UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Writing Modernity: Constructing a History of Chinese Architecture, 1920 – 1949

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History of Art & Architecture

by

Yan Wencheng

Committee in charge:

Professor Swati Chattopadhyay, Chair

Professor Richard Wittman

Professor Xiaowei Zheng

March 2016

The dissertation of Yan Wencheng is approved.

Richard Wittman

Xiaowei Zheng

Swati Chattopadhyay, Committee Chair

March 2016

Writing Modernity: Constructing a History of Chinese Architecture, 1920 – 1949

Copyright © 2016

by

Yan Wencheng

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has taken longer than I had imagined at the beginning of my graduate career. It would not have been possible without the help of many along the way. I wish to thank my home department of the History of Art & Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara, for providing academic and financial support for my studies. I thank the professors who have given support and assistance whenever I needed it, making the department my home for almost a decade. In particular, my thanks go to Professors E. Bruce Robertson, Peter Sturman, Jeremy White, Volker M. Welter and Ann Jensen Adams.

I thank the staff at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library of the University of California, Berkeley, where I conducted preliminary research during the spring of 2012. Special thanks are due to the Librarian for Chinese Collections, Jianye He, who was welcoming, courteous, and always ready to help with locating materials.

For the academic years 2012–2014, I relocated my family to China to conduct archival research for my dissertation, and I thank the archivists and staff at the Beijing Municipal Archives for their help. I am also grateful for the financial support from the Claudia D. Weitlanner Fellowship which helped defray travel costs.

My sincere gratitude goes to the professors in China and elsewhere who have gone out of their way to meet with me, discuss my project, and/or answer my questions without hesitation. These include Nancy Steinhardt of the University of Pennsylvania, Zhao Chen of Nanjing University, Wang Guixiang and Luo Deyin of Tsinghua University, Delin Lai of the University of Louisville, Xu Subin of Tianjin University, Zhu Tao of the University of Hong Kong, Li Hua and Zhuge Jing of Southeast University, Zhu Yimin of the South China University of Technology, Zhu Jianfei of the University of Melbourne, and Lu Duanfang of the University of Sydney.

I am fortunate to have received generous help from Professor Emeritus Ron Egan, Professors Mayfair Yang and Michael Berry of the East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies at UCSB with my project in its initial stage. I have also benefited tremendously from friendship with and assistance from my colleagues, especially Katherine Papineau, Shalini Kakar, Mira Rai Waits, George Flaherty, Seokwon Choi, Noa Turel, Mary McGuire, Mallorie Chase, Rachel Johnson, and Briana Simmons.

Last but not least, I thank my Doctoral Committee members for their unfailing support, belief, and guidance with every aspect of my intellectual and personal growth over the years. Professor Richard Wittman spent hours writing extremely helpful comments, from the first term paper I wrote in his seminar to this dissertation; from theoretical issues to careful editing. Professor Xiaowei Zheng of the History Department was a crucial and timely addition to my committee when she first joined the university in 2009. Her expertise in the history of modern China has proven invaluable to my research. My advisor and committee Chair, Professor Swati Chattopadhyay, has been the driving force of this project. She has provided guidance not only for the conceptual development of the project through the long years, but also bibliographical references and research strategies, not to mention the numerous meetings we have had, the many revisions she has suggested, and the meticulous editing of my dissertation over and over again until it took its current form.

I dedicate this work to my family, both in China and in the United States. To my mother and father in China, to Chad who has endured every minute of the marathon, and

to my babies Callidora and Vincent, I love you.

VITA OF YAN WENCHENG
March 2016

Education

- Ph.D. Candidate, Department of History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, doctorate expected Winter 2016.
  i) Major Field: History of Architecture in Modern China. Dissertation title: Writing Modernity: Constructing a History of Chinese Architecture, 1920 – 1949. Committee: Swati Chattopadhyay (Chair), Richard Wittman, Xiaowei Zheng.
  ii) Minor Field: Studies in Vernacular Architecture. Minor Committee: Swati Chattopadhyay, Volker Welter.
- Master of Arts, History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2009. Master's Thesis: Spectacle and "Nature" on Tiananmen Square.
- Bachelor of Arts in English, School of Foreign Languages, Hubei University, June 1999.

Academic Interest

- History and historiography of Chinese art and architecture
- Vernacular architecture
- Cultural and comparative studies

Work Experience

- Teaching Associate, Department of History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, Fall Quarter 2015.
- Teaching and Research Assistant, Department of History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007 – 2011, 2014 – 2015.
- Teaching Assistant, Department of Asian American Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, Spring Quarter 2009.
- Language Instructor and Lecturer, Berlitz Beijing Center, China Agricultural University, Sea-Rich Foreign Languages School and other institutions in China, 1999 – 2005.
- Translator and Interpreter, Beijing, 2001 – 2002.

Publications

- Liang Sicheng, "Why study Chinese architecture," trans. Yan Wencheng, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol.73, no.1 (March 2014): 8 – 11.
- "Modernizing the vernacular: house reform in Republican-era publications," *South Architecture* no.1 (2014): 11 – 17.

Fellowships and Awards

- Claudia D. Weitlanner Fellowship, Fall Quarter 2013.
- ABD Research Award, History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2011 – 2012.

- Pre-ABD Research Award, History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, summer 2010.
- Awarded Fellowship for the UCSB-Leiden Exchange Program, Fall Quarter 2007 (relinquished).
- Department Special Fellow, History of Art & Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2006 – 2007.

Language Skills

- Mandarin Chinese (native speaker)
- English (fluent speaking, reading and writing)
- German (reading with references)

ABSTRACT

Writing Modernity: Constructing a History of Chinese Architecture, 1920 – 1949

by

Yan Wencheng

This dissertation joins the contemporary debate on rewriting the history of Chinese architecture by critically (re-)examining the initial stage of discourse formation during the Republican period. Focusing on the ordinary house in the city, I excavate the popular voice on Chinese architecture from the newspapers and magazines, examine the municipal government's effort in modernizing the city and life, as well as the professional community's attempt to establish the authoritative figure of the modern architect to replace that of the traditional craftsman. I show that these different constituencies of Chinese architecture articulated and presented a more vibrant and complex scene of discourse and practice than we have recognized until now. Although each held different forms of power, and focused on different issues, these early interpreters of Chinese architecture nevertheless converged on their understanding of reforming the Chinese house and Chinese architecture. The municipal government's modernizing projects in the city served to bolster the professional community's claim to expertise that culminated in writing a new history of Chinese architecture. This history subsequently became the standard historiography, suppressing and subsuming the popular voice and relegating it to history's dustbin for decades. By retrieving the popular discourse of Chinese architecture from this period, we not only gain a fuller understanding of the formative stage of Chinese architectural historiography, but are also provided with helpful indications pointing to a possible route to rewrite the history of Chinese architecture.

Key words: architectural history, Chinese architecture, historiography, popular discourse, modernity in China, modern China

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Retrieving the Popular in Chinese Architectural History of the Republican Period …………………………………………………………………1

Chapter One: The Popular Discourse.. 22

Chapter Two: The Vision of the State 88

Chapter Three: The Voice of the Professionals 142

Chapter Four: Writing a History of Chinese Architecture 197

Conclusion: 256

References 265

Appendix 276

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. A Western housewife's daily schedule……………………………..……..276

Figure 1.2–1.3. Plans of early *shikumen* house…………………………….….……..277

Figure 1.3. "The Western house"...278

Figure 1.4. A properly decorate living room.…………………………..….……………279

Figures 1.5-1.6. Models of the ideal house from *Liangyou*'s ideal house …………..280

Figure 1.7. An efficient kitchen ………………………………………….,………281

Figure 1.8. Christine Frederick's efficient kitchen ……………………………….....282

Figure 1.9. The efficient kitchen "messed up"………………………………………283

Figures 1.10–1.11. The old and reformed public toilets of Guangzhou……………..…284

Figure 1.12. The *Xiangya* toilet ………………………………..…………..…..285

Figure 1.13. The Java toilet …………………………………………………..…...286

Figures 1.14–1.15. Plan and elevation of house design by Jin Xianfa……………….287

Figure 1.16. Plan of K's design of a country house……………………………….….…288

Figure 2.1. Photo of street from *Shenbao* ………………………………….……….. 289

Figure 2.2. Map of Shanghai in 1880s …………………………..…….….……….290

Figure 2.3. The expansion of the foreign settlements ………………..….…………. 291

Figure 2.4. Map of Shanghai during the 1930s ……..……...………….....………….292

Figure 2.5. Map of the Greater Shanghai Plan………….……………..…….……….293

Figures 2.6. Zoning plans of the Greater Shanghai Plan……………..……………….294

Figures 2.7–2.9. *Shikumen* houses in Shanghai …………..……………………..…... 295

Figure 2.10. House-shop of Lee and Zhang's collaborative design…….………….....296

Figure 2.11. Rental-house design by Xu Ruifang……………………...……………..297

Figures 2.12–2.13. Reforming the courtyard in Beijing……………………………. 298

Figure 2.14. The type: the courtyard…………………..……………………..……299

Figures 2.15–2.16. Examples of the standardized design: the county seat ……….....300

Figures 2.17–2.18. Shantytown dwellings in Nanjing ……………….…………..…301

Figures 2.19–2.22. *Pingming gong* by Lin Keming in Guangzhou…………….....…302

Figure 2.23. Tianqiao low-rent housing..…………………………………..……. 303

Figure 3.1. Western and Chinese floor structures ………………………..……... 304

Figure 3.2. Two “cute little houses” ………….…………………………..………... 305

Figure 3.3. “Small houses in California” ……………………………………….....306

Figure 3.4. “Economic house no.6: 100% American style”…………………....... 307

Figure 3.5. “Economic house no.3: Spanish design”……….…………..…………308

Figure 3.6. “The modern house of 1933”……………………………...………….309

Figures 3.7–3.9. Three winning entries of the Pencil Points-Flat Glass Industry

Architectural Competition……………………………………….………....…310 – 312

Figure 3.10. Early *lilong* house in Shanghai ……………………….………………. 313

Figures 3.11–3.12. Examples of the reformed *lilong* house………………….......314 – 315

Figures 3.13–3.14. “An illustrated house”…………………………...….….316 – 317

Figures 3.15–3.16. Reformed *lilong* houses at *Yugucun* on *Yuyuan* Road.....……….318

Figure 3.17. “Economic house: no.4” ……………………………...…….…….319

Figures 3.18–3.20. Block plan of site, south elevation, and section of a Hung-Jao Road

house…………………………………………………………………….….…….320 – 321

Figure 3.21. “Practice design by Zhu Guangming”……………….…….….….….322

Figures 3.22–3.26. Three houses in Hangzhou………………..……….....…323 – 325

Figures 3.27–3.28. House in Nanjing ……………………….…..………..……326 – 327

Figures 3.29–3.30. The Ginling Girls' College main building ……..…………… 328

Figures 3.31–3.35. Spanish house on Yuyuan Road………………………. 329 – 331

Figures 3.36–3.37. YMCA building at Baxianqiao……………………..…….. 332

Figures 3. 38–3.39. Zhongshan Hospital in Shanghai, by the Kuan, Chu and Yang Architects and Engineers…………………………………….……………333

Figures 3.40–3.42. Main entrance to the West Lake Expo, by Liu Jipiao….334 – 335

Figure 3.43. Entrance to the Hall of Revolution…………………….….……335

Figure 3.44.The number one theatre……………………………..….….……336

Figures 3.45–3.46. Two more designs by Liu Jipiao………………..…..……….. 337

Figures 3.47–48. Plan and section of houses……………………….……..…....338

Figures 3.49–3.50. Perspective and plan of house ……………….…….….…....339

Writing Modernity: Constructing a History of Chinese Architecture, 1920 – 1949

Introduction: Retrieving the Popular in Chinese Architectural History of the Republican Period

In early 1934, the eminent Chinese architectural historian Liang Sicheng wrote a piece entitled "A Review of Yue Jiazao's *A History of Chinese Architecture*: Repudiating Its Errors." In the article, Liang launched a full-scale attack on a book he regarded unacceptable as scholarship, a book that was supposed to be a specialized study on the then emerging discipline of Chinese architecture. As a preface to his critique, he noted the paucity of studies on Chinese architecture, both by foreign scholars and his fellow countrymen, and the need to refute uninformed claims from both communities if China was not to "lose face" in front of an international audience. There were a few assumptions regarding scholarly audience and expertise that underlay Liang's review.[1]

Liang spoke as a "specialist." He questioned Yue's categorization and explication, that is, both his method and inference. He pointed out that a "bunch of unsystematic loose essays" based on faulty knowledge of architecture and of history, could not constitute a history of architecture.[2] Because of the influence and stature of Liang Sicheng in subsequent Chinese architectural historiography, his negative opinion, to say the very least, of Yue's ill-fated book remains the standard reception. Since its publication in 1933,

[1] Liang Sicheng, "A Review of Yue Jiazao's '*A History of Chinese Architecture'*: repudiating its errors," first published in 1934, reprinted in Liang Sicheng, 2001. *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng*, vol. 2, 291 – 296.

[2] Ibid.

the book has been relegated to oblivion due to what Liang saw as its unredeemable shortcomings. Only recently have scholars started taking Yue's work seriously.[3]

Yue's book and its contemporary fate will be dealt with more in depth in Chapter Four of this dissertation. I wish to point out a few issues central to Liang's review that would come to have a great impact on the historiography of Chinese architecture in the twentieth century. First is Liang's allusion – although he never said it quite explicitly anywhere in the article – that this was among the first attempts to write a "specialized study" of Chinese architecture by a Chinese scholar, indicating the nascent stage of the subject in China.

The second is Liang's acute awareness of the attention of scholars from "both East and West" to the topic of Chinese architecture at the time. Indeed during the 1930s when Liang published this article, the emerging field of Chinese architecture was a highly contested arena intellectually, politically and culturally. The newly established Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, of which Liang was the Director of Research, was the only institute devoted to the study of the subject. The Society was founded and managed by a group of connoisseurs, amateurs, and scholars with mixed background, including a handful of trained architects such as Liang himself. Liang was conscious of the gaze of scholars "East and West" because Western and Japanese scholars dominated the field of Chinese architectural history, effectively turning it into a battle field for both scholarly

[3] It has been a sort of consensus now among Chinese scholars that Yue's book was the "first Chinese architectural history by a Chinese scholar," which is also reflected in the number of reissues of the book in 1996 (Shanghai shudian), 2002 (Guizhou renmin chubanshe), 2005 (Tuanjie chubanshe), and 2013 (Jilin renmin chubanshe), to name a few editions. Scholarly articles have been published on it and its author. For a sampling, see Du Songzhu, "Yue Jiazao and his *A History of Chinese Architecture*," *Guizhou wenshi tiandi* 1 (1995): 62-63, Zhang Fan, "The study on Yue Jiazao's *Chinese Architectural History*," Zhongguo jianzhu shilun huikan 2011: 337-365, and more recently, Lai Delin, "Old in new: reflections on the influence of the traditional study of Classics, Ming and Qing Pragmatism, and late Qing New History on the historiography of Chinese architecture," *Architectural Journal* 2014. 9-10:108 – 116.

and political authority. The advancement of the Japanese troops in the north-east of China was having an effect on the intellectual exchange between the Chinese and Japanese scholars that had been congenial before. Liang must have regarded Yue's book embarrassing because it appeared inadequate by the standards of modern, scientific historical writing to which both he and his colleagues, as well as rival Japanese scholars of the time, adhered.

Last but not least is the unwavering confidence with which Liang discussed the subject of Chinese architecture. By virtue of his credential as a professionally trained architect, Liang claimed his authority over the subject matter, and over Yue, by assuming the stance of an expert with specialized knowledge. – Like many Chinese architects of his time, he had studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania from 1923 to 1927, and had established an architecture department in the Northeastern University at Shenyang upon his return from the United States. Liang taught there, while practicing as a professional architect. His professional training and his own understanding and grasp of the new, scientific method of historiography, of which his own father Liang Qichao was among the strongest proponents at the beginning of the twentieth century, afforded him two things, in his opinion, that Yue's work lacked: the knowledge of architecture, and that of history. He was clear: Yue's work did not "meet even the lowest standards of specialized scholarship from the point of view of a specialist" such as himself.[4]

Liang's faith in the expertise of a specialist and in the scientific historiography that his later, best-known works were to embody and substantiate indicated a particular moment of historical transition in Republican China, specifically in historical thinking and writing. Leaving aside the detailed treatment of this phenomenon to the last chapter

of the dissertation, I wish to point out that a systematic understanding and knowledge of Chinese architecture and its history in a modern, academic environment has been closely predicated on the perspective and approach of modern, scientific historiography. This modern tradition of architectural history found roots in twentieth-century Chinese academia, and has been produced and perpetuated in the architectural programs that Liang and his colleague and students have set up ever since. Mostly written by them, an official version of Chinese architectural history took shape in the early years of the People's Republic of China and remained influential for generations afterwards.[5] The periodization of Chinese architecture along the lines of dynastic regimes, for example, was taken up and continued; the emphasis on formal and stylistic qualities, the methodologies of textual as well as field research were maintained; the general linear progression of Chinese architecture following its origin, development, maturity and decline was sustained in academic education.[6] In fact, Liang has been so canonized that the system of Chinese architecture that his research and writing helped to define and establish is usually referred to as the "Liang System" in academic circles in China.

But this view of Chinese architectural history was only one among many. There was a varied and vibrant scene of articulations, speculations, practices and preferences concerning Chinese architecture during the early decades of the twentieth century.

---

[4] See note 1.

[5] The most representative of the standard, literally "official," version of Chinese architectural history was edited by Liu Dunzhen during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Compiled by almost all the most influential architectural historians of the time, this version went through "seven years of compiling, and eight revisions" before it took its final shape in 1966. See Liu Dunzhen. 1980. *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* [*A history of ancient Chinese architecture*]. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.

[6] This is true especially in the case of traditional architecture in China, and in the decades before the Reform and Open policy of 1978. A noticeable difference in the newer version of Chinese architectural history, for example, presents the development of traditional Chinese architecture in a few surging waves of "climaxes." See Liu, Xujie, et al. 2001 – 2003. *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* [*A history of ancient Chinese architecture*]. 5 vols. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, especially during the period under investigation, that is, from around 1920 to 1949, journals and newspapers were filled with discussions of Chinese architecture, ranging from reforming the outer appearances of buildings to rethinking its interior structure and spatial organization, from investigating its historical development to postulating its future as a modern incarnation of the traditional spirit with the advent of new materials, technology and ideology of construction, and a new breed of modern building professionals and public interlocutors of Chinese architecture. The general public's heated discussion was centered on such matters as the hygienic and healthy qualities, and comfort of the house as a space of domesticity. This dissertation seeks to complicate current understanding of Chinese architecture and its history by excavating and retrieving some of these lost voices on the subject, in order to broaden the scope of contemporary discussion on the role of history in Chinese architecture.

Previous Scholarship

There were dissenting voices from the very beginning of this process of modernizing architectural discourse and practice. A few examples will suffice. The early work of Liu Dunzhen on the vernacular tradition and cultural and regional diversity of Chinese architecture was perhaps the earliest example. Liu was Liang's colleague, and rival to some extent, at the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, where he was Director of Documents.[7] Taiwanese scholar Han Baode questioned both the use of

[7] Liu, Dunzhen. 1957. *Zhongguo zhuzhai gaishuo* [*A general study on Chinese residential architecture*]. Beijing: Jianzhu gongcheng chubanshe.

structural rationalism as a measure of architectural merit and the framework of the established Liang System along similar lines.[8] Liu's pioneering work on the vernacular dwellings of China has been followed up by a group of scholars led by Chen Zhihua and Lou Qingxi of Tsinghua University's Architecture School since the 1980s.[9] These scholars have incorporated various interdisciplinary approaches in their study of traditional settlement communities in China, borrowing insights and methodology from archeology, social history, folklore studies, local history, history of art and architecture, anthropology and ethnography, and conducting both textual analysis and extensive field research. They claim to write on Chinese architecture from the viewpoint of architectural history, not from that of architectural design.[10]

Art historian Wu Hung adopts a more explicitly art historical approach to Chinese architecture. His work on Tian'anmen Square's transformation during the early decades of the People's Republic situates the (re-)construction project in the broad social and historical circumstances of the time, and interrogates the identity of the square both in its capacity as a political space of official representation and in its contention and appropriation by contemporary avant-garde artists.[11]

Wu Hung is not the only scholar to contextualize the works of Chinese architectural history, both canonical texts and buildings, in its broad historical condition.

---

[8] Han, Baode. 1982. *Ming, Qing jianzhu er lun* [*Two essays on Ming and Qing architecture*]. Taibei Shi: Jing yu xiang chubanshe (first pub. 1969).

[9] Wen Yuqing also cites the 1958 National Conference on Architectural Theory and History as having a decisive role in steering architectural historians' attention to vernacular traditions. He states, "Because of contemporary political pressure on academia, vernacular studies was decided to be the focus of architectural history research," which consequently initiated "a large scale survey and study of residential architecture in China and made it an important area of study in Chinese architectural history." See Wen Yuqing, 2005. "A summary of Chinese architectural history research (1949 – 1958)," *Architect* 2005.1: 48 – 50.

[10] Chen Zhihua, 2010. "Forever vernacular: villages, museums, libraries," in *Jianzhu lilun · lishi wenku. di1 ji*/ *Essays on architectural theory and history*, vol. 1. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.

[11] Wu, Hung. 2005. *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the creation of a political space*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.

Nancy Steinhardt's examination of the making of the Tang architectural icon directs our attention more specifically to the "politics of Chinese architectural history."[12] Steinhardt argues that Liang's elitist tendency and single-minded focus on monumental Chinese architecture has led him to canonize the East Hall of the Foguang Monastery in Shanxi Province and to make it the Tang architectural icon. Steinhardt also suggests that Liang's nationalist, anti-Japanese sentiment during the Sino-Japanese war (1937 – 1945) might have also played a part in his writing of the time. Lai Delin likewise argues that since the rise of architecture and architectural history in modern China was concurrent with the First World War, especially the surge of Chinese nationalism after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the early scholars' study of Chinese architecture was, from the very beginning, an integral part of the New Culture Movement of this period.[13] By embedding the writings of the early Chinese architectural historians in their social and cultural milieu, both Steinhardt and Lai Delin have helped enrich our understanding of the discipline at its inception.

Zhu Jianfei's recent comprehensive study of architecture of modern China provides a "social, historical and formal" critique of modern Chinese architecture. Zhu attempts to provide a new perspective on the subject through its ambitious scope, i.e., from 1729 to 2008, and provides an in-depth analysis of social and formal issues in Chinese modern architecture. Form, power, autonomy of architecture, criticality of modern Chinese architects and geo-cultural differences are the author's major

[12] Nancy Steinhardt, 2004. "The Tang Architectural Icon and the Politics of Chinese Architectural History,"*Art Bulletin.* 86 (2): 228 – 254.

[13] Lai Delin, 2007. *Zhongguo jindai jianzhushi yanjiu/ Studies in modern Chinese architectural history*. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe.

problematics.[14] As Zhu states, his immediate concern is architecture and he always writes with an eye towards design practice.

Vimalin Rujivacharakul's doctoral dissertation on Chinese architectural historiography also examines the subject by placing it in the larger context of cross-cultural transmission, knowledge production and circulation through the complicated tripartite network of the West, Japan, and China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She traces the concepts and principles of the first generation of Chinese architectural historians to the nineteenth century Hegelian philosophy of history, Darwin's theory of evolution and its application in the social sciences, and the development of the history and theory of art and architecture in relation to archeology and anthropology in the West. She frames them in the context of the historical and political reality of Western imperialist dominance in China and the East, Japan's purposeful and willful mediation, and China's rising nationalist sentiment of the time.[15]

In his collection of essays on Chinese architectural history and theory, Zhao Chen examines what he calls the "tragic conflict" between Liang's "academic classicism" and "political nationalism" to argue that Liang might have misrepresented Chinese architecture and its history, knowingly or otherwise, under the powerful influence of his strong nationalist sensibility during a time of China's utter weakness in virtually every aspect: in international affairs, in domestic politics, in military power, in its economy as well as national psyche. Claiming that Liang misunderstood the fundamental concept of the façade in Western architecture, for which there was no counterpart in Chinese

[14] Zhu Jianfei. 2009. *Architecture of modern China: a historical critique*. London: Routledge.

[15] Rujivacharakul, Vimalin. 2006. *The rise of Chinese architectural history: cross-cultural studies and the making of modern knowledge*. Thesis (Ph. D. in Architecture)--University of California, Berkeley, Spring 2006.

architecture, Zhao has called for rewriting Chinese architectural history with its own paradigms and principles, rather than relying on the borrowed interpretive lens of structural rationalism such as Liang had done.[16]

All this previous scholarship has helped to broaden and deepen our understanding of Chinese architecture and its history tremendously. Especially in the past decade or two, there has been a wave of criticism of the Liang System, among which Zhao Chen's argument might be cited as the strongest. However, problems remain despite the sometimes quite harsh critical reevaluation of the Liang System. Of the most problematic of the critiques of Liang and his work is that despite the very critical stance against the Liang System, these critiques remain focused on the canonized, god-like master and his work. In other words, the critics are only quarrelling with Liang from inside the modern architectural discipline, the parameters of which were defined by Liang. Arguing and advocating for the studies of the vernacular landscape, for instance, only complement and complete the system.

This should not come as a surprise if one understands the mechanism of how architectural historians and the critics are trained in China. Almost without exception, the architectural historians in mainland China are graduates of architectural departments and schools who are trained as architects first and foremost, and who then go on to have a more advanced degree in architectural history and theory.[17] Immersed in the academic disciplinary environment from the very beginning, these architectural historians and

[16] Zhao Chen, 2007. *Limian de wuhui* [*Misunderstanding the facade*]. Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian.

[17] My knowledge of an architecture-related higher degree in Chinese universities came from years ago when I began considering applying to a graduate program in architectural history and learnt that in order to be admitted into any such program, I would have to have had a degree of architecture in hand. In other words, the potential architectural historians come from architects in China.

critics, most likely, will not find anything odd about critically re-examining Liang from the same perspective that he had taken decades ago.

