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Article

Platform–Corridor–Hall and Regional Mechanisms of Taoist Architecture in Central China: A Comparative Study of Wudang Mountain and Taihui Temple

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Abstract: This study investigates the regional mechanisms of Taoist architecture in Central China through a comparative analysis of the Golden Hall complex on Wudang Mountain and Taihui Temple in Jingzhou. Existing scholarship has largely emphasized symbolic meanings, religious iconography, and artistic styles of Taoist temples, but has rarely examined how geography, culture, construction technology, and political context jointly shape regional architectural patterns. Adopting the Platform–Corridor–Hall spatial paradigm as the primary analytical framework, and integrating field surveys, historical documentation, and typological analysis, this research reveals both shared principles and site-specific adaptations. The findings demonstrate that, while both temple complexes embody the Taoist cosmology of the "unity of Heaven and Man" through Bagua-based orientation, axial symmetry, and hierarchical spatial sequences, their construction strategies diverge in response to local conditions. Wudang Mountain employs copper casting, multi-tiered Sumeru platforms, and pronounced imperial symbolism to adapt to humid mountain climates and to materialize royal patronage. By contrast, Taihui Temple raises robust stone foundations, simplifies roof and bracket systems, and incorporates Chu cultural motifs to resist flooding, accommodate urban fabric, and embed local beliefs. Building on these observations, the study develops a four-axis model—nature, culture, technology, and socio-political symbolism—to explain the dynamic interplay driving regional differentiation. This framework offers methodological and practical insights for the conservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of Taoist architectural heritage in diverse ecological and cultural settings.

Keywords: taoist architecture; regional architecture; wudang mountain; temple heritage; architectural typology

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1. Introduction

The formation of religious architectural styles is shaped not only by material conditions but, more importantly, by spiritual and cultural forces. As an essential component of traditional religious architecture in China, Taoist buildings embody ritual functions and philosophical ideals such as the "Unity of Heaven and Man" and "Tao Follows Nature." Existing research has primarily focused on overall forms, symbolic meanings, or stylistic analyses, while systematic studies of their regional characteristics shaped by environmental contexts remain insufficient.

This paper examines two representative Taoist temples in Central China, the Golden Hall of Wudang Mountain and Taihui Temple in Jingzhou, through the spatial typology of the "Platform-Corridor-Hall." This pattern, consisting of a load-bearing platform, transitional corridor, and sacred main hall, became prominent in the Ming and Qing dynasties [1]. It reflects architectural responses to natural topography and the ritualized

progression from secular to sacred, embodying the Taoist trinity of "structure-function-symbolism."

Using comparative architectural analysis and drawing on field investigation, historical documentation, and typological methods, this study compares the two sites in terms of materials, craftsmanship, spatial organization, and cultural symbols. By revealing how Taoist architecture transforms between mountainous and plain environments within the interplay of "locality-faith-technology," the research provides fresh theoretical insight into its dynamic regional continuity and offers references for contemporary Taoist spatial design and heritage preservation [2].

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. background

Research on the regional characteristics of Chinese religious architecture has shifted toward more micro-level investigations, particularly in Taoist temple architecture. The integration of ritual norms with geographic environments and religious beliefs is evident in Taoist architectural principles. The concept of "Tao Follows Nature" is reflected in the adaptation to mountain topographies and water environments, influencing spatial organization [3]. While Taoist architecture in mountainous regions, such as Wudang Mountain, has been extensively studied, plains-based temples, such as Taihui Temple in Jingzhou, have received limited attention. Investigations into Taihui Temple have yet to address regional construction logic, including flood prevention strategies and the utilization of local materials.

The relationship between architecture and regional identity can be examined through the concept of the "Spirit of Place," which provides a framework for exploring the regional expression of Taoist architecture in China.

2.2. Theoretical basis

2.2.1. "The Spirit of Place"

The term describes the unique atmosphere that distinguishes one location from another. It comprises three core attributes: orientation, identity, and belonging, corresponding to the geography-culture-form framework. Orientation stems from spatial awareness and environmental relationships; identity arises from cultural familiarity embedded in environmental features; belonging reflects emotional attachment and comfort. When the characteristics of natural environments are translated into built environments, spatial order often echoes natural order, producing stronger place attachment [4]. Thus, orientation affirms the human-nature connection, identity forms the basis of belonging, and belonging represents their culmination.

2.3. Research methodology

This study utilizes the "Platform-Corridor-Hall" typology to analyze the Golden Hall of Wudang Mountain and Taihui Temple in Jingzhou [5]. The methodology follows a five-stage pathway as illustrated in Figure 1.

