

## Urban Culture Construction in Modern Landscape Architecture

### - Take the Design of South Bank Linear Park in Meizhou City, Guangdong Province as an Example -

Deng Wugong · Jia Jianzhong · Han Bingyue

Institute of Landscape Architecture of China Academy of Urban Planning and Design

#### ABSTRACT

Modern cities are weak in traditional culture with the lack of characteristics and the problem of environmental deterioration. As the important carrier of urban culture, landscape architecture should be responsible for solving these problems. The urban need is paid much attention in the design of South Bank Linear Park in Meizhou city. Following the principle of inheriting and developing urban traditional culture, the design of the whole park is integrated with Hakka culture in Meizhou, which forms the landscape with local features and modern landscape architecture culture, and promotes the urban culture construction.

*Key Words: Landscape Architecture, Hakka Culture, Urban Culture Construction, Park Design*

### I. Culture-the Spiritual Ligament between Landscape Architecture and Cities

Cities are the concentrated reflection of national politics, economy and culture. Every city has its own history of development during which its characteristic cultural values and features are formed, and content of multi-culture is presented. Whether it is classic traditional culture or modern urban culture, literature and art or folk customs, the location and layout of the city or residential architecture, tangible culture or intangible culture, it is found all over the city, and it is the culture that reflects the character and features of the city.

Chinese traditional landscape architecture is an important part of urban culture. Due to the development of society, modern landscape architecture also performs other functions besides being the carrier of culture. However, undoubtedly, culture is still the soul of modern landscape architecture. Modern landscape architecture culture is integrated with multi-cultural forms such as philosophy, religion, literature, art, ethics and folk custom, etc, it is conveyed in various forms of landscape through all kinds of landscape architecture

elements, which leads to the formation of unique cultural landscape within a certain regional space.

In a way, culture is the spiritual ligament between modern landscape architecture and cities. Through integrating culture into landscape architecture and creating landscape, modern landscape architecture culture can be formed, which enriches the urban culture, promotes the urban culture construction and serves the urban people. The design of South Bank Linear Park in Meizhou city follows the tenet of constructing the urban culture, which integrates the unique Hakka culture in Meizhou city into the whole layout and every detailed design of the park.

### II. The Features of Hakka Culture in Meizhou City

Meizhou city is located in the northeast of Guangdong Province, at the border between Fujian Province, Guangdong Province and Jiangxi Province. It is a national historical and cultural city with the time-honored reputation as "home of Hakka, home of overseas Chinese, land of football, land of

culture and land of pomelo". Hakka accounts for 97% of the population in Meizhou city, and the Hakka culture is dominant.

## 1. History of Hakka

Hakka family is a branch of the Han nationality, namely, the family of Min, Yue and Gan. It is formed by the integration of Han Chinese who migrated southward and local aborigines such as She and Yao, which has unique dialect, culture and characteristics. It is mainly composed of Han Chinese and it also comprises minority nationalities that become Hakka, such as She and Yao nationalities. It is one of the families that have the most widespread distribution and the most far-reaching influence in the world.

The Hakka has experienced five great migrations, and the Hakka family developed in Meizhou finally. Thereafter, Meizhou is the main center of the development or migration of the Hakka, so that the city has become the concentrated community and the land of pilgrimage of the modern Hakka and has the reputation of "Hakka Capital of the world".

## 2. Hakka Spirit

Far away from their home, drifted from place to place, Hakkas were homeless and miserable. They have survived in numerous hardships, during which the highly praised Hakka spirit is formed, namely, respecting education, regarding family education; loving and serving their hometown and country; being brave and resolute, and fearing no sacrifice;

Table 1. Brief Explanation of the Origin of the Hakka(Luo Xianglin)

Origin	Migration period	Migrant people	Cause of migration	Immigrant area and the features of migration
The first migration	From the end of West Jin Dynasty(317 AD) to Sui and Tang Dynasties(879 AD)	Han majority in central plain	"Five barbarian peoples over-running China" in the north	Some migrated southward to the places surrounding the Yangtze River and the Huaihe River where near central plains, and others migrated to Poyang lake region and Ganjiang river valley.
The second migration	From the end of Tang Dynasty(880 AD) to North Song Dynasty when the capital was moved to Hangzhou (1126 AD)	Han majority in central plain: Original Hakkas	The Huang Chao Uprising at the end of Tang Dynasty; Liao and Jin nations invaded the central plain, and the capital of Song Dynasty was moved to south China.	A large amount of Hakkas migrated to the mountainous areas in the south of Jiangxi Province, in the southwest of Fujian Province and in the northeast of Guangdong Province, with the most in the mountainous areas in Ganjiang river valley.
The third migration	From South Song Dynasty (1127 AD) to the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty (1644 AD)	Han majority in central plain: Original Hakkas	The central plain was occupied by Jin. Mongols moved southward. The south of Jiangxi Province was overcrowded.	During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Tingzhou became the concentrated community of Hakkas; during the late Song Dynasty and early Yuan Dynasty, Meizhou became the new concentrated community of Hakkas; thus, "Hakka stronghold" came into being in the mountainous areas in Ganjiang river, Tingjiang river and Meijiang river valleys at the border between Jiangxi Province, Fujian Province and Guangdong Province, and Hakka family formed.
The fourth migration	At the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty (1645~1867 AD) the period of "five families detached from one group "	Hakkas	Manchurian moved southward; the Hakkas in the stronghold were crowded; in early Qing Dynasty, directed migration were encouraged.	Most Hakkas migrated from Meizhou and Tingzhou to the middle, the west and the beachfront of Guangdong Province as well as Guangxi Province, Hunan Province, Sichuan Province and Taiwan Province, which led to the pattern of widespread distribution of Hakkas, and a part of Hakkas in Meizhou migrated back to the south of Jiangxi Province, which led to the coexistence of new Hakkas and original Hakkas.
The fifth migration	From the middle of the 19th century (after the year of 1867)	Hakkas	The Taiping Tianguo Uprising ended in failure. The Hakka-Punti War happened in the west of Guangdong Province.	A part of Hakkas have been emigrating to counties in southeast Asia

working hard and forging ahead. The spirit still has great realistic significance in the present age.

### 3. Folk Custom of the Hakka

Hakkas originate from original Chinese in central plain, and its folk custom is similar to that of modern Han majority. However, because it has little connection with other nationalities, it keeps most of the folk customs of ancient Han majority. For example, as the spring begins, there is the custom of spring-greeting ox-“the beginning of spring”; at the Festival of Lanterns, Hakkas go to ancestral temple to add lights with the wish to “have a boy born into the family”; at the Double-Ninth Day, they make Double-Ninth Cake and drink some chrysanthemum wine; the marriage conveyance follows the “six rituals” in the ancient institution, namely proposal, birth date, bride price, wedding gifts, arranging the wedding, and wedding ceremony.