Analytic Framework

I take a different approach to this problem of undoing a theoretical and methodological impasse, by turning to a set of important articulations and discursive practices that have been ignored by standard historiography. My primary analytic framework is supplied and supported by theoretical insights yielded by a few disciplines. First of these are popular culture studies and studies of everyday life such as represented by the works of the literary historian Leo Ou-fan Lee and the cultural historian Lu Hanchao on modern Shanghai. Ordinary life in the modern era as imagined, produced, experienced, and lived through a myriad channels constitutes, as these scholars argue, significant sites to probe the question of Chinese modernity, whether imaginary, literary, spatial, or physical/ architectural.

In his research on urban popular culture of modern Shanghai created by and mediated primarily through print and its emerging reading public, Lee demonstrates what he calls the "Shanghai modern" as a sensorial and spatial experience of the "LIGHT, HEAT, POWER!" of the modern city. Presenting a semiotics of modern life in the city both as spatially and architecturally produced and experienced – in coffee houses, theaters, department stores, dance halls, race tracks – as literally and visually represented – in contemporary literary works and popular pictorials, Lee argues for paying attention to the

“cultural imaginary,” the “surfaces” of images and things modern which nevertheless constitute a significant component of the experience of modernity.[18]

Lu’s work on everyday life of the city corresponds with the scholarly focus of historians in past decades on material and daily life as a valuable repository of meaning, capable of revealing complex patterns of thought and behavior under close examination. Focusing on the ordinary walks of urban life including the “little urbanites” and shantytown dwellers, most of whom were immigrants from the country and other parts of the nation to the modern metropolis of Shanghai in search of a better life, or escape from sheer devastation, Lu’s book provides an account of the “insignificant” people in their subtle and resourceful ways of adapting and adjusting to the drastic change around them. In his own words, “The story of daily life in Shanghai is a tale of how the little people, in their own creative ways, lived through the gigantic changes in modern China.”[19] The attention to the “insignificant” as historical subjects makes it possible to construct a richer and more nuanced narrative which is either glossed over or neglected by the grand narratives of elitist historiography, to which Lu’s book serves as a pointed critique and corrective.

Another related source of inspiration comes from vernacular architecture studies that treats the vernacular as “less a *kind* of building than an *approach* to looking at buildings,”[20] as a subject of study with its own structure and logic, rather than as an awkward, uneasy and inferior supplement of historical architectural monumentality.

---

[18] Lee, Leo Ou-fan. 1999. *Shanghai modern: the flowering of a new urban culture in China, 1930-1945*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

[19] Lu, Hanchao. 1999. *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press. http://ark.cdlib.org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/ark:/13030/ft6z09p124/ (accessed February 23, 2014).

[20] Camille Wells. “Old claims and new demands: vernacular architecture studies today,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 1 – 10. The emphasis in the text is the author’s own.

Similar to the cultural historian's attention to the ordinary life discussed in the preceding paragraphs, I focus on the vernacular, namely, the ordinary house in the city, for its potential to inform us on the concept of modernity as both discourse and practice. By examining the reformed, modern house in the city in imagination, articulation, discussion, and design in various publications, I show that this set of discourse reveals a slew of concerns quite different from the later, standard narrative of Chinese architectural history.

My investigation of archival sources has highlighted at least three relevant constituencies on the discourse of Chinese architectural history during the Republican period: (1) the general public with its concerns about (the lack of) modernity in the Chinese house and architecture, published in newspapers, magazines, and journals; (2) the municipal governments with their modernizing tools, particularly the formulation and enforcement of new building codes and regulations to modernize and standardize not only the practice of construction, but also the design process and the professionals themselves, creating both a uniform, legible built landscape and society; and (3) the building professionals including engineers, architects, and builder-contractors. These varied interpreters and practitioners of Chinese architecture at this historic juncture were each concerned with a set of issues, which overlapped and interlocked. The point of convergence for all these constituencies was undoubtedly the issue of modernity, articulated through and embodied by the idea and praxis of reform, although each constituency had a different understanding of modernity and each emphasized a different aspect of it.

This dissertation reexamines the notion of the modern through the various lenses of the aforementioned constituencies, and the focus will be on domestic architecture and the house in the city. By steering away from the well-trodden path of monumental

edifices and iconic figures in the standard history of Chinese architecture, this dissertation hopes to enrich our understanding of the subject by bringing into the discussion the popular, non-professionals, the authoritative figure of the municipal governments, as well as the motley crew of professionals, particularly those whose names are less well-known, and whose ideas at that time were not entirely compatible with the soon-to-be dominant interpreters of Chinese architecture. All were powerful influences and instigators of change who helped shape both the discourse and the actions that reformed the Chinese house and architecture in one way or another, whether or not that influence is explicitly acknowledged or heeded in the standard historiography of Chinese architecture.

The non-monumental, vernacular house became the site of the modern for all three constituencies under examination. For the general public, the house embodied not only a physical shelter, but also the site to experience modernity in the corporeal, the social, and the spatial. The changes wrought by the advent of modernity were brought to bear most directly and decisively on the family structure and ways of living which, consequentially, exerted a direct impact on the spatial expectation and experience of the house for the urban residents. Embracing almost whole-heartedly the idea of reforming the traditional Chinese house, the non-specialist interlocutors of Chinese architecture discussed a range of issues including site emplacement – that is, siting the house in the most healthful and hygienic orientation; rearranging its interior with fashionable European furnishing and décor; reforming the traditional kitchen and bathroom for hygiene and health; structuring the daily routines of the household according to a set of imported, scientific principles of efficiency, productivity, and so forth.

For the municipal authorities of Republican China, the reform of the house was carried out by their modernizing visions of both the built landscape and society on

different levels. Starting literally from the ground, modernizing projects of the city included building and improving a network of modern infrastructure: roads, bridges, ditches, underground sewage and so on. The facade, or face, of the city needed to be "rectified;" that is to say, it needed to be uniform, rationalized and legible. The building industry needed to be modernized, with its personnel brought under the purview and supervision of the state. Lastly, partly in response to the public's increasing demand for housing the urban poor during a period punctuated by war, internal strife and natural disasters, a number of municipal governments experimented with building affordable housing for the city's least fortunate, – the residents of shanty-towns that sprang up in every major city in the Republic of China. Their primary concerns were the efficiency of construction in terms of cost and time, and efficacy of management and administration of the residents.

For the building professionals, the issue of reforming the house was understandably more closely tied to the problem of a modernist expression of Chinese architecture, dictated by fashion and the clientele's taste, and by the architect's own preference and social awareness of his/her role and responsibility as a modern architect. Equally at stake was the need to assert a professional presence in the vision and awareness of the public at this early stage. A variety of means were adopted while a set of contentions emerged: the tension between decoration and structure, the relation of exterior forms and interior functionality, the issue of *Chinese-ness* and Westernization/ Modernism, and the relation of architectural history and contemporary design, to name just a few.

Finally, all the contending views and actions congealed at the point of reforming the epistemic structure of traditional Chinese architecture; that is to say, modernizing its

episteme. It was the elite literati of Chinese architecture and its history, such as Liang and his colleagues, both the amateur and the professional architects, Chinese and foreign, who published various treatises on the subject in the short 30-year span, that effectively modernized the study of Chinese architecture and its history from an oral, craftsman tradition to an academic mode of knowledge acquisition and transmission. It is also through this mode of learning that we have come to understand Chinese architecture right down to the present day. The amateur, non-specialist voices of the early twentieth century, such as that of Yue Jiazao mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, were subsumed and subordinated into a professional, specialist discourse heavily predicated on the tenets of scientific historiography. The latter, cast through the interpretative lens of structural rationalism, was decisive in the professional training of the first-generation Chinese architectural historians.

These are my key research questions: What were the visions of the modern for the general public, the state, and the building professionals during the 30-year period before 1949, and in what ways, and to what extent, were they similar or different? What did reform entail for each of these constituencies? How can studies of popular culture inform us on the issue of modernity in the Republican Chinese city? How did the non-specialist discourses on Chinese architecture affect its perception and understanding for the public, and what effect did it have on the writing of a history of Chinese architecture by the professionals? Through what means of (re)presentation did the professional architects and historians claim their expertise, and assert their authority over the field?

Plan of This Dissertation

The body of the dissertation contains four chapters, each of which devoted to a particular aspect of the modern as mentioned earlier: the experience of modernity for the urban residents; the modernizing projects of city, house, and society for the municipal governments; the quest for a Chinese modernism by the professional architects and engineers, and the creation of a modern episteme for the discipline of architecture by the literati writers. Chapter One focuses on the popular discourse of the Chinese house and architecture that found its main outlets in newspapers, journals and magazines. This discourse included the discussion of the house in the rubric of reforming and reorganizing the family for the changing time. Smaller family units with an idealized family structure were lauded as the model family that called for an ideal family setting of the house, running the whole gamut from the setting and location of the house to its interior decoration. Primary materials come mainly from newspapers, such as *Shenbao* and the *Shishi xinbao* [*China Times*], especially the electronically accessible *Shenbao*, and old journals and magazines, the majority of which comes from the online database of the *Dacheng* Old Journals Full-text Database, as well as *Duxiu*, the powerful Chinese academic search engine for journal articles and books, conference papers, theses and dissertations, etc. The National Library of China with its digital collections of Republican-era publications as well as contemporary scholarship, particularly articles accessible through the China Academic Journals database, has been tremendously helpful for my research. Many articles that I have accessed are found through keyword search, while many of them are also gleaned from browsing through an entire important journal collection in a database.

Chapter Two examines the municipal government's role in the reconfiguration of the urban residential landscape, in such examples as soliciting standardized designs of

rental houses and house-shops in Shanghai, reforming the traditional courtyard house in Beijing, as well as in providing affordable housing for the city's poor, as in the case of Guangzhou, Beijing and other cities in the 1930s. The municipal government's effort to standardize the urban landscape was also reflected in the codification and registration programs for architects, engineers and builders/construction companies. Similar to Chapter One, sources for the municipal governments including building codes, laws and regulations, reports and commentaries on legislative bills, and administrative work, construction work of the departments of public works bureaus, and public health bureaus, etc., are from the same databases. I have also used archival materials obtained from the Beijing Municipal Archives in this chapter. There are also sociological studies from the period, such as the well-known survey of Beijing society conducted and published by Sidney Gamble and his colleagues in 1921. Sociological studies of living standards of the city's poor in shantytowns in Nanjing and other cities in this chapter provide a general overview of urban living in the Republic.

Chapter Three concerns the building professionals. This professional community was perhaps the most conscious and aware of what was at stake for them; members of a nascent profession, they needed to establish their authority as the expert, in front of both the public – the potential clientele – and the traditional builders, the latter being the rivals they sought to replace. Collaborating with municipal governments in creating a modern edifice for China, the architects forcefully established their presence in the public domain through their state (and stately) commissions. At the same time, publications aiming to present a professional image, such as the professional associations' mouthpieces like *The Builder*, *The Chinese Architect* – which also supplied the majority of the primary materials for this chapter – and to educate the general public and the would-be

professionals of architects and engineers, e.g., students of vocational schools, on architecture, all worked to secure the dominant position of the professional vis-a-vis that of the public and the traditional craftsman builder.

Chapter Four moves away from the material and physical aspects of design and building, or articulations closely related to architectural design, to the construction of a history of Chinese architecture; in other words, to the writing of a Chinese architectural history. Different modes and styles of writing are examined and analyzed, as are different positions and relations. The evidential historiography in the classical *biji* tradition, represented by the work of Yue Jiazao, for example, is analyzed to demonstrate that although generally regarded as an "inadequate" prototype of an early attempt, this work shares with the official, standard version of Chinese architectural history more than has been realized.[21] Some early writings in English are also examined to reveal a typical, impressionist writing of the so-called characteristics of Chinese architecture, which continued well into the 1930s and 1940s. Of particular significance was the relation between the history of art and the history of architecture. Different authors treated this issue differently in Republican China. The art historians trained in or influenced by the Western academic system considered architecture as an indisputable component of a history of Chinese art, whereas their fellow architect-turned-historians of the time attempted to grant Chinese architecture complete autonomy as a modern discipline by not only freeing it from the yoke of Confucian codes and rituals, as Xu Subin has argued, but

[21] Lai Delin's article cited earlier also shows the influence of Yue's work on the contemporaneous and later scholars of Chinese architecture and establishes an intellectual and historical link between these works by comparing their research approaches and topics. See Lai, 2014, Table 1: A comparison of the issues and methods of Yue's Chinese architectural history and relevant researches of other scholars, in his "Old in new."

also from the alliance with, or perhaps dominance of, [fine] art history.[22] In other words, Chinese architectural historians attempted to write a history of Chinese architecture in and of itself, although references to artistic trends and development were inevitably made.

As a result, materials for this chapter are comparatively more eclectic. Many of the English publications from the period, especially book-length treatises, have not been accorded due attention, perhaps because they fell out of the purview of the early Chinese architectural historians on the account of their lack of scholarly merit, and subsequently out of the boundary of Chinese architectural historiography. My resurrection of these materials has come almost as a surprise to myself; I was unaware of the existence of this discourse until a few years ago when I started researching English writing on Chinese architecture published during the Republican period outside the confines of the standard academic version of the field.

The conclusion of the dissertation brings the discussion to contemporary architectural practice to lend more immediacy to the debates surrounding Chinese architectural historiography. My insertion of the present moment in the concluding discussion is not meant to satisfy the pragmatic requirement of connecting every piece of the historical puzzle to the present, or to give more weight of "usefulness" to the work of a historian. Quite the contrary; in the past decades the debate over what constitutes Chinese architecture and what its future direction should be has its root set deeply in the originating historical moments of its articulation in the Republican period. In fact, in today's academic setting, how else but through a historical narrative handed down in a standard history could one learn about Chinese architecture, which has endured such

[22] Xu Subin argues that a fundamental change to the word and world of architecture in China around the late Qing and early Republican periods was that it was extricated from the Confucian rituals where it

drastic changes in the past century so as to obfuscate if not totally annihilate its indigenous appearance and character?

The detrimental effect of the official, standardized version of Chinese architecture on our understanding and grasp of the subject has yet to be fully assessed. Meanwhile, it is useful to point out a couple of important strands of indigenous tradition in Chinese architecture that have been discontinued since the promulgation of that history. The first one is the literati tradition from traditional China, where the educated men of letters, the literati, were active participants in architectural design and creation, not only of gardens, but also of studios, scholarly retreats, etc. They, as the educated elite of society, also authored treatises on architectural design and creation, such as Ji Cheng and his *Craft of Gardens* published in the seventeenth century, which has become a classic.

A second tradition that was severed was the craftsman's role in erecting buildings and sustaining the building tradition. Acquiring the knowledge orally, and most importantly, through first-hand on-site handling of materials and construction itself, the traditional craftsmen's empirical knowledge was made to look antiquated and obsolete by the modern architect, engineer, and both the state and society at large of Republican China, all of whom were eager to reform every aspect of design and construction, from materials to tectonics, and to appearances of Chinese architecture.

Significance of This Dissertation

My intention is to veer away from the monumental and iconic in standard Chinese architectural historiography and bring the publications that have been neglected and

---

had been embedded to become its own entity and assume its own identity, as both a science and art of building. See Xu Subin, 2010.

brushed aside to the foreground for a close reading and analysis. This is justified by a few considerations. Firstly, these publications represent a different possibility of articulating the subject of Chinese architecture. Secondly, and more importantly, they are significant not for their scholarly merit or contribution to our knowledge of Chinese architecture, but because they continue a lineage of writing on Chinese architecture that could be traced back to much earlier articulations, however more highly regarded the latter are in comparison. Knowledge, both "scientific" and "partial/prejudiced," has its own way of accumulating and disseminating; that is, through writing and reading, whether in an academic setting or otherwise. By closely examining the manner in which histories of Chinese architecture have been written, we can hope to gain a better understanding of where we have come from, how we arrive at where we are, and where we could go.

Seen through the interpretive lens of vernacular architectural studies and studies of popular culture of everyday life in the city, Chinese architecture at this historic moment of transformation has much to teach us. Alternate perspectives and positons, neglected until now, will also afford us a fresh starting point in reconfiguring our knowledge of Chinese architecture and rewriting its history in the near future.

Chapter One: The Popular Discourse

In 1922, the influential newspaper *Shenbao* published an article discussing the necessity of reforming the traditional courtyard house for the re-formed small family of the time in its popular column, *ziyoutan*, or free talk. The author started with a strident critique of the traditional house:

> Chinese residential architecture is very strange. The farmers' houses more or less make sense, but the houses for the middle-class and above are usually all the same through and through. The first course [of the courtyard] is the wall and entrance gate; the second one, halls with side chambers, and behind those are the sleeping quarters. It looks as if every house was a government office, or there were celebratory occasions every day. Or every household had the same amount of income, and lived the same kind of life. These sorts of careless architecture are really appalling. In summary, everywhere in our compatriots' life are seen signs of vanity, and no one realizes that the house is a place of comfort for the inhabitants. After the breakdown of the big family, this kind of house is even less appropriate.[23]

This remarkable paragraph is packed with information on a number of things concerning the general social and cultural milieu of the time that would illuminate the characteristics of popular discourse on housing in Republican China. Firstly, we learn that there was a public outlet for people to discuss matters such as this, namely, the newspaper; and in this case of the *Shenbao*, established in 1872, had already enjoyed 50 years of publication.[24] Secondly, that the "big family" was "breaking down." With the fall of the

---

[23] Wu Xiaochu, "Route to the ideal family," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, Dec., 24, 1922, page 19.

[24] *Shenbao* [also spelt as *Shun Pao*] was launched by the English businessman Ernest Major (1841 – 1908) in Shanghai in 1872. It was a newspaper published in Chinese for the Chinse audience and the editors/ contributors were Chinese scholars hired by Major. It quickly became a popular newspaper in Shanghai, and had grown, from a circulation of around 1000 in the first year to 10,000 by 1887, when it set up distribution offices in 30/40 cities in Jiangsu, Zhejiang provinces [both in close proximity to Shanghai] and the rest of China, including those in the capital cities of Japan, England and France. Closed off in 1949, it was a newspaper with the longest circulation history (78 years) in Republican China with a wide-ranging influence. For a specialized study of the newspaper in Chinese, see Song Jun. 1996. *Shenbao de xingshuai*. [*The rise and fall of Shenbao*] Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe. There are also many detailed and specific works on it in other languages. See, for example, Tsai Weipin. 2010. *Reading Shenbao: nationalism, consumerism and individuality in China, 1919-37*. Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave

imperial order in 1911, every aspect of political, social, and cultural life was thrown into a state of flux; the traditional patriarchy was no exception to this and the very structure of the family was transformed. It was challenged on more than one front by new ideologies of home and family, new roles for and expectations of the woman, a new consciousness of the individual, among others.

Lastly and most significantly, all the changes in society and family were (to be) reflected on residential architecture, which is the traditional courtyard house as discussed in the article. Fundamentally, the house was perceived *differently* – in opposition to all the *sameness* indicated in the article – on multiple levels. In terms of its physical, spatial layout, that is to say, the organization of the house in the shape of multiple courtyards in the traditional configuration for the middle-class and higher mimicking that of a government office, needed reforming. Its basic function and relation to the inhabitants in providing "comfort" for the latter was a marked shift from the Confucian conception of the family as a microcosm of the state, and the house as a physical embodiment and enforcement of Confucian moral codes and ritualistic dictates. And its significance in marking the economic, social and cultural status of the inhabitants also changed; since all the conditions – economic turnout and life style for example – were different, the house that accommodated the various life styles of families with different economic conditions should undoubtedly change in accordance. The heightened sense of difference was not unwarranted; individuality, implicit in the article, denoted and insisted upon difference after all.

Macmillan. And Barbara Mittler, 2004. *A newspaper for China?: power, identity, and change in Shanghai's news media, 1872-1912*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Asia Center.

Subsequently, the change in the perception of the house proved to have immediate physical and spatial import, as the author continued to discuss the design – note that the idea of "design" was taken for granted in the process of building activity – of an appropriate house for the small family. Adopting an apologetic tone for not being an architect, the author nevertheless continued,

> [P]roceeding from common sense, now that the ceremony for the court's favors is nonexistent, [I think] we can do away with the *qiangmenjian (foyer?)*. And since there are public spaces for rent for occasions of festivity, we can get rid of the hall. The rooms that are indispensable for our life are the bedroom, kitchen, study, living room, etc. The nursery and bathroom also seem indispensable. And if there was space for storage and for a small garden, that would still be better.[25]

Clearly marked in these sentences was a shift from a ritualistic orientation of the house to a more pragmatic one. The close correspondence between the physical space of the house and the ideological and political structure of imperial China was disturbed because of the new political reality of the Republic established in 1912. The specific division and designation of the rooms inside the house, as imagined by the author, betrayed a strong Western influence, best seen in the preference for a "small garden." In other words, the house was no longer conceived in terms of the traditional courtyard, but from a new model having its roots set in the Western house of the conjugal family that was gaining popularity among the urban residents of China.

Leaving the detailed treatment of the Western influence on reforming the Chinese house to a later section in the chapter, I wish to point out the fact that, according to contemporary thinkers and interlocutors, the transformed concept and structure of family and home should have an architectural and spatial dimension to it. Or put it another way, the design of the house should likewise change. It can be argued that this was precisely

---

[25] See note 23.

what made the popular and non-specialist discourse a modern phenomenon, as it was an articulation of conditions, concerns, and sentiments specific to the reality and experience of living in a modern era and coping with phenomenal change.[26] Also in this sense, the ordinary house gained its significance, not only as material artifacts sheltering daily life, but also as a site of concentrated discourse that has much to inform us on the modern era as imagined and articulated by the urban residents.

Indeed these ideas and arguments were typical of the time. Right around the beginning of the twentieth century, discussions of the house began to flourish in popular media such as newspapers, magazines and journals. In this chapter, I will focus on articles published in newspapers such as *Shenbao* and the *China Times*, two of the most influential newspapers in late Qing and Republican China, as well as popular journals and magazines that discussed the Chinese house and architecture. A host of such publications sprang up during the period under investigation, although many of them only enjoyed a very short life span and probably a relatively small audience. Nevertheless, as a whole, there were a plethora of such popular publications, including the well-known *Ladies' Journal* that, published by the influential *Commercial Press* in 1915, enjoyed 17 years of publication, and the *Eastern Miscellany*, a hallmark publication from the same press with its impressive 44 volumes from 1904 to 1948.[27] Journals such as the *Eastern Miscellany* were important in their comprehensive coverage of discussion topics ranging from

[26] In his study of domestic space and bourgeois culture of modern Japan, Jordan Sand notes a similar "conception of the home as a space to be molded around an ideal model of family" during this period. See Jordan Sand, 2003. *House and home in modern Japan: architecture, domestic space, and bourgeois culture, 1880-1930*. Cambridge (Mass.): Distributed by Harvard University Press: p.8.

[27] According to the *Dacheng* Old Journals Full-text Database, which has the most comprehensive collection of the *Ladies' Journal*, the journal was launched in Jan. 1915 (vol.1, no.1), and stopped publication in Dec.1931 (vol.17, no.12), and then resumed publication from 1940 (published as "Launch Issue"vo.1,no.1 in Sept.1940) to 1945. Considering the Sino-Japanese war that ensued after 1931 and lasted until 1945, it was mostly like that the journal stopped publication during the interval. Many Chinese scholars seem to date the journal's publication period only from 1915 to 1931.

contemporary political and social matters both domestic and abroad, cultural issues and debates, academic discoveries and development as well as aspects of daily life that was undergoing an unprecedented transformation for the elites, well-to-do, the ordinary and the underprivileged. In examining discussions of issues directly or indirectly related to the house, and the housing problem especially in urban centers of China, one discovers a pattern and form of discourse that differed from that of the professional discourse, which was espoused by the experts represented by the modern engineers, architects, and builders that will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Analyzed through the lens of popular culture studies and studies of daily life in the city, the ordinary house takes center stage under a new light and appears contrary to its perceived status as a lack in terms of architectural and artistic, cultural and historic merit in the standard historiography of Chinese architecture. Taking cues from Leo Ou-fan Lee's assertion that modernity is also about the "cultural imaginary" of the modern, I focus on popular discussions of the house in its capacity to conjure up images of the modern for the different walks of city life. To be sure, the house became the contested site of modern discourses concerning hygiene, health, individuality and community, home economics, and of course, modernity, all in a state of uncertainty, in the process of taking a more stabilized and fixated form in modern China.

Discussions of the house in popular media operated in a number of larger categories including the reform and reconstruction of the family and society, the position and role of women in the family, the reorganization of interior space, particularly the reform of the kitchen and bathroom, and the remodeling of the house according to (Western) modern architectural design principles. Living in the city in the tumultuous period of the Republic also meant that for a good number of the residents, the issue of

housing was always a pressing one. Public interlocutors also discussed ways of solving this problem in the borrowed rhetoric of establishing housing cooperatives and co-partnership and calling for municipal governments to fulfil their responsibility by providing affordable housing for the city's poor. I wish to examine the situation from the public's understanding as expressed in popular media in this chapter.

Reforming the Family: Route to the Ideal/ Model/ Standard Family

In an era marked by fundamental change, arguably one of the most drastically affected was the institution of the extended patriarchal family of traditional China. In a nutshell, the model of the small family consisting of a man and a woman united in a conjugal union under the condition of love, as opposed to the traditional bond forged or imposed by "the order of the parents, and words of the matchmaker," as the age-old Chinese saying goes, became the desirable ideal and model of the new family and the traditional extended family structure came under attack.

Take *Shenbao* for instance. As early as the very beginning of the 1920s, a few popular terms for the new, re-formed family were used rather frequently on its pages. These included *lixiang jiating*, or literally, the ideal family, *mofan jiating*, the model family, *xiao jiating*, the small family, and even *biaozhun jiating*, the standard family. As can be expected, discussions on a small family never could completely detach itself from the extended "big family" of traditional China, especially at the beginning. In fact, it grew out of the latter. As a consequence, much attention was directed to how to reform or restructure the old, extended, patriarchal family structure in a modest and mild spirit; or how to "smash the big, old family" in a more "revolutionary" and militant manner.