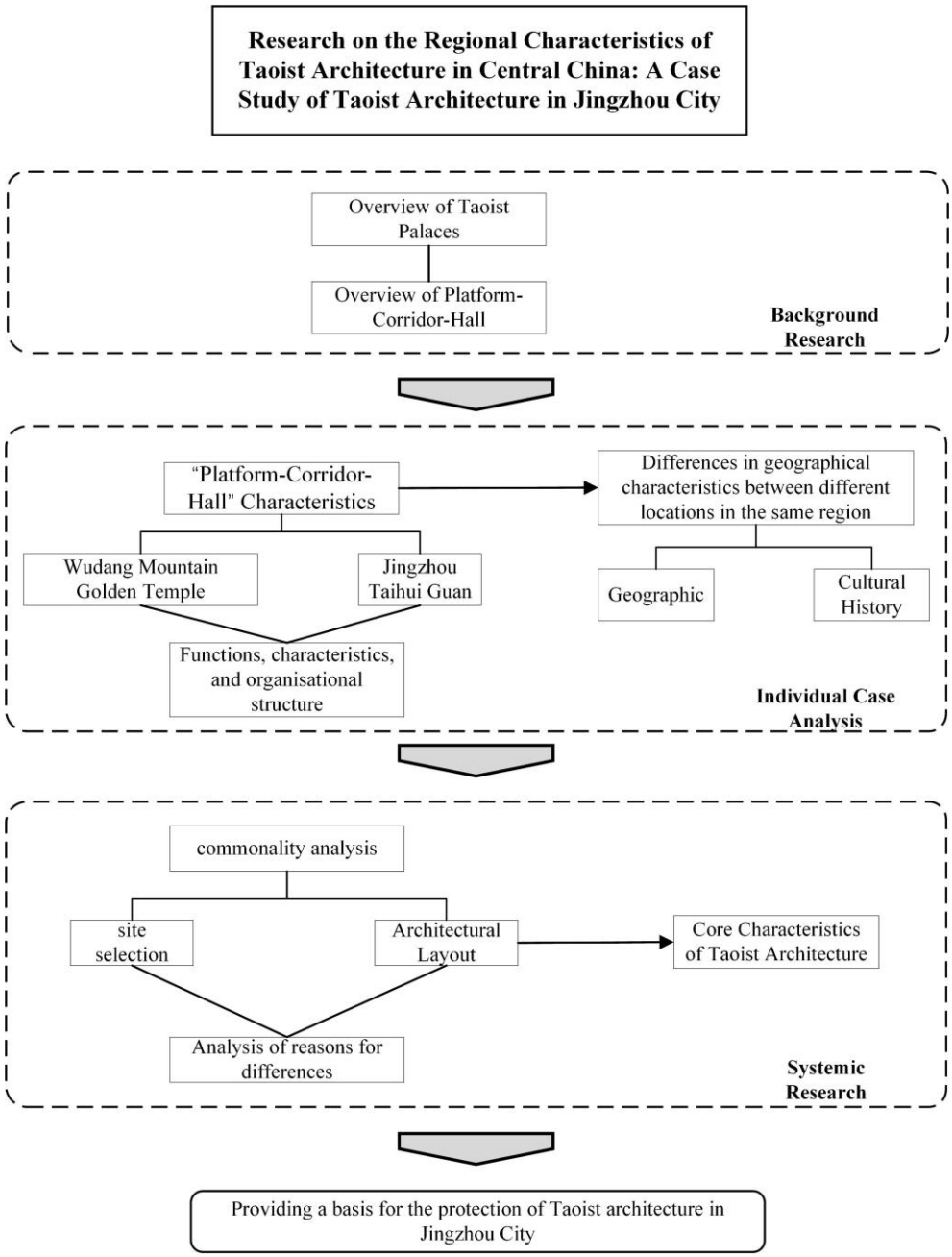

Figure 1: Research framework

Theoretical Definition and Conceptual Clarification: Defines "regionality" and the "Platform-Corridor-Hall" model, establishing analytical dimensions that encompass form, culture, and environmental adaptation [2].

Analysis of Typical Cases: Investigates Wudang's Golden Hall and Jingzhou's Taihui Temple, focusing on spatial structure, materials, craftsmanship, and symbolism, with each element analyzed through the triadic framework of platform, corridor, and hall [6].

Extraction of Commonalities: Identifies shared attributes in layout, religious function, feng shui orientation, and spatial logic, summarizing the defining characteristics of the "Platform-Corridor-Hall" paradigm in Central China [7].

Analysis of Regional Differences: Explores environmental contexts such as mountain versus plain, political influences, technological traditions, and cultural systems to uncover factors shaping diverse architectural expressions [8].

Construction of a Regionality Mechanism: Proposes a four-axis model encompassing nature, culture, technology, and function to explain broader regional formation

mechanisms, offering insights for the conservation and adaptive reuse of Taoist architectural heritage [9].

2.4. Definition of Core Concepts

2.4.1. Regionality

"Regionality" refers to the composite characteristics that emerge from the interaction of natural landscapes, climatic conditions, technology, and local culture. In Taoist architecture, it reflects the principles of adapting to local conditions and establishing form according to broader philosophical concepts. Regionality involves both formal adaptations and cultural expressions shaped by these factors, moving beyond static architectural forms to explore dynamic interactions between architecture, environment, and culture (As shown in Figure 2).