Besides, Hakkas of Meizhou have some characteristic folk customs in the process of their development, such as various folk entertainments like stepping on boat lights, singing mountain songs, string puppet, stepping on hurricane lamps and nine chains of rings. Additionally, there are also some local dramas such as mountain song theater in Mei County, Han drama in Guangdong Province, puppet show in Mei County, string puppet show in Wuhua County and Hakka zither in Meizhou. Thereinto Han drama is famous all over the country, and Meizhou is praised as “land of mountain songs”.

### 4. Hakka Round-dragon House

The main forms of Hakka folk residential architecture include square building, round building, court-style enclosed house and round-dragon house. The architecture is characteristic of huge scale, perfect symmetry, delicate structure, firmness and durability as well as good defense.

Round-dragon houses in Meizhou are unique, with the ancestral hall in the middle and other halls above and below. Besides, they are in large scale, with the middle axis running through the whole house, which leads to perfect symmetry. It is the most important form of Hakka residential architecture, which is very local and regional with the integration of traditional rituals, ethical concepts, biquinaries, geomantic omen, philosophical thoughts and architectural arts. Together with

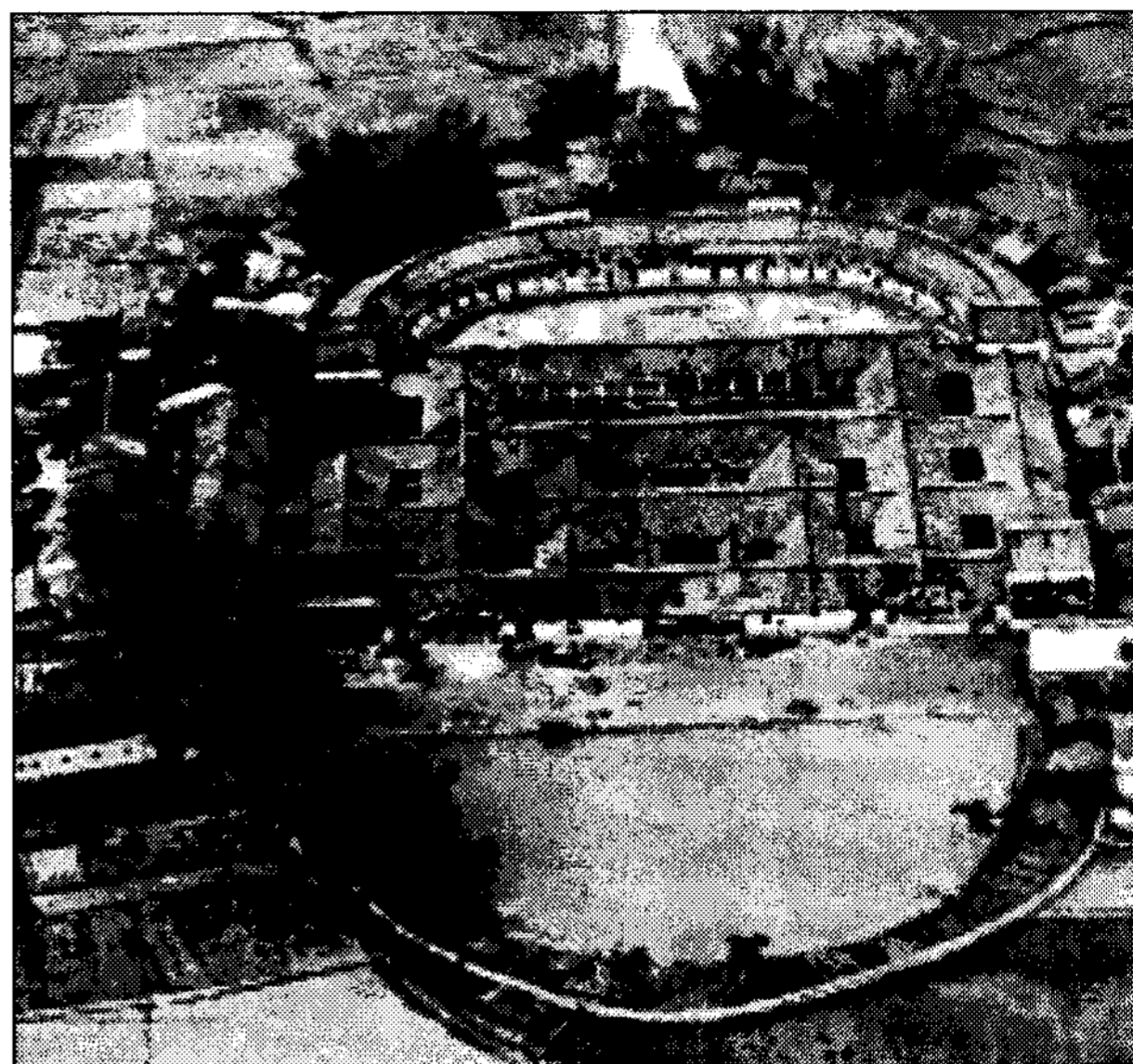


Figure 1. Hakka Round-dragon house in Meizhou

“courtyard dwellings” of Beijing, “cave dwellings” of Shanxi, the wood or bamboo stilted houses of Guangxi and the cube-style houses of Yunnan, Round-dragon House is considered as one of the five major Chinese residential architecture forms by Chinese and foreign architecture scholars (Figure 1).

### 5. Physical Culture of the Hakka

Hakkas not only respect education but also love martial art, and both women and men practice martial art in some remote mountainous areas. Hakkas have many traditional folk physical activities that aim to be healthy and amused, such as breathing technique, lion dances and dragon boat race, and there is also the feat of imperial examination.

The football culture in modern Meizhou is extremely developed. Li Huitang, a person from Meizhou, shook the international football arena between the 1920s and 1940s, and he is praised as “the king of football in Asia”, and Meizhou is called “land of football”.

### 6. Hakka Education and Celebrity Culture

Hakkas of Meizhou pay much attention on education, and its culture and education is extremely developed all along. In Qing Dynasty, it was praised as “the champion in terms of culture in South China”. “Yuanchuyi”, the popular book of Hakkas, is edited and used by themselves for education, which

includes characters in common rural use, Hakka folk customs, farm works in a year and popular folk literature. There is a folk saying of the Hakka, "Rather lose a large amount of money than lose popular books". Since the print of the book began in the year of 1730 during the Yongzheng reign period of the Qing Dynasty, it has been spreaded abroad Tingjing River, Meijiang River and Ganjiang River valleys.

There are a lot of outstanding and famous people from the Hakkas of Meizhou, such as Ye Jianying, Huang Zunxian, Qiu Fengjia, SongXiang, Zhang Bishi, Xiao Xiangrong, Lin Fengmian and Zeng Xianzi.

In general, Hakka culture not only keeps most of traditional culture of Han majority but also be integrated with culture of ancient Yue minority in the south China. It even absorbs some components in Southeast Asian culture and western culture. Besides, through the constant migration, the Hakkas formed the spirit of hard work, namely being strong, forging ahead as well as being social and united.

