

Chinese Folk Culture Series
中国民间文化丛书



Residence

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Cave Dwellings of Loess Plateau

黄土高原上的陕北窑洞

Shaanxi, also called *Sanqin*, which is known as the birthplace of Chinese civilization, lies in the northwest of China. Exceptional geographical environment, natural weather, local conditions and customs form the residential architectures with a unique lingering charm, among which are cave dwellings that we are familiar with.

I . The Origin of Troglodytism

Cave dwellings, common folk houses on the Loess Plateau, are widely distributed in the middle or lower reaches of the Yellow River. The peculiar dwelling places are built by local people with the nearest resources—loess, which contains characters such as easy-cutting, heat preservation, firmness, sturdiness. In shape, cave dwellings are supposed to be related to the custom of living in caves of primitive men. According to some related archeological findings, ruins of *Yangshao* Culture with a history of 5 000 years from the Neolithic Age

陕西位于中国的西北地区,又称为“三秦”。陕西是中华民族悠久历史文化的发祥地之一。特殊的地理环境、自然气候和风土人情形成了陕西独具韵味的民居建筑,窑洞便是我们所熟知的陕北民居。

一、穴居的由来

窑洞是黄土高原上常见的民居建筑,广泛分布于黄河中下游地区。当地人采取就地取材的方式,利用黄土易凿、保温、坚固、耐久等特性,建造了这种奇特的居住场所。从形态上看,窑洞应当与原始人类穴居的传统有关。据考古发现显示,在位于黄河中游的西安半坡地区,发掘出距今五千年前的新



have been excavated in *Banpo* of *Xi'an*, which is located on the middle reaches of the Yellow River. People of the tribes lived in caves and digged crypts with simple tools on the ground, building the rudiment of cave dwellings. Historical records show that the earliest cave dwellings in the northern *Shaanxi* were built in the *Zhou* Dynasty with the type of semi-crypt. And they gradually evolved into the crypt, or commonly called the earth kiln according to folklore after the *Qin* and *Han* dynasties. Building materials had been improved since the middle of the *Ming* Dynasty. Stones began to be used in building a kiln wall, strengthening its soundness and stability. In the late *Qing* Dynasty and the early years of the Republic of China, people patterned earth kilns and laid stones to build cave dwellings, which added strength, beauty and decoration effect to them.

Nowadays, with the remarkable development of people's living standard, traditional cave dwelling constitution hardly meets people's pursuit of a higher living standard. Such scientific improvement as windows widening and the kiln leg's lifting has been adopted, which creates a transparent and lightesome space and expands the living area, making the house more attractive and functional. New

石器时代仰韶文化遗址，聚落内的民居采用的是“穴居”。先民依靠简易的工具，在平地上开凿地穴而居，这便是窑洞的雏形。据史料记载，陕北地区所建造的窑洞，最早始于周代，当时采用的是半地穴式。秦汉以后，逐步发展为全地穴式，也就是民间俗称的“土窑”。明朝中叶，人们对建造窑洞的材质进行改良，开始运用石块做窑面墙，从而增强了窑洞的牢固性和稳定性。清朝末年民国初年之际，人们又仿照土窑的模式，建造了石砌的窑洞，不仅使窑洞更为坚固，而且起到了美化、装饰的效果。

如今，随着人们生活水平的显著提高，传统的窑洞构造已不能适应现代人对生活品质的追求。人们对窑洞又进行了更为科学的改良，譬如将窗户设计得开阔些，抬升窑腿的高度等。这不仅增强了室内的通透性与采光率，而



cave dwellings with divided room and two-storey structure have emerged in many places. Ventilating windows which can freshen the air in the cave dwelling are installed on top of another window of some cave houses. While decorating, people do well in making use of new building materials like colorful tile and elegant wallpaper, bringing vitality to the old cave dwellings.

II. Shenxian Cave

The plain and natural modeling of the cave dwelling blends in with its surroundings. Moreover, it has earned its reputation as immortal cave for the features of sound insulation and heat preservation.