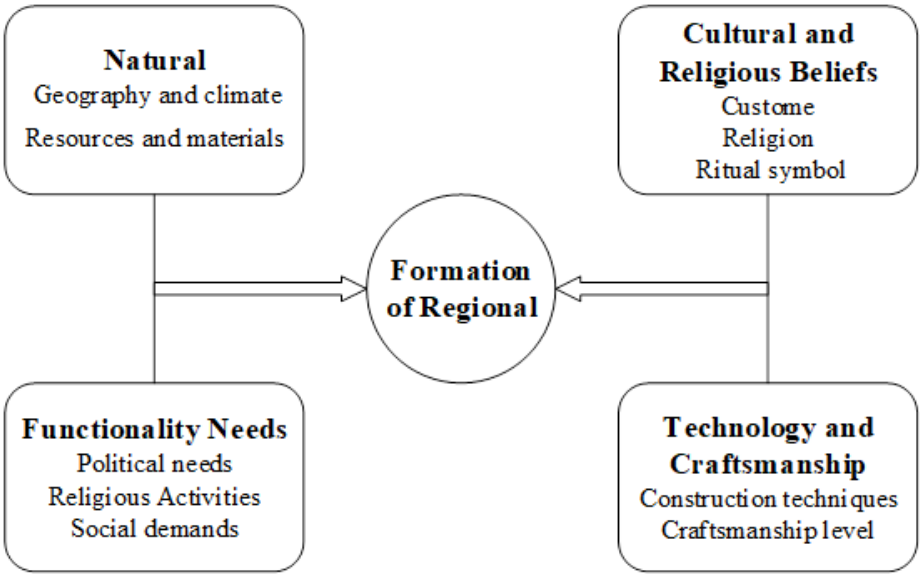

Figure 2: Mechanisms of regional formation

2.4.2. "Platform-Corridor-Hall"

"Platform"

The platform forms the structural foundation of a building, originally serving to prevent moisture before gaining symbolic meaning as a marker of status and hierarchy [3]. Its use can be traced back to ancient times. Platforms are generally divided into ordinary and Sumeru types.

Ordinary platforms, built from flat stones or bricks, are simple and low, commonly found in vernacular or small-scale architecture where they primarily provide structural stability [10].

The Sumeru platform, named after Mount Sumeru, symbolizes sanctity and nobility [11]. It features a multi-tiered, inward-tapering form with broader base and top sections. Taller and more imposing than ordinary platforms, it conveys grandeur and monumental significance within the architectural ensemble.

"Corridor"

The corridor serves as the transitional space surrounding the central structure, guiding movement and enhancing ritual experiences. It also acts as a boundary, demarcating the sacred core from the external environment. Typically constructed around the platform, it contributes to both functionality and aesthetics, ensuring visual symmetry and reinforcing the building's hierarchy [12].

"Hall"

The hall is the central component of Taoist and religious architecture, embodying cultural and symbolic significance [13]. Elevated on a platform, the hall is the focal point of the structure, with intricate design and decorative features such as complex roofs (e.g.,

hipped-gable or double-eaved roofs). The hall's central position and symmetry reflect the traditional spatial order of Chinese architecture, emphasizing its prominence within the complex.

3. Overview of Taoist Palaces

"Man follows the Earth, the Earth follows the Heaven, Heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows Nature" expresses the Taoist ideal of harmony between humans and nature, guiding the site selection, spatial layout, and regional variation of Taoist architecture [8].

The Golden Hall of Wudang Mountain, atop Tianzhu Peak, incorporates massive boulders and inward-leaning walls for stability. Four carved stone gates symbolizing the "Heavenly Realm of Five Cities and Twelve Towers," along with its high platform and heavy-eaved hip roof, reinforce cosmic order and the link between humans and the heavens [13].

Nanyan Palace, on Nanyan Peak, rises in layers along cliffs and dense forests [9]. Its ascending axis and roof alignment with surrounding peaks create a sacred space embodying the unity of Heaven and Man.

Fuzhen Guan in Wudang's central valley adopts a central axis and integrates streams, ponds, and bridges, reflecting ideals of seclusion and spiritual refinement [2].

In the plains, Changchun Temple in Wuchang adapts Taoist architecture to hilly urban terrain; despite modest elevation, it maintains axial symmetry and blends European and Tibetan influences [5].

On the eastern coast, Laoshan Mountain in Qingdao, known as "the first famous mountain on the sea," contains temples such as Taiqing Palace, whose open courtyards and sea-facing layouts express natural integration and purity [1].

Taoist architecture materializes Taoist philosophy across diverse landscapes: mountain temples emphasize spiritual ascent, valley temples seclusion and harmony, and coastal temples openness to sea and sky. This geographic diversity enriches Taoist spatial culture with layered and regionally distinct meanings.

4. Analysis of the Hall of Supreme Harmony in Wudang Mountain

4.1. Wudang Mountain Golden Hall "Platform-Corridor-Hall"

The Taihe Palace at Tianzhu Peak was initially marked by a small copper hall for incense offerings to Zhenwu Dadi. In 1412, an imperial directive led to its construction, with the gilded copper structure commissioned. The hall, with four gates symbolizing the "Heavenly Realm of Five Cities and Twelve Towers," evokes a celestial presence amidst clouds. The Golden Hall embodies the Taoist "Platform-Corridor-Hall" model, with a high pedestal (platform), a perimeter corridor (spatial protection), and the main hall (sacred core), creating a hierarchical and ordered space.

The Sumeru platform, serving as the complex's foundation, measures 5.7 meters by 4.6 meters with a height of 0.94 meters. Stairs provide symmetrical access, enhancing the axial symmetry critical to ritual architecture [13]. The platform not only boosts visual prominence but also ensures effective drainage in the humid Wudang climate. A copper railing further reinforces spatial hierarchy and protection.

