manifest prominently in various aspects, including furnishings, shapes, and layouts. These cultural elements not only serve as aesthetic components but also act as reflections of a profound connection to heritage. Recognizing the interplay between design concepts, regional materials, and traditional craftsmanship, this research underscores the necessity of a profound understanding of regional culture as a cornerstone for homestay design.

The primary objective of this study is to address the spiritual yearnings of individuals within our developed and materialistic society. Against the backdrop of rapid modernization, this research endeavors to facilitate a remembrance of original aspirations and cultivate a sense of psychological belonging. Understanding the vital role of regional culture in this pursuit, the study aims to refine and apply regional cultural elements to contemporary homestay designs, transcending the conventional limitations of homestay decoration.

In recognizing the intrinsic differences in regional cultures, the research advocates for the meticulous incorporation of regional cultural elements into modern local homestay designs. This departure from generic homestay decoration is a deliberate effort to establish a deeper connection with cultural roots, seeking an authentic sense of belonging. By creating homestay designs that resonate with regional styles, the study endeavors to evoke a profound sense of cultural identity and foster a renewed appreciation for heritage in an increasingly globalized world.

**Keywords:** Homestay Design, Regional Culture, Spiritual Fulfillment, Modern Style, Cultural Identity

## 1. Introduction

In modern society, with its rapid advancement, there is an increasing trend of people reminiscing and pursuing the charm of antiquity. Under the premise of material saturation, the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment becomes especially important. In people's attire and culture, the combination of fashion and morality is evident, reflecting a pursuit of modern style. Whether in furnishings, shapes, or layouts, these elements showcase the profundity of Chinese culture and its rich characteristics. Therefore, the design concepts, regional materials, and traditional

craftsmanship in homestay design require a deep understanding of regional culture as an important vehicle for our study. The main aim of this research is to satisfy people's spiritual pursuits in such a developed society and materialistic world, to remember the original aspirations, and to seek a sense of belonging psychologically. Due to regional cultural differences, refining and applying regional cultural elements to modern local homestay designs breaks the limitations of homestay decoration. Creating regionally styled homestay designs seeks the roots of belonging.

## **2. Overview of Homestay Design**

"Homestays, originally introduced from Japan to Taiwan and popularized in China, are similar to family-run bed and breakfasts, close to the definition of 'farm stays' and 'guesthouses.' Homestays mainly combine local customs, ecological environment, natural scenery, and people's productive activities in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, etc., leveraging the surrounding landscapes to showcase their unique charm and provide accommodations for travelers. Homestays in historic districts operate as private, family-style residences, offering comfort, relaxation, and a natural environment." [1] Thus, homestays differ from general hotels and inns, which provide warm and efficient services and comprehensive infrastructure.

Homestay buildings should not deviate from the local rural style in pursuit of novelty. They should both display the original architectural style and integrate into the rural environment. Most of the architecture of homestays should maintain the style of the original village, with a portion designed creatively to display characteristic design techniques and elements. The building façades, as the first visual impact, should catch people's attention, not just with white walls and black tiles but with localized alterations on the original texture, creating spaces with differences.

Homestays differ from general hotels and inns; thus, their design features should enable guests to experience an environment unlike any other. The chosen locations for homestays should have certain attractions, such as mountains, water, and beautiful natural scenery that allow people to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, or areas with rich cultural heritage and ancient architecture. Creative districts in cities or conveniently located places can also form themed homestays. Homestay design should not only complement the environment but also reflect the personality, hobbies, interests, or personal experiences of the owners, embodying a certain storytelling aspect. This makes the homestay distinct from other hotels, creating a space that is culturally rich and affable.

## **3. Characteristics of Hui-style Homestay Architecture**

The artistic characteristics of Hui-style construction matured early, emerging in the late Tang Dynasty and flourishing in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Residential houses best reflect the Hui architectural style, embodying the stable and comfortable living state of residents at that time. Hui-style architecture, with its unique design, showcases its charm and strong regional characteristics, representing a design where culture and environment merge. Hui-style buildings, constructed alongside mountains, facing streets and alleys, are designed with Feng Shui principles in mind, natural and regional, simple yet elegant. The layout is clever and flexible, with unique forms and varied changes. The arrangement of houses is mainly courtyard-based and community-oriented, facing south while sitting north, with the most distinctive features being high houses, large halls, and deep wells.