A few words on the multi-layered meanings of the terminology concerning the family are warranted. As pointed out by Elizabeth LaCouture in her study of the modern individual's identity formation in the Republican-era treaty-port Tianjin, the Chinese word *jiating*, the prevalent suffix to all the terms used in *Shenbao* quoted above, indicating the new family of the time, was a neologism translated into the Mandarin Chinese language at the turn of the century from the Japanese word *katei*, itself a translation, or concoction combining both western ideas of the home with Confucian ideologies about family and state. It was made popular by the New Culture intellectuals' call for a vernacular language for both literature and everyday life in modern China. LaCouture explains that the new terminology *jiating* was used to replace and displace the indigenous Chinese term *jia*, which encompassed house, household, and family depending on the context, thus linking "space, people, and social rations" into "an organic whole" in the Confucian concept of the family.[28] In William Rowe's words, in the traditional Confucian cosmology of the family, "The state was the family writ large." [29] As LaCouture argues, the individual-household-state tripartite continuum entailed a spatial dimension that would suffer the repercussions of upsetting and disrupting such a connection once the Confucian ideology ceased to be the dominant organizing principles for both family and state after the end of the imperial rule in 1911. In other words, the house would have to transform with the changes of the family, a position clearly articulated by the author of the article quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

Surrounding the discussions of the small family were thus issues that were informed and inspired by the larger social and historical conditions of early twentieth-

[28] Elizabeth LaCouture, 2010. *Modern homes for modern families in Tianjin, China, 1860-1949*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--Columbia University, 2010, 46.

century China, such as family reform as a first step to social reform, the discovery of the individual as a consequence of the New Culture Movement, the emancipation of women through education and economic independence, equality between men and women, women's position in family and society, and so forth.[30] Other issues were related to such matters as the management of household economics – since the small family resided outside the extended family – budget management, and women's employment in society, the issue of polygamy and prostitution for men and concubinage for women, and discussions on whether or not to hire a maid or helper of some sort, or to assign all household work to the woman.

The approach by the author quoted at the beginning of the chapter, whose exposition of the route to an ideal house for the ideal family started with criticisms of the traditional courtyard house which provided a logical foundation for his suggestions of reform, seemed to be a tactic commonly adopted in discussions of family reorganization and social reform. Around the turn of the twentieth century, there appeared many discussions on the so-called evils of the traditional, extended family. Pitted against the model of the nuclear conjugal family of Europe and the United States, the extended family structure in China with its generations of descendants living under the same roof – which used to be a virtue and model to be aspired to – and its concurrent issues such as

---

[29] Rowe as quoted in Susan L. Glosser, 2003. *Chinese visions of family and state, 1915-1953*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 4.

[30] The New Culture Movement was a far-reaching enlightenment movement initiated in 1915, in response to the perceived failure of the newly established Republican regime, aiming to reform such cultural aspects as the linguistics, literature and historiography of modern China. It was characterized by its advocate of a vernacular language and literature, a critical stance towards Confucian ideology and historiography, and promotion of western liberal ideals as the model for China. It was later shanghaied by the revolutionary radicalism of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and its reinterpretation against the official discourse of the Chinese communist party has been a matter of contention among historians of different perspectives.

the relationship among family members, household management, the complex problem of inheritance and so forth – came under very unfavorable light.

Many different solutions were suggested. Opinions varied from the extremes to the compromising "middle-ground." Family reform in fantastical rhetoric and forms echoed or responded to Western schools of thought on the same issue including "eliminating the family," "the apartment family," "the hotel family" and "the school family," etc.[31] Although more radical solutions such as a family cooperative, and joint household for more autonomous rule also appeared, the more typical solution was to reform, however drastically or mildly, the existing family structure in order to adapt it to the changing ideas and ways of life of the new family.

An article entitled "Reforming the family" published in 1917 in the influential *Eastern Miscellany* was typical of this moderate, half-way view. The author acknowledged the influence of Europe and America's (small) family structure on the social customs of China, but he was not to discard the traditional ways altogether. As a matter of fact, the author was unequivocal about his "mild, reformative" strategy when it came to adjusting the family to changing conditions of Chinese society, in order to preserve as much of the old institution as possible. The middle way of "eliminating the

[31] According to Yu Hualin, "Jindai Zhongguo jiating yanjiu de xingqi" ["The rise of family research in modern China,"] *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 4 (2003): 102 – 106. A 1923 *Shenbao* article suggested two alternative models for the "new, reformed" family, i.e., the "assembly family" and the "school family." The first one entailed gathering the whole family, now in separate, smaller units, in a family assembly on a weekly or monthly basis to improve relations among family members as well as discuss family matters. The second one suggested running the family like a school, "purchasing some books for the educated members of the family to lecture to the rest at time of leisure, focusing on writing and mathematics and supplemented with the arts." This intellectual cultivation, together with bodily improvement supplied by "exercise equipment in the back of the house," would make a strong family. See Jian Yi, "The new, reformed family," *Shenbao*, September 4, 1923, page 19.

drawbacks" of the old family, and "adopting the advantages" of the new customs was the preferred solution.[32]

The author then pointed out four drawbacks that needed reforming in the family, touching upon some of the most fundamental aspects of the subject. For instance, the practice of an extended family living together under what he termed "the enthrallment of the false virtue of 'living and cooking together' with disregard of the actual inconvenience and hindrance" of such a practice was discussed. Under such a system, since the property was collectively owned, the economic consequences, the author argued, included producing indolent family members with little or no sense of responsibility. The overly elaborate ceremonies for ancestral worship and excessively strict disciplinary atmosphere of the traditional family were also among those aspects to be reformed. But as the author asserted at the end of the article, his suggestions were on "preservation" more than "reform," as they were ultimately aimed at avoiding major conflicts between "the old family" and "the new society."[33]

Another article likewise discussed the "key elements of forming a model family."[34] Acknowledging the actual difficulty of "reforming [the old family] thoroughly" in a transitional period, the author argued that there was no need to distinguish between "old" and "new," so long as the structure of the family was "perfect." In the author's views, this entailed the members of the family in a monogamous conjugal

---

[32] Gao Lao, "Reforming the family," *East Miscellany* 14.4 (1917): 8 – 11.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Huafo louzhu, "Key elements in forming a model family," *Shenbao, ziyoutan*, February 19, 1922, page 8.

relationship of a man and a women "with a small number of children," bonded by love. And the family made sensible economic considerations.[35]

This kind of disintegration of the extended family into smaller units indeed seemed to be a preferable solution for many advocates of family reform. Realizing the impossibility, and implications, of completely severing the ties with the old family structure, the authors appeared rather pragmatic and solution-oriented in their views on the subject, which was shown in their clear-headed understanding of their own era and in their willingness to negotiate and compromise. Another article spelt this out: "At a time of transition, we … should break the big family into several small families, each with only one husband and one wife and their underage children living together."[36]

The emphasis on one husband and one wife was a recurring theme, as seen here. It was, of course, not a casual remark. It was, rather, a critique of the long-held tradition of the Chinese patriarch's polygamous practice. This practice drew a lot of criticism on many grounds, such as the status of women, the equality between men and women in the family and so forth.

This compromising, reformative strategy reflected and resulted from the contemporary understanding of the traditional and new/ small families in terms of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each. The advocates of the new family were caught in the conundrum of the conflict between the two, among them were the entrenched ethical values, such as ethics of filial piety which was perhaps the most difficult to discard. Aimed at regulating personal relations in and outside the family,

---

[35] Ibid. The author's willingness to compromise on the principle of the one-husband-one-wife structure of the small family which, even though according to him, was "the best," was shown by incorporating the parents into the family which seemed more of a practical consideration for the wife than for anything else.

[36] Lin Zhensheng, "Evils of the family and ways to reform it," *Jiating yanjiu [Research on the family*] 1. 2 (1921): 49 – 52.

traditional codes of conduct such as filial piety were particularly thorny to deal with. On the one hand, these young people assumed an iconoclastic stance against the traditional ways; on the other, there did not see a viable, conscientious way to reject it all. One author's summary of the debate of the problem and his solution were illustrative. After giving a short overview of the debate between those who argued for the small family and those who were opposed to it, with each accusing the other of undesirable quality and character, the author wished for a solution that would provide benefits of both, by keeping certain elements of the family separate while other elements mutual and shared. He wrote,

> Daily life is best when separated but there shouldn't be a demarcation of the spirit. Monetary circulation should be maintained. Help should be given when needed. The principle of filial piety should be upheld and parents should be supported. Brothers should love each other. Structured this way, a small family is free of the impersonal disconnectedness, and a big family is free of the agony of restriction. Their relationship should not be sought in terms of form, or grandiloquent rhetoric.[37]

Another article published in the *Family Research* concentrated on the particular issue of personal relations among the family members. Dividing family members according to the individual and their sex, the author discussed how to "handle" the father, the mother, how to be a husband or wife, how to deal with the in-laws, and cope with sisters, and how to be parents.[38] The unfaltering belief of the author and ultimate solution to the problem of the family, accordingly, seemed to be the members' evolutionary progress into personhood. For example, when talking about "coping with our sisters," the author also noted about the brothers by stating, "There is no new way of handling our brothers. We can only hope to persuade them to behave like humans."[39] When talking

[37] Shou Zhang, "The small family and the big family," *Shenbao*, July 14, 1923, page 19.
[38] He Li, "How do we handle our family now?" *Jiating yanjiu/ Family research* 1.3(1921): 66 – 69.
[39] Ibid, 69.

about dealing with the father, the author argued that since the pension system did not exist for supporting the elders, the children should fulfill their duty and support their father (and mother).[40]

Understandably this moderate middle-way solution was only one sampling of the heated debate on reforming both family and society, and everything else with them at the time. Certainly more exciting and militant were the positons taken by the more radical New Culture youths. But as Susan Glosser points out in her study of the small family ideal during the Republican period – extending into the People's Republic of China until a campaign was launched to fully implement the new Marriage Law in 1953 – even the New Culture radicals of the 1910s and 1920s who were ostensibly more iconoclastic in their attitude had something in common with this "conservative" group. Tracing the trajectory of the family reform rhetoric embodied by the *xiao jiating*, or small family, from the Republican period to the early People's Republic of China, Glosser identified four major groups of interlocutors in their manipulation of the discourse to advance their own courses: the New Culture intellectuals of the first two decades of the new century whose concerns centered on a new manhood for themselves and their personal fulfillment and happiness; the nationalist state of Nanjing during 1927-37; the entrepreneurs of family journals aiming to turn the small family into a unit of consumption in the 1930s; and the communist regime that exploited the link between the individual, the state, and productivity established by their New Culture radical predecessors and used more coercive means to intervene in the family and society.[41]

---

[40] Ibid. The author also noted that "For the evil parents, we can fight against them with harsh measures, but if there is room for persuasion, we should try to persuade them."

[41] Susan Glosser, 2003. *Chinese visions of family and state*, 1915-1953. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Looking to "the Western nuclear family as a modern alternative" to China's problem of the family,[42] as Glosser argues, these young radicals were not set about destroying the patriarchal system altogether; but rather, rebelling against the patriarchal authority of the past, these young men were hoping "to carve a foothold for themselves within the Chinese patriarchal order and from their heightened vantage point exert control over their own lives and the lives of their families," which was their way of seeking a new identity in the modernizing and industrializing world around them.[43]

The link between the family, the state, and productivity also had a tangible dimension in how household activities were, or should be, structured, and how daily routines were, or should be, scheduled and conducted. The rhetoric of the scientific – championed by the New Culture Movement – infiltrated into daily life with its implications of rationalization and efficiency. In fact, it provided the theoretical underpinning for discussions on how to channel the mundane activities of daily life into a rigid "scientific" schedule to increase efficiency and productivity, and by extension, content and happiness. This sort of discussion also constituted an important aspect of reforming the traditional family on route to a modern, ideal, or model one. The following article published in 1923 provided an account of "a good model" of a small family of the author's friend, a Mr. Zhang and his wife – both primary school teachers – and Zhang's mother and young son living together. After telling a story to illustrate the good upbringing of the child and "harmonious, serene atmosphere" of the family, the author gave a detailed daily (and weekly) schedule of the Zhangs "for the readers' reference:"

> In the morning
> 6AM: getting up and 6:30, breakfast (milk and bread);

[42] Linda K. Kerber, "Foreword," in Susan Glosser, 2003, ix – xiv.
[43] Glosser, 2003, 11.

7AM: 15 minutes of exercise, and 7:25, everyone goes to school;
8AM: Mother starts working;
10AM: Mother stops working;
11AM: everyone comes home to prepare lunch, and at 11:40 after lunch, the family plays a game, or talks, or reads the newspaper;
12:30PM: everyone goes back to school;
In the afternoon
2PM: Mother starts working;
4PM: Mother stops working;
4:30PM: everyone comes home to prepare dinner;
5:20PM: dinner;
After dinner, everyone takes a 30-minute break. Mr. Zhang and his wife would attend to their work of the day while the mother rests and the little boy does his homework;
After 7PM: the family gathers for talking, story-telling, science, singing, telling jokes or sewing;
8PM: Mother and child go to sleep while Mr. and Mrs. Zhang would read or write letters;
9PM: lights out and everyone is in bed.
On Sundays, they would either attend lectures/ talks or invite their colleagues over for a gathering of music, dance, or debates.[44]

This rigid ordering of the day into a "scientific" timetable – daily activities punctuated and compartmentalized by the clock – was not uncommon at the time. Newspapers and magazines did not bother to hide their original inspiration for this scheduling either. For example, the *Ladies' Journal* published an illustration of a Western housewife's daily schedule in 1915, quite similar to the one described above (Figure 1.1).[45] The housewife's day, as told by the clock, started at 8 o'clock in the morning and revolved around household chores such as laundry and food preparation, washing and cooking all day.

In fact, the impulse to structure family life according to a purely scientific mentality was so strong that it was considered a fundamental constituent of a modern family. In an article written almost a decade later, "scientific living" was exalted as one of

[44] Yi, "A good model of the small family," *Shenbao, changshi*, August 3, 1923, page 19.
[45] See "A Western housewife's daily schedule," *The ladies journal* 1.6 (1915).

the two basic elements of a new family, the other being "artistic environment," reflecting the need to tend to the physical environment of the house, although material considerations were masqueraded as the more morally and spiritually appropriate and elevating – "artistic." In the author's eyes, material advances alone, or even living standards or habits – such as frequenting western restaurants or dance halls – were not sufficient to make a family "modern," whereas "scientific living" and "artistic environment" were.[46] This could be an indication of a shift from the earlier focus of the family-reform discourse on ideologies and relationships to material and physical considerations of the house and family.

The author went on to define "scientific living" as having two meanings: "First, it means to conduct our life with scientific principles, and second, it means to increase the efficiency of our life with scientific knowledge…. In other words, a scientific life is a life of efficiency, economy and rationality."[47]

The obsession with efficiency and productivity, both predicated on the rational, scientific management of time and labor, carried more immediate repercussions within the house. For example, the article cited at the beginning of this chapter, a serialized publication in the newspaper in four installments encompassing a wide range of issues discussed in the current chapter thus far, also touched upon the issue of production and household management. The author wrote,

> Housekeeping in China is tremendously troublesome. Chips of firewood have to be used for ignition; vegetables have to be washed in the river; shopping means a lot of running around, to say nothing of child-rearing, which is most intense. So the women of below-the-average families labor all day for food and drinks alone, without the least amount of production whatsoever.[48]

[46] Pan Wenan,"Two essential elements of a new family," *The modern home* 1.1(1931): 1 – 10.
[47] Ibid, 9.
[48] Wu Xiaochu, *Shenbao*, December 17, 1922, page 8.

Viewing women's labor in the domestic realm as unproductive was also indicative of the time; women were widely regarded as merely consumers, rather than producers of household economy. This kind of connection between labor and production-profit was certainly based on an industrial and commercial economy mediated by monetary exchange as the measure of labor; in other words, men's labor was considered productive because it occurred in the market place outside the domestic realm; whereas women's labor was not, because it was confined to the household. Indeed, women's role and position in and outside the family constitutes one of the most contentious points of debate in the family-reform discourse from the beginning.

The nuclear conjugal family as the embodiment of the ideal of the small family necessarily posited women as the interdependent compliment of men. Thus women's positon and role were also reflected in the debate on equality between the sexes, in terms of education, marital status, employment, etc. As pointed out by Glosser, the fate of the New Culture radicals' model of woman's emancipation, Nora from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which enjoyed wide popularity in modern China, served as a wake-up call and inspired discussions that were more pragmatic in place of the romanticizing aura of earlier debates on women's emancipation.[49] Economic independence came to be seen as a crucial step in both women's equality with men, and her independence from the patriarchal family and her husband. But if women's domestic labor was considered non-production, she could only hope to find employment outside the family, and in the

[49] Ibsen's *A doll's house* was translated into Chinese in 1921, and enjoyed immediate success on the stage, claiming a wide-ranging influence. But Lu Xun's public lecture in 1923 discussing her fate after leaving home – either falling into disgrace, i.e., prostitution, or having to return to her husband as she had no other means of supporting herself – triggered wide discussions on women's economic independence as the first step to her true emancipation. See Lu Xun, "What happens after Nora left?" *The Ladies' Journal* 10.8(1924): 1218 – 1222.

marketplace in order for her labor to be recognized as "productive." In other words, discussions on whether a woman should seek employment outside the family appeared in abundance subsequently.[50] One article, published in 1921, went as far as to state that the principle defining a "real small family" was not the number of people living under one roof, but rather whether both man and woman in the family were economically independent. If both attained economic independence, the author argued, then they were "on equal footing," "keeping their own spirit and character," and thus "eradicating the difference between depended and dependent," or, "the superior and inferior."[51]

Debates on women's employment seemed to have carried on well into a decade later. In 1935, one magazine, the *Funv xunkan* [*Chang Hwa Ladies' Magazine*], solicited answers to their questionnaire of "Where should the Chinese women go: leaving family for employment, or leaving employment to return to the family?" It is interesting to note that all the respondents that they solicited answers from were illustrious men of the time,[52] marking a period when most voices on women's issues did not come from women themselves, but male intellectuals self-designated as speakers for women.[53] Although there was not a complete lack of sensitivity to the paradox of educated men speaking for

[50] Lin's article cited earlier, for example, talked about extricating the person and body from the family for the sake of the society. It also discussed women's equality with men through her economic independence, which was, according to the author, a basic step for solving such problems as "women's emancipation" and "societal reform." See Lin Zhensheng, "Evils of the family and ways to reform it," *Jiating yanjiu [Family research*] 1. 2 (1921): 49 – 52.

[51] Huang Housheng, "The true principle of a small family," *Shenbao, ziyoutan*, August 21, 1921, page 18.

[52] The answer from one particular man, the literary figure Zhou Zuoren (1885 – 1967), captured the dilemma of the time. His conclusion was that there was nowhere for the Chinese women to go, just as there was nowhere for the Chinese men to go. So his final answer to the question was, "This was a hard question to answer." See *Funv xunkan* 19.2 (1935).

[53] This is shown by Glosser's analysis of the New Culture intellectuals' advocate for women, and Liu Huiying's article on the male-dominated discourse of women indicates this as well. See Liu Huiying, "From the *New Youth* to the *Ladies' Journal*: women's issues articulated by the May Fourth male intellectuals." *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* [*Chinese Culture Research*] 2008.1: 118 – 126.

women,[54] as a whole, women did not gain a more full-fledged status in voicing their own concerns until the 1940s. As Li Xiaohong argues, when the aggressive Japanese control of major cities of China during the 1940s all but stifled earlier male-dominated discourses of the nation, state, patriotism and nationalism, it nevertheless opened a discursive space for women's voice to surface.[55]

More discussions followed in the wake of the argument that pursued questions further. Or to be more precise, more issues of a concrete and pragmatic nature entered into the discussion of women's emancipation and family reform. For example, one short article pointed out that there were two issues to be tackled, institutionally and architecturally, before women could have real "emancipation," which is to say, the issues of "public/ communal architecture" and "communal education of children."[56] The author argued that if women from each family had to prepare meals and take care of the children individually, it would amount to great waste of social resources, which would also render women's emancipation "empty talk" in the end.[57] The model of "public/communal architecture" that the author referred to featured kitchens and canteens that were shared/ public, which was worth promoting in the author's view.[58]

The independent, small family assumed its identity – however fluidly – in various incarnations rather quickly, perhaps indicating the extent to which the idea and practice

---

[54] The New Youth editors, for example, attempted to involve more female participation in discussions of women's issues by soliciting their articles during the 1910s, realizing the "inappropriateness" of men speaking for them. See Liu Huiying's article cited above.

[55] Li Xiaohong, 2007. *Shanghai's intellectual women and the public media in Republican China: studies on the women's journals* (Diss. Xiamen University).

[56] Yu Fu, "My thoughts on the issue of the family," *Jiating yanjiu* [*Family research*] 1.1(1921): 64 – 65.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. The person responsible for this (philanthropic?) project of communal housing in Shanghai seemed to be Nie Yuntai (1880 – 1953), an industrial entrepreneur who was known for his contribution to the textile industry in China. I have been unable to find more information on this particular project from *Shenbao* or other contemporary sources.

was accepted and established.[59] Take *Shenbao* again. Discussions on reforming the family and improving the home frequently appeared on its "*ziyou tan*," (free talk), one of the newspaper's hallmark supplements in the 1920s. Some discussions focused on the house of the small family, covering the whole spectrum of the topic from its architecture and design, including the exterior environment of the house such as its location in the urban, or rather suburban surroundings, as well as its spatial layout, its interior decoration, furnishing and organization.

Examples abounded. An article entitled "My idea of the ideal family" gave "constructing an exquisite house of five to six rooms outside the city center to avoid its dust and chaos" as the number-one necessity for the ideal family.[60] Another article discussed the furniture setup and proper disposition and arrangement of household stuff, and insisted that an orderly organization of the house was the most essential aim of family reform. The author criticized the practice of mixing winter clothes with summer ones in the closet, and misplacing both books and leftover dishes in the bookcase as bad examples of home arrangement. To the author, everything in its own and proper place contributed to an orderliness of house decor, whereas misplacement and disorganization were "bad habits" that required the most urgent reform.[61]

Another short article entitled "Designing the small family" was interesting and illustrative not only because it encompassed the whole cluster of issues mentioned so far, in its few paragraphs no less, but it also gave a clear sense of the typology of the house that would best serve the small family of "the average economic conditions." It was the

[59] An article published in 1929 cited the small, conjugal family consisting of a man and a woman as "today's trend," in contrast to the older practice of the polygamous patriarchic system with "five generations living under one roof." See Zhong Mou, "Designing the small family," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, June 27, 1929, page 19.

[60] Bi Bo, "My idea of the ideal family," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, February 25, 1923, page 8.

popular *lilong* house of modern Shanghai, where the author lived and observed the trendy concentration of small families that informed his design. This *lilong* house was a two-storey, single building consisting a few rooms designated as the (front) hall, the upstairs bedroom, the study and dressing room at the back of the second floor, and the servant's room downstairs, etc. The spatial layout of the house was typical of the *lilong* design, with its sky-well preceding the hall on the first floor, and the upstairs space taken up by the bedroom(s), and bathroom and dressing room, etc. Its plan, according to the description, would closely resemble a typical *lilong* house of the time in Shanghai (Figure 1.2).[62]

In terms of decorating the house, the author favored such principles as "both simple and pleasing" and "appropriate for its function." The wall hangings, for example, should be limited to two or three pieces of small items and nothing more. Set up in this way, the house, even though it might be "as small as a pigeonhole," would have all its daily life functions such as living and sitting and sleeping, "in proper order," and thus better than the usual practice of pursuing the excessive and luxurious, which was, in the author's eyes, both "unscientific and inartistic."[63]

As the author here made abundantly clear in his description of the house, it was a typical Shanghai *lilong* type that he had in mind, but this was at most only half of the picture. As many contemporaneous articulations also showed, without doubt, the

---

[61] Yi Guan, "On family reform," *Shenbao: ziyou tan*, January 21, 1923, page 8.

[62] The *lilong* house, also known as the *shikumen*, was a hybrid house type that became very popular in Shanghai's residential landscape during the mid-19th century and first decades of the 20th-entury. Originally a make-shift solution to the pressing housing issue due to the rapid development of Shanghai's foreign settlements in the second half of the 19th century, it went through phases of change and adaptation, eventually dominating modern Shanghai's vernacular landscape. For a focused study of the building type, see Lou Chenghao, and Xue Shunsheng, 2004. *Old Shanghai's shikumen houses*. Shanghai Tongji daxue chubanshe.

[63] Zhong Mou, "Designing the small family," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, June 27, 1929, page 19.

imported Western house, either from Europe or America, was the preferred form of accommodation for the ideal, small family. In an article aptly entitled "A good model for the small family," the author paid his homage to "the most noticeable three things" of the "model family" he knew; namely, an "exquisite and elegant library," "clean bathroom," and a "smooth and spacious tennis court," all indicators of unmistakably Western concepts both in nomenclature and form.[64] As a matter of fact, Westernization or Europeanization was the norm of the day.

The Lure of the West

An abundance of publications from the period seemed to show that Western-style architecture and interior decor and furnishing were indeed the trend in the 1920s and 1930s or perhaps even earlier. Not only was Western style preferred for interior decoration, but the general spatial arrangement of a typical Western single-family house was also a preferred model for reforming the traditional courtyard type. An enthusiastic *Shenbao* reader-author shared what he referred to as "all the advantages" of building a house in the new way that he came across "for the reference of those devoted to architecture."[65] These advantages included: "Only one two-storey building, four *zhang* wide and four *zhang* deep, was constructed in the center of a lot with much unbuilt space around;" "It was located in a quiet place away from the city's dust and crowds;" "the walls are conveniently windowed on all sides to let in air and light," and "there was a

[64] Xin Yi, "A good model for the small family," *Shenbao: changshi*, Mar., 31, 1923, page 20.
[65] Feng Jiang, "Reference material for constructing a house," *Shenbao: changshi*, February, 19, 1924, page 17.

large field for sports in front of the house."[66] The single detached house in the middle of a lot with unbuilt space around it, the quintessential model of the modern Western detached single-family house, was an antithesis of the traditional courtyard type with its buildings and rooms surrounding a central courtyard.