The perimeter corridor encloses the hall, serving as a buffer between worshippers and the sacred space [1]. It is bordered by copper, providing shelter and enhancing the visual hierarchy. The Golden Hall is west-facing with four columns on the mountain side and intricate copper engravings, including eight-petaled lotus patterns at the column bases (As shown in Figure 3).

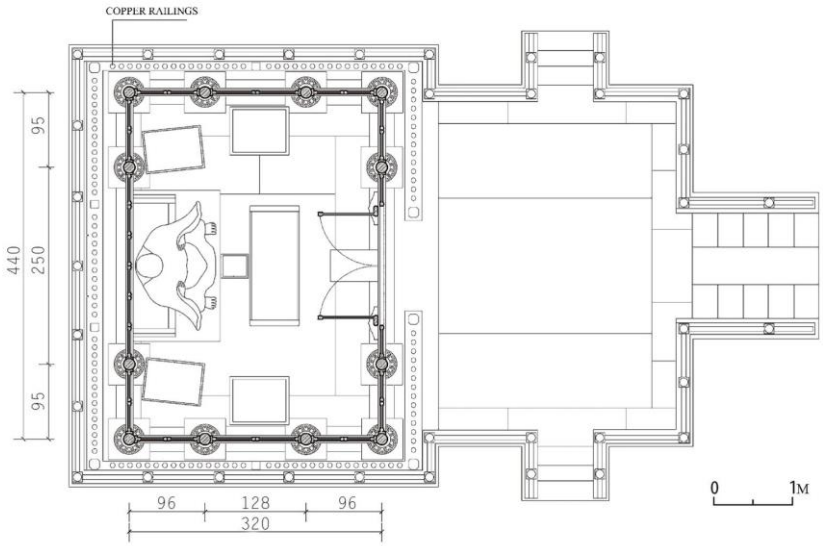

Figure 3: Plan view of Taihe Palace, Wudang Mountains

The core function of the Golden Hall is to enshrine Zhenwu Dadi, aligning with the Zijin Cheng (Purple-Gold City) and South Heavenly Gate, reinforcing the sanctity and authority of the hall within the Taoist complex. The hall's all-copper construction, featuring intricate craftsmanship and wooden imitation structures, represents Taoist ideals of divine symmetry [7]. Its column-free interior and decorative elements, such as lotus column bases, enhance the spiritual atmosphere and sanctity of the hall.

4.2. Expression of Mountain Adaptation in Wudang Mountain Golden

The Golden Hall exemplifies Taoist principles in a mountainous environment, integrating the concept of harmony with nature and mountain adaptation [4]. The challenges of steep terrain, characterized by a 45-degree slope, and a humid, rainy climate with an annual precipitation of 1,200mm were addressed through material and process innovation. The structure employs copper casting with a composition of 90% copper, 6% tin, and 1-3% lead in modular sections, making it suitable for the mountainous terrain. The lost wax method and clay casting techniques facilitated intricate decorations, showcasing both artistry and functionality.

The architectural axis aligns with the mountain's contour, featuring 365 steps leading to the hall, symbolizing the cyclical harmony of heaven and earth. The Zijin Cheng corridor wall adapts to the terrain, embodying principles of spatial balance and environmental integration, contrasting with Mount Tai, where the architectural axis emphasizes ceremonial alignment (As shown in Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison between Wudang Mountain's South Heavenly Gate and Mount Tai's South Heavenly Gate.

Dimension	Wudang Mountain South Heavenly Gate	Mount Tai South Heavenly Gate
Architectural form	Single-eave, one-story, compact	Two-story, heavy eaves, large scale
Roof material	Green glazed tiles (Taoist "tranquility")	Yellow glazed tiles (royal dignity)
Wall color	Red walls + green tiles, blending with mountain	Red walls + yellow tiles, ceremonial

Decoration style	Simple, rustic, mountain-integrated	Carved beams, elaborate, royal majesty
Structural characteristics	Segmented masonry; steps adapting to terrain	Tower-like structure; arched lower floor, heavy upper eaves
Spatial sequence	Gate → Monument → Golden Hall	Gate → Sky Street → Jade Emperor Peak
Environmental integration	High mountain-architecture unity ("Taoism of nature")	Embedded in mountain pass; strong ritual axis
Religious/political symbols	Zhenwu belief; North Pole & "Purple Breath Coming East" imagery	Imperial center; emperor's Zen tradition
Accessibility	Leads to Taihe Palace & Golden Hall (pilgrimage route)	Leads to Tianjie & Jade Emperor Peak (summit-oriented)

Religious symbols significantly influence the hall's design. The seven stars of the Big Dipper in the Algal Well represent cosmic harmony, while sunlight illuminating Zhenwu's statue creates the phenomenon known as "Purple Breath Coming from the East," symbolizing divine authority and celestial alignment.

5. Analysis of Jingzhou Taihui Temple

5.1. The "Platform-Corridor-Hall" Layout of Taihui Temple

Jingzhou contains three major Taoist temples, among which Taihui Temple holds significant architectural and artistic value. Its layout combines a high stone platform, surrounding corridor, and central hall, forming a solemn hierarchical structure (As shown in Figure 4).