The design style of Hui-style architecture is simple and realistic, not ostentatious. The character and living habits of Hui residents are reflected in their architecture, combining the spirit of mountains and rivers with cultural customs, simple, elegant, and structurally rigorous, a design with unique charm. Hui-style carvings in Hui

architecture showcase exquisite craftsmanship, with stylish and exquisite decorations, an artistic charm described as "three carvings beautify a building," unique and distinctive.

Built according to natural laws with favorable terrain, Hui-style architecture creates a good living environment, warm and comfortable, pursuing a harmonious state. In construction, Hui architecture places more emphasis on the philosophical meaning of living, valuing the harmony of time, location, and human relations, and being cautious about the choice of trees and house orientation. Their ideas are realized in the construction system of Hui-style architecture, showing reverence and respect for Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism.

### **3.1 Regional Cultural Elements**

"The spirit and core of Hui culture are mainly influenced by Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, with Hui architecture embodying these philosophies, either in the delicacy of the overall architecture or the elegant and generous layout of the village" [2]. Confucianism emphasizes ritual education, and the layout of residential houses also strictly adheres to the clan system, ethics, and hierarchy, a manifestation of maintaining "ritual." Lower-status Hui merchants also abide by simplicity and modesty in house construction, focusing on elaborate and elegant interior decorations. The carving art on doors, windows, and stone pillars vividly showcases the refined taste of Hui people.

Hui architecture is also influenced by Taoism. Located in mountainous and hilly areas, ancient Hui culture was relatively closed. Taoist Laozi emphasized the "main" characteristic of space, observing the surrounding geographical environment as per Yin-Yang and the Five Elements theories, essential for Hui people in choosing their settlements, thereby utilizing the surrounding environment. Laozi also introduced the idea of colorless simplicity, as bright colors can distract from the object's inherent characteristics. Thus, the overall color scheme of common Hui-style architecture is black, white, and gray. "Simplicity" refers to white, and "mystery" to black. Taoism regards black as a sacred color, the ancient name for the North Pole, or the zenith. Hui-style architecture, with its dark tiles, is solemn and mysterious, decorative, and the natural textures of brick and wood showcase Taoist aesthetics of simplicity and mystery.

"The rhythm of ancient architectural design also reflects the local people's aesthetic concept" [3]. The art of Wan-Nan architectural cluster is a manifestation of Chinese national character and spirit, with design implications consistent with the national spirit. The inner beauty sought by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism has a significant impact on our mental and moral development, thus the most vivid expression in architecture. During the Han and Wei dynasties, due to a large number of migrants escaping wars, their influx had a close relationship with the local population structure and life, causing significant changes in the ancient Hui population. The Central Plains people's strong attachment to their culture and traditions led to the preservation and inheritance of Central Plains culture, spreading and developing advanced culture and facilitating exchanges and integration between the two regions. This form of architecture, suitable for living, also reflected their status and personal cultivation. The Hui-style architecture we know today has promoted the culture and art of its era.

### **3.2 Architectural Space Layout Structure**

The courtyard-style community structure is the main overall arrangement of Hui-style homestay architecture, with most houses facing south while sitting north, against mountains and facing water. Generally, Hui-style architectural structures are symmetrically divided along a central axis, with the hall in the middle and rooms on both sides of the hall, with ventilated and illuminated patios in front of the hall. This layout characterizes the self-

sufficient living space of the architecture. In terms of exterior appearance, complete features make it easy to establish a strong aesthetic sense.

Representative high walls and deep houses. In Hui-style ancient architecture, walls often enclose the buildings, generally using small windows apart from the main doors of rooms, with patios being the only parts allowing interior lighting. Architectural spaces, courtyards, and halls are arranged in sequence, with the overall enclosure of high walls making it appear deeper.

"Enclosed walls mostly exist in the form of horse-head walls" [4]. "Horse-head wall" is a symbol of Hui-style architecture. With a high density of residential buildings, they are used for fire and wind protection, evolving gable walls into the "horse-head walls" we see today, with staggered contours, a common format in southern architecture, also with typical stylistic features.