### III. Meizhou Hakka culture embodied in South Bank Linear Park

Along with the construction of new Meizhou city, modern buildings prevail in the city that the features of the traditional neighborhood as well as the characteristics of Hakka culture are becoming increasingly uncommon. In order to make the construction of Meizhou city bear more traditional cultural characteristics, the design of South Bank Linear Park is enclosing the theme of the city's culture, and blending the culture with the landscape architecture, by which the landscape architecture culture is formed. On one hand, the landscape architecture culture starts from the city's culture and delivers the culture content by creating landscapes (mainly artificial landscapes), which is the natural humanization; on the other hand, it gives priority to the natural landscapes, which are endowed with people's ideas and sensibilities that for people to feel, to realize and to appreciate, it creates a life style, which is the so-called naturalization of human. The purpose of the landscapes architecture culture is to create landscapes and life styles, based on which the design of Meizhou South Bank Linear Park integrates the Meizhou Hakka culture into the landscape architecture.

#### 1. Character of the Park

South Bank Linear Park is located at the verge of new Meizhou city, its east part bordering Meijiang river in the east, with the span of 4000m and covering an area of 26.7 hectare. According to Meizhou Hakka culture as the connotation and targeting at spaces with diverse waterscape, the character of the park is a water front park, which mainly for citizen's leisure and activities.

#### 2. Selection of Culture Content

Then how to present the Meizhou Hakka culture in South Bank Linear Park? Through the reearches on the cultural facilities and green spaces of Meizhou, we found in the City, there have been many facilities and theme parks with prevalent atmosphere of humanism already. Therefore, it is not necessary to present all the Hakka culture in this park. So that, in the design, the characteristic culture of traditional Hakka culture is selected as the cultural expression content, and is presented in a lively landscape form, which makes the cultural content of the park with characters of participant, cognitive, amusive and open.

#### 3. Conception of the Design and the Layout

Starting with Hakka culture, through the dissection and reconfiguration, the design of this park is anticipated to build a site by Meijiang River, where the history and culture of Hakka in Meizhou will be engraved.

In ancient times, people kept records of events by knotting on ropes, nowadays, people kept records of histories by the

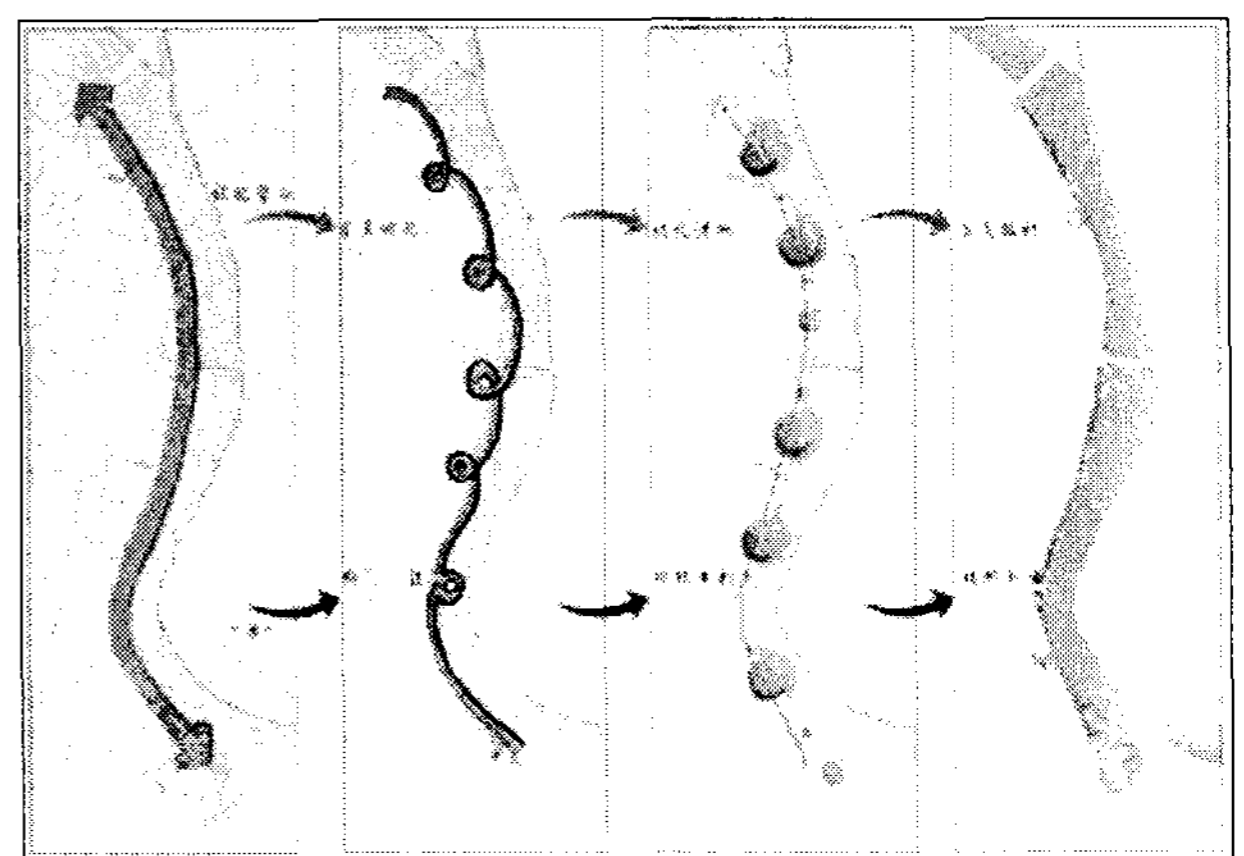


Figure 2. Chart of Originality and Conception

same way The design use the “knot” as the focal point of the culture in the reconfiguration of the site. Meanwhile, the development of Meizhou must adhere to the environmental protection and human-oriented ideology that ecological and pleasant landscapes shall be built in the park.

Therefore the theme of the design of South Bank Linear Park has been selected as “Recording Hakka by Knotting and Building Beautiful Landscapes along Maijiang River”(Figure 2).

Based on this theme, according to different characters of landscapes and Hakka culture contents, the park is divided into 5 scenic areas, which are the scenic area of “Strolling in the Woods”, the scenic area of “Impression of Meizhou”, the scenic area of “Moonlight on Meijiang River”, the scenic area of “Hakkas Travel around the World” and the scenic area of “Harmonious Hakka”. Surrounding pavilions are built separately in each scenic area with their own square, telling Hakka’s five migrations. The five pavilions are the big landscape “knots” recording the Hakka, together with other small landscape “knots” containing cultural contents, the greenland belt is formed.

#### 4. The Formulation and Exhibition of Hakka Culture

- 1) The scenic area of “Strolling in the Woods”: Hakka’s spiritual culture is presented

Eucalypts, which are good for people’s health, are kept in the design for exercising. Plank road and log cabins are set up in the woods, for people to walk, rest and drink tea. In the log cabins, unique Hakka’s dialect can be heard. Straight eucalypts and plank roads in polygonal line contain the meaning of Hakka’s spirit of being hardworking and pioneering as well as persistent in self-development.