Figure 4: Front view of Taihui Temple, Jingzhou

The 8.2-meter-high stone foundation ensures stability and visual prominence. The central hall, approximately 10 meters wide and deep, sits on a platform exceeding 11 meters in total height. The Ancestor Hall is enclosed by a 2-meter-high fence featuring 500 carved spiritual officials, while the entrance steps are flanked by green-stone railings adorned with narrative character reliefs (As shown in Figure 5).

Figure 5: The patterns carved on the railings of Taihui Temple

The Golden Hall, with a three-room heavy-eave hipped roof, is referred to as "Sai Wudang" and "Little Golden Dome" due to its roof being fully covered with copper tiles. Its nanmu timber frame blends Ming-Qing official style with local folk features. The structure employs a bucket-arch beam system typical of the Ming dynasty, and the corridor incorporates octagonal columns, six of which are carved with coiled dragons, enhancing visual dynamism [2] (As shown in Figure 6).

Figure 6: The carvings on the threshold beam of Jingzhou Taihui Temple and Jingzhou Taihui Temple's Coiling Dragon Pillar.

As a central religious space, the Golden Hall exemplifies the Platform-Corridor-Hall model: square layout, aligned proportions, solid platform, and dynamic hall. The integrated pedestal and corridor reinforce unity and emphasize its sacred status within the complex [13].

5.2. Plain localization practice of Jingzhou Taihui Temple

Taihui Temple in Jingzhou adapts to both natural and cultural contexts [9]. Given the frequent floods in the Yangtze River's middle reaches, the temple is built on an 8.2-meter-high platform, incorporating a platform-ditch-pond flood prevention system, aligning with the Taoist principle that water symbolizes prosperity.

The feng shui concept of water symbolizing prosperity is integrated into the temple's design, using local nanmu wood and stone carvings depicting Chu culture myths such as the Lingguan Parade. The temple's functional layout includes a west courtyard for farming rituals and an east courtyard for Taoist practices, reinforcing the symbolic balance between Taoist cosmology and the agrarian society.

6. Common Laws

Taoist architecture encompasses the forms of Taoist palaces and temples, including halls, verandahs, pavilions, gardens, tombs, pagodas, plaques, statues, frescoes, and the layout of palaces and temples. It serves as the primary venue for Taoists to carry out their religious activities and is a significant part of ancient Chinese architecture. The layout of Taoist complexes generally follows Bagua principles, aligning the central axis north-south, with main halls facing south. Deities are enshrined along the axis, while flanking halls follow the principle of "east of the sun, west of the moon" to ensure symmetry. Living quarters are typically placed in the east courtyard, corresponding to Green Dragon (yang, wood) in yin-yang theory (As shown in Table 2).

Table 2: Symbolic structural logic table of Taoist temple layout

Location	Orientation	Symbol Attributes	Typical Architectural Functions	Philosophy
Central Axis	Meridian	Earth, Taiji Core	Main Hall, Zhenwu Hall	Balance of yin and yang, the center of Taoism
Eastern Taoist Temple	East	Wood, Green Dragon, Yang	Taoist training area, the dan room	"Pure Yang" cultivation, moving image
Western Taoist Temple	West	Gold, White Tiger, Yin	Cafeteria, guest house, temporary resting place for visitors.	Static image, place of acceptance
Former Dynasty	South	Fire, Vermilion Bird, Ritual	Mountain Gate, Shoupi, Paikou	Sacred and bright
Backward leaning	North	Water, Xuanwu, Hidden	Rear Hall, Storage, Taoist Collection Room	Retreat convergence, hide the image

Taoist palaces follow strict ritual and hierarchical norms, integrating yin-yang, feng shui, and Bagua symbolism. Their site selection adheres to the principle of "negative yin holding the sun," with mountains behind (Green Dragon and White Tiger on both sides) and water in front, typically a crescent pond or curved stream. The site, known as the "Dragon's Nest," balances mountain and water to form an auspicious base (As shown in Figure 7).