Southern-style courtyard patios are symbolic of many Hui-style buildings. These are open spaces enclosed between houses or houses and walls, mostly paved with blue bricks, mainly serving ventilation and lighting purposes, ensuring air circulation in the building. This construction feature is also related to the Hui tradition of engaging in commerce, hence the saying "four waters return to the hall," a typical Hui custom.

Interior decorations highlight regional culture. Decorative techniques for doors and windows emerged at the turn of the Southern Song Dynasty, carrying profound cultural characteristics. The patterns carved on doors and windows embody people's aspirations for a good life, a heritage of Chinese Han carving. The restoration of residences, construction of academies, ancestral halls, and gardens, and the compactness of these residential buildings formed group architectural structures. Under the constraints of the feudal hierarchy, the identity and wealth of Hui merchants could not be reflected in architecture, so interior decoration became the main aspect. Door and window carvings and all interior components were extremely meticulous, using wood, brick, and stone "three carvings" craftsmanship, with exquisite carvings visible on railings, doors, windows, and flying eaves. Decorative contents mostly include mythological stories, local Hui stories, loyalty, etiquette, and other folk cultures.

Hui architectural culture differs significantly from other cultures, not only in architecture but also due to historical background and regional cultural characteristics. Regarding Central Plains architectural culture, the two have very different historical backgrounds. Hui culture, situated in high terrain near mountains and water, often experiences misty and humid climates. Due to its closed and relatively backward culture, ancient residential buildings were mostly "dry-column style." With the influx of Central Plains people escaping wars, the combination of Hui "dry-column style" and Central Plains bungalows formed the current patio-style Hui architecture, addressing the humid climate and harsh environment. The Central Plains, located in flat areas with rapid agricultural development, enjoyed affluent material life and significant family concepts influenced by Confucianism. Early "semi-cave dwellings" evolved into circular or square buildings over time. Due to the integration of three ethnic cultures, Central Plains culture absorbed a vast array of foreign cultures, forming a diverse cultural collection.

Due to Hui culture being situated in highlands, backed by mountains and facing water, its unique natural conditions make Hui architecture conform to the beauty bestowed by nature, naturally elegant, without pretense. Integrating objects with scenery, creating reality from the void, it possesses a serene natural beauty. The architectural design pursues compliance with wind and water, symmetry and complementarity, fully and thoroughly expressing the Chinese traditional culture of the "Golden Mean." Hui and Central Plains architecture differ significantly in layout and space. Hui architecture, based on Feng Shui, emphasizes the harmony of time,

location, and human relations, backing mountains and facing water. The structure, appearance, and color of the buildings harmonize with the natural environment, integrating with and displaying the harmony and coordination of the construction environment. The most classic Hui residential areas, Hongcun and Xidi, represent Hui culture and are also influenced by feudal society, greatly showcasing the prosperity of Hui culture. Central Plains architecture, while emphasizing aesthetically pleasing symmetry and coordinated spatial planning, also exhibits spatial fluidity. Central Plains architecture typically uses different aesthetically pleasing materials to divide spaces, such as partitions, screens, and curio shelves, which both separate and beautify spaces, making them dynamic and lively. This is where Hui and Central Plains differ in structure and layout.

### **3.3 Colors and Materials**

Today's society is an era of rapid industrial development, with cities built of steel and concrete rising and developing swiftly, where people's living spaces lack a pastoral environment. Science and technology bring us comfort and convenience in certain products, but people still harbor a deeper longing for nature. The environmental impact is also inspired by Hui-style residences.

In the landscape conception, the key planning focus of Hui-style residences is on "emphasizing mountains and water," such as courtyard planning surrounded by mountains and water. Most of the buildings we see today are Hui-style residences centered around courtyards, with roofs collecting rainwater forming a "treasure bowl" style, symbolizing the moral landscape of "conservation." Although homestay design integrates landscape and environment, the main goal is to incorporate natural landscapes into the architecture.

In terms of color coordination, the black and white contrast in Hui-style residences reflects the same consideration in modern design. Hui and modern designs use color clashes and clever combinations to make the architectural atmosphere enchanting.

From the perspective of material integration, Hui-style residences primarily use wood and stone, while modern construction uses less wood. However, homestays in design refer to Hui-style, with common wooden furniture and decorations. The texture of materials also affects the psychological feel of the interior space.