Judging from externals, northern *Shaanxi* caves are divided into the flat ground type, the mountain type, etc.. Unlike other buildings,

且扩大了室内的居住面积，使房屋更加美观、实用。不少地方，还出现了分割厅室及上下两层楼房式的新型窑洞。有些窑洞的窗顶还开设有气窗，使窑内的空气更加清新。在装饰窑洞的时候，人们还善于利用新型建筑材料，如用彩色瓷砖贴制窑面，在窑洞的墙面装裱精美的壁纸等，从而使窑洞焕发出勃勃生机。

二、神仙洞

窑洞的造型质朴大方，与周围的环境十分协调。窑洞有隔音、隔热、保温等功效，具有冬暖夏凉的特点，素有“神仙洞”的美誉。

从外观看，陕北的窑洞有平地型、山势型等种类。窑洞与其他建筑不同，



with the benefits of environmental protection, the cave houses are built according to the land-form, without destroying terrain and physiognomy and occupying too much cultivated land. It is a cost-effective way to build caves by using loess and stones. The doors and windows are usually wooden framework installed in the front side. Two windows are installed on the right side and the wooden door is installed in the middle. The windows of the cave dwellings are of two main types, namely, little square window with about one square meter and round window with three to four square meters. The windows are papered with cotton paper, which makes the room bright, tidy,

它一般顺势而建，不破坏原有的地形地貌，不过多占用耕地，具有环保的作用。窑洞的建筑材料多用黄土或石块所砌，节省了造价成本。窑洞的门窗为木质框架，多安装在窑洞的正面。木门置于正中，窗户位于右侧。窑洞的窗户一般有两种，一是小方窗，面积约1平方米；一是圆窗，约3~4平方米。窗户一般使用麻纸裱糊，这不仅使室内明亮干净，而且保暖透气。窑洞大门的建



warm and ventilated. Styles of the doors vary from wood-made to stone-built. Stone lions are put in front of the threshold of a wealthy family. Doors of cave dwellings are not fixed. Instead, gaps left while building walls are later reformed into doors. One family lives in a single cave dwelling with a separate yard, in which there is a stone roller, food shelves, millstones and livestock sties. Plant species like jujube and locust trees are grown in the yard by the master, which makes the yard full of serene farmhouse flavor, representing the regional sense of people in northern *Shaanxi*.

Seen from within, the typical cave dwelling usually adopts a dome-shaped top, which is seven to eight meters deep, three meters wide, three meters high and twenty meters or more at its deepest part. One will right away find the big Heated *Kang* on the right side built with adobe or stone boards as he enters the door. The Heated *Kang* as an essential part in the cave is a place of cold proof and heat insulation in freezing season. For the convenience of daily life, the functions of the Heated *Kang* go from simple bedding to a place where women do the needlework, children read and

筑样式颇为繁多，有木条编制的大门，有石块砌成的大门，富裕人家还多用石狮置于门槛前。不少人家的窑洞并无规制上的大门，而是将围院墙时留下的豁口改造为大门。窑洞的住户一般为一户一家，每家都有一个单独的院子。在窑洞的院落里面，多放置有石碾子、粮食架子、磨盘和牲畜圈等。主人还喜欢在院内种植枣树、槐树等植物，使整个院落充满恬静的农家气息，体现了陕北人的地域气质。

从内部看，典型的窑洞一般多用圆形穹顶，洞深一般约7~8米，宽约3米，高约3米，最深处可达20米开外。一进窑洞，最显眼的便是建在右手边的大火炕，多用土坯或石板砌成。火炕是窑洞内必不可少的物品，尤其在严寒之日，具有抗寒保温的作用。为了便于日常生活，火炕不再是单纯的卧具，逐步被赋予多种功能。



write, and the hosts entertain guests. People tend to rest or play on it after entering the house. An old stove for water boiling and meal cooking is usually equipped on the edge of the *Kang*, with which it communicates, hence smokes generated by cooking go out through the path which lies under the *Kang* and inside the wall, and finally out of the chimney on the top of the cave house, which creates a heating system and saves wood. A cellar is dug for the storage of food preparation like potatoes, radishes, cabbages, etc.. Particularly in the freezing winter is this of great use. Several vats or porcelain jars are usually placed in the back of the cave house. And the tunnel doors with their semicircle-shaped top assure the inter-work in the cave. People in northern *Shaanxi* enjoy papering three walls around the *Kang* with *Kangweizi*, the painted paper or collage. This practical decorating method aims at