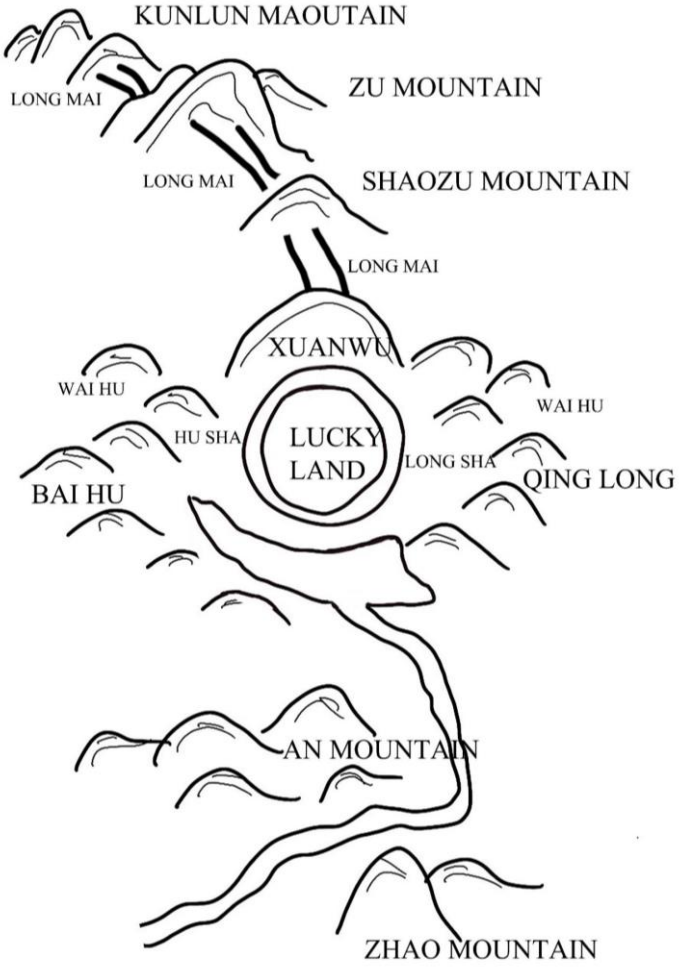

Figure 7: Taoist ideal Feng Shui map

In traditional temple layouts, the West Taoist Temple typically serves as a supporting hall. For example, Jingzhou Taihui Temple follows this paradigm: the main hall occupies the central axis, the west courtyard functions as a canteen and lodging, and the east courtyard serves as the priests' living and working area. The arrangement reflects the five elements—wood, fire, gold, water—with the central axis symbolizing earth, embedding Taoist philosophical balance within the planning [1].

Located in the more open terrain of the plains, Taoist temples generally adopt a courtyard layout and integrate Taoist ideological connotations. The arrangement of the east and west courtyards and the main hall along the central axis corresponds to the four elements: wood, fire, gold, and water, with the central area symbolizing "earth." This layout embodies the completeness and harmony of the five elements, reflecting the Taoist philosophical principles of balance and unity. It highlights the subtle integration of traditional philosophical concepts within the architectural planning (As shown in Figure 8).

Figure 8: Overall layout of Jingzhou Taihui Temple

The Golden Hall of Wudang Mountain exemplifies Taoist spatial logic. Macroscopically, Wudang is formed by the ancestral Kunlun Mountains and the secondary Daba Range, flanked by the Han River and Yangtze River [10]. Golden Peak stands like a pillar, with seventy-two peaks extending upward. The mountain's form resembles rising flames, while Tianzhu Peak and its northwest ridge resemble a giant tortoise, aligning with the Taoist belief that Xuanwu suppresses both water and fire.

Microscopically, the Golden Hall follows the Four Spirits layout: Vermilion Bird in the front, Xuanwu at the rear, Dragon on the left, and White Tiger on the right, an arrangement difficult to realize on such rugged topography. Craftsmen therefore used surrounding walls and railings to enhance its spatial order. The pilgrimage route, marked by the "Heavenly Gate," together with surrounding peaks forming a tortoise-like pattern, reinforces feng shui symbolism. Although the Golden Hall cannot adopt full axial symmetry due to terrain constraints, it expresses Taoist concepts such as the "law of nature," making the complex resemble a mountain garden blending natural and sacred space [9].

The hierarchy of Taoist palaces and deity placement is also linked with imperial authority. The Golden Hall was constructed under the directive of a ruler who elevated Taoism as a state religion to reinforce legitimacy [9]. Taihui Temple, originally a royal residence, was later converted into a Taoist temple, becoming a major Jingchu religious site. Despite different origins, both belong to the tradition of "unity of church and state."

Both temples adopt the "Platform-Corridor-Hall" model. The Golden Hall's granite Sumeru platform and Taihui Temple's 8.2-meter stone pedestal emphasize sanctity and durability. Their perimeter corridors provide protection and spatial transition: Wudang uses copper fencing, while Taihui features open or semi-open corridors. The halls serve as religious cores: Wudang's copper-cast hall is richly decorated and dedicated to Zhenwu Dadi, while Taihui's hall emphasizes ritual atmosphere. Both structures highlight a strict hierarchy among platform, corridor, and hall, integrating sacred symbolism with regional environmental adaptation.

7. Mechanism of Difference

7.1. Wudang Mountain and Taihui Temple

Wudang Mountain's Taoist complex, spanning approximately seventy miles, includes over twenty buildings along the Sacred Path, from Xuanwumen Gate to the summit, culminating at the Golden Hall. The entire complex integrates with the natural terrain, preserving the mountain's ecology despite extensive development. The architecture adapts to regional conditions, reflecting Taoism's principle of harmony with nature in varying contexts (As shown in Table 3).

Table 3: Natural adaptation: ecological responses of mountains and plains

Dimension	Golden Hall of Wudang Mountain (Mountain Palace)	Jingzhou Taihui Temple (Plain Palace)	Generative Logic
Natural Adaptation	Copper casting to resist tide, terrace foundation to channelize water	Stone masonry to prevent flooding, nanmu to allow wind penetration	"Earth Law of Heaven": Rainy mountains require copper for erosion; plains need elevated platforms to prevent flooding
Cultural expression	The dragon well symbolizes imperial power, and the Heavenly Gate strengthens the sacred narrative.	Carvings integrate Chu culture, myths from "Nine Songs"	"People and Law": Royal temples symbolize political authority; folk temples cater to local faith
Technological Traditions	Official copper work	Local techniques	"The Way of Nature": Centralized power promotes standardized techniques; local craftsmanship adapts to needs

The Golden Hall's foundation symbolizes ritual significance, with a focus on moisture resistance and symmetry. The Sumeru platform incorporates a culvert to channel rainwater, demonstrating adaptation to the humid, rainy climate of Wudang Mountain. The Taihui Temple in Jingzhou, with its 8.2-meter stone pedestal, highlights functionality in flood prevention, elevating the building and integrating the "platform-ditch-pond" system for water control.