The subject of “Teaching and Disabusing” square is originally from Hakka’s popular reading material “Yuan Chu Yi”, which is exhibited by carved stones and steles around the square. In addition, the “Teaching and Disabusing” sculpture brings out the cultural theme and is the central landscape of the square. Together with fountains and plants, which imply life and wisdom, the construction of the landscape presents the Hakka’s ideology of attaching importance to education (Figure 3).

- 2) The scenic area of “Meizhou Impression”: the characteristics of Maizhou culture is presented

In this scenic area, the prominent cultural impression of

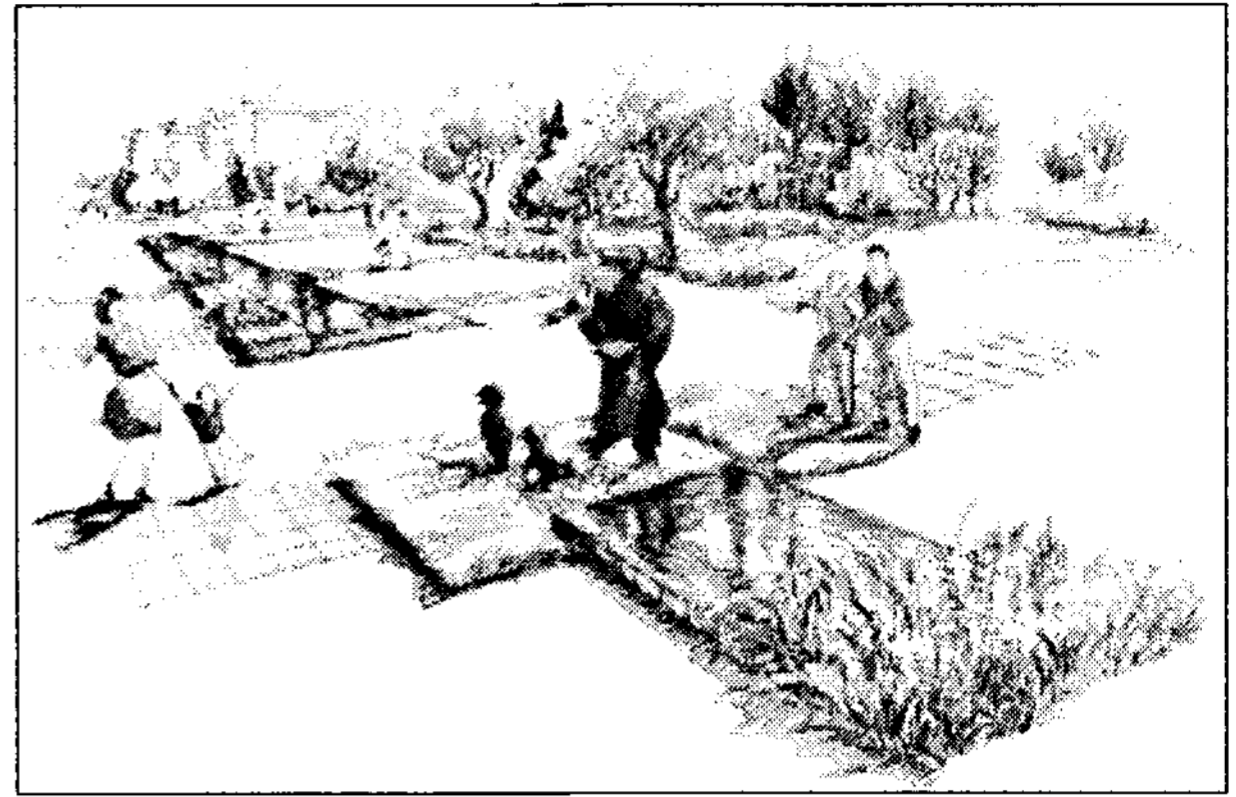


Figure 3. Effect Chart of Teaching and Disabusing Square

Meizhou is exhibited by scenery spots: round-dragon house, topographygeomorphology, and football culture.

The historical architecture, a round-dragon house which is originally outside the park, is included in the design. Through the repairation, it will be kept as a folk building museum, in which the culture of Hakka building is presented in a material form.

The design of Golden Turtle Floating Square(Figure 4) is based on the topography of Meizhou as “Golden Turtle Floating”. In the design, the sculpture of golden turtle and the pavement with gravels of water veins signify “Golden Turtle Floating”, which is not just visualized and interesting, but also bearing cultural significations. On the other field, the topography of Meizhou is reproduced by the sand map.

The football square uses curves and beelines, which eparate the space that to represent the moving tracks of football (Figure 5). The history and culture of the football is unfolded by the novel sculpture “Shooting” and embossment wall of football history. Hakkas of Meizhou are sports lovers,