Another article discussing "The structure of residences" stressed the desirable qualities of a residential house, which is to say, the appropriateness for living, the orderliness, and simplicity of design, which the author upheld as the three fundamental elements of good house design.[67] Contrasted with the sprawling courtyard layout of a rather elaborate type of the Chinese house, the generic Western house was praised for its compact design of functional spaces in close proximity and laid out in a logical sequence, thus facilitating easy communication and convenience. The author's example of such an "appropriate, orderly, and simple" residence was the imported "one of the ordinary Western houses," the plan of which was taken from an American newspaper. It had many merits even though "not the best of houses" in the author's opinion. Enumerating on the twelve points about the design of the house, the author wrote:

> First, it is extremely suitable for a middle-ranged family. Second, the square-block plan requires minimum plot space. Third, the living room is spacious and well-lit. Fourth, the entrance is connected with the living room, the kitchen, and the staircase, making effortless entry and exit. Fifth, the back/ side door leads to the kitchen or upstairs directly. Sixth, the dining room and living room, divided by a sliding door, could be connected or disconnected at will. ....The eleventh, closets in each bedroom helps maintain an orderly look. … All in all, this house is designed suitable for living, both orderly and simple (Figure 1.3).[68]

[66] Ibid. *Zhang* is a traditional Chinese measure unit used in Republican China and even now in the rural areas of the country, with one *zhang* equaling about 3.33 meters, so four *zhang* was a little more than 13 meters, or about 44 feet.

[67] Zhang Yuanshan, "The structure of residences," *Ladies' Journal* 2.4 (1916): 3157–59. The term "structure" used here referred, according to the content of the article, to the design/ plan. The author's title was Bachelor's degree from Cornell (?) University of the United States.

[68] Ibid.

Almost every single point of the author's remark here should be read in relation and opposition to its perceived counterpart in a Chinese courtyard house, posed as a foil and defined in terms of a lack. In fact, the author also mentioned the design of a traditional courtyard complex in southern China with its "rows of houses" arranged into sequences of courtyards, and its consequential cumbersome living for the residents, such as the usually long distance between the kitchen and living room. The praise of the Western house's advantages served as a simultaneous critique of the Chinese courtyard house.[69]

Examinations of the interior facilities, decoration and furnishing of the house focused likewise on the livability of the house, that is to say, whether the house was, according to contemporary standards, hygienic, comfortable and convenient for living for a small family, whether the interior decoration and facility were simple and practical, and whether the house was visually pleasant. A strong preference for European architecture and decor was likewise apparent. For instance, in a brief discussion on house decoration, the author, by comparing the traditional decoration for the extended family in China, noted for its symmetrical and "parallel" quality, and that for a small family, claimed that "decoration for a small family is European. …Every decorative piece is beautiful," resulting from an asymmetrical and lively contrasting arrangement.[70] In another article on house decor, the author gave a detailed list as to what should go into the kitchen, living room and the garden. The setting of the living room, especially, shows people's preference at the time. Although warning that one should "avoid pompousness and

---

[69] Ibid.
[70] Pei Yu, "On house decoration," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, April 29, 1923, page 8.

luxury," the author argued that one should do one's best in decorating the living room, the showcase of the family.

> One indispensable piece is the curtains for the windows, which should be light and airy in the summer but warm and plush in the winter. The color of the curtains should be quiet and under-toned. Sofas and rocking chairs are laid out on the sides. Vases of flowers should be a fixture on the stand. There should be a landscape image on the wall. White is the best choice of color for the frame; yellow is the worst. Chinese traditional paintings should also have a place. If one can afford a phonograph, then one has the means to both entertain oneself while at leisure and friends while at a gathering.[71]

These descriptions need not be completely realistic. Sometimes people wrote about the ideal family of their imagination. It can be argued, to some extent, that these imaginaries of the ideal family were more powerful in portraying people's desires at the time, precisely because of the unobtainability of such an imagination. One contemporary article was explicit in this respect. In the protagonist's imaginary life of his "ideal family," he and the woman of his love would establish a small family and,

> We would then rent a Western house whose interior is decorated completely in Western style, divided into the library, sitting room, bathroom, etc. In front of the house is a small empty plot reserved for the lawn, lined up with bushes and flowers along the sides.[72]

Another book devoted to the topic of interior decor was published in 1933 with illustrations of the properly decorated living room, dining room and other spaces in the house. One of the living rooms was particularly telling (Figure 1.4). The well-designed living room, according to the author, had pronounced Western features such as the hearth and sofas. The size of the room was marked in inches, and the English word *sofa* was used without translation.[73]

---

[71] Wei Chen, "My views on decorating the house," *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, October 28, 1923, page 8.
[72] Shuang manaozhu (?), "The ideal small family," *Shenbao, ziyoutan*, November 23, 1924, page 12.
[73] Shi Yan, 1933. *Decorating the modern home*, Shanghai: Dadong shuju.

Although at the beginning of the book, the author Shi Yan admonished the tendency for imitating Western styles "slavishly," insisting instead that the "Chinese flavor and national characteristic" of Chinese architecture and interior decoration should not be forgotten, he nevertheless seemed completely enamored with Western ways of life and an array of western material objects, in their proper handling and decor, to complement that lifestyle.[74] Not only did his rooms in the house follow the Western composition and spatial designation with its "guest room, study, bedroom(s), dining room, kitchen, living room, bathroom, nursery, etc.," but the house also included such structural and decorative features as the fireplace, the chimney-piece, and mantel-shelf, sliding glass doors and oil paintings. The author did not bother to explicate that his house model was a Western one; it was simply assumed and shown. In addition, his text was littered with English terminology, sometimes completely superfluous, to accompany the Chinese original. These included – aside from some of the afore-mentioned Western features – sofas, stained-glass, hatch, table-cloth, linen, napkin, knife, fork, spoon, and so forth, the terminology itself parading an imported alien form of lifestyle. Considering the title of the book, *Decorating the Modern Home,* the modern was here unequivocally equated with the Western.

Perhaps the best embodiment of the lure of the West in terms of housing the ideal family was seen in a collection of photographs of 62 small house designs of the so-called ideal house, almost completely in Western styles, published by the popular *Liangyou* company in 1936. According to the editor of the picture book, these 62 models of small houses, in "different styles and flavors," would each cost between 15,000 yuan and

[74] Ibid, 15.

30,000 yuan – supposedly affordable to (a segment of) the audience – who could choose one from among the models, and then "consult an architect on how to realize it as an ideal house."[75] Presented exclusively in photographs, these "dream houses" showed an eclectic assortment of styles found in contemporaneous United States and Europe.[76] In fact, the photographs seemed as if they were taken directly from Western landscapes, with the houses nestled in their "natural" surroundings with plenty of trees and vegetation, or culled from contemporary photographic sources of the North American or European built environment (Figures 1.5–1.6). The editors offered a terse explanation for rejecting the traditional Chinese house as model, which was presented almost as self-evident. In the preface to the volume, the editors offered an analogy of clothing to explain the difference between the Chinese and Western house; one being "spacious and slack," and the other being "compact and figure-fitting," figuratively speaking. The usual rhetoric of the Chinese house – the elaborate courtyard-after-courtyard type inevitably – in terms of its sprawling spatial layout was criticized for being ill-functioning, and the Western house, with its compact plan and functionality, "with a space for washing and storage, and everything" was considered more suitable as a house of one's dream.[77]

The editors would have liked the audience to believe that these "ideal houses" were affordable and within their reach, whereas the opposite might have been the case for the majority of the book's readers. According to the salary and living standards of the

---

[75] Liangyou editorial (?), 1936. *Lixiang de zhuzhai [The ideal house],* Shangahi: Liangyou Publishing House. I have been unable to access a print copy of this book. The electronic version I used was from the National Library of China's website, where it never loaded properly or fully, perhaps because of the large amount of information due to the pictorial format of the book, and I couldn't access the copyright information either.

[76] This book is hard to access probably due to its rare availability. I could see about 1/3 of the book's content from the online collection of Republican-era publications from the National Library of China's website, and am not sure if all the illustrations were photographs.

[77] Ibid. "The ideal family," preface to *The ideal house*.

1920s and 1930s in major cities of Republican China, the cost of the houses, between 15,000 and 30,000 *yuan*, would be well beyond the reach of the majority.[78] Even then, so many young people, perhaps partially guided by the notion of the "new family," had fallen into the trap of decorating their homes in European style even by resorting to taking loans to do so, that voices of criticism were raised against the trend. One author pointed out, "Lately people in our country must feel that the word 'new' inevitably entails imitating the European ways."[79] The author was sympathetic to the young people whose "stupid" act of borrowing money to follow "the European style of decoration" ended up putting them at the mercy of debtors, or sometimes even leading them to commit suicide. Although the author's purpose was to explain that the "new family" was founded on the principle of "destroying all the bad habits of the old family," rather than on material displays, the article also inadvertently portrayed the powerful attraction of the European style of decoration and furnishing for young people of the time.[80]

Against this critique and warning, however, that trend seemed to have persisted in the 1920s and 1930s. A 1931 piece published in the Architecture and Realty Supplement of the *China Times* commented on such a trendy preference for Western-style buildings in Shanghai. It attributed the "voracious need for Western-style buildings" to "its popularity among the majority of the people."[81] This was how the author described the trend:

---

[78] See for example Xiao Di, "Salary and expenditure of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou during the Republican period," *Shanghai Business*, 2013.9: 60 – 61. Xiao stated that in Beijing in 1925, the monthly salary of a well-paid university professor such as Hu Shi, the star professor of his day, was between 300 and 500 *yuan*, whereas an average working household's monthly income was a meagre 15 *yuan*. In Shanghai in 1933, the average single-worker was paid 20 *yuan* a month, and those who earned between 100 and 200 a month, such as middle-rank clerks, engineers, middle-school teachers, doctors, journalists, writers, lawyers and ordinary [non-star status?] actors, would be considered members of the middling class.

[79] Yu Cangyuan, "The new family and Europeanization," *Shenbao: zityoutan*, September 16, 1923, page 23.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Jing Zhou, "The new trend of our compatriots' preference for foreign-style buildings," *The China Times*, Architecture and Realty supplement, August 13, 1931, page 2.

> Those who could afford to rent such high-rise Western-style apartments were proud and happy. These Chinese families, while moving from an old Chinese house into such a new one, would not refrain in informing their friends or showing off their happiness. It is certain that only under extreme conditions after this, the likes of a tremendous misfortune or financial calamity for the family, would they consider moving back into an old house. From this we could see how attractive these Western-style houses are, with their abundance of windows, the comfort of living in a tall building with running water and the sink, flush toilet and the bath tub, etc. All these facilities make one's life convenient, hygienic and filth-free.[82]

The catch phrases of convenience, comfort and hygiene were unmistakable markers and legacies of their time. The notion of convenience and comfort were in accordance with the awakening sense of the individual and his/ her pursuit of happiness, and with the house perceived as a physical protector and nurturing facilitator of such pursuit. The issue of hygiene will be dealt with more in depth in a later section on the problem of the bathroom and kitchen, but suffice it to say that as Ruth Rogaski shows in her study of the changing meanings of health and disease in the treaty-port city of Tianjin during the first half of the twentieth century, the notion of hygiene is "a central element" in this Chinese "definition of modernity."[83] Rogaski noted that the classical Chinese term *weisheng*, usually translated into hygienic/ hygiene, or sanitary/ sanitation, with its indigenous focus on self-cultivation, shifted to align with the public health agendas of the state and medical professionals during this period. Indeed the rhetoric of the hygienic, apart from the public health campaigns such as Rogaski illustrated, reigned supreme in every aspect of political and cultural life in modern China, on the scale of the individual,

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ruth Rogaski. 2004. *Hygienic modernity: meanings of health and disease in treaty-port China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2.

the community and the nation; from the cultivation of personal hygienic habits to building a strong nation of healthful individuals.[84]

It would be understandable that the Western-style buildings, equipped with such facilities that were considered congruent with promoting all these desirable qualities, would hold such a luring power to society at large. The author showed more examples of people's preference for these buildings in Shanghai, one of which was the practice of leasing a hotel room for group gatherings on a regular basis – "either once every week, or once every fortnight" – for the convenience and comfort afforded by the modern facilities. Western-style buildings offered more than just material comfort. The author discussed their strong appeal for young people, "Those who wish to form a new small family seem to have to live in a Western-style building. Otherwise they would not only lose face among their relatives and friends, but their fashion-conscious brides would be annoyed and unhappy too." Therefore even renting a smaller Western-style building for the newly-weds who could afford only such, would be more desirable than renting a traditional Chinese house with more space.[85]

In1920, *Shenbao* added a supplement called *changshi,* or common sense, further divided into morality, law, hygiene, and economics, to foster the so-called common sense knowledge in daily life. Hygiene, in particular, became an important index of whether a house was "modern," as implicitly shown in the newspaper article quoted above.

---

[84] It can be argued that the notion of building bodily health in the individual for a strong nation and connecting the two had a most urgent import in Republican China with the perception of China as the "sick man of Asia," under her repeated defeat by the imperial powers since the mid-nineteenth century. For an account of such construction of the imagery, see Yang Ruisong, 2010. *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi: xifang shiye de Zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai Zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang* [*The sick man of Asia, the yellow terror, and the sleeping giant: the image of China in Western perception and the national narrative imaginary of modern China*]. Taipei: Chengchi University Press, chapter 2.

[85] Jing Zhou, 1931.

Together with the convenience and comfort of living afforded by the functional design of the house, hygiene and functionality became important indicators of house design. One article cited "the architecture of the new family ought to be practical and hygienic" as the number one item for "The ten ought-to-bes for the new family."[86] Another author pointed out that a house "need not be luxurious, but needs to be hygienic." In order to be hygienic, the house should be equipped with means for ventilation, lighting, cooling, eliminating moisture, heating, and so forth.[87] The author of an article discussing "the most hygienic orientation for a house" argued that the best orientation for a house was not cardinal south, as dictated by conventional norms, but southeast or southwest, which made it possible for the house "to bathe in sunlight every day all year round."[88] And consequently, those aspects of the traditional house that were viewed as inappropriate for "modern" life, such as lack of a proper toilet and bathroom, lack of sufficient lighting – especially natural lighting – for the kitchen, became proof of their "unhygienic" quality, and thus much discussion focused on improving the kitchen, toilet, and adding bathrooms and dining space to the house.[89]

Hygienic and Healthy: **the Problem of the Kitchen and Bathroom**

If there were particular elements that were simply notorious for their "unhealthy," and "ill-suited" character for "modern" life in traditional Chinese architecture, they were the kitchen and bathroom. These spaces were usually located away from each other, in the

[86] Yi, "The ten ought-to-bes for the new family," *Shenbao: changshi*, August 18, 1923, page 19.
[87] Jun, "Must-knows for building a house," *Shenbao: changshi*, September 29, 1920, page 16.
[88] Zhu Yunzong, "The most hygienic orientation for a house," *Shenbao: changshi*, August 22, 1923, page 21.
[89] For a sample piece, see Chen Shida, "My views on reforming the inland house," *Shenbao: changshi,* October 31, 1921, page 22.

inconspicuous corners of the familial complex of a courtyard house with bad ventilation and lighting. The kitchen was tucked away from the main living area, sometimes quite far from the dining space, because its perceived grease and filth, smoke and noise were considered disrespectful for the house guests. The disconnection resulting from the long distance between the kitchen and the served area, i.e., the dining room, had become one of the major complaints against its perceived bad design and ill function in the reform rhetoric.

The toilet in a traditional courtyard house, – when there was one – usually in the form of a semi-open-air latrine with some sort of a boxy cover for decency was considered a major embarrassment and drawback not only because of its lack of propriety but also because of its associations with "unhealthy," "unhygienic" qualities as caused by bacteria and germs. The foul smell, especially in the hot summer seasons, was a primary concern for the overly health-minded reformers of the time because the bad smell suggested the potential of spreading bacteria-borne diseases.

Discussions of reforming the house, when moving away from the philosophical and the romantic and in the direction of the corporal and pragmatic even in the slightest manner, would thus usually touch upon either or both of these problems. Suggestions were plenty as to how to reform them, and bring them more in line with "modern" life. Adding a toilet to a house, when there was a lack thereof, or reforming the habit of using the chamber pot, was the first step. Improving the conditions of ventilation and lighting to both areas was understandably the usual remedy. One article published in *Shenbao* in 1921 discussed specifically the use of the chamber pot. The major problem of keeping a chamber pot "next to one's bedside" was also the issue of hygiene. The author pointed out that not only middle-income families, but people with plenty of space in their houses

also used the chamber pot instead of a separate toilet, a very unhygienic practice. The author suggested the construction of a toilet away from the bedroom for families with the space, and for families lacking such space, that the chamber pots be sanitized regularly for "eliminating both odor and germs," as if it had never been done in almost exactly the same manner for ages.[90]

The problems with the kitchen and bathroom were indeed sore thumbs. One article dealt with the kitchen, toilet, bathroom, and dining room specifically, all major areas of reform in the author's eyes for a traditional Chinese house. Supposedly writing from a metropolis like Shanghai, the author first pointed out the problems of the inland house before providing his opinion on them. For example, here is how he described the kitchen:

> In an inland residence, the kitchen and toilet are usually located in the east and west corners of the complex. The kitchen faces the gable end of the main house, forming a narrow hallway in front of it and there is no [direct] sunlight inside. Other than the chef and kitchen servants, all the house maids and servants would gather there too, producing more noise and commotion than in a tea house or restaurant. Doors and windows are wide open in the summer with all the houseflies inside; while in the winter, the air is dirty and stifling because all the windows are tightly shut. The vegetables are thrown carelessly on the table to attract flies.[91]

The author's way of reforming this was to install a screen door for the kitchen during the summer and to forbid other people "without due business" from entering it. As for the toilet, the practice of men urinating virtually "everywhere out of sight" was as bad and unhygienic as the uncovered latrine in the open, turning the toilets both indoors and outdoors into "factories of flies and maggots." The author suggested prohibiting such

[90] Wu Jizhi, "Handling the chamber pots," *Shenbao: changshi*, June 28, 1921, page 18, 17.
[91] Chen Shida, "My view on improving the inland house," *Shenbao: changshi*, October 31, 1921, page 22.

practice, and eliminating the open-air latrine, and instead, "putting a bucket of ash in a small room" for toilet needs. Regular sanitation – "at least once a week" – of the toilet was also necessary.[92]

The need for time and labor efficiency, discussed earlier in the section on reforming the house through scheduling household activities with a scientific, rational rigidity for greater productivity, did not escape the reformist rhetoric of the kitchen and bathroom either. The reform of the kitchen was to take place at the design level, and design was linked with the idea of time and labor management. Articles started discussing the out-datedness of the traditional kitchen, not only with its lack of modern facilities such as the gas stove and storage cabinets, and running water in the precinct, but more importantly, the lack of a clearly defined stream-lined efficiency influenced and inspired by the industrial mode of productivity in the realm of the home. This latter kind of inadequacy was seen in the traditional kitchen's spatial arrangement of a rectangular room as a side chamber/ room of a courtyard complex, or, in situations where space was more of an issue, as whatever left-over space that was appropriated for the purposes of culinary preparation. Neither arrangement was considered particularly conducive to promoting time or labor efficiency. Consequently, the solution was to introduce and adopt the U-shaped spatial arrangement of the modern kitchen from the West, a model that was disseminated in China by both popular and professional journals.[93]

One example was illustrative. An article published in the housework column of a journal discussed the design of and issues related to the kitchen to its audience of the

[92] Ibid.

[93] For example, the professional journal, *The Builder*, translated and published a piece on modern kitchen design in 1933, detailing the designs of a modern kitchen based on the U-shaped plan through comparing "good" and "bad" designs and arrangement of space and movement in the kitchen. The professional journals will be dealt with in Chapter Three.

housewife. The author focused on two main points of the subject: how to design the kitchen well so as to promote labor and time efficiency, and how to cleanse and sanitize it to ensure hygiene and thus health of the family.[94] Designing was the starting point of the discussion; the author discussed the size, location, orientation and other related aspects. For example, the kitchen should be located in the "corner of the house," ideally in the north-east or north-west, since that location would open it to two unobstructed sides for better lighting and ventilation. The equipment and arrangement of the kitchen should conform to the principle of best handling the two clusters of activities in the kitchen, namely, culinary preparation of the meal, and cleansing and storing dishes and utensils after the meal. The best design of the kitchen, as the author argued, should aim at concentrating the appliances and sequences of activities in a logical manner to promote efficiency. The author thus explained the principles of setting up "a simple and reasonable kitchen:"

> The storage cabinet, for storing dishes and utensils, should be placed near the dining room, and therefore is located on the wall next to it (if there is a hallway between the kitchen and dining room, then it could be put in the hallway). The wash basin (sink) connects to the storage cabinet, and that is why they are placed next to each other. A wooden board or table could be put on the left side of the wash basin for draining the dishes after washing, and on the right side, another table to hold dirty dishes before washing.
>
> For setting up and in preparation to cook, the food storage should be placed to the left side of the work table, while the stove should be to the right, to the right of which should be a table for holding the dishes already prepared. For convenience of conveying the cooked dishes, this table should be as close to the dining room as possible.
>
> A kitchen thus arranged allows the two clusters of activities to each occupy half of the kitchen, both orderly and time-efficient, thus cutting down much of the housework time for the housewives.[95]

---

[94] Zi Tai, "Designing the kitchen: points of consideration," *Fangzhou* 28 (1936): 25 – 27.
[95] Ibid, 26.

The author further demonstrated the efficiency of such an arrangement in the kitchen through bodily movement, indicated by the dotted lines in the illustration, of the housewife preparing the meal (Figure 1.7). As the author explained, the lines started from the door at the upper left-hand corner, where the food was brought in from the outside and deposited in the cupboard/ storage cabinet prior to cooking. While preparing for the dish, the cook/ housewife would take the raw material out, "take one step right to the work table [in the upper right-hand corner]" and cut it before "taking one more step right to the stove" to cook it. Then she would put the cooked dish on table 1 to be served by the servant, completing the line of movement prior to the start of the meal. The line continued with the removal of the used dishes after meal from the dining table to table 2 next to the sink to be cleaned. Then the housewife would "take one step left" to wash the dishes, and "one more step left" to put them on the rack to drain before putting them away in the storage cabinet behind the dining room. As shown in the diagram, the lines of movement indicated a very clear, orderly succession of movements: one step right, one more step right; one step left, and one more step left, along the perimeters of the kitchen. All seemed very logical and rational and efficient, without any crisscross of movements messing up the clean orderliness of things.

This consideration of efficiency in the design of the kitchen was certainly no invention on the part of the Chinese reformists. As shown by Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller in their study of the "overlapping patterns of *biological* digestion, *economic* consumption, and *aesthetic* simplification," manifest in the design of the modern bathroom and kitchen between 1890 and 1940 in America, a set of very similar ideas and

experiments was also circulating at the same time.[96] In particular, the efficient kitchen designed by Christine Frederick, modeled after the modern factory's assembly line, might have provided the direct inspiration, if not the downright originating example and source (although unacknowledged) for the diagram mentioned above (Figure 1.8). Given the "voracious appetite for things foreign," to borrow a phrase from our earlier example of the newspaper article, it was very likely that the Chinese reformists were borrowing these ideas, as well as the designs, of reforming the kitchen from their American counterparts.

But of course one could point out a few things that the author conveniently left out in this diagram of movement. First, the raw foodstuff had to be cleaned before cooking, either right after purchase or prior to cooking. And second, either the cook or the servant – there was at least one servant in the kitchen – would have to take more than one step to the dish (storage) cabinet located behind the dining room, for a clean dish for each cooked dish. Third, since there was at least one servant helping with the dishes in the dining room, his/ her servicing would certainly mean movement in the kitchen. Adding all these other movements to the diagram, we would get a rather different picture from the one shown by the author (Figure 1.9).[97]

The toilet was also a particular flaw of the traditional house for the reform-minded of the early twentieth century. Even more than the kitchen, the reform rhetoric of the toilet and bathroom was closely related to the discourse of individual and public hygiene and health. Not only did the reformers have to deal with the material lack of public health and sanitation provisions – such as the inadequate number of public restrooms in major

[96] Ellen Lutpon, and J. Abbott Miller, 1992. *The bathroom, the kitchen and the aesthetics of waste: a process of elimination.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 1. The emphatic italics are the authors' own.

[97] Lupton and Miller likewise commented on the tasks that were omitted in Frederick's design such as setting the table, consulting a cookbook, tending a child, etc. See Lupton and Miller, 46.

cities in China then – but they also had to fight the perceived age-old tradition of the public's disinterest in matters of hygiene and sanitation among other problems. A short commentary published in the annual municipal report of the Department of Health of the city of Canton in 1923 remarked on the nature and severity of this problem, and exalted the workers of public health and hygiene, who had to battle it, to that of the great divine hero Hercules. The article thus applauded their work:

> And that need of praise, and honour is all the more deserved when it is remembered that the faithful workers have had to contend against centuries of callous and indifferent attitude towards things hygienic and sanitary. It is a Herculean task indeed when all the factors, influences, and prejudices of the community are taken into consideration. The age-long habit of dumping rubbish outside the door, the promiscuous spitting indulged in by everybody everywhere, the congested sections with their narrow streets, the inadequate and filthy drainage system, the bitter opposition of the masses toward all sanitary measures, the meagre sum allotted for Public Health Expenditure, and the gross ignorance and superstition of one kind or another, combine to tax the patience and ingenuity of the greatest modern Hercules to the very limit.[98]

In the same report, the editors included some illustrations of the reformed public toilets (Figures 1.10-1.11). The emphasis was likewise on the issue of hygiene, but reforming the public toilet understandably entailed a wider range of considerations than that of the kitchen. From a design and construction perspective, reforming the bathroom was more complicated because of its subterranean septic tank, and the need to retrieve its content as fertilizer.

The war-time economic situations created restraints in terms of implementation, as commented by many observers, but a wide range of experiments of design solutions, including introducing the Western-style flush toilet, were put forward and tried during

[98] No author, "Canton's public health by the editor of the Canton Gazette," *Annual report of the Department of Health of Canton Municipality*, Guangzhou: 1923. This, according to the editor of the report submitted to the mayor of Canton, was an article commenting on the work of the Department of Health by the editor of the English journal *Canton Gazette*. The article was full of high praise for the said department as one can sense from the introduction cited here.

this period. Although many acknowledged that the Western flush toilet was the better choice, it was difficult to install one in each household, apart from economic and civil engineering issues. The National Medical Journal of China published an article on the "hygienic toilet" in 1938, and lamented the fact that even though the Department of Health advocated for the use of the Java toilet throughout China, it was not realized mostly because of the high price for the boring equipment that had to be imported and that the waste was hard to retrieve from such a toilet. But for the Western-style flush toilet, the author criticized his contemporaries who, "returning from their studies in Europe and the United States," wished to implement Western ways in China, which was, in the author's eyes, similar to trying to join "a square tenon and a round mortise" that "simply do not fit." The author cited economic situations, the general environment, and people's living habits as factors that contributed to this incompatibility.[99]

Therefore a group of medical doctors worked together to invent a toilet that was both hygienic and "appropriate for the economic situations of our country (Figure 1.12)." The perceived advantages of such a toilet show that the main effort consisted of providing a hygienic environment by preventing disease-carrying flies from entering the bathroom and eliminating odor. The author commented,

> First, it is easy to clean. There is no way for the flies to get into the bathroom, so there will not be insects or maggots.
> Second, there is a reduced level of odor, and the toilet cover is automatic. One never sees the excrement.
> Third, the materials are completely domestic, so the construction fees are affordable (from a dozen *yuan* to two or three hundred *yuan*).
> Fourth, there is not the bothersome business of emptying the septic tank often, and the waste can still be used as fertilizer.[100]

---

[99] Jiang Kun, "Construction method of a hygienic toilet," *Zhonghua yixue zazhi/ The National Medical Journal of China* 24.7 (1938): 539 – 548.