它不仅可以充当卧床,也是妇女做针线活、孩子们读书写字和主人招待宾客的地方。人们进屋后,也爱在炕上休憩或玩耍。炕头前一般都设有土火灶,是用来烧水做饭的。炕与土火灶相连,烧饭的烟火可通过炕底的火道,从墙壁直达窑顶的烟囱排放出去。这样既取暖,又节省木柴,可谓一举两得。在窑洞的深处,还会挖造一个地窖,里面用来存放土豆、萝卜、白菜等日常所需的食材。特别是在隆冬季节,人们在地窖内存放过冬的食物。窑洞后边一般放置有几口大缸或摆放几个瓷罐。窑洞内部有隧道式的小门互通,顶部呈半圆形。陕北人喜爱在炕周围的三面墙上,贴上一些绘有图案的纸或拼贴的画,俗称“炕围子”。炕围子是一种实用性的装饰手法,其目的在于美化居室。不少人还在炕围子上作画,所绘内容多与日常生活主题有

the decorating of the house. Some people even draw pictures about daily life on the paper of the wall, and this activity has become one of the great folk stunts in northern *Shaanxi*.

III. Types and Features

Types of cave dwellings abound. According to the differences of locations and building methods, they are divided into *Ya* kiln, *Keng* kiln, *Futu* kiln, *Gu* kiln, etc..

The common *Ya* kiln is mostly located on the sunny natural vertical cliff out of the wind. And it is holed from inside to outside over a short period of time for its simple digging process. This type of cave dwelling can only be placed side by side, rather than be grouped around. No door but windows are installed on the surface of the cliff in a confined space. While cutting the *Keng* kiln, one should dig a big square hole, on four walls of which several holes will be dug then. And one curved sloped tunnel will be dug in one of the holes in order to lead people to enter the hole to the ground. According to the functions, they are divided into the host's kiln, the guest's kiln, the kitchen kiln, the animal kiln, etc.. The pattern of *Futu* kiln which expands the internal space and is a building of two floors can be built in-

关,炕围画已成为陕北的民间绝活之一。

三、类型与特点

窑洞的类型多种多样,根据选址和建筑方式的不同,通常可分为崖窑、坑窑、覆土窑、箍窑等。

最常见的当数崖窑。崖窑多选择在向阳避风且天然垂直的悬崖,由内向外开凿,开凿过程十分简单,所需工期较短。这种窑洞只能并列,不能围聚成院。主人在崖面上开窗而不设门,洞内空间相对狭小。坑窑的开凿稍为复杂,要先在平地挖一个方形的大坑,然后在坑的四面挖掘若干孔窑洞。在其中的一孔窑洞内,设一条斜坡通道,拐个弧形直角通向地面,成为人们出行的门洞。各个窑洞按照功能又分为主窑、客窑、厨



side, is built both to the cliff and under the ground. *Gu* kiln, the most popular artificial building built with bricks, stones and adobe, has one or two floors and a yard will be established with the composure of several *Gu* kiln. It is solid enough for people to live in for several decades or even hundreds of years; however, walls outside need to be mud every three to five years.



According to the differences of building materials, cave dwellings can also be divided into the earth kiln, brick kiln, stone kiln, etc.. The earth kiln is the cave dwelling dugged in the soil cliff. After installing the doors and windows, the frame is completed. It is the oldest architectural style. Although it is built without any difficulty, it has good warmth retention property. One can make a fire to cook dinner in the room without considering the danger of the collapsing of the room because of the solid soil texture of loess and the dry cli-

窑、牲口窑等。覆土窑洞介于崖窑和坑窑之间，是一种半靠崖半地下的窑洞建筑样式。这类样式拓展了内部空间，在其内部可以建造两层楼房式的窑洞。目前，最时兴的莫属“箍窑”，这类窑洞完全采用人工建造的方式搭建。人们在平地上用砖、石、土坯等材质建造而成，通常为1~2层，几个箍窑在一起就能建成一个院落。箍窑比较坚固，一般可住几十年甚至上百年，但箍窑比挖的窑更为复杂，每三五年需要在窑的外面抹层泥。

依据建筑材质的不同，窑洞又可分为土窑、砖窑、石窑等。土窑，即在土崖上挖出的窑洞，安上门窗即成，这是一种最为古老的建筑样式。土窑的建造十分简易，但保暖性很好。虽不如石窑和砖窑牢固，但由于黄土的土质结实，加上西北地区气候干燥的特点，即便在窑内生火做饭，也不易倒塌。石窑