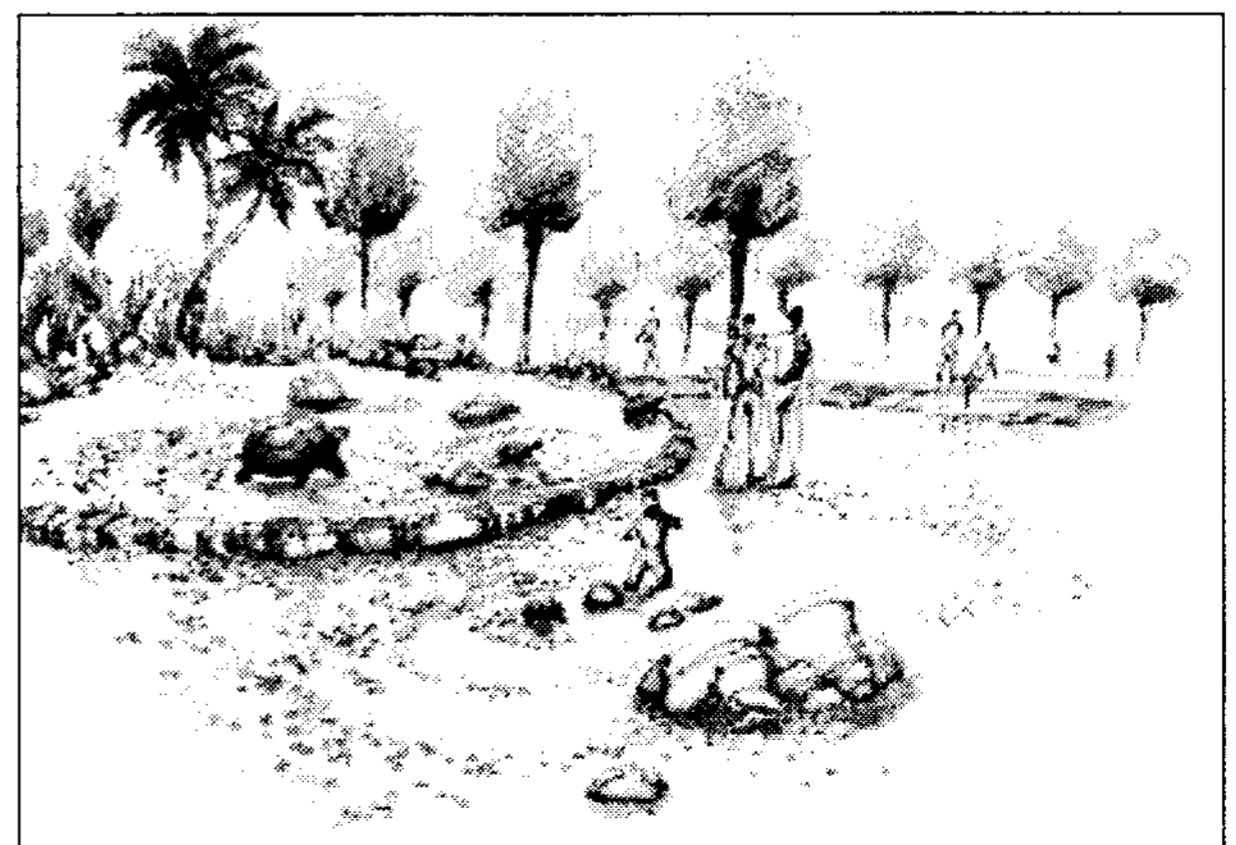


Figure 4. Effect Chart of Golden Turtle Floating

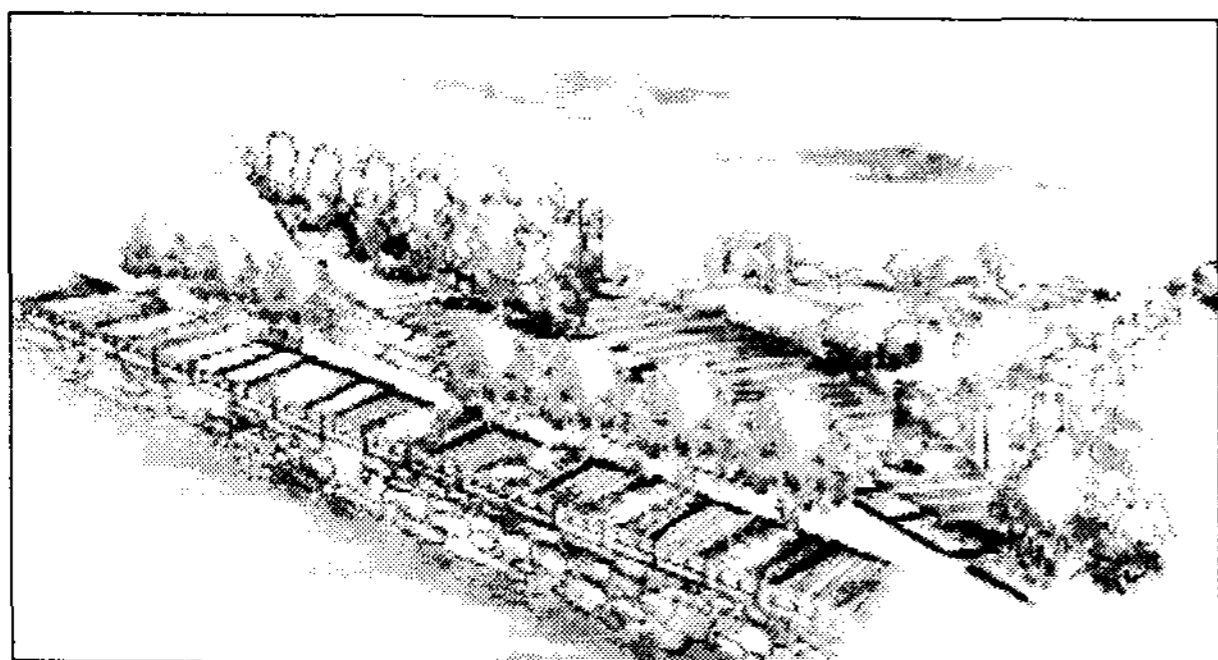


Figure 5. Sculpture "Shooting" and the Effect Chart



Figure 6. Effect Chart of the Playground

therefore, the playground is set up besides the Football Square, and traditional sports which are adored by people in Meizhou are recorded on a stone (Figure 6).

3) The scenic area of "Meijiang River's Moonlight": the folk culture of the Hakka is presented

This scenic area echoes with the walking street of "Hakka Travel around the World" area at western part of the park: open space is set up and cafés as well as teahouses are arranged. This area is blended with Hakka's folk culture and it is for citizens to gather together and enjoy leisure-time.

In the design, the old building on the riverbank are rebuilt to a two-storey building, which is used as Meijiang river exhibition hall and restaurants. The exhibition hall will bring forth the history of Meijiang River and its historical tales as well as historical figures stories. In the restaurant, people is able to taste the Hakka cuisine, and experience the Hakka's dietetic culture.

Sculptures of commodities in Hakka life Square present the life of Hakkas. There is a foot stool with 6Chi (3Chi=1m) long and 0.7Chi high, which is one of the most unique appliances in Hakka's daily life. It is used as a stepping-stool when going to bed, as well as the appliance for babies to