[100] Ibid.

As mentioned earlier, the focal issue of hygiene in the bathroom reform discourse and practice was closely related to that of personal and public sanitation and health. In 1940, the Department of Health of the Administrative *Yuan* issued an order to organize the county-level health/ hygiene facilities, outlining the principles of establishing medical outlets at the county-level and below. The principles mostly concerned personnel and facility equipment, including training lower-level medical practitioners for the clinics. The teachers at the training schools subsequently wrote and published a series of twenty pamphlets, entitled *Series on Public Medicine*, focusing on more practical aspects related to the issue of public hygiene and health. According to the general preface to the whole series, more was at stake. The real issue was the promotion of "scientific medicine." As the editors explained, "Whether or not people from the countryside will have faith on scientific medicine relies on the 'model effect' of the medical facilities. In other words, whether scientific medicine can establish a basis in the vast rural area of our country, depends on whether the county-level medical facilities can embody the spirit of scientific medicine."[101]

The medical facilities included the construction of new public bathrooms as model facilities of modern medicine. One of the series of publications was on the architecture of the toilet and bathroom, published by Zhang Renjun in 1941. Public health was, without exception, the main consideration of this pamphlet. In the short preface, the author Zhang pointed out two public health issues that needed urgent attention, that of handling the human waste and that of providing running water supply. Solving these two problems, in the author's opinion, would "eliminate gastrointestinal disease." So his goal

[101] Zhang Renjun, 1941, *Architecture of Toilets*, Guiyang: Wentong shuju, "General preface to the Series on Public Medicine," 2.

was to provide “a standard toilet design” for tackling the first issue.[102] But in fact, the author provided a few major toilet designs to suit different locales and situations in this pamphlet, including a ditch toilet for temporary use for the army. Admitting that even though the flush toilet was the best choice for a public bathroom, the author conceded that it was not commonly found other than in a few major cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Qingdao and Beijing, because of economic reasons and the drainage system that was not yet in place.[103]

As a result, the text dealt instead with alternative ways of constructing a toilet or a latrine in the countryside. First of all establishing principles such as not contaminating the water source, eliminating odor and disease-ridden flies and maggots, easy for cleaning and recovering the deposit as manure, etc., for the design and construction, the author discussed the designs of the pit toilet, the cellar toilet, the cesspool toilet, the chamber-pot toilet, the septic toilet, the chemical toilet, the Java toilet and so forth (Figure 1.13).[104] Meant as a guide for construction, the discussion included the dimension of the structures in terms of the ratio between the number of users and the size of the toilet, or more precisely, the size of the septic tank, as well as the appropriate construction materials. As stressed in the principles for construction of the toilets – whatever their form or location – the major considerations were hygienic issues, elimination of the odor, and usage of the waste as fertilizer. In the almost universal presence of the flush toilet in cities both big and small of the twenty-first century, publications like this pamphlet provided us with a

[102] Ibid, no page number.
[103] Ibid, 20.
[104] Ibid. The various kinds of toilet that the author discussed were quite hard to differentiate in English. The first three in Chinese, for example, seem to be different only in their dimension, i.e., they kept getting bigger from *fenkeng cesuo*, literally “a feces pit” toilet, *fenjiao cesuo*, literally “a toilet with a cellar/ tank, to *fenchi cesuo*, a “toilet with a pool.” The other ones included *biantong cesuo* [the chamber-pot toilet],

glimpse of the past that was not so-long gone and yet completely forgotten, almost unreal in its jarring and odd incredibility of the deadly serious matter of reforming the toilet only less than a century ago.

Personal and individual efforts notwithstanding, a fundamental solution to the problems of the kitchen and bathroom would perhaps entail more than what a single household could provide, as many commentators recognized. A short polemical piece published in 1927 called for the government to help "revolutionize" the kitchen and toilet. After satirizing the contemporary craze for all sorts of "revolutions" – racial and political as well as literary[105] – the author turned to more "practical" revolutions that had "a very close relationship with everyone's daily life," targeting the kitchen and toilet. The usual story of the kitchen's filth and the toilet's stink was retold. Although the author maintained that this revolution was everyone's responsibility, he also pointed out that the ultimate solution to the problems rested on the municipal government. The author called for infrastructural provisions such as gas plants and waterworks, water pipes and sewage, and the drainage systems. Borrowing the rhetoric of modern city administration and governance, the government's responsibility to the residents, or the "taxpayers," and the citizens' rights, the author wrote,

> All these are important issues of civil administration beyond an individual's capacity. So the solution is for all the residents [of Beijing] to request for it.

---

huafen cesuo, literally a toilet where waste is liquefied, and *huaxue cesuo*, the chemical toilet, where chemicals were put in the toilet for treatment of the waste.

[105] Xiao Tong, "Revolutionize the kitchen and toilet," *Xiaoguan*g 1.1 (1927): 14 – 16. The "Racial Revolution" in the text was the author's slightly parodic referral to the slogan by Sun Yat-sen for overthrowing the Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty, and the "Literary Revolution" referred to the New Culture Movement that advocated reforming literature through the use of the vernacular language for creating a "new" literature of the early twentieth century. The author attributed the chaos and ultimate failure of the political revolutions to their being "too grandiose and complicated," and considered the "success" of the Literary Revolution to its being on "small and simple," although in fact the implication of the latter was anything but "small and simple."

> Beijing residents pay taxes on municipal administration each year, and requesting for municipal engineering improvement is their due right.[106]

The municipal governments of Republican China did respond to this call to improve infrastructure through urban planning and administration, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, but it is interesting to point out that the public had realized, by this point, that the very basics of "everyone's daily life" was closely connected to the roles and functions expected of the modern municipal government.

The Reform Rhetoric: the Design Perspective

In the reform rhetoric of both the kitchen and bathroom in particular, and also of the Chinese house and architecture in general, the issue of design grew in prominence. Especially in the case of the bathroom and toilet, where construction seemed to involve not only inventions of suitable types, but also technical issues such as mathematical calculations of load and issues of engineering and so forth, a professional presence was felt necessary, or even indispensable, in the process. In the situation of reforming the Chinese house, the various discussions seemed to converge on reforming its design in effecting more comfortable spatial arrangement and tasteful decor of the interior.

If it was only "natural" that an architect or engineer would insist that their expertise be consulted before a house could be constructed, it was noteworthy that by the 1930s, this seemed to have become the understanding of a segment of the public as well, perhaps partly due to the self-conscious promotion and "advertisement" for architects and the profession in such popular media as newspapers and magazines. One aptly titled article, "Why hire an architect to construct a house," published in the *China Time*'s

[106] Ibid.

Architectural and Realty supplement in 1932, was a typical example. After comparing two houses at the beginning of the article – one allegedly built by contractors and builders without an architect, and the other designed by an architect – in terms of their functional and aesthetic qualities, the author went into a discussion of why one should commission an architect for construction. The comparison, competition, and contrast were pitched between a traditional contractor/ builder and a modern architect. The author thus argued,

> We have always known that only the contractors and builders were the ones to build houses, but what they do is manual labor, not the brain work required for the construction. So who is the brain of the work? The architect! The architect is the teacher/ master, and the builder is the pupil/ apprentice. The architect knows [the work], and the builder does [the work]. And so the house is built; the client lives in it comfortably.[107]

According to the author, the architect's undoubted superiority and dominance over the contractor-builder was guaranteed by the expert knowledge that he acquired through professional studies. The author continued,

> The architect's job is to design architecture. They spend years of effort specializing in the subject, discussing architecture and seeing it, and their knowledge about constructing a house is therefore really far more superior than ours. They are familiar with the history of architecture all over the world, and styles of architecture from different nations. They know the laws of construction and mechanical calculation, as well as all the other kinds of specialized knowledge.[108]

Borrowing a host of justifications, then, from a distinction between manual, physical work of the builder, and the "brain," intellectual work of the architect – perhaps subconsciously reflecting an entrenched prejudice of the literati against manual labor in traditional China – to the professional discourse of architectural design predicated on the aesthetics, "specialized knowledge" as well as of historical knowledge of "styles of

---

[107] Zhang Shaoyu, "Why hire an architect to build a house," *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, September 16, 1932, page 6.

[108] Ibid.

architecture from different nations," the author argued for his case of the necessity of hiring professional help in building a house.

In view of the public's perceived ignorance of the architect's role in designing and constructing a house, articles also appeared in order to familiarize them with it, such as the one entitled "Ramblings on the Architect," aiming to provide the public with exactly such general knowledge about the architect's expertise and their duties in the construction process. It was translated from an article published in *Pencil Points*, and dealt with the issue in three parts, namely, "What is an architect," "Qualities of an architect," and "Duties of an architect."[109]

In the section "Qualities of an architect," the author enumerated a few abilities that the architect should possess: the ability to design, an aesthetic aptitude, and knowledge of architectural regulations and laws. The article defined an architect's "aesthetic aptitude" as shown in the drawings, which "should possess an element of beauty. And this element of beauty is solely the architect's domain, which sets him apart from and elevates him above other practitioners of architecture."[110]

Likewise, the architect's profession was defined in the following terms:

> The architect is a specialized talent, just like the lawyer and the medical doctor. In other words, other than providing the selfless altruistic service to others, he is not like a businessman, who buys and sells commodities. His knowledge of architectural design and supervision was not acquired in a day; rather, it is the result of years of studies and years of apprenticeship.[111]

Also echoing the building professionals' opinion and borrowing their rhetoric, the

---

[109] Yuan Zongyao, trans. "Ramblings on the architect," *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, February 28, 1931, page 3. The article did not give more specific information concerning the translated piece, other than a mention of the journal's name *Pencil Points*. I have been consequentially unable to locate the article in its original source.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

"natural" conclusion was that a house had to be "properly" designed before it could be "properly" constructed. Conflating the architect and engineer and treating them as one body of the professionals vis-à-vis the figure of the master builder/carpenter of traditional China, another article in the same newspaper described the "design" process and the architect's/engineer's role in the process in greater detail:

> Prior to constructing a big, tall building, drawings must be made by an engineer, so that labor and materials could be assembled in order to execute it. The so-called "drawing" here is a major responsibility of the engineer, who would consider the distribution of the load, the flow of light and air, and even more importantly, whether the drawing conforms to [principles of] modern science…. He needs to synthesize all these into an art of architecture. In other words, he should aim at transforming an abstract intangibility into a specific, material form in the drawings, which are done with calm and caution. Therefore this so-called "drawing/ proofing" is really "design." Only after the "design" was made can the workers execute the building according to the drawings and the building be built promptly.[112]

From the proceeding paragraphs, we can infer a few things about the emerging architect's profession in modern China. Firstly and foremost, what separated the modern architect from the traditional craftsman builder was his/her expertise gained from professional training, a system of disciplined, academic knowledge acquisition that was different from the oral transmission of the traditional ways, not to mention that the first generation of Chinese architects and engineers were all trained overseas, in a time when China looked up to the West (including Japan) for lessons on virtually every aspect of social, political and cultural life. Secondly, his/her "aesthetic aptitude" was a vital component that elevated the architect to a rank well beyond the reach of the traditional builder. Knowledge of architectural history and architectural styles "all over of the world," – that the traditional builder obviously lacked, – formed an important cornerstone

[112] Shen Luming, "The Engineer and the drawing," *The China Times*, Architectural and Realty Supplement, September 16, 1932, page 6. In this article, the term engineer was more or less interchangeable

of this aptitude. And lastly, an architect's ability to design was seen or shown most primarily in his/ her ability to draw. It can be argued that all these aspects of a modern architect's professional training and qualities were highlighted to the effect of making the traditional builder appear inadequate for his job and thus untrustworthy for construction. As Dell Upton convincingly shows in the case of the professional architect's ascendency in Europe and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the architectural profession established itself successfully as the arbiter of "high" or "correct" taste through its claims of superiority gained from professional training and provided by access to an international and historical repertoire of architectural design.[113]

In time, not only was it necessary to consult and hire an engineer or architect for "big, tall" buildings, but such a procedure was also deemed necessary for small, ordinary buildings such as a house. Amid severe housing shortages that plagued much of the Republican period especially towards the end of the war, the fundamental solution was to construct more houses, and the effort to persuade people to have their own houses built for them and/or by themselves– other than living arrangement provided by lease or purchase or inheritance – was a first step towards employing an architect for the project. In an article discussing self-built houses for the middle class, the author attributed the unpopularity of self-built houses to the structure and organization of the family at the time. In the author's opinion, living together in a traditional, extended family, as many still did, involved providing a lot of floor space for the family members, something only a big, well-off family could afford. And as for the urban poor and labor classes, the

---

with the term architect. The relationship between the engineers and architects in modern China will be discussed in Chapter Three.

[113] Dell Upton, "Architectural History or Landscape History?" *Journal of Architectural Education* 44.4 (1991): 195-199.

government should "try to provide more affordable apartments [for them], like the People's Palace in Guangzhou."[114] But for the middle class, they should try to have their houses built by themselves. They could, the author asserted, either pay off the expenses by installments through arrangement with the developers, or build outside the city (but not far from it) where land was more affordable and living was more hygienic, although the latter also had the problem of modern facilities – "construction projects by the government" – to be taken into account. The reasons for choosing to have one's house self-built included economic gains from selling a self-owned piece of property later on, and accommodating individuality with individualized rooms of the house – what a self-built house would provide – and all these, the author argued, "would amount to less than renting a house."[115] From here, it was only logical that the author would suggest, as he did at the end of the article, that an architect's service be sought after for such an undertaking since the ordinary people's knowledge about construction would surely not suffice.

It seemed to be such a popular belief that a house should be designed "properly" prior to construction that not only professional architects and engineers, but also people, who were not in the profession, started publishing articles and books on how to design a house on one's own when commissioning an architect was not an option. Leaving the case of the architects and engineers to Chapter Three, I wish to examine some examples of (laypeople's) instructions on architectural design in the current chapter. These

[114] Zhang Shaoyu, "The issue of self-built houses for our compatriots," *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, July 20, 1932, page 3. The so-called People's Palace in Guangzhou mentioned here referred to a low-rent apartment building that was built by the Guangzhou Municipal Government to house homeless and low-income people in Guangzhou in 1931. Municipal governments' effort to provide housing for the urban poor will be discussed in Chapter Two.

[115] Ibid.

examples provided us with a fresh perspective on the public's perception of architectural design.[116]

The first example was an article published in the *Ladies' Journal* in 1916 under the title of "Selecting a house and designing its architecture."[117] Viewing housekeeping as the essential "duty" of a woman, the author pointed out from the very beginning that knowledge about the house thus constituted a vital part of a woman's duty of housekeeping. As she stated, hers was advice for the housekeeper. The article was divided into two main sections dealing with the two major aspects indicated in the title: selecting a house, and designing it. In the first section, the author gave four principles for the selection process, namely, hygiene, that "ensures the family's health," economy, "from which the surplus of the family is expected," convenience, which "produces the happiness of the family," and joy, which "guarantees the family's peace."[118]

Concerning the issue of hygiene, the author referred to the general environment of the house: the land – which should ideally be elevated and dry, – air, drinking water, trees and greenery. Economic considerations included the price of the land, that of hiring servants, and situation of the local financial system: a more developed financial system would make a better choice. The issue of convenience, in the author's eyes, was determined by a few things: firstly, one's occupation. For example, a merchant should choose a house near the market place, and a person whose livelihood depended on

[116] While it is true that most likely many of the authors writing on designing a house might have had some sort of artistic or other related training and thus should not be considered entirely incognizant to the architectural profession, it is also true that they did not belong in the professional group of architects and engineers to be discussed in Chapter Three. It is in this sense that I consider their opinion to be "the public's idea on architectural design."

[117] Zhu Suiqiu, "Selecting a house and designing its architecture, I and II," *The Ladies' Journal* 2.6 (1916): 3499 – 3503, and 2.7 (1916): 8 – 13. According to the title that the author included, she was affiliated with a girls' school (or college?) in Japan.

[118] Ibid, Zhu, 2.6 (1916): 3499.

farming, sericulture, or livestock should live in an open field with fertile soil, etc. Then, transportation, education and local customs (*minqing*) also factored in the consideration of a house's convenience. The familiar story of Mencius' mother relocating her family a few times was retold here to illustrate the point.[119] The consideration of joy meant respecting personal preferences and living habits of the members of the family. The author seemed to be discussing relocating the family most clearly here.

After one was certain about what to look for in a site or house, the author continued to explain designing the house in the second section. She wrote,

> Designing and constructing a house is an important matter for a family, which is best assigned to an expert with specialized knowledge. Even so, the housekeeper/ hostess should have a general understanding of the design of the house, which will help her in her negotiations of purchasing or renting a house.[120]

The author then enumerated four main design aspects in the rest of the article. The first concerned the orientation of the house. The author detailed the advantages and disadvantages of orienting the house to the four cardinal directions in view of the amount of direct (sun-)light and wind, and concluded that the south-east is the best orientation for a house. She also discussed different types of geography/ ground for the house, i.e., dry land, low and damp ground, on the hills and near the ocean, each with different points to attend to in order to make the house more hygienic and inhabitable.

The author's second point, laws of architecture, referred to the "facilities that the

---

[119] This was a well-known classical story about the mother of Mencius who relocated her family a few times in order to find a better environment for Mencius's education. As the story was told, originally living near a grave yard, young Mencius would learn and imitate the dealings of burying the dead, and his mother decided that it was a bad influence and so moved next to a market. But Mencius started to play merchants/ businessmen with his playmates, and this worried his mother again, who decided to move one more time. At last, they settled next to a school, where the young boy started observing and learning Confucius etiquettes and rituals. The story was usually told to show the influence of the environment on one's education and character formation.

[120] Zhu, 2.7(1916): 8.

house had to be equipped with for the sake of hygiene." These facilities included those for warming the house in the winter, meaning that "the floors, walls, and windows all need to be air-tight to guard against the cold air, and a furnace is needed to keep the room warm;" those for cooling off the house in the summer; provisions for ventilation such as fan lights and wind-gaps, and for dehumidification and lighting.

After a brief discussion of the building materials for the house, the author continued to discuss the planning of the house, which included the spatial configuration of the rooms, – for example, the library should be away from the nursery/kids' room, and the hostess's room should be close to the family elders' room for her to take care of them, etc. – and the size and location of the rooms.[121]

This was, of course, a different type of "design" of the family house, one that was rather general and abstracted to say the least; it was an idea or ideal rather than a real architectural design in any proper sense of the word. Nevertheless, one could still learn a few things about the house and the family, as well as the social contexts and conditions of the time. The article was meant for housekeepers, or women of the family whose "duty" was seen to be keeping the house in proper order. Or put it another way, she was to keep it hygienic, healthy, convenient and comfortable for the family. Half of the article was devoted to discussions of choosing a proper house in a proper location, either through purchasing or renting, indicating a level of mobility of the family. Members of the family were likely either moving out of the extended, shared family house, or relocating to a different place for various reasons. At any rate, the sense of the family on the move was palpable in the article, perfectly indicating the atmosphere of the time.

[121] Ibid, Zhu, 2.7 (1916): 8 – 13.

The compositional elements of the house were also informative. In the second section on designing the house, the author mentioned a number of rooms: the reception room, the library, the nursery or kids' room, the living room, the servant's room, the hostess's room, the handiwork room, the kitchen and bathroom and so forth. It was not exactly clear whether the author had a traditional courtyard house or a Western house in mind. It could be a fusion of the two since the family seemed sufficiently well-off, and the house was spacious enough to contain a division of so many rooms. The author's comfort with and easy accommodation of both Chinese and Western ways, not very surprising when one considers that she was likely a student at a Japanese college/school, as indicated by her title, were most clearly shown in the design suggestions for the garden. Considered a part of the house "not to be omitted," the author suggested that it could either take the form of mountainous rockeries, "the old Chinese style," or it could be a flower garden with vegetation, which, although "lacking in elegance and beauty," nevertheless had the advantage of being the easier option to accomplish.[122]

The author's emphasis was certainly not on the structural or physical or stylistic aspects of the house; rather, she was concerned with whether the house was hygienic, healthy and comfortable for living, the catchphrase considerations of the time. In fact, hygiene was the key component of her consideration. Almost all the aspects and qualities of the house that she discussed, be it its orientation, the sun's rays, the abundant circulation of air (but not unwelcoming cold winds), the necessary provisions for the house and so forth, were considered desirable because they were conducive to producing a hygienic environment, both physical and mental, for family life.

[122] Ibid.

The second example of the public's understanding of architectural design was a series of articles published in a journal called *Zixiu* [literally *Self-Cultivation*] in 1940 and 1941, more than two decades later than the previous one. Written by an author named Jin Xianfa, the article was serialized in the journal in over 20 installments.[123] It consisted of seven chapters altogether dealing with a few house types including a "very simple bungalow," an ordinary single-storey house, the Spanish bungalow and the Spanish country house, a few two-storey houses, as well as such structural elements as the door, window, floors and stairs, the roof and so forth.[124] The author seemed to have drawn most of the drawings himself for his articles, including plans, elevations, sections and perspective views. In fact, the whole enterprise of designing a house was predicated on the drawing of it, with each house type presented in the aforementioned four kinds of architectural drawings successively.

One of the most noticeable aspects in this series of articles was the author's writing style. Convinced that "a living design should not be described in a dead language," the author Jin employed "artistic language" to describe his designing process in order that "the reader could comprehend the essence of design unawares."[125] As a result, not only were stories told (or fabricated), travels narrated (or imagined), but

---

[123] Jin Xianfa, "Designing and drawing a residence," *Zixiu*, various issues from no.115 to no.151, 1940 – 1941. These pieces were short, mostly only about 3 pages in each issue. The journal, *Zixiu*, was first published in 1938 and continued until November of 1941 according to the database that I accessed. As the editors explained in the first issue, the aim of the journal was to provide a text-book-like periodical for young high school and vocational school students who were trapped in Shanghai during its "Island" period, a period lasting from 1938 to 1941, when Shanghai was but entirely taken over by the Japanese except for parts of the foreign settlements forming an enclave in the city. That status was ended with the Pearl Harbor attack after which all of Shanghai fell to the Japanese. I have not been able to find more information on the author Jin himself, although he seemed to have been trained either as an artist, architect or engineer or he had somehow acquired the drawing skills by himself. He seemed to have befriended Mao Xinyi, who published *A Brief History of Chinese Architecture* in 1941 and whom he mentioned a few times in his articles.

[124] One of the seven chapters, Chapter 6, which, according to the author, was devoted to Modern house design, was completely missing from the database I accessed.

[125] Jin, *Zixiu* 119 (1940): 17.

literary sources were also cited, and ambience described – the author described all the four seasonal scenes around him during his writing which lasted from the spring of 1940 to the end of 1941 – and feelings thus evoked and consequently, a certain sense of immediacy and intimacy was created and maintained between the author and his reader throughout the text. Jin's very opening paragraph of the series, a vivid description of what a plan was for a house, was but one such example illustrating his writing style. This is how he described it:

> Perhaps I am telling a fairy tale story! Imagine an exquisite house sitting on the spring field nestled in green mountains and clear water, so full of peace. One day, a giant came with a huge, terrifying, sharp knife in his hand, and cut the house into two halves as if it were a melon. He had carried the top half of the house away, and probably thrown it into the wild sea. But the bottom half of the house still sat there in the ground, weathering the winds and rains, discombobulated like a prisoner without his head. ….On a bright morning of the spring, a tiny little sparrow flew over to the house, fluttering its wings and looking for its old nest. "Well, where did the roof go? Where is my nest that was under the eaves? What should I do?" …. That little bird might be angry but as it turned to look from the bright skies down at the rest of the house, it would see another wonder. It saw all the brick walls, both thick and thin, meander like mountains and rivers; the location of the doors and windows and furnishing of the house were all there on display. Everything clearly showed its dimension and thickness, the only part missing was the height. This did not look like a house.[126]

The author then concluded the "fairy tale story" and told the reader that "this is the plan that we are going to draw; you could also call it a bird's-eye-view." The author attached great importance to the plan, the determining factor of the design. In his own words, "Whether a house was well or poorly designed: its light and shade, air circulation and scenery thus made available," all depended on "the drawing of the plan (Figures 1.14-1.15)."[127] In fact, the plan had become, for the author Jin, the substitute for the house to

[126] Jin, *Zixiu* 115 (1940): 16.
[127] Ibid.

come; the ability to imagine such a plan was itself modern, regardless of whether or not one could actually build a house according to the plan.