The rapid development of residential construction in design concepts, materials, and technology also continually changes people's psychological needs. The influence of Confucianism on Hui culture, harmoniously coexisting with nature, pursuing the unity of heaven and man, complying with nature while atmospheric, serves as a model for contemporary design. Modern architecture should be harmonious and integrated, embracing external cultures and showcasing its unique construction style.

Hui construction allows us to feel as if in nature, witnessing sunrises and sunsets, the undulating horse-head walls, and the white walls and black tiles, no less a natural realm. In Hui architecture, we must emphasize the relationship between humans and the ecological environment, harmonizing with it, prioritizing greening, and following the path of architectural planning and ecological environment.

### **4. Development of Hui-Style Homestay Architectural Design**

Homestays, different from traditional hotels, operate as a supplementary family business, offering travelers a rustic abode. Size and luxury are not the pursuit of homestays; instead, they aim for distinctiveness, delicacy, and elegance, with beauty being their defining feature. Homestay design has no specific boundaries or rules; most hotels can also be considered homestays. Modern market trends in homestay design increasingly start from emotional connections, with local customs and practices easily evoking feelings of being in a familiar place, with

the simplicity and uniqueness of hometowns used to express love. Designers, carrying modern interests and nostalgia for their hometowns, renovate rural areas, with their cultural thoughts also influencing homestay design. Homestays attract numerous travelers due to curiosity about local culture, customs, and practices. Accurate application of local culture is essential for encouraging repeat visits, representing travelers' recognition and appreciation of local life and culture. More precisely, homestays are not just a place to stay; they serve as a window to a region, showcasing local customs and practices.

Homestays are built and designed based on local customs, geographical environments, and thus, they have high environmental requirements. Visitors are drawn by the pursuit of idealized sentiments. Homestays cannot completely detach from the local ecological environment, which is a unique aspect of their design. The basic starting point in homestay design is to respect the ecological environment.

Environmental protection is the fundamental principle in design, aiming to utilize local environmental potential without relying on external forces, and to formulate suitable methods based on local conditions, preserving a harmonious atmosphere between people and the environment. The design process should adhere to environmental protection guidelines, respecting the human environment without disrupting the original ecological environment, complementing man-made and natural environments, and preserving ecological integrity without destroying natural habitats.

Accurately grasping the characteristics of the era and innovating designs timely is essential. Although homestays represent a return to authenticity and the pursuit of natural simplicity, no industry can isolate itself from the times or external changes. Therefore, it's necessary to inherit and highlight the vitality of homestays from within and without. Designers should consider global issues, and based on problem analysis, consider overall economic development planning, delineate ecological regions, and under the premise of land development and tourism industry growth, select naturally advantageous environments with beautiful surroundings and rich cultural heritage. Correct layout planning highlighting features should be made according to local conditions, delineating the development framework for homestays.

Focusing on the theme of homestay design, considering the surrounding natural environment and local customs, rational planning should be done in the style and room decoration of homestays. These should inherit and develop, while also being innovative and aesthetically distinctive, reflecting the designer's creativity and spirit. The local charm should be evident in furnishings, amenities, and outdoor arrangements, maintaining the hearty local customs and achieving harmonious development with nature. In practical situations, a comprehensive analysis based on local cultural characteristics should be conducted. These characteristics should be integrated into the design and construction process. As in our interior design, using unified and harmonious symbols and representations for packaging provides visual comfort. If the design is disorganized and lacks unity, the theme will deviate and lose coherence. Design should not only be innovative but also focus on symbol unity and harmony, being vibrant and tasteful. Homestay design should blend with the surrounding environment, creating a seamless and harmonious feeling, which is the fundamental philosophy we pursue in designing homestays, ensuring comfort for guests in body and mind.

## **5. Conclusion**

The style of Hui design is increasingly beloved and followed by the public, yet its essence and charm are not easily captured. The overall study applies the essence and characteristics of Hui style to homestay design, influencing people's thoughts and ideas under the influence of ancient culture. Researching the impact of Hui

culture on homestay design, based on an understanding of Hui culture and starting from residential design, yields not only Hui characteristics but also more breakthroughs and innovations, ensuring traditional residential design is a pathway to discovering fresh concepts. In-depth practice can bring new momentum to the development of residential design.

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