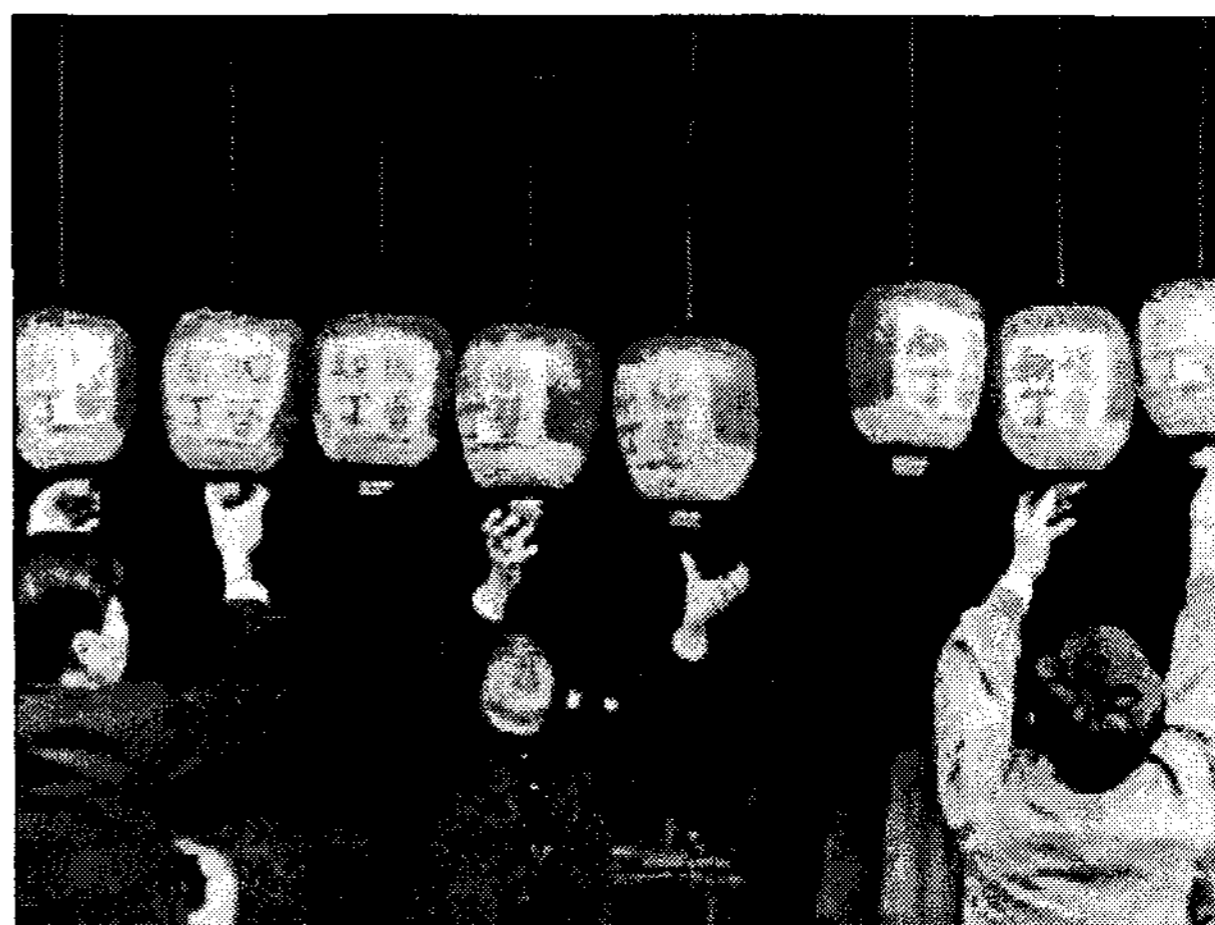


Figure 7. Antetype of Having a Baby Born into the Family Square

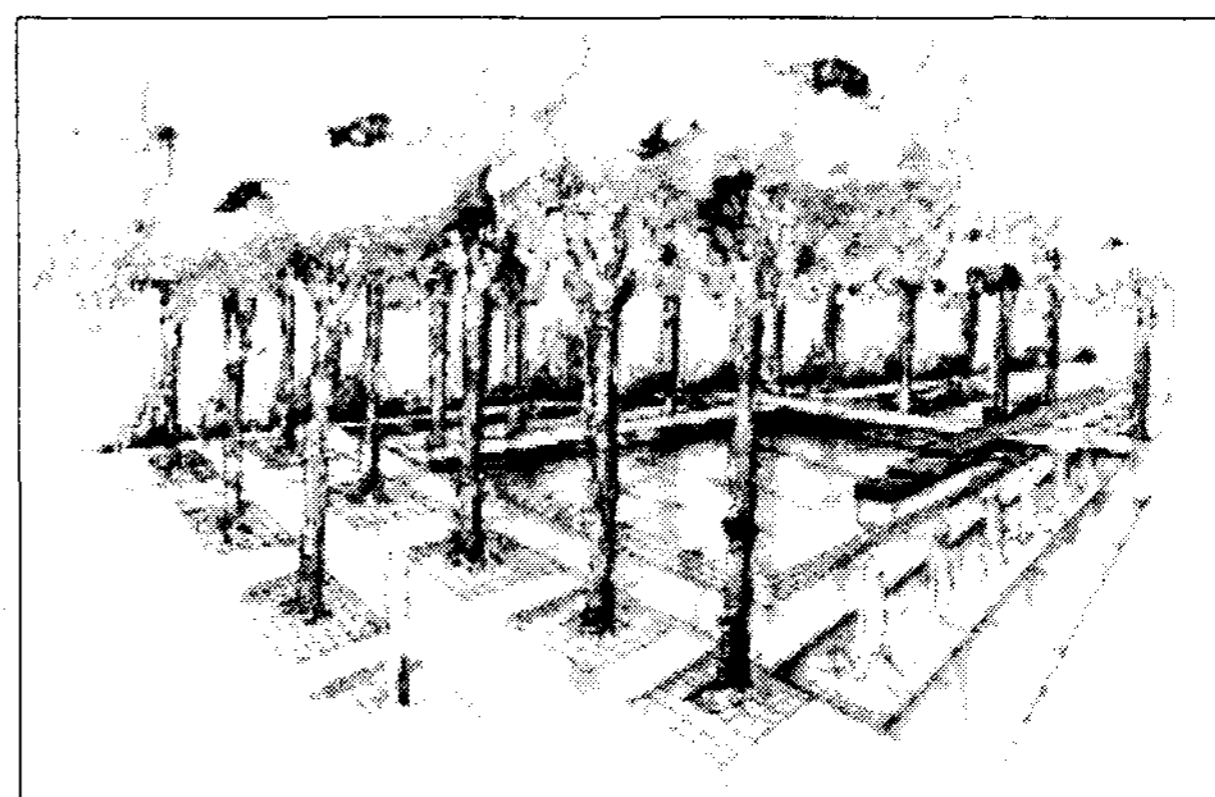


Figure 8. Effect Chart of Having a Baby Born into the Family Square

have dinner, to sleep and to do homework. The sculpture of foot stool is unique and amiable, which brings people into the beautiful memories of the childhood.

Square of Having A Born into the Family is based on the Hakka's tradition that every Lantern Festival the family with newborn boy must light up a lantern at the ancestral temple, which indicates baby booming. It is rare to see in cities nowadays, the traditional Hakka heritage can be passed and succeeded and the urban culture can be continued by the form of landscapes. Lanterns are hanging on lamppost in the square and the custom is introduced by characters, furthermore, the urban residents who have newborn babies will be able to hang lanterns here for celebration (Figure 7, 8).