The Golden Hall's copper fence protects the building, reinforcing imperial symbolism, while Taihui Temple's carvings, such as the "Lingguan Parade," integrate local myths and folk culture, emphasizing the connection with regional beliefs (As shown in Table 4).

Table 4: Cultural expression: The differentiation between royal narratives and local beliefs

Dimension	Wudang Mountain Golden Hall	Jingzhou Taihui Temple
Faith Function	Royal Taoist temple, national rituals	Local religious center, folk beliefs
Cultural Vocabulary	Dipper symbolizes God of Heaven, "Purple Breath Coming East" for imperial legitimacy	"Qu Yuan asks the sky," "Lingguan parade" showing Chu myths
Performance Style	Symmetrical, complex decoration, divine right of kings	Wood carvings, storytelling, local resonance
Feng Shui Symbols	Building orientation represents North Star, heavenly gate and tortoise-shaped wall	Central axis layout, emphasizing balance and practicality

7.2. Comparison of Palace Architecture in Other Regions

Taoist architecture in China's famous mountains can be categorized into four types: 1) scattered temples distributed along the mountain, 2) concentrated temples forming a central area, 3) multiple centers with subordinate temples, and 4) a primary sacred path connecting temples across the mountain. These classifications reflect the environmental and architectural characteristics shaped by natural geography, cultural influences, and historical context (As shown in Table 5).

Table 5: Mechanism of difference: The diverse roles of nature, culture, and rituals

Name	Geography	Architectural Form	Main Materials & Styles	Cultural Characteristics
Wudang Mountain	Mountainous terrain around Tianzhu Peak	Central-axis symmetry; 33 halls incl. Taihe, Zixiao, Golden Dome	Wooden structures, glazed roofs; Golden Hall cast in copper	Quanzhen School birthplace; Ming royal patronage, strong ritual culture
Laoshan Taiqing Palace	Coastal mountain (1132 m), surrounded by seven peaks	Three-courtyard "品" layout; multiple halls	Local pine, green stone, gray tiles; Song-style simplicity	Embodies Taoist "quiet and inaction"; ancestral court of Quanzhen
Qingcheng Mountain Tianshidong	Deep valleys, canyons, streams	Layered ridge-based layout; uneven courtyards; main halls incl. Three Pristine Ones, Yellow Emperor, Heavenly Master	Wood-stone combination; curved corridors, flying eaves	Birthplace of Tianshi Tao[25]; linked to ancient witchcraft, garden-like seclusion
Kongdong Mountain Taihe Palace	Terrace atop Kongdong, Liupan Mountains	Layered complex, "eight platforms and nine palaces"; halls incl. Zhenwu, Jade Emperor, Laojun	Wood & stone, brick walls, yellow/green glazed tiles; carved dragon ramps	Integrates Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism; imperial Yellow Emperor sacrifice culture

Songshan Zhongyue Temple	Foothills of Taichushan, one of the Five Mountains	Strict south-north axis; 7 courtyards, 11 layers; Zhongyue Hall (9 × 5 bays)	Wooden structure, yellow tiles, red walls, Qing seal-style painting[26]	Core of Central Plains sacrificial culture; imperial ritual and Quanzhen shrine
Jingzhou Taihui Temple	Plain (Jianghan Plain), west of city foothills	North-south symmetry; halls incl. Tianshidong pagoda, Jade Emperor, Guanyin, Four Heavenly Kings	Wooden halls, yellow glazed tiles, ornate plaques	Zhang Daoling preached here; Southern School origin; once rebuilt from a prince's palace

Taoist architecture across China's varied landscapes demonstrates regional adaptations to natural conditions. In mountainous regions, temples are arranged along slopes, harmonizing with natural elements. In flat plains, temples are designed with symmetrical central axis layouts. Climatic variations affect roof designs: northern temples feature steep roofs to retain heat, while southern temples incorporate deep eaves to enhance ventilation. Cultural influences and sectarian distinctions further shape architectural styles, resulting in diverse designs that integrate the natural environment, religious practices, and regional traditions.

8. Theoretical Modeling

By integrating regionalist architecture, the concept of Spirit of Place, and architectural typology, this study constructs a four-axis model of Taoist architectural regionalism: nature, culture, technology, and socio-political factors. Building upon a previously established three-axis system of "nature-culture-technology," the inclusion of political symbolism and social function enhances the model's relevance to religious architecture [10, 13] (As shown in Figure 9).