Apart from the idiosyncratic writing style, the author also wasted no time indicating his feelings toward the practicing architects and builders of his time. Since it is difficult to find more specific information on Jin's educational background or career, one could only speculate on his position from his writing. Below is how he discussed these two groups of people, supposedly most closely related to what he professed to do:

> Because the craftsmen/ builders are so simple-minded, we have to mechanically make the architectural drawings for them to build accordingly. This is no wonder, as the architects are all idle. If you expect them to be the masons and carpenters themselves, you'd have to smash their heads open or the circumstances would have to force it upon them.[128]

It seemed that for the author Jin, the ideal designer/ builder would be a combination of both an artist/ writer who was knowledgeable in architectural drawing, hence designing, and the traditional mason/ carpenter in one. The author cited an example, its possible status of a made-up story notwithstanding, of a literary writer's design of a countryside house for his brother. The writer, a Mr. K, was the author's friend "proficient at drawing," and designed the house for the author's brother free of charge. After seeing the design and touring the house after its completion, the author commented,

> Now I begin to notice the doors and windows of the house, and its overall form in its entirety. What an unpretentious little house. It is neither exquisite nor vulgar. It is a masterpiece of a modest residence (Figure 1.16).[129]

In writing this self-taught series of architectural drawings and design to an audience that supposedly had no previous training in either architecture or drawing, the

[128] Jin, *Zixiu* 116 (1940):14.
[129] Jin, *Zixiu* 120 (1940):17.

author stated clearly that not only a lot of practice in drawing would be required of the reader/student, but they should also make good use of the "European and American architectural magazines" from which he himself sometimes drew examples for his articles.[130] As he assured the reader, "No one denies that architecture is an advanced, specialized study. It is not acquired in a year or two."[131] Inferring from his example of Mr. K, a writer of novels who was good at drawing, one could speculate that the author himself, with his heavy literary inclination exhibited in his writing, might be such a similar self-taught "architect."[132]

The age-old predilection for the countryside as the preferred place for living, as against the vice and evils of the city, was evoked over and over again in the articles. The appeal of the country was understandably even stronger to someone like Jin, especially at a time when Shanghai was but all conquered by the Japanese.[133] Jin accounted a few trips that he took, either real or imaginary, to the countryside where he could escape to the "natural" world with its serene and calming beauty, not to mention the architectural "masterpieces" that he encountered. These descriptions had to be read against the grains of the real world of Shanghai, where the author seemed to have resided, a world amidst war full of isolation, despair and misery in the author's account. Echoing the Chinese literati's unfailing longing for the countryside as the spiritual home, the author Jin

[130] Jin, *Zixiu* 125 (1940): 18.

[131] Jin, *Zixiu* 136 (1940): 20.

[132] This speculation could be supported by two more pieces of "evidence." First, as thoroughly as he dealt with drawing plans, elevations and sections, his dealing with the perspective views was rather cursory throughout the article; there was not one complete perspectival drawing of his houses. Second, he probably never practiced as an architect at any rate, for any reason, which could also partly explain why he was not included in Lai Delin's *Who's who in modern Chinese architecture*, and that information on him was difficult to find. His scathing remarks on the architects quoted earlier would also make more sense. Although he did mention at the end of the article that he also intended to write a book/ series of articles on civil engineering design, it did not seem to have been carried out.

[133] As indicated on the cover of the journal *Zixiu* itself, on which Jin's articles were published, it was registered with the authorities of the International Settlement.

dreamed about building a perfect house in the quiet country. Even though his preference for the fashionable Spanish style houses – he devoted two full chapters to them – was unmistakable, he saw the need to create a "new Chinese architecture," as the familiar architecture of old China was seen as the "residues" of the old world falling apart. He wrote,

> A few greyish clouds are drifting in the sky. The wind comes to blow off the harsh summer heat of the past few days. I am longing for a storm to hit Shanghai soon, and wake every coward slouching away in this island from their dreams. May the storm take with it all the ramshackle architecture, residues of the old world and may we reconstruct everything anew for this new age. Chinese architecture from now on will move away from the capitalist stain, spread to the countryside from the city, and live in every village in a new China. We will see! [134]

And he thus expressed his feeling toward the end of his writing:

> I put down my pen to take a breath. Looking out the window at the drowsy winter night, I was gripped by a feeling of dejection, an odd incomprehensibility. I should have spent so much time writing leisurely on designing a sweet home, a "Utopia"; and forgotten what the realities of our time have revealed to us.[135]

It was certainly understandable why one would write about "Utopia" at a time of war; but war-time issues were numerous and had to be dealt with not only in discourse, but also in concrete terms. One of the pressing issues, aggravated during times of war, was the problem of housing which involved the majority of society. Many suggestions including co-operative housing were made to tackle this problem, calling forth both individual effort and effort on the part of the municipal governments.

The Housing Issue: Living in Urban Centers of China

Although the well-to-do among the urban population could talk or dream about

---

[134] Jin, *Zixiu* 125 (1940): 19.
[135] Jin, *Zixiu* 149 (1941): 19.

having a library and sketch-room as an "indispensable" component of the house, the less fortunate of the lot had to deal with very real problems of coping with living in an urban center such as Shanghai and Guangzhou in Republican China under tremendous pressure. In fact, the continuously deteriorated living situations were not a singular case peculiar to Shanghai or China at the time. An article published in 1921 outlined the so-called "housing shortage" in the world after the First World War. Using statistics such as the number of families in need of accommodation, the increasing rates of rent, and the high price for labor and materials and so forth, the article discussed the housing situations for the laboring class in the United States, England, France, Holland, Germany, and Japan, as well as the respective governments' responses to these situations, such as establishing laws and regulations for housing and renting, and providing government subsidies to encourage construction.[136]

But there was no denying that the living situation in Shanghai was particularly severe for the majority of the people. In the case of Shanghai, the housing problem had a complicated, long history, as analyzed in Zhang Sheng's recent study of the subject, *Living in Shanghai Was Not Easy*.[137] Zhang traced the origin of the problem to the very early stage of Shanghai's urban development and followed its trajectory through the 1920s and 1940s. Zhang examined the cause and development of the housing shortage, analyzed the ensuing disputes between the landlords and tenants, and the municipal

---

[136] Yi Nong, "Housing shortage of the world, part 1," *Yinhang zhoubao/The Bankers Weekly* 5.38 (1921): 10 – 11. The second and third parts of the article were published in number 40 and 41 of the same volume of the journal. See Yi Nong,"Housing shortage of the world, part 2," *Yinhang zhoubao/ The Bankers Weekly* 5.40 (1921): 7 – 8, and Yi Nong, "Housing shortage of the world, part 3," *Yinhang zhoubao/ The Bankers Weekly* 5.41 (1921): 6 – 7.

[137] Zhang Sheng, 2009, *Living in Shanghai was not easy: studies on the housing shortage of modern Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.

government's intervention of the problem and [various forms of] the tenants association's effort to lower the rent and better their living situation.

Descriptions of the crowded living situation and housing shortage in Shanghai and other cities were numerous, indicating its intensity. Newspaper reportage, magazine articles as well as literary publications were permeated with such descriptions. Take one example. When discussing the housing shortage caused by the population increase in Nanjing, aggravated by the fact that it was made the capital of the Republic of China in 1927, one author noted,

> The population increase in Nanjing since it became Capital is startling…. From 269,000 in 1912 to 395,000 in 1926, and then above 970,000 recently, this is a two and half times increase in ten years. … The sudden exponential increase in population has put such pressure on the existing housing market, making the supply so extremely short that the landlords have started asking exorbitant prices at will for their houses, which are now precious commodities. I have long lived in Nanjing, and from what I can see, seven or eight years ago, an ordinary house used to rent for two to three *yuan* per month, three or four the most, but now they rent for no less than seven or eight or even more than ten *yuan* a month. A new-style house would rent for no less than 23 *yuan*, besides the deposit that is five or six times the rent. Consequently the ordinary people below the middle class are miserable with this burden of housing, and the labor class is worse. They have no place to stay other than those ramshackle straw sheds/ shantytown houses.[138]

Contemporary commentators pointed out various reasons for the phenomenon, viewing it first and foremost as "a severe social and economic problem."[139] Another article also pointed to the fact that the demand for housing was simply greater than could be met by the supply in Shanghai in the early 1920s, and under capitalist ownership of private property, competition for the scarcely available housing on the market was

---

[138] Zhang Zonghan "The housing issue amidst the cries for lowering the rent," *The municipal review* 3.21(1935): 8.

[139] Hua Weisheng, "On the problem of living in Shanghai," *Xin yu* 2.9 (1934): 1 – 2. The author concluded that it was after all "an economic problem," which required the improvement of the ordinary people's economic situation for its solution.

inevitable, accounting for the rising rent.[140] Likewise, discussions of the disputes between the landlords and tenants of Shanghai attributed the root of such disputes to the private ownership of land.[141] The author wrote, "The actual reasons for this kinds of disputes are quite simple. Firstly, we have to understand that this is an abnormal situation under the system of private ownership of land. Secondly, this situation is peculiar to the 'island' status of Shanghai."[142]

Suggestions for solving the problem were also multi-faceted. Urging the government to build more affordable housing for the city's labor class and poor was a recurring theme seen in popular media. And some municipal governments, such as that of Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Beijing, etc., did respond by taking positive action and building affordable housing for the city's poor. Laws and regulations were also implemented with the goal of regulating the housing market. Private enterprises took the matter in their hands by providing collective housing to their employees that was also more affordable than on the market.[143] But what seemed more interesting and intriguing was the suggestion of solving this huge "social and economic problem" through forming housing co-partnership/ co-operatives.

The idea, as many others in China then, was imported from Europe and America. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were already publications introducing the idea and practice of housing co-partnership/ co-operatives from Europe and America into

---

[140] Jian Hu, "Rent and housing co-partnership," *Eastern Miscellany* 18. 21(1921): 4 – 6.

[141] Zhang Liu, "Shanghai fangwu jiufen de toushi/ Perspectives on Shanghai's housing disputes," *Xiandai Zhongguo/Modern China Weekly Review* 1.8 (1939): 13 – 14. The author mentioned the contractual relationship between the landlords and tenants, and the peculiar class of the so-called "second-tier landlord," which refers to the subleasing tenants ubiquitous and notorious in Shanghai during this period. The disputes arose, according to the author, when the landlord wished to retrieve the property as an excuse for raising the rent which was met with the tenants/ "second-tier landlords" subsequent resistance.

[142] Ibid. The author did not give any concrete solution to the problem, other than pointing out that this was a problem arising from private ownership of land.

[143] Especially common were the big companies providing dormitory-style housing to their employees.

China. For example, shortly after the Cooperative League of America published its *Cooperative House Building* in 1918, it was partially translated into Chinese in 1921.[144] The translated excerpts included the reasons for establishing such a building cooperative: to protect the consumers' interest against the greed and exploitation of the landowners/ real estate companies and bankers. It also introduced the methods of organizing such a cooperative. Written in the growing housing tension for urban centers then, articles like this read like a sure advocate for such practices.

Another article on the same topic discussed the British model of the Tenants' Co-partnership, where residents pooled money together to build houses for themselves and subsequently rent out the property, collectively owned by the tenants, to members at a lower rate than market price. Addressing the possible initial difficulty of securing capital for construction, the author cited another example from Brooklyn where only a small group of 32 people collected 8,000 dollars to take out a loan from the bank to start the project, to argue for similar small-scale experiments in China.[145] The author saw the benefits of this practice not only as material- and finance-oriented, but also psychological and moral; the residents would be more likely to form a community among themselves to fight against the social ills of urban life.[146]

The housing problem continued, as did the suggestion to form housing cooperatives. A piece published a decade later in 1934 entitled "The urban housing problem of our country and the housing co-operative movement," again discussed this

---

[144] The excerpts translated by Zeng Zhaoli (? The last character of the name was illegible) only gave *Cooperative house building* as the name of the original article/ book, without any further information on it. This is typical in the Republican China publications with regards to their original sources. Judging from the content of the article, it seems to be the booklet published by the Cooperative League of the United States of America in 1918, reissued/ reprinted in 1920 (?). See Zeng, "Cooperative house building (partially translated)," *Pingmin* 47 (1921): 1 – 2.

[145] Jian Hu, "Rent and housing co-partnership," *Eastern Miscellany* 18. 21(1921): 4 – 6.

issue. The author analyzed the three usual solutions on the part of both the government and society, namely, "providing laws and regulations to curb the rise of rent; encouraging self-built houses; and providing affordable housing for the ordinary folk/ urban poor by the government," and concluded that all these solutions could only provide temporary relief to the problem.[147] The author's suggestion was to form housing co-operatives to solve this problem collectively, by "a group of like-minded people." He thus explained the scenario:

> Assuming each person can raise 50 *yuan* per month, in three years he can raise 1800 *yuan*, enough perhaps to build a small house on his own. Suppose that the land price is 30 *yuan* per *fang*, the construction cost is 300 *yuan* per *jian*/bay for the main house, and 150 *yuan* for every *jian*/bay of the kitchen and wings/ side chamber, this 1800 *yuan* [that he has] would buy him 20 *fang* of land at the most, construct 3 bays of the main house, and one bay each of the kitchen and wings, or side chamber, with only five or six *fang* of land left. This cannot be satisfying even if it is done, let alone the fact that it is not easily done. But what if we could gather ten people together to form a housing cooperative? Each person would contribute, in installment over the years, 1800 *yuan*, and we would have 18,000 *yuan* altogether. Working on the same presuppositions given above, this would be enough to buy 200 *fang* of land, and after signing a contract with the construction company for payment in installments, we could build 30 bays of main houses, a public cafeteria, a public library and reading room. Because it is a cooperative, the number of kitchens and side wings can be cut down, and the expenses thus saved can be used to build the public cafeteria and library.

The author went on to explain that not only was building collectively cheaper, but working on the same premise, such a cooperative at a larger scale, say 50 to 100 people, should also be sufficient for building "better housing, a larger sport area and a bigger library," and for "a communal primary school and a public bath, and other shared facilities" that would make the cooperative even more effective.[148] At the end of the article, he also warned the readers about a few logistical points to heed in forming such a

[146] Ibid.
[147] Tang Daohai, "The urban housing problem of our country and the housing co-operative movement," *Zhongguo geming* 3.19 (1934): 10 – 14.
[148] Ibid.

cooperative, such as membership qualification for the group, and the specification for the ownership, inheritance and transfer of the property/ house thus acquired.

What appears as interesting and peculiar is that the author did not seem to realize that his proposition was also easily beyond the reach of the people whose problem his suggestion purported to solve. In the beginning of the article, when discussing the severity of the housing issue for the lower classes in the city, the author had written,

> About seven or eight years ago, an ordinary house in the city, renting for between half a *yuan* and two *yuan* per month per *jian*, was more or less affordable to an ordinary worker or of the labor class. But rent for the same kind of accommodation is now raised to above three or even ten *yuan* per month per *jian*, affordable only to those below the middle class. As a result, many of the ordinary people and the labor class have to seek accommodations more wretched than ever, and some are forced to sleep on the streets![149]

After learning about the range of rent for an ordinary house for the lower classes in the city – above three or ten *yuan* per month per *jian,* – one wonders how exactly such a person could be expected to "raise" 50 *yuan* per month, a formidable sum in comparison to the rent, as planned out by the author for the housing cooperative.[150] Envisioning and discussing the house in terms of the main house and side wings/chambers also indicate that the author's imaginary house was based on the traditional courtyard model more than something else, although the inclusion of such

---

[149] Ibid, 10.

[150] Ibid. The Chinese text is not exactly clear about whether a *jian,* or a bay, a structural term in Chinese architecture that refers to the space enclosed by four columns, of a house refers to one bay of the house, or the whole house collectively. Judging from what comes next in the text, when the author talked about how many *jian* of the main house or kitchen/ side wings can be built with a certain sum of money, a *jian* here more likely refers to a bay of a house. For example, the main house for an ordinary family was usually comprised of three *jian*/ bays. So the rent for a whole house would be much higher than what was given here. Another note: the architect/ architectural historian Lin Huiyin's article published in 1932, as pointed out by Zhu Tao, defined the structural significance of the *jian*/ bay in Chinese architecture, linking plan/ space and structure together, a first time in Chinese architectural historiography. But she should be using a very familiar term; did the *jian* used here by a non-architect refer to the same thing as she did? See Lin Huiyin, "On a few characteristics of Chinese architecture," *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan/ Bulletin of the Society for research in Chinese architecture* 3.1(1932): 163 – 179. And Zhu Tao, 2014. *Liang Sicheng yu ta de shidai/ Liang Sicheng and his time*. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe.

facilities as the public cafeteria, library and sport areas were certainly as alien to the plan and structure of the Chinese house as the idea of housing cooperatives itself.

Despite the oversight, commentators were not discouraged from proposing the same suggestion for the same problem that only got worse after the end of the Second World War in China in 1945, albeit with noticeable differences. Housing shortage became an even bigger problem in major cities in China. One article published in 1946 was informative of such differences. Entitled "Preliminary remarks on establishing housing cooperatives," the author put forth his argument in a few steps, indicated by the subtitles of the article, "First, the severity of the urban housing problem," "Second, the necessity for establishing housing cooperatives," "Third, the types of housing cooperatives and their scope of business," "Fourth, organizing principles of housing cooperatives," and "Fifth, the implementation of housing cooperation" in the body of the article.[151] Proceeding from the assumption that urbanization was to be the trend for China's development after the war, the author thus stated the "obvious functions and advantages" for establishing housing cooperatives that would enable the construction of "the most reasonable and comfortable housing" with "the most economical means:"

> Firstly, housing cooperatives can facilitate the construction of houses needed with the forces and funds gathered collectively, and can rid of any present or future phenomena of housing monopoly and speculation typical of any capitalist city through a cooperative system. This will not only provide housing for the people but also encourage the development of group life in society.
> Secondly, through a cooperative means, and based on the principle of equality and mutual benefit, [housing cooperatives] can construct houses that are the most useful, beautiful, comfortable, and hygienic with modern scientific technology and architectural engineering.
> Thirdly, following the principle of the socialization of distribution, [housing cooperatives] can provide suitable places and beautiful environment of living for

[151] Chen Zhongming, "Preliminary remarks on establishing housing cooperatives," *Xin Zhonghua/ The New China magazine* 4.1(1946): 28 – 30.

their members, to promote happiness in both body and mind, and encourage work incentive.[152]

Although the immediate aim was still to accommodate the majority of the city's residents, especially during a time of such a severe housing shortage, the ultimate goal of these cooperative organizations, as propagated by the author Chen Zhongming, had shifted quite fundamentally from earlier versions of the same system. The social benefits of such a practice seemed to have far outweighed any other consideration. Even with the attentive discussion of the need to hire a professional architect for consultation and overseeing of the building projects in order to "properly solve the housing problem for humankind under the cooperative spirit coupled with the newest architectural engineering," the author's emphasis was on the social impact expected of these communities accommodated by the cooperatively built and owned houses.[153] In Chen's own words, after the initial stage of constructing or purchasing houses, the business afterwards should continue to expand to promote the awareness of cooperation. For example, public cafeterias, baths, parks, clubs, sports stadiums, schools, hospital, etc., should be constructed in order to "build an ideal, cooperative society."[154] The imagination of the built house in its spatial dimension receded to the background of such a proposal, while the idea of the social meaning of the house took precedence over other factors.

Part of the solution to this problem rested with the government or corporate bodies, even though the author did not make any direct reference. The integration of "the immaterial and material advances," what the author saw as the "two wings of the flying bird," was essential. In the author's own words, "Although it might be too early to talk

[152] Ibid, 29.
[153] Ibid, 30.
[154] Ibid.

about installing electric power now, the construction of gas plants should not be delayed any further. Or at the very least, there should be a child-care center for the mothers to leave their children. And any relatively large place should have waterworks and gasworks facilities."[155] This kind of responsibility and provision, as rightly recognized by the commentators themselves, was expected to be shouldered and provided by the municipal authorities rather than through individualist efforts.

In fact, the municipal governments of Republican China did have a fundamental and active role to play in envisioning and creating an image of modernity in the major cities throughout the period. By examining their imaginary of the modern, which was partially carried out by their modernizing tools such as administrative and legislative measures, as well as the modernizing projects and efforts to house the urban poor, we gain an understanding of the modern from a different perspective with a different set of concerns and implications on the subsequent development of Chinese architecture.

---

[155] Ibid.

Chapter Two: The Vision of the State

The public's call for municipal governments to improve the urban infrastructure for the sake of providing better housing for the urban populace in general did not fall on completely deaf ears. Municipal governments all over Republican China, especially those of Hankou, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Qingdao, Nanjing, and Beijing eventually took the matter into their hands. Infrastructural works such as roads and streets, bridges, ditches, pipelines for water, gas and waste were installed, while canals and rivers were cleared and dredged for better circulation. Sanitary measures were taken to ensure public health and hygiene.[156] Public bathrooms were improved for this purpose, including, for the first time, those for women on the streets of Guangzhou starting from the early 1930s.[157] From the standpoint of the governments, the old Chinese cities were in dire need of reform.[158] The most urgent task was to modernize the old cities of China to adapt them to "modern" life, by making them comply with public health and safety standards, and by enforcing building codes and regulations to produce a visual conformity of the urban landscape. Measures to accommodate the urban poor were accompanied by a desire for more

---

[156] For a typical view of modernization projects in late Qing and Republican China, see for instance the case of Shanghai. Xiong Yuezhi, et al. "Lve lun jindai Shanghai shizheng" [A preliminary investigation of modern Shanghai's civil engineering"] *Xueshu yuekan* 6 (1999): 85 – 93, where the authors discussed the infrastructural development of the city starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, effected by both the foreign and Chinese authorities, and its impact on the spatial and architectural (mainly in the housing market) configuration of modern Shanghai.

[157] Li Kaizhou cites Guangzhou newspapers from1931 to show that by then, there were public restrooms for women. See Li Kaizhou, "Meiyou nvce zenmeban?" ["What to do without a restroom for women?"] *Wenshi cankao* [*History reference*] 64 (2012): 72 – 73.

[158] Many old habits were deemed necessary for reform. For example, articles published in *Shenbao* discussed reforming the age-old "unhygienic" eating habits in favor of abolishing chopsticks and shared dishes among the diners, and reform of clothing was also debated. The most fundamental and radical solution for solving China's ills also took the form of reforming: reforming the "national character" of the Chinese people. For a comprehensive study on the last topic, see Yu Zuhua, 1996. *Shenchen de minzu fanxing: Zhongguo jindai gaizao guominxing sichao yanjiu* [*Profound national reflection: a study on reforming the national character in modern China*]. Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe. For a recent study on the most powerful proponent of "reforming the national character" of modern China, Lu Xun (1881 – 1936), see Yan Yugang, 2004. *Gaizao guominxing: zoujin Lu Xun* [*Reforming the national character: a study on Lu Xun*]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe.

effective and efficient management and control of a certain sector of the urban population. The registration system for professional architects, engineers, builders and constructors/contractors was also an integral part of the undertaking, aiming to bring building activities from the earliest stage under the supervision of the state.

These efforts produced far-reaching results. On the one hand, the government's infrastructural and institutional "modernization" of the city benefited at least a portion of the larger urban population; while on the other hand, the modernizing efforts concerning construction activities mostly benefitted the emerging professional group of engineers and architects. The attempt to bring building activity more closely under the government's purview buttressed the professional community's claim of being better equipped to serve as instigator and overseer of such activity. In fact, many engineers and architects, almost all of whom had trained overseas, were not only commissioned by the municipal governments for construction projects, consulted on architectural design and urban planning matters, but also directly employed by government agencies such as the public works bureaus to be in charge of the government's modernization projects, forming the core of a new elite of technocracy in various levels of municipal administration. At the same time, however, the municipal governments' approach to modernize the city and house was also different from that of the building professionals in fundamental ways.

Visual conformity and legibility of the urban landscape, seen as complimentary to each other, played an important part in the government's reform of the city. Directly and literally connected with the legible façade of the city was the subterranean system of the infrastructure; a legible city was deemed a sanitary, hence modern, city. Contemporary sources such as *Shenbao*, municipal reports, as well as official building codes and regulations repeatedly cited the goal of "rectifying the look of the city/street" as among

the primary incentives behind the government's reform efforts. Apart from attempting to bring the city under a holistic approach of reform, i.e., under the grandiose schemes of urban planning with monumental buildings to anchor and accentuate the character of the city, efforts were also made on a more micro level to lend legibility to the urban streetscape. Codifications were set up to regulate the edifice of the city. In the case of Beijing, for instance, strict and detailed regulations were decreed and revised to regularize the look of the streetscape, achieved by the implementation of a foundation baseline along the street-front structures, which could not exceed the uniform line for considerations of improving traffic safety and for visual impact.

Such efforts saturated both the public streets and the houses behind them. Although seen in many cities, the most prominent examples could be cited from the Shanghai municipal government's solicitation of standardized designs for urban house-shops and rental units, as a part of their comprehensive urban planning of a Greater Shanghai in the late 1920s and mid-1930s, Beijing government's attempt to reform the traditional courtyard house to conform to a more "modern" way of life in the 1930s, and the Ministry of Internal Affair's dissemination of standardized designs for both public and private buildings to be adopted throughout the nation in the 1940s.[159] All these efforts aimed to create a visually uniform and standardized architectural presence, especially when it concerned the street fronts.

[159] This last set of materials, supposedly four individual slim volumes comprised of standardized design drawings of different types of buildings mainly for the county and town levels, such as the municipal government building, council, police station, public markets, public gathering place, elementary schools, public and private bathrooms, houses for the city and countryside, etc., is hard to access now, most likely due to their general scant availability. The first three volumes were probably published in the 1930s, while the fourth one came out in 1941. The first three volumes might have been so hard to come by even by the 1940s, that they were reprinted as a single combined volume in 1945, which nevertheless remains difficult to find or access. I learnt this information from various library catalogues, search engines and online book stores for old and rare books.

For the municipal governments, the issue of reforming the residences of the middle- and upper classes was never such a headache as the problem of accommodating the urban laboring class and the poor, a daunting task for many cites. Amid incessant internal warfare and severe natural disasters, not to mention the Japanese aggression in China (1937 – 1945), major cities of China experienced various spells of pressing "housing shortage," particularly Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, and wartime Chongqing, the provisional capital of the Republic of China during the Second World War in China. The government's attempts to alleviate such shortage comprised several aspects, the most commonly deployed means being curbing rent increase in the hope of making accommodation more affordable for the ordinary people, building low-rent, affordable housing for the laboring class and the poor, and encouraging construction of more houses by individuals.[160] Rent-related regulations were formulated and published in many cities. The municipal government of Guangzhou started plans for the construction of low-rent accommodations for the city's poor in the late 1920s. Nanjing also followed suit in its efforts to provide shelter for the shantytown dwellers in the capital city during the 1920s and 1930s. Both the Shanghai and Beijing governments experimented with similar projects in the 1930s, while the latter's low-rent housing at the Tianqiao area in 1936 institutionalized the practice, shifting from the earlier consideration of visual impact to a more socially conscious orientation.[161]

In comparison to the proposals and efforts to modernize Chinese architecture and

[160] Han Jianchen, and Zhang Qun. "Minguo shiqi Shanghai shi zhengfu de fanghuang jiuji" [Housing relief efforts of the Shanghai municipal government during the Republican era] *History teaching* 587 (2009): 45 – 47+53.