4) The scenic area of "Hakka Travel around the World": culture of Hakka celebrities is presented

Five different venues and a "footprint" garden furniture in this area are telling stories of the Hakkas traveling all over

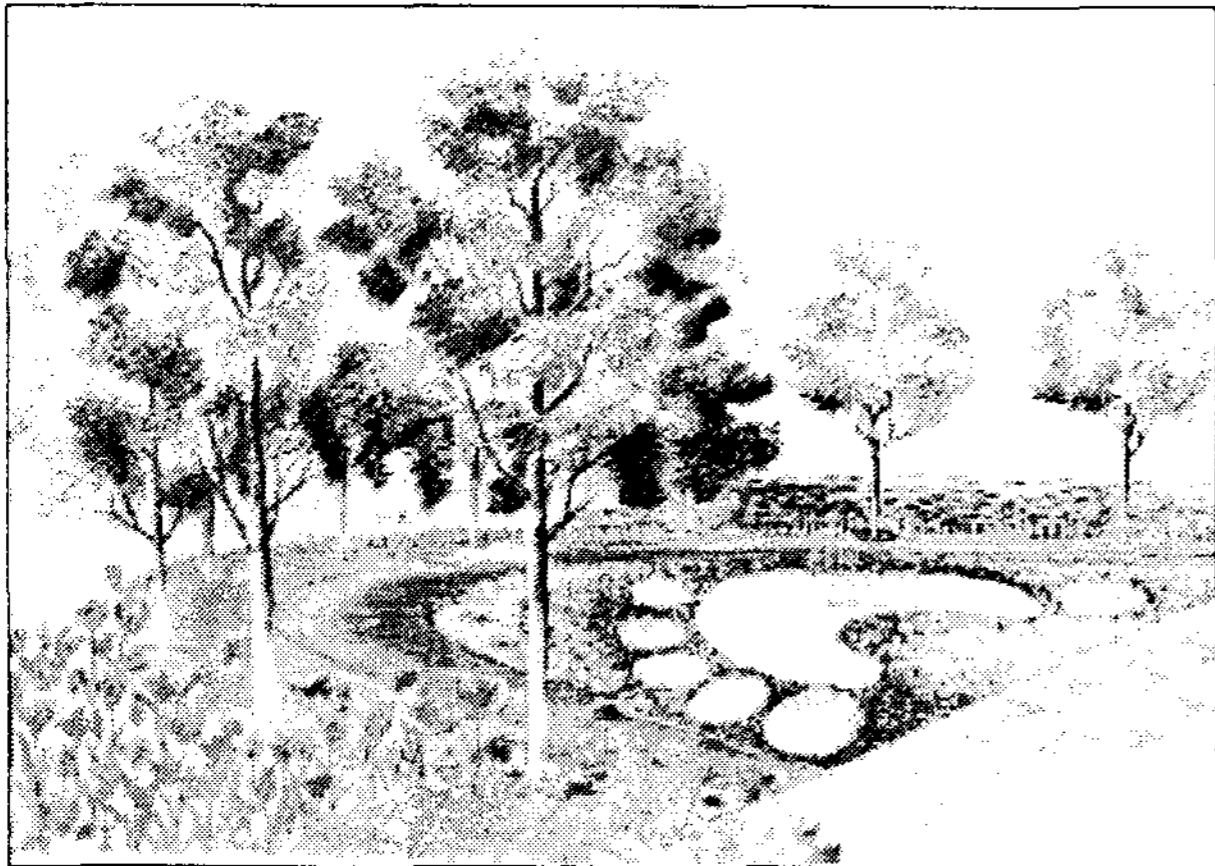


Figure 9. Effect Chart of Footprint Sketch

the five continents and anecdotes of Hakka celebrities during different periods.

Footprints garden furniture is delivered by an interesting footstep platform and a depressed footprint(Figure 9). The footstep platform implies the Hakka's arduous effort in building the enterprise, and the big footprint hints the road of Hakkas is becoming wider and wider and their footprints are found all over the world.

The five squares is named by the Hakka celebrities, including Fengmian Square(in memory of the master of traditional Chinese painting Lin Fengmian), Xiangen Square (in memory of patriot Qiu Fengjia), Square of General Ye(in memory of General Ye Jianying), Zhiwan Square(in name of Guangdong first wise man Song Xiang) and Gongdu Square (in name of diplomatic pioneer Huang Zunxian).

The Square of General Ye is combined with Sixian Pavilion, where the hydrophile platform and the antistrophic pavilion are set up, by which the complete square is formed. The square is decorated with lively sculpture and in the form of tablet to record the anecdote of the General, and the stone-carved Asia map and yellow pavement represents Hakkas are traveling around Asia. The other four squares are also represented based on the personalities.

##### 5) The scenic area of "Harmonious Hakka": agricultural culture of Hakka is presented

This scenic area is relatively far from the downtown. Its design is blended with the agricultural culture of Hakka, in which arbors, shrubs and grass were reasonably mixed that local plants as well as farmland landscapes are presented. (Figure 10).

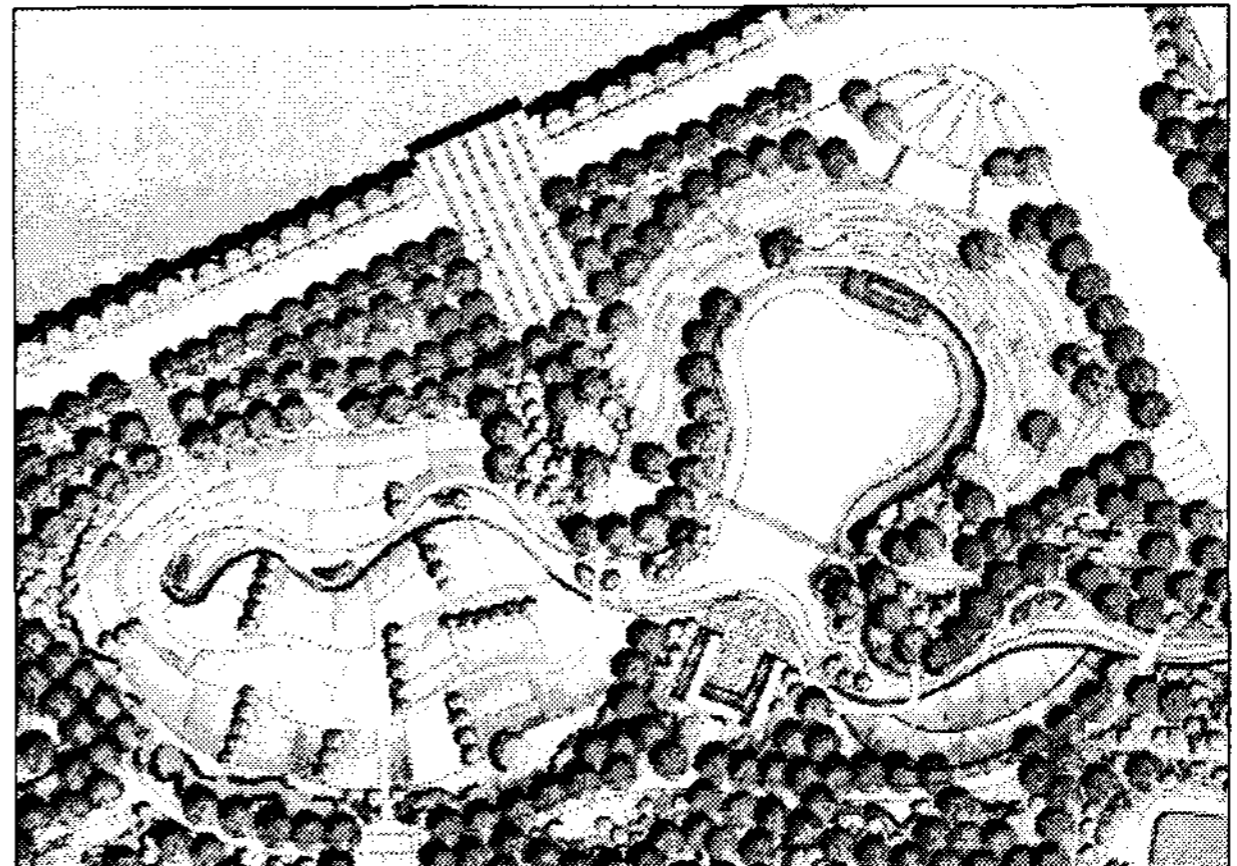


Figure 10. Planar Graph of Harmonious Hakka(part)

The water in the bottomland is rebuilt, which shapes a half-moon pond borrowing the form of round-dragon house. The farmland in the bottomland is rebuilt to terrace form, where short ornamentals are planted and a water mill, a straw man as well as dead stocks are placed. Furthermore, a Hakka folk building will be set up, by which a farmland landscape is simulated together with the surrounding water, plants and terrace, and the agricultural culture is presented.