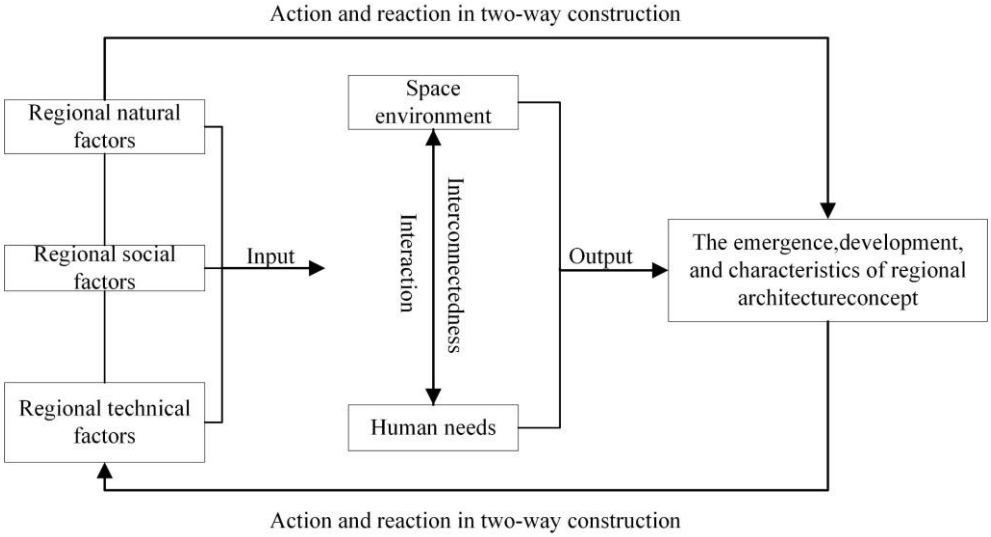

Figure 9: Structure and Logic of the Theoretical Model

The model consists of four interactive axes [12] (As shown in Figure 10).

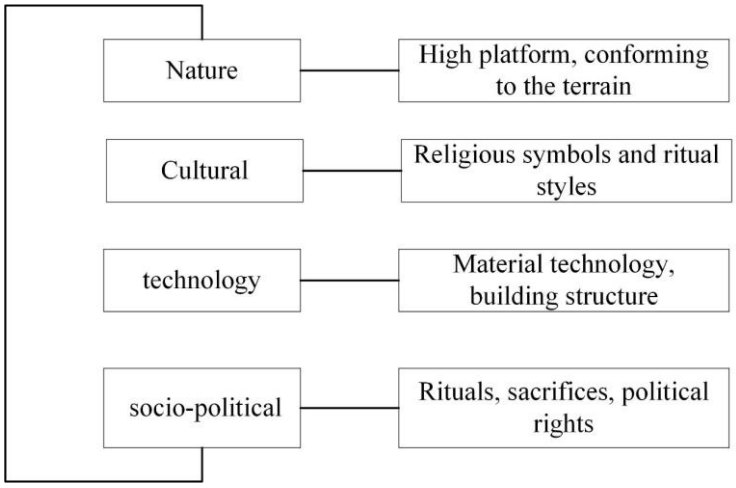

Figure 10: The composition of the regional architectural system of Taoist architecture

8.1. Natural Ecology Axis.

Demonstrates geographic and climatic adaptation: Wudang's Golden Hall utilizes copper casting to resist humidity, whereas Taihui Temple incorporates stone platforms to mitigate flooding.

8.2. Cultural Tradition Axis.

Architecture reflects local beliefs and rituals, such as Beidou wells and Lingguan carvings, illustrating the concept of "culture embedded in place."

8.3. Technological Craftsmanship Axis.

Echoing the concept of appropriate technology, Wudang employs lost-wax bronze casting techniques, while Taihui Temple utilizes local wood construction methods, highlighting regional craftsmanship variations.

8.4. Political Symbol Axis.

Religious buildings convey political authority: the Golden Hall emphasizes imperial legitimacy and the associated belief system, while Taihui Temple represents the religious transformation of local governance.

Together, the four axes constitute a dynamic, interdependent system [3]. Political initiatives, such as royal support for copper casting, influenced ecological resource utilization and advanced casting techniques, which in turn enriched cultural symbols like the Big Dipper. Consequently, the regional characteristics of Taoist architecture emerge through the interplay of environment, culture, technology, and political factors.

9. Conclusion

This study explores the regional characteristics of Taoist architecture in Central China through the spatial logic of the "Platform-Corridor-Hall" model. The findings demonstrate that this paradigm, with the platform as foundation, corridor as boundary, and hall as sacred core, is universally present but exhibits regional adaptations. For instance, one site accommodates steep, humid terrain with specialized construction techniques and symbolic elements, while another employs elevated stone platforms for flood control and utilizes locally sourced materials.

Taoist architectural layouts are guided by principles such as bagua orientation, axis symmetry, and the feng shui concept of "negative yin holding yang," embodying the philosophy of harmony between humanity and the cosmos. Regional geography and cultural context influence material selection, craftsmanship, and symbolic systems, illustrating the interplay between Taoism and the natural environment in architectural forms.

In summary, Taoist architecture represents a synthesis of nature, culture, and spiritual beliefs. Future research could extend to diverse geomorphological contexts and

incorporate digital modeling techniques for more comprehensive spatial and cultural analyses, highlighting the importance of preserving integrated cultural landscapes.

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