[161] According to Tang Bo, what sets the Tianqiao case apart was the "policy objective" of the government which shifted from "cleaning up the look of the city" to "housing security/ welfare." See Tang Bo, "The housing dream of Republican China" *National History* November 2011: 106 – 111.

the house from the professional community of engineers and architects, to be discussed in the next chapter, the municipal governments' actions operated on a different scale with different priorities. Grand visions for the city's future were articulated and embodied by grandiose urban planning of major metropolises of modern China in the 1920s and1930s, including, most prominently, the cases of Guangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, and Beijing, where local intentions and provisions of the modern, planned city were also intricately linked to aspirations of the representative power and symbolic status of each city on the national and international stage.

The issue of infrastructure with its associations of modern, hygienic, and efficient transportation of people and goods, as well as waste matter in the underground network of the sewage system, was the cornerstone of "modernizing" the city and house. What was also inadvertently exposed and highlighted was the ways through which the modern was envisaged and implemented for the differing strata of society. On one end of the spectrum, there was the vision for a modern/modernized house for the urban rich and well-to-do, the upper crust of society. And on the other end was the abjectly vulnerable in the city. For the former, there appeared to be quite a range of tolerance for things that were, although not necessarily considered "modern," nevertheless deemed unnecessary for improvement or "modernization." For the latter, the modern was equated with material facilities associated with a "proper" living place, whether an apartment or a single-room tenement housing such as the low-rent accommodation provided by the municipal governments in the 1930s. Material comfort – however minimal – and economy and efficiency in the construction of these living quarters were the major considerations of the government. In other words, in the case of housing the urban poor from the point of view of the governments – as well as from that of the users – modernization equals Westernization.

When it comes to the vernacular, that is to say, the ordinary people's house, the formal considerations associated with architectural styles, the legacy and implications of cultural symbolism, and the struggle to find a proper language of "modern" architecture in modern China, were the professional community's concern, not one that was shared by the governments. For the municipal governments in the Republican period, the primary considerations of such modernizing projects included creating and maintaining visual conformity and legibility of the urban landscape, effecting administrative management and security measures related to large numbers of the most underprivileged urban populace, and establishing an image of a model metropolis, not only in China but also in the world.

In this chapter, I will examine the government's infrastructural work in relation to their efforts to "modernize" the vernacular house in the city which reflected quite literally their understanding and priority in the project of "modernizing" China. I will analyze such efforts as shown in reforming the courtyard house in Beijing, and creating a standardized urban landscape in Shanghai, and juxtapose these efforts at reforming the "higher end" of the housing stock with that of providing affordable, low-rent housing to the city's most vulnerable laboring class. This exercise will draw out the multifarious complexity in the modernizing projects of the municipal government. The different priority in considerations was paralleled by the difference manifested in the material artifact of the house, not only in construction material and building scale, but also in style and spatial configuration, to say nothing of its relation to the historical, "national" tradition of Chinese architecture. In other words, in different cases, architectural modernity was marked differently. Building codes and architectural regulations, including establishing an official registration system for the building professionals of engineers,

architects, and contractors, will also be examined to show the relationship between the state and the professional community, and to examine its impact on the profession of architectural design and construction.

Modernity on the Ground: Roads, Bridges, Pipes and Beyond

Traditional Chinese cities encountered a wave of criticism for their "backwardness" and ill-suited nature for "modern" life and subsequent suggestions for improving them started to appear from the nineteenth century. Critics pointed out aspects of reform for the cities: its refuse-filled streets and narrow, broken roads, its unsightly sight of chamber pots, and unpleasant smell of humans and animals, among other things (Figure 2.1).[162] But instead of investigating what went "wrong" with the cities, it is perhaps more worthwhile to ask what had enabled people to find fault with the old cities in the first place. Indeed it was the view and perception of the city, and expectations of what city life should be like that had reflected the traditional city in negative light in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in China. It can be argued that a modern vision of the city carried with it such elements that were inherently incompatible with the traditional city and its way of life. First of all, the city was gradually seen as a totality and for the first time in history, it needed to be a comprehensive entity "planned" in the modern, professional sense of the word. Although the traditional Chinese cities – one thinks of such classic examples as the Ming-Qing Beijing and the city of imperial Chang'an in the Tang dynasty – were also planned, a wholly new notion of city planning

[162] There were many discussions on repairing and managing the roads and streets on *Shenbao* during this period. See a few examples: Lingnan liantang sheng, "On the filthy streets of Shanghai which ought to be cleaned and repaired" *Shenbao* April 19, 1873, page 1; "Dirty streets," *Shenbao* Sept. 21, 1882, page 3; and "On repairing and managing the roads and streets," *Shenbao* March 10, 1883, page 1.

had entered the discourse by the beginning of the twentieth century. Seen through the lens of modern urban planning and administration imported from the West, especially in the cases of such port cities as Guangzhou, Shanghai and Tianjin,[163] and also in inland cities such as Beijing and Nanjing, the old "organic" city suddenly appeared unhygienic, unhealthy, and unscientific, and thus in need of reform.

Although due to the extremely volatile political situation of late Qing and Republican China, the official structure and organization of government agencies, once they were established, fluctuated and changed with the political climate, there was a certain lineage to the organizations responsible for the work on the city as a whole, namely, the municipal government and its public works bureau. Take the complicated case of Beijing for example. Both the name of the city – alternating between Beijing and Beiping in Chinese, or Peking as more commonly known in English – and the organization of the administration and its agencies and departments shuffled constantly between 1912 and 1949, resulting from the change of its status as the capital city of the Republic of China (1912–27), a Special Municipality (1927–37), and an occupied city of the Japanese (1937–45). A Municipal Hall [*Shizheng gongsuo*] was established in the then capital-city Beijing in 1914, but it was not until 1918 when a prototype of the municipal government was set up. In 1928, the former Municipal Hall was renamed and reorganized into a municipal office. Within the 14 years of its existence, the Municipal

[163] Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai were the five port cites opened to foreign trade after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. Other treaties followed and more cities were opened including Hankou and Tianjin, etc.

Hall has been reorganized at least seven times, with its branches and departments renamed, replaced, contracted, expanded, and so on.[164]

Despite the organizational and structural changes of the governing body, however, the core functions of the government agency remained in a range more or less contained within the scope of a modern municipality. In Kerrie MacPherson's study of the Chinese municipal government of Shanghai, similarly complicated if not more so in its structure and continual fluctuation in the presence of both the International Settlement and the French Concession, after its establishment in the early 1900s, we see the continuities that gave a modicum of stability to public works:

> [T]he specific municipal responsibilities shouldered by the Chinese municipality in regard to its infrastructure: roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, the Huang-P'u Conservancy, licensing, police, and the myriad concerns of public health, among others, were identical to the most important functions of the SMC [i.e., the Shanghai Municipal Council of the International Settlement].[165]

In the case of Shanghai, the Chinese municipality, modeling itself more or less directly on the organizations of the foreign settlements, carried out both infrastructural work and social reform programs on entrenched habits and customs considered unsuitable for "modern" life such as spitting and urinating in public, gambling and prostitution, and so on. In fact, the city of Shanghai provided a peculiar and interesting case for observing the "modernization" of the old city after the establishment of the foreign settlements. Opened as one of the five port cities for foreign trade after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, Shanghai's foreign settlements, – the English, followed by the American, the French and others, – started on a swampy site outside the old walled

---

[164] For a concise introduction to the city's historical development in its structure and organization, see "A genealogy of the city of Beiping," in *Design materials of the urban planning of the city of Beiping*, vol.1 (1947): 4 – 11.

[165] Kerrie L. MacPherson, "Designing China's urban future: the Greater Shanghai Plan, 1927 – 1937." *Planning perspectives* 5.1(1990): 39 – 62.

Chinese city to its north, along the Suzhou Creek, butting the Huangpu, or Whang Poo, River on the east and south, spreading out from what was later known as the Bund, the iconic landmark of modern – as well as contemporary – Shanghai along the Huangpu River (Figure 2.2).

From the beginning of its new identity, Shanghai's municipal-level authority was complicated with the establishment of the foreign settlements and divided between them and the Chinese city.[166] Home to a group of foreign settlements including the British Settlement with "the longest history of establishment" from 1845 to 1943 in modern China, and "the largest area of occupation, and the most extensive network of governing bodies and a sophisticated level of development" for urban planning and administration, Shanghai thus becomes an ideal site to observe the transition, both the physical changes wrought to the built environment, and the behavioral and administrative changes effected through a gradual but steady shift of social values and principles that occurred in this period. Shanghai also affords a useful examination of a sometimes harmonious, sometimes contentious, always competitive, interaction between the Chinese and foreign authorities' claim to the city.[167]

As has been pointed out, the location of the original English settlement clearly demonstrated ideological differences that were ultimately tied to the value system of the

---

[166] The generic term in Chinese for the foreign settlements/ concessions during the late Qing and Republican China periods, *zujie*, literally meaning "land/ territory on lease," [*The Dictionary of Modern Chinese* defines this term as "the area used as a stronghold for further invasion in a treaty port that the imperial nations forced the semi-colonial nations to "lease" to them.] was differentiated, in the case of Shanghai, by the terms The International *Settlement* and the French *Concession* in English, because, as indicated by the terminology, the International Settlement (mostly of the English and Americans) and French Concession were different in their legal status and organizational structures.

[167] See Shi Meiding, Ma Changlin Ma, and Feng Shaoting. 2001. *Shanghai zu jie zhi*. Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe. Accessed through the Shanghai municipal government's Office of Shanghai Chronicles online database: http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node63852/node63855/index.html (Accessed April 1, 2015).

negotiating authorities: for the Qing government who signed off this piece of land to the English in 1845, the site was only a backwater with "a few thatched houses amidst the marshy wilderness," whereas for the English, its location on the Huangpu River meant strategic advantages for military security and potential future development.[168] Although at the very beginning, the foreign settlements depended on the Chinese city for both labor and subsistence, the situation quickly changed with the rapid growth of the settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century.[169]

Subsequent development of the settlements depended on aggressive actions on the part of the foreign authorities as well as historic circumstances. Politically dominating the Qing government, the foreign authorities developed the settlements beyond the control of the local Chinese government. The strategic shift of China's international trade center from Guangzhou in the south up to Shanghai after the Opium War also contributed to the economic growth of the settlements.[170] The Small Sword Rebellion of 1853–1855 in Shanghai and the Taiping Uprising, lasting more than a decade from 1850 to 1864 and particularly with the attacks on Shanghai in 1860 and 1862, not only drove a large number of people from the Chinese city and the surrounding areas of Shanghai into the foreign settlements in search of protection and peace, initially meant only for foreign occupation under the rule of "separate habitation of the Chinese and foreigners," but also provided excuses for the foreign authorities to implement emergency measures in the management and control of the area by seizing more administrative power, including

[168] See Lu Hanchao, "Western material culture in modern China," *Historical review* 2 (1987): 112 – 120.

[169] Zhang Zhongli, 1990. *Jindai Shanghai chengshi yanjiu* [*Research on modern Shanghai*] Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.29.

[170] Lu 1987, 114.

building Outside Roads,[171] maintaining a police force, and collecting revenues from the Qing government.[172] One of the major changes, as a direct consequence of the unstable political situation of this period, was the amalgamation and subsequent and successive expansion of the three major settlements – those of the English, Americans, and French – into forming one body of the International Settlement, after the establishment of the Municipal Council, the official executive organ of the Settlement in 1854.[173]

Taking advantage of the fact that the settlement boundaries were not specified originally, the foreign authorities pushed for expansion of the areas immediately after the initial founding of the settlements. For example, when the Land Regulations were signed between the Qing government and the English Consul allowing for the English to lease a parcel of land in 1845, the boundaries were only vaguely indicated. According to the regulations, the English could lease and reside in the area "north of *Yangjing bang*, south

---

[171] Outside Roads referred to the roads that were built outside the official boundary of the foreign settlements, initially for military defense purpose during the Taiping Uprising, but the strategy was later frequently used as an effective way for the foreign authorities to extend the boundary of their settlements.

[172] Concerning the militia: The Shanghai Volunteer Corps was organized in 1853 after the Taiping armies took over the adjacent Nanjing and Zhenjiang, causing alarm among the foreigners in Shanghai, especially the English, all of whom enlisted in the corps. It was one of the major forces "protecting" the foreign settlements during the Small Sword Rebellion erupting in September of the same year, and dismissed afterwards. It was reestablished in 1860, and put in the charge of the Municipal Council in 1870. Its head officer, the Commandant, was appointed jointly by the Municipal Council and the British War Office from the standing army officers from 1903 to the 1930s, excepting the WWI period from 1915 to 1920, when it was served by a volunteer officer. During WWII, many British volunteers went back to Britain to be recruited in the war. Japan occupied the settlements after Pearl Harbor, and it was officially dismissed by the Japanese-controlled Municipal Council in 1942. See both Xu and Qiu, vol.2, chapter 2, section on the structure of the Municipal Council, pp. 119 – 120, and the Shanghai Chronicles Office's section on the police and armed forces of the settlements: http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node63852/node63858/node63882/node64474/userobject1ai57983.html (accessed March 23, 2015).

[173] The French, who acquired their original settlement site in the late 1840s, never really quite merged with the English and Americans, and quickly rejected the union by officially reclaiming its old concession outside the International Settlement and the walled Chinese city, with its own Public Director's Bureau, the Frenchman's counterpart of the Municipal Council of the International Settlement, established in 1862. The American Settlement merged officially with the English to form the International Settlement of Shanghai in 1863. See volume 1 of Xu Gongsu, Qiu Jinzhang, 1980. *Shanghai Gonggong zujie zhidu [The institution of the International Settlement of Shanghai]*, and chapters 2 and 3 of Kuai Shixun, ed. *Shanghai Gonggong zujie shigao [Historical sources on the International Settlement of Shanghai]*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe (reprinted in one volume in 1980, but both books were first published in the 1930s).

of *Lijia chang*, and west of the Huangpu River."[174] A subsequent negotiation between the parties in 1846 decided on an area of 830 Chinese *mu*, or about 138 acres for the English. Two years later, the area was expanded to the Suzhou Creek on the north, and *Zhoujing bang* on the west, covering an area of 2, 820 Chinese *mu*, or 470 acres. By 1893 after successive rounds of negotiations, the International Settlement claimed 10,685 Chinese *mu*, or 2,049 acres of land both north and south of the Suzhou Creek to its official control (Figure 2.3).[175]

Another important means through which the foreign authorities expanded their control was to build transportation networks that extended beyond the demarcated boundaries of the settlements. The aforementioned tumultuous political situation of the 1850s and 1860s provided the first excuses for such practice, with the foreign authorities building "military roads" outside the settlements for alleged security reasons, what came to be known as the Outside Roads, mentioned earlier. These temporary roads were subsequently turned into streets, and more construction of the infrastructure, including new roads, bridges, and revetments/ jetties followed after the rebellious troops left Shanghai. These infrastructural works not only had a direct impact on the residents of the foreign settlements, but also on the people residing in the Chinese sections of the city. As a matter of fact, the latter influence might have been the more significant. In short, the Chinese people's perception of what constituted desirable urban living and their expectations of the municipal government's role in providing for the residents and

---

[174] Xu and Qiu, p.68.

[175] See ibid, Xu and Qiu, vol. 1, chapter 3, "The expansion of the International Settlement," 68 – 69. The number provided by the Shanghai Chronicles office is slightly different, totaling 10,676 *mu*, which might have been caused by a cacography of the area of the American settlement at this time, which was 7,865 *mu* in Xu and Qiu, but 7,856 in the Chinese source, which explains the 9 Chines *mu* difference in the two numbers. The subsequent total number of the merged area was derived from adding the 2,820 Chines *mu* of the English settlement south of the Suzhou Creek to this figure.

administering the city changed gradually but definitely in line with the physical environment around them.

Understandably, it was a period of transition for the ordinary Chinese to confront "things foreign" – as well as "people foreign" – at such a close proximity and intensity after the establishment of the foreign settlements in Shanghai. It took them some time to comprehend the material as well as mental, institutional as well as behavioral changes that were implemented in the foreign settlements which induced manifest physical and psychological effects, as well as palpable contentions, sometimes outright conflicts, which were ultimately clashes between two different systems of belief and value. The change in the attitudes of the foreigners residing in Shanghai also contributed to the changing prospect of the area. Take the initial stage of the settlements' development for instance. The settlements were home to a host of adventurers and speculators who were determined to make a fortune as quickly as they could, with no intention of regarding Shanghai as a permanent "home." During the so-called land speculation of the 1860s due to the aforementioned political unrest in Shanghai, many land speculators built a type of whimsical housing, the prototype of the later *lilong* house, to accommodate the swelling Chinese populations which were swarming into the settlement.[176] While confronted and criticized as being speculative and short-sighted in leasing and subleasing to the Chinese, one English businessman was quoted to have said to the then English Consul Rutherford Alcock:

> The day *will* probably come when those who then may be here will see abundant cause to regret what is now being done, in letting and subletting to Chinese. But in what way am I and my brother landholders and speculators concerned in this?

[176] One source cites the Chinese population initially moving into the foreign settlements at 500 in 1853 after the Small Sword Rebellion, and that figure skyrocketed to half a million in 1862 with the advance of the Taiping Uprising troops. See Ma Luji, "Jiu Shanghai de dichan jingying," [Old Shanghai's real estate] *Shanghai wenshi ziliao xuanji* 63 (1989): 80 – 91.

> You, as H. M.'s Consul, are bound to look to national and permanent interests – that is your business; but it is my business to make a fortune with the least possible loss of time, by letting my land to the Chinese, and building for them at thirty or forty per cent. interest, if that is the best thing I can do with my money. In two or three years at farthest, I hope to realize a fortune and get away; and what can it matter to me if all Shanghae disappear afterward in fire or flood? You must not expect men in my situation to condemn themselves to years of prolonged exile in an unhealthy climate for the benefit of posterity. We are money-making, practical men. Our business is to make money, as much and as fast as we can; and for this end, all modes and means are good which the law permits.[177]

This reply perfectly captured the short-term interest in profit-making of the typical land speculator in the initial stage of Shanghai's foreign settlement history. But as the settlements continued to grow, more resources were put into building the area into an enclave not only for residents, but also for businesses, organizations, and the authorities. In particular, new infrastructure was put in place with an intended purpose of developing the area into "the Model Settlement" as claimed by the authorities.[178] The Committee on Roads and Jetties was established as early as 1846, replaced by the Shanghai Municipal Council in 1854. Bridges and roads were built, with auxiliary facilities such as road lamps lit by gas and then by electricity in 1882. Running water, among the first of such waterworks systems in Asia then, was supplied in 1883. The English men and the Americans, as well as the French and their fellow alien residents were in Shanghai to stay.

As commonly accepted by scholars working on the history of Shanghai today, the Chinese people's encounter with and acceptance of the physical and material changes brought by the presence of the foreign settlements went through a sequence of transitions. The Shanghai historian Tang Zhenchang thus writes on the attitude of Chinese people in

---

[177] Alcock, Rutherford. 1863. *The capital of the tycoon; a narrative of a three years' residence in Japan*. New York: Bradley: 59 – 60.

[178] Kerrie L. MacPherson, "Designing China's urban future: the Greater Shanghai Plan, 1927 – 1937." *Planning perspectives* 5.1(1990): 42.

Shanghai toward "things foreign": "At first it was a shock, then curiosity; after that came the admiration and envy, followed by a desire to emulate."[179]

The Chinese, both the general public and the authorities, certainly saw plenty of reason to admire and emulate the foreign urbanites of Shanghai in the second half of the nineteenth century. The period of the foreign settlements' expansion and development, from the latter half of the nineteenth century up to the mid-1910s when its spatial expansion was finally checked by the Chinese authorities, was simultaneously a period of decline for the old walled Chinese city, a diminishing of its status in the overall urban scheme. Bounded by the Huangpu River and the foreign settlements on all sides, the Chinese city was left with little room for further growth. For the Chinese government, especially the Nationalist Municipal Government of Shanghai after it was declared a Special Municipality in 1927, a more aggressive, competitive stance was set in motion from the start. The government officials were clear in their intention to compete with the foreign settlements and replace them as the true authority of Shanghai.[180] As analyzed by Zhang Xiaochun in his study of Shanghai's spatial transformation reflected in the shifting centers of urban life, for the local administrative authorities of *Zhabei*, an area to the immediate north of the International Settlement, "Their basic strategy was to compete with the foreign settlements, whereas their primary tactic was to communicate with them."[181]

[179] Tang Zhenchang, 1994. *Jindai Shanghai tansuo lu [Explorations into modern Shanghai]*. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 62, quoted in Zhang Xiaochun, 2006. *Wenhua shiying yu zhongxin zhuanyi [Cultural adaptation and translocation of the city center]*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe,72.

[180] Wei Shu. 2011. *"Da Shanghai jihua" qishilu: jindai Shanghai Shi zhongxin quyu de guihua bianqian yu kongjian yanjin* [*The Greater Shanghai Plan revelation: the planning and spatial evolution of the urban center of modern Shanghai*]. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 38.

[181] *Old Shanghai*. 1998. Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 324, as quoted in Zhang 2006, 82.

Indeed emulation took place on several levels and by various sectors of society. The newspapers, for instance, started publishing not only discussions urging the Chinese government to better the environment for considerations of both business and habitation, but also contemplations and reflections on some of the age-old behavioral and social customs of the Chinese themselves. Beginning in the 1870s, discussions on improving the road system became a regular topic on *Shenbao* accompanied by articles discussing proper management of the city on the part of the Chinese government. It was no wonder that the situation of the roads was among the first to command people's attention. Comparing the road system in the Chinese city with that of the foreign settlements, critics connected the latter's rising prosperity and the former's decline to their respective transportation networks, essential for an expanding market. *Shenbao* articles speculated: "The prosperity of the market in Shanghai was brought about at least in half by the convenience of the roads;" "Business in the foreign settlements is prosperous because of the communication of the road network,"[182] and if the Chinese city did not improve on administering its roads, "The future destitution of the market would be beyond words."[183] Suggestions were thus offered for cleaning and managing the streets and roads properly, installing road lamps, restricting "improper" behavior of the residents. What went on in the settlements was used as a contrast to highlight the deficiency or inadequacy and the unreasonableness of the Chinese way of doing things, and as an appropriate model of emulation.

What was also inspiring for the Chinese was the institutions of the foreign administration and organization. For instance, the *Nanshi malu gongchengju*, or the South

[182] Articles in *Shenbao*, July 14, 1896, page 1, and December 8, 1896, page 1.
[183] Ibid.

City Roadworks Board, established in 1895, was a direct copy of the Municipal Council of the International Settlement. Over time, the Chinese authorities adopted approximately every administrative measure from their foreign counterparts, from paving roads, building the sewage network, to installing street lamps and so forth.[184]

Long-held customary practices were also put in new light and perspective and subject to new scrutiny. The newspaper discussed how the practice of spitting and urinating, sometimes even defecating in public, was harshly criticized and checked by the foreign authorities in the settlements and those struck a harmonious chord with some Chinese commentators. Even high-profile ritualistic practices were re-negotiated. For example, instances of clearing the streets of passengers and firing salutary cannons on a high-profile official's visit to the city following ritualistic requirements of the empire were recorded because conflicts ensued between the Chinese and foreigners who considered these practices intolerable.[185] The International Settlement Municipal Council's attempts to relocate the ancestral burial grounds of the Chinese for infrastructural construction were also the catalyst for bloody conflict. What is particularly interesting and somewhat ironic to note is that when the Chinese authorities encountered resistance from the public while implementing changes in the Chinese city, just like their foreign predecessors did, they would cite the example of the latter, and claimed that it had been done this way in the foreign settlements![186]

Perhaps nothing embodied the Shanghai Nationalist government's ambition and vision of reclaiming Shanghai as its own, and asserting itself as the true "owner" of the

---

[184] Yuan Xieming,"The Municipal Council and Shanghai's early roadworks," *Shanghai shehui kexueyuan xueshu jikan [Quarterly of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences]* 4 (1988): 77 – 85.
[185] See *A history of Shanghai's International Settlement*.
[186] Yuan Xieming, 1988, 85.

city more than the Greater Shanghai Plan, initiated right after the establishment of the Special Municipality of Shanghai in July 1927. Although as pointed out, the status of the foreign settlements vis-a-vis that of the Chinese city had reached a stage of "impasse" by the late 1920s, indicated by the settlement authorities' reconciled stance to renounce extraterritoriality at this point,[187] the Chinese government nevertheless felt the need to assert itself through a grandiose planning scheme. Planned on a scale that encompassed almost every aspect of modern city life, including an ambitious new civic center with its group of "mandatory" cultural, civic, and recreational institutions outside the old Chinese city, as well as a new port to the northeast of the city at Wusong Jiang (River) and other transportation facilities, and partially realized in the 1930s, it was an active move on the part of the municipal government of Shanghai to counteract the development of the foreign settlements, by developing a competing urban center – on a then sparsely populated area northeast of the city – while simultaneously curbing the future development of the foreign settlements (Figure 2.4).

The final scheme was based on a series of conceptual and practical developments gradually taking shape over the years. The twin objectives of developing the Chinese city and curbing that of the foreign settlements were but two sides of the same coin, permeating the consideration of the whole scheme. The nationalist government attached great importance to the planning, aiming not only to build "the first well-planned city in China," but also "one of the most up-to-date cities in the world." The government not only hoped to create "a great monument to New China, but also to "set an example for the

[187] See MacPherson, 1990, 46. This matter of affairs could also be confirmed by the Chinese government who considered revoking the territories of the foreign settlements as "the fundamental solution to Shanghai's development." See Shanghaishi shizhongxin quyu jianshe weiyuanhui [Civic Center Building Committee], 1930. *Jianshe Shanghai shi shi zhongxin yuqu jihuashu* [*Plan on the construction of the city center of Shanghai*]. Shanghai: 4.

general planning movement throughout the country."[188] The Civic Center Building Committee, the organization responsible for carrying out the plan, was set up in 1929, and calls for submission of necessary materials were sent out to the bureaus of Land, Social Affairs, Public Security, Public Health, Port Authorities and Public Utilities.[189] By the end of 1930, some preliminary works were published including the Constructive Plan of the Civic Center of Shanghai [*Jianshe Shanghai shi zhongxin quyu jihuashu*], together with maps of projected road systems and zoning plans for the city. As a set of general guiding principles for the planning of Greater Shanghai, the Constructive Plan of the Civic Center of Shanghai provided information on the priorities of the government's strategy. Other than considerations of the transportation system which dominated the plan,[190] the zoning plan of the city was also prominent (Figures 2.5-2.6). The city was to be zoned roughly into a commercial/business district to the south, a port/ docking zone to the north, and a residential area to the west.[191]

In terms of zoning, however, the Civic Center Building committee showed a degree of ambiguity concerning the [new] center. Here is how it described its deliberation:

> But based on the nature of the city center, it should naturally be the point of conglomeration of the best of the city's business activities; and judged by prevalent principles of urban planning, the center should also be the location of administrative organs and important public structures. Furthermore, at the initial stage when business is yet to be fully developed, and property price is relatively

[188] Shanghai municipality, 1933. "Scheme for Greater Shanghai Development," as quoted in Wei Shu, 2011, 38.