In addition, Araucaria lawns, Bianchun Sculpture lawns, and Pomelo Square, which display the natural landscape, suggesting the culture of farming as well as the "land of pomelo".

##### 6) Architecture Design of the Surrounding Pavilion: the Hakka's history and architectural culture are presented

The Hakka's round-dragon house in Meizhou represents the aesthetic purpose and high architectural level of Hakka culture. The summerhouse is a common architecture of the Hakka for people to have a rest. The design of the surrounding pavilion is based on the combination of the Hakka's traditional round-dragon house and the summerhouse, both of which the function and the format are contained in the design. Then a landscape architecture forms with functions of historical display, amusement, leisure as well as landscape is formed, and Hakka culture is displayed(Figure 11).

The surrounding pavilion is permeable and light and has two floors: on the first floor, a picture that displaying the five migrations in the Hakka's history is carved; the second floor is a sightseeing stand. The five surrounding pavilions are of unified formation but with varieties of material. They become the sign of the landscape in the park, and embody the theme idea of "Recording the Hakka by Knotting".

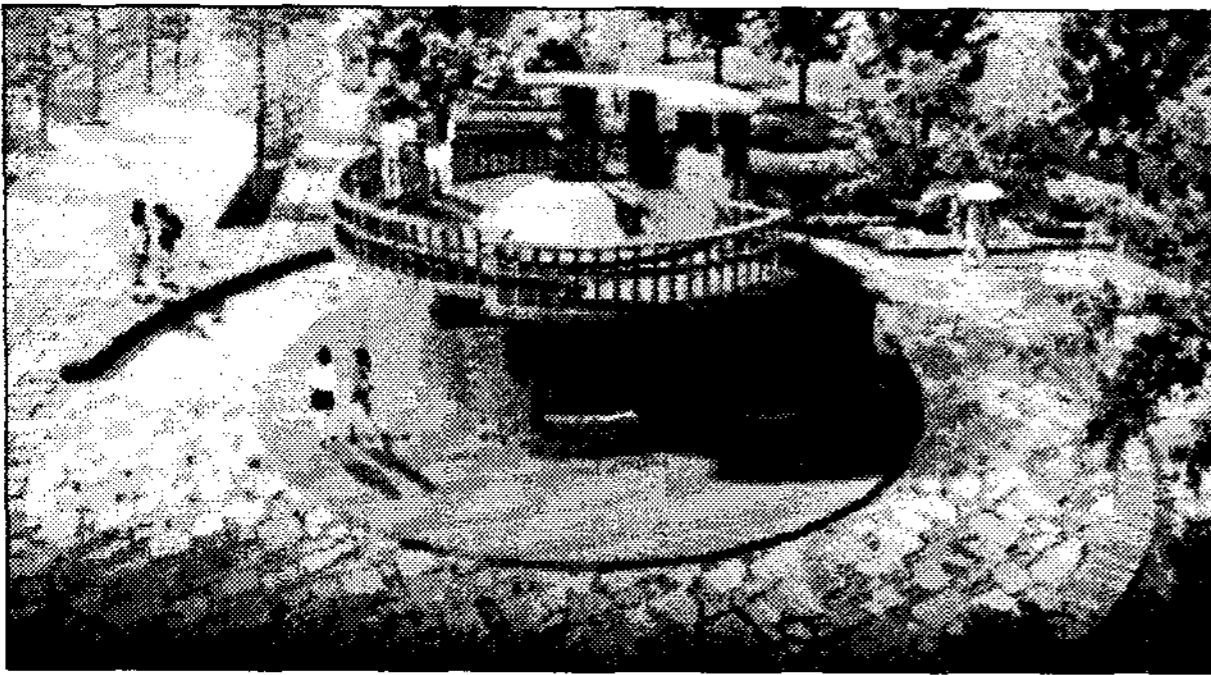


Figure 11. Effect Chart of the Surrounding Pavilion

## IV. Conclusion

In modern cities, there are many problems, some of which is closely related to modern landscape architecture. From a cultural point of view, there are three major aspects. Firstly, the urban cultural tradition is weak. The rapid economic development undermines the status of culture in urban life. Cities have showed excessive materiality but less cultural characteristic, which is adverse to cities' long-term development. Therefore, modern landscape architecture is needed in the cities to carry forward their cultural traditions. Secondly, cities lacks of features. Currently, the appearance of a city's construction is single, and the city's own characteristics can not be fully delivered. As a part of the city, the landscape architecture should make great efforts in presenting the regional landscape, that the landscape containing local cultural characteristics is the most expressive form. Thirdly, the environment in cities is deteriorating. In view of the increasing deterioration of ecological environment, urban residents have the emotional needs of closing to the nature. The landscape architecture is one of the most effective measures to meet their demands. Meanwhile, the landscape architecture is blended with local folk customs and abundant pop culture, which will make the landscape architecture bear more vitality.

The design of Meizhou South Bank Linear Park pays close

attention to the needs of urban city and takes on the above three social responsibilities. The design utmostly blends the regional culture with the park, summarizes and extracts Meizhou Hakka culture, that sums up the cultural identity, which expressed by landscapes and eventually forms the unique regional landscape. Meanwhile, the South Bank Linear Park bears profound culture connotations, which shapes modern landscape architecture culture as well as promotes the construction of culture in the city.

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## Brief Introduction of Authors

Deng Wugong, 1979/1/24, graduated form Beijing Forestry University and majors in Landscape Architecture, engaging in National Park planning, greenland planning and landscape architecture design. 13520634201 5858dwg@163.com

Jia Jianzhong, 1958/1/26, graduated form Beijing Forestry University and majors in Landscape Gardening. Director of Institute of Landscape Architecture, China Academy of Urban Planning & Design, senior engineer, engaging in National Park planning, greenland planning and landscape architecture design. 13601014138 jjz8@yahoo.com.cn

Han Bingyue, 1970/11/6, graduated form Beijing Forestry University and majors in Landscape Gardening, engaging in National Park planning, greenland planning and landscape architecture design. 13331097719 hby1010@y163.com