[189] Wei Shu, 2011, 59.

[190] One scholar summarized this approach as "urban development predicated on the development of transportation." See Yu Zidao, "Minguo shiqi Shanghai dushi fazhan guihua shulun" [A discussion of Shanghai's urban planning in the Republican period*] Fudan xueb*ao (*Shehui kexue ban*) 1992.1: 71 – 77 + 113.

[191] See Civic Center Building Committee, 1930, 11. The zoning of Shanghai on a comprehensive scale seemed to have been initiated by the Public Works Bureau that drafted a preliminary zoning plan in 1929 dividing the whole city, including the then projected port facilities at Wusong, into administrative, industrial, ports/docks, commercial, and residential zones. See *Shanghai tebieshi Gongwuju yewu baogao* [*Report of the Shanghai Special Municipality Public Works Bureau*] 2-3(1928): chapter one: "Draft of a zoning plan for the city."

reasonable, a parcel of the land should be allocated to build residences for the convenience of the people of the area.[192]

To regard the city center as a hub of business activities undoubtedly reflected the recognition of the commercial identity of Shanghai in the first decades of the twentieth century.[193] To populate the urban center – at once a political and business/ commercial center – with civic and administrative buildings was also mostly a modern planning legacy of the West, as indicated both by the presence of Western planning experts as advisors and consultants to the project, and by the more detailed plan of the civic center, the centerpiece of the project.[194] In fact, judging from the plan of the civic center, the "prevalent principles of urban planning" in the official document referred to a mixture of the most popular urban planning theories and practice of the West at the time, including both the Garden City, seen in the radial road network emanating from the center, and an unmistakable sign of neo-classical planning with accentuated civic buildings on a monumental scale aligned along a central axis for a powerful presence, appropriate for the purpose of asserting state authority.

This working plan provided the basis for the later Greater Shanghai Plan, more elaborate and detailed in its content, from which one could sense its ambitious scope. Consisting of ten volumes and divided into about 30 chapters, including a brief introduction to the history and geography of the city, statistical information on population and transportation, as well as a compilation of laws and regulations at the end, the body

---

[192] Ibid, Civic Center Building Committee, 1930, 11.

[193] Zhang Xiaochun notes, in his analysis of the Chinese government's recognition of the importance of the Bund, that by this point, its previous neglect of the waterway (and the Bund) had shifted toward a consensus with the foreign settlements on the identity of shanghai as a business/ commercial metropolis. See Zhang Xiaochun, 2006, 75.

[194] The American geologist and civil engineer Carl Ewald Grunsky (1855-1934, former president of the California Academy of Sciences from 1912 to 1934) was among the team of foreign advisors and

of the plan included the zoning plan of the city (volume three), transportation networks (volume four), construction/ buildings (volume five), open spaces and parks (volume six), public facilities (volume seven), hygienic facilities (volume eight), constructing the civic center (volume nine), and so forth. As elaborate as the outline seemed, the ambitious scope of the plan might have been the reason of its never being realized in a finished form.[195]

Nevertheless, one could see the primary considerations quite clearly. Much emphasis was laid on the infrastructural work of the city, including construction of a transportation network of docks, roads, railways, an airport and the underground sewage system and facilities for waste treatment. Modernity was given a tangible, material sense and form in the city.

Although many factors - among them financial difficulty and political instability most prominently – contributed to thwart the plan from realization, an important portion of it was completed, which was the semi-circular road named *Zhongshan* Road, or the Sun Yat-sen Road, built in 1928-29. This road extended from the *Longhuasi* Temple in the south of the city to *Zhabei* in the north, closely following the contour of the boundary of the International Settlement and French Concession. Initially envisioned particularly to curb the foreign settlements' expansion outward, the construction of the road was proposed as early as 1912, immediately after the establishment of the Republic of China, and then again in 1923, for the same primary intention, but also with a consideration of providing a transportation artery to link the northern and southern parts of the Chinese

---

consultants to the project, as was his fellow American urban planner Asa E. Phillips and the German Hermann Jansen.

[195] According to Wei Shu, no physical copy of the finished plan has been seen, most likely due to the fact that it was never finished. See Wei Shu 2011, 60.

city, bisected into two halves by the foreign settlements in the middle. Although proposed early, it was not until after the nominal unification of Shanghai under the Nationalist government in 1927, that the project was reconsidered and actively pursued. Extending north – south 13 kilometers in length, and 27 meters in width with trees planted on both sides, the road was conceived as an important part of the Greater Shanghai Plan.[196] A provision of 5 meters of flower-garden space in front of the street-front houses was made to both "beautify" the look of the city, and for potential future widening of the road.[197] Great symbolic significance was vested in the construction of the road not only by staging a ceremony in March 1928, attended by 1500 of the city's various levels of luminous representatives to mark the start of its construction, but the military was also deployed in providing the necessary work labor. The mayor of the city enumerated a slew of significance for the project, among which was the perceived status of the road in the Greater Shanghai Plan, stressing that it was "the most important work of realizing the Greater Shanghai Plan."[198]

But more than any concrete reality of the infrastructural or institutional work on the city, it was perhaps the view – what it was like – and the vision of the city – what it ought to be like, – that underwent most dramatic change during this period, as reflected in the planning. The changes were manifest. First was the recognition of Shanghai's strategic position in China and the ambitious goal of its future development in a world

---

[196] The road was later lengthened to go northeast for approximately another six kilometers in 1930. See Zheng Zu'an in the following note.

[197] Zheng Zu'an, "The origins of the ring road Zhongshan Road," *Shanghai urban planning review*, 2001: 34 – 35.

[198] Speech of Zhang Dingfan, then Mayor of Shanghai, as quoted in Zheng. See ibid, 35. Zhang's speech gave six points of significance for the road: 1. To commemorate the (deceased) former president Sun Yat-sen; 2. The most important work in realizing the Greater Shanghai Plan; 3. Utilizing labor from the military and implementing the "military as laborer" policy (?); 4. The north-south transportation no longer dependent on the foreign settlements; 5. At least discourages the outsiders' greed to expand beyond their boundaries; 6. The longest, and unprecedented great road of Shanghai.

framework. In the official documents, reference was made over and again to Shanghai's exalted position as the "largest commercial city of China," and the "biggest port of East Asia," following decades of rapid, if also aberrant and abnormal development, and its potential influence in China and the world.[199] To be sure, consideration to develop Shanghai into a world-class city also propelled the sweeping overall plan.

There was also the need to zone the city into different areas, each devoted to a specific function: living, working, recreation, etc. This was pitted squarely against the practice of the "old cities." The report of Shanghai Special Municipality Public Works Bureau noted in the following terms:

> Old cities do not have zoning; warehouses and factories, schools and residences are all chaotic and jammed together with no sense of order whatsoever. After the city grows in this manner, it is difficult to make any changes. Further development is thus impeded. In modern times, material culture prospers on a daily basis, as are relations and affairs among people which grow more complex each day. In a large commercial port city with a concentrated population, people's daily needs are multifarious, and more types of architecture are needed. Various functions are called for and facilities are especially complicated. Without clear regulations for zoning the areas according to the type [of functions/ buildings], there is no means to achieve a standard uniformity that is perfect. This is why zoning is the primary consideration of civic administration.[200]

The "organic" growth of the city, typical of traditional cities, was therefore seen as ad hoc, disorderly, and inefficient, which ought to be brought into an overall scheme of comprehensive urban planning of the municipal government, led by a group of

---

[199] See, for example, the Constructive Plan for such remarks. The Chinese authority regarded the prosperity of the foreign settlements, set against the "backwardness" of the Chinese city, as "abnormal" and "aberrant," and the lop-sided development of the city as a whole thus as "sickness."

[200] *Report of the Shanghai Special Municipality Public Works Bureau*, 2-3 (1928): volume one: zoning, 1.

technocrats. In the report quoted above, the city of Shanghai was divided into a few different zones for future development: administrative, industrial, the docks, commercial, and residential, which also provide a blueprint for the later Greater Shanghai Plan.[201]

Other than planning for and starting a new urban center – anchored by the new civic center – from scratch, the Greater Shanghai Plan also called for an ambitious "cleaning up" of the old part of the city, aiming to bring it up-to-date through reform. But reform means different things in different contexts, and when it came to reforming the Chinese house and architecture, the difference became even more pronounced within different sectors of society.

Modernizing the Cityscape: Approaches to Reform

Drastically changing the urban landscape of modern Shanghai was, first of all, the *shikumen lilong* house that originated in the foreign settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the aforementioned period of social unrest of the Taiping Uprising, exacerbated by the Small Sword Rebellion in 1853–1855, the influx of Chinese into the foreign settlements which was meant initially only for foreigners broke the rule of "*Hua Yang fen ju*"/ "separate habitation of the Chinese and foreigners."[202] The resultant "mixed habitation of the Chinese and foreigners" was finally tolerated and acquiesced by the foreign authorities with the direct consequence of a particularly skewed development of real estate in the International Settlement, due to the extraordinary increase in housing demand created by the population growth. By 1855, there were 20,000 Chinese in the

[201] Ibid, vol.1, chapter 1: "Draft of the city zoning plan," 2 – 6.

[202] Shanghai's real estate, in terms of increase of land value and of housing and living during this period was exponential. Accounts of Shanghai by foreigners pointed out that the business of real estate was the surest and fastest way of accumulating wealth for foreigners in the International Settlement and French Concession, especially during this early period.

foreign settlements, and that figure surged to a staggering 300,000 in 1860, which continued to rise to half a million in 1862.[203] The architectural response was the emergence of the *lilong* house, initially made of wooden materials. This was a hybrid house type resulting from the marriage of southern China's vernacular courtyard and that of the town house imported from Britain. Known as the *shikumen (lilong)* type in the local dialect, they were built along alleyways, or the *li* and *long*, with the main living area preceded by an open sky-well, the kitchen and rooms at the back, and additional spaces on the second floor (Figures 2.7–2.9). The whimsical character and their proneness to fire quickly prompted the foreign authorities to discourage building them in favor of more fire resistant materials. Since its emergence to the 1940s, the *lilong* house type had continuously evolved, closely mirroring the economic conditions of the city and China at large, and reflecting its spatial characteristic in the city. By the 1940s, this initial hybrid house had become the most standard and representative type of housing in modern Shanghai.[204]

The development of real estate and land speculation in the International Settlement and French Concession certainly did their part in changing the outlook of the city, but the settlements authorities also took measures which influenced the development of the area as a whole. Indeed the house, similar to the changing and reformed new family that it housed, was also considered an object of reform. This was an especially thorny issue for the Chinese municipal authorities faced with the old housing type that was

[203] See Lou Chenghao, and Xue Shunsheng, 2004. *Old Shanghai's shikumen*. Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 4 – 5.

[204] The Shanghai Chronicles Office states that by 1949 before the Liberation of Shanghai, there were 9214 *lilong* with 200,000 units of *lilong* houses in the old city of Shanghai, accounting for 57.4% of the whole city's residential stock. See Shanghai Chronicles online, Chronicle of Shanghai's Residence, volume 1: Old Residences, chapter 2: *Lilong* houses.

considered ill-suited for a modernizing mindset and mounting pressure of accommodating the city's poorer population. As discussed in the previous section, the Greater Shanghai Plan, a grand-scale vision for a new Shanghai aiming to develop a new urban center to take the place of the foreign settlements, revamping the older parts of the city was also an integral component of the new plan. In August of 1928, the Public Works Bureau of Shanghai announced its intention to reform both the rental house and the house-shop for lease with standardized new designs, and solicited designs from professional architects in a competition.[205] This is how the government's bulletin stated of the necessity for the competition:

> In order to rectify the look of the city, the first thing to do is to reform the architecture, which is no easy task. As stated earlier [in this volume], demolishing structurally unsound buildings, issuing architectural codes, and registering architects and construction companies are urgently needed steps. But if actual and tangible guidance and recommendation can be provided, it is sure to produce better results.

And the principles for the designs which would be used as "a standard and guide for future construction of rental houses:"

> The primary principles of the accompanying brief guideline for the designs can be summed up as three points: first, the design must be suitable for the present economic situation; second, it must be hygienic; and third, it should adopt the advantage of Western architecture while simultaneously keeping the Eastern flavor.[206]

These rental houses and house-shops were meant each for a single family. According to the design guidelines for the competition, each house consisted of "a living

---

http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node75091/node75095/node75114/index.html (accessed 4/23/2015)

[205]The designs were for two specific categories: one of "two- to three-storey *lilong* houses for rent," and the other of "street-front two- to three-storey urban houses for rent." The second category, with "its lower floor used as stores," seemed to be the house-shops. See "Chapter Six: Soliciting standard designs for rental houses," *Bulletin of the Shanghai Municipal Public Works Bureau*, 2-3 (1928): 178.

[206] "Chapter Six: Soliciting standard designs for rental houses," *Bulletin of the Shanghai Municipal Public Work's Bureau*, 2-3 (1928): 177.

room, bedroom(s), a dining room, a kitchen, a servants' room, a toilet/ bathroom and laundry terrace," with additional provisions such as a pantry and coal room, space permitted. Obviously these were meant for the well-to-do in the city. This would be confirmed by the winning designs of the competition. Of the fifty submissions, an initial twenty-five were selected, among which the first three prizes were chosen for each of the two categories of design: *lilong* rentals and house-shops for rent.

The first prize for the rental house-shop was won by the architects Poy Gum Lee and Zhang Kebin's collaborative design (Figures 2.10-2.11). On the outside, it looked like the familiar *lilong* house of Shanghai with its pitched tiled roof and elaborate latticed windows, but a closer look reveals a very compact plan on all floors and a much smaller portion of space reserved for sky wells. About half of the floor space on the first floor was devoted to the store, whereas the family's dining and living spaces were moved to the second floor. This compact plan was likely one of the architects' strategies to deal with the "present economic situation," reflecting the tight urban space and high land price of the city.

By comparison, the first-place winning design for rental houses by the architect Xu Ruifang appeared more "Western" on the outside, although it also used similar elaborate window patterns like the house-shop. The most conspicuous features of the design were the fireplaces on both floors, connected by the chimney. The inside was a fusion of both Chinese and Western design elements; a narrow and deep rectangular site recalls the typical *lilong* layout, with the living room preceded by the garden and the second half section along the depth at the back of the unit punctuated by a sky-well to provide more light and ventilation to both the kitchen and dining room around it (see Figure 2.11).

Similar measures appeared in Beijing. In September 1936, the Public Works Bureau of the Beiping Municipal Government presented illustrated designs and building instructions for the recommended courtyard reform in Beijing, scheduled as a part of the administrative plan in the previous year (Figures 2.12-2.13). The building instructions provided detailed guidelines for all aspects involved in the construction of these houses, including the type, size, color of building materials, and methods of construction. In October of the same year, the Technical Office of the Municipal Government gave their endorsement to the reformed design, with more detailed amendments and corrections to the design and instructions. One of the changes was the addition of a door between the kitchen and bathroom "for the sake of better communication."[207] Other changes concern more technical aspects such as maximum span of door lintels, the thickness of the foundation, the use of the materials, etc. The same document also provided the reason behind such a recommended reform,

> The courtyard complex was built in traditional ways, with each house disconnected from the other. The houses usually have windows only on one side, resulting in a lack of hygienic aspects such as lighting, ventilation, and heating. Besides, the traditional construction methods usually require more materials, such as seen in the roof framing and walling, which is costly, and prone to constant repair and thus not very economical.[208]

Therefore one of the aims of the reform was to "construct houses that are more progressive and advantageous, with the same amount of building materials, on the same size of building lot."[209] This act on the part of the Municipal Government of Beijing

[207] Mei Jia, ed., "Materials on reforming the courtyard house in Beiping in the 1930s," in Chen Leren et al, eds., *Ershi shiji Beijing chengshi jianshe shiliaoji (shang)*[*An anthology of materials on Beijing's urban construction in the twentieth century*], vol.1. Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2007: 131 – 137. The original document is held at the Beijing Municipal Archives under the title of "The petition of the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau to reform the courtyard house and the government's directive," archival number: J1-4-53.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

might be part of what is known as the "Three-year Urban Planning of Beiping," scheduled to be carried out between January 1934 and the end of 1936, initiated by the former mayor of the city Yuan Liang, who was in office from June 1933 to November 1935.[210]

If one takes a closer look at the reformed plan of the courtyard house, one would be amazed at how little was actually "reformed." Every aspect from the spatial layout of the complex to the outer appearance of the traditional house type was retained. The courtyard, a quite elaborate affair including a doorkeeper's room inside the main gate and a spacious inner courtyard, was arranged in the traditional layout separating the outer, i.e., more public, area, and the more private inner section with a traditional hanging-flower gate. The kitchen and toilets were located in opposite corners of the complex, as dictated by conventional design principles and construction custom (see Figure 2.13). The outer appearance of the courtyard was also maintained with the curving roof and intricate lattice window-work, although one could see the simplified roof-truss system in the section that was different from the traditional construction method (see Figure 2.12). Even though the primary design considerations of the reformed courtyard, in the Bureau's words, were "to facilitate more convenient living with better connection and arrangement of the houses," "to reduce construction cost by using the new-style roof-truss with less materials," and "to provide better lighting and ventilation, and to improve hygiene with windows on two sides," the basic scheme of the house was not changed very much. In fact, other than the modern amenities that were considered necessary for a comfortable city life – these were houses for a large, affluent family with designated spaces for the servants and a doorman after all – such as the garage and the modern bathroom, the plan

[210] For discussions on Yuan Liang and the "Three-year urban planning of Beiping," see Dong Ke, "Yang Liang and the program of Beiping's Three-year Urban Planning," *Beijing Archival Sources* 1999 (2):

of the new courtyard shows almost no deviation whatsoever from the traditional spatial arrangement of its type (Figure 2.14).

The government's effort to modernize and standardize both public and private edifices in city and country alike was kept up from the 1930s to the 1940s. The Ministry of the Interior published a series of standardized designs to be adopted by the local authorities: the villages and towns, and county-level establishments. These designs encompassed a wide range of institutions, including elementary schools, public markets, county seats and councils, the court houses, memorial columns for the victory of the war and Sun Yat-sen halls, the militia headquarters, rural houses and houses for the towns, public restrooms and recreation grounds, and granaries, etc.[211] These designs, made and drawn by the Construction and Planning Agency of the Ministry of Interior, were disseminated to various levels of local authorities through administrative channel and meant to be a design and construction guide that aimed at providing formal uniformity on the street level.[212] For the government institutions, the proposed buildings usually took a monumental scale, and resorted to the classical language for artistic expression. For instance, in the design of the county seat, the emphasis was on the stately appearance expressed through an indication of classical symmetry and its outline, whereas the

---

312 – 317, and chapter 3 of Wang Yanan, *Studies on the urban planning and construction of Beijing, 1900 – 1949*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 2008.

[211] The predecessor of the Construction and Planning Agency, which was responsible for publishing these series of designs, was first established in 1937, to be in charge of "urban planning, building agency, rural construction agency, civil engineering, and public works." After several changes in its structural organization, it finally took its present name in 1981. See the brief introduction to the agency on the government's website: http://www.cpami.gov.tw/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10754&Itemid=10 (accessed December 13, 2015). As noted before, this series of booklets are hard to access, but judging from the fact that the fourth volume came out in 1941, the first three – which were later combined in one volume and reissued in 1944 – most likely had come out sometime in the late 1930s.

[212] Government documents were straightforward about the visual impact that factored heavily in the consideration. For instance, in an article discussing reforming, i.e., straightening and cleaning the streets, unifying the stores and houses in Wuhan, the author noted the "neat appearance" of a unified streetscape.

pragmatic, and possibly also the economic, requirements of the program were fulfilled by the simplified roof construction and other structural elements (Figures 2.15-2.16).

But compared to what the municipal governments had to do to accommodate the laboring class and the poor in the major cities of modern China, reforming the existing courtyard house or designing standardized store-fronts or rental houses for the urban affluent and well-to-do was a breeze. As mentioned before, war and natural disasters during the 1920s and 1930s forced people to concentrate in the cities and land prices went up consequently. Large cities in China became over-crowded and housing shortage became a wide-spread problem during this period. While the well-to-do and above-the-average households, for whom the standard and reformed houses were built as shown in the examples above, could certainly find ways to adapt to the changing situation, the laboring class and poor had to deal with the issue of finding affordable accommodation which was virtually non-existent.[213] Huge numbers of lower class workers providing the bulk of labor for the sectors of construction, transportation, factories, and domestic service poured into the cities, especially such metropolis as Guangzhou, Shanghai and the capital city of Republican China during 1927-1937, Nanjing. Newspapers and magazines, as well as literary works of the time, were filled with descriptions of life in an over-crowded space, with substandard, inadequate facilities for the residents who were reduced to an almost inhuman status. Shanghai's situation became so appalling that a peculiar category of "profession" and its "protagonist" emerged as a byproduct of the under-

---

See Li Lifu,"Gailiang jiedao shangdian zhuzhai jihua," [Plans to reform streets, stores, and houses] *Hubei jianshe yuekan* 1.1 (1928): 30 – 33.

[213] Incessant internal warfare as well as the two world wars that destroyed property and displaced populations apart, devastating natural disasters during this period included a flood and a big fire in south China's Guangdong/ Guangzhou in June and July of 1915, a draught in north China in the summer of 1920, and a great famine in northern Chine in 1928 – 30, among others.

regulated housing market, that of the so-called second-hand landlord, referring to a subleasing tenant who used subleasing as a means of extracting profit.[214] The lowest of the low, the poorest of the city's population resorted to sheltering themselves, barely so at much of the time, in shanty-town dwellings on the outskirts of the cities.

Almost every major city in China at the time had its own population of shantytown dwellers, sometimes a significant percent of the whole population. For instance, a few years into its capital city status, Nanjing had 38,900 families of shanty town residents, accounting for more than a quarter, or 26.41% to be exact, of the city's total number of families with 154,210 people, or over 20% of the total population of the city, in October, 1934.[215] These so-called dwellings could be as crude as a sort of temporary tent on the ground, with no windows or any other necessary provisions. Their presence was both an eye sore and security issue to the reform-minded governments and sociologists who sought to take various measures to address the issue of housing the urban poor.

Sociologists conducted a series of field work in order to assess the situation of living for the poor before making suggestions of improvement to both government and society. In the words of the sociologists who studied the shantytown dwellers in Nanjing in the 1930s, their work was intended to "investigate various aspects of Nanjing society,

---

[214] As depicted in literary works, the figure of the second-hand landlord, or *er fangdong* as in Chinese, was notorious. He/she was someone who sublet part of the rental house/ property to others. As for the origin of this peculiar phenomenon and figure, it is generally accepted that initially the second-hand landlord did this only to lower the financial burden for themselves, but over time, as housing situations continued to deteriorate in Shanghai for the ordinary people and rental prices continued to go up, this practice became a primary means of profiting for the so-called second-hand landlords. The Shanghai government's regulations to secure housing for the ordinary tenants by restricting the property owners' liberty to change/ terminate the rental contract in the 1930s seemed to have done the opposite of what they intended: it only made it more profitable for the *er fangdong*, as they were the largest financial beneficiary in the end.

[215] Wu Wenhui, 1935. "Introduction," *Nanjing penghu jiating diaocha: Nanjing 180 hu penghu jiating zhi fenxi [Nanjing's shantytown dwellers: an analysis of 180 shantytown families in Nanjing]*. Nanjing: Guoli Zhongyang daxue, 10 – 11.

in order to discover social problems for theoretical study; and the survey results will be published to the society at large as the foundation of social reform."[216] Different aspects of Chinese cities and populations were subjected to the "scientific" study of the modern scholar, everything ranging from family structure, occupation, rates of life and death, to living standards, wages, etc., revealing how appalling matters were for the urban poor. Other than foodstuffs and other subsistence requirements which constituted a major part of the surveys, housing and living situations were also important categories for their research and analysis.

The aforementioned survey done by a group of sociology students from Nanjing's National Central University during the winter of 1933 was published as a report in 1935. The author of the book, Wu Wenhui, and his colleagues set out to document the population living in the shantytowns of Nanjing's southwestern suburb, along the northeastern part of the Mochou Lake. Of the 220 families that were investigated, 180 of them were later used for detailed analysis.[217]

As the author stated, the survey focused on the "household size" and "living expenses" of the families, in order to understand the problem of poverty for the shantytown residents, which, in turn, as was hoped, would shed light on "the truth" of China's poverty issue at the time.[218] The investigators thus crafted about 100 questions that were divided into eight categories: family population/ members, occupation, family belongings and income, living expenditure, levels of education, hygienic situation of the

[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid, "Preface" and "Introduction."

family, [religious] faith, and entertainment, with information on occupation and expenditure being the most important categories.[219]

Gathering outside Nanjing primarily due to disasters and economic hardship, the men from these shanties, according to the findings, most commonly took up occupations such as selling reed as firewood or selling vegetables, or engaged in some other small trade, making and trading reed mats, pulling rickshaws, farming, and other sorts of handicraft work. Women's work included weaving reed mats, growing vegetables and sewing.[220]

The category that examined the housing issue most directly was the questions concerning hygiene, sub-divided into sections dealing with the living situation, hygiene of the environment, sources of drinking water, diseases and death rates, and women's "bad customs," referring to the practice of foot-binding among women. In the section on the living situation, which was also the most detailed, the "over-crowding" of the residents was recorded: there was only less than two *jian*/ bays of rooms for each family: the vast majority of the residents – 161 families of the 180 total – had only one to two rooms for the whole family, and the family size averaged at 4.12 persons according to the findings.[221]

The structure of the huts was simple and crude, and building materials were local and makeshift in most cases. Reed was by far the most commonly used, probably because of its ready availability in the area. Over half of the total families – 101 out of 180 – had

[219] The "faith" question was mostly about "religion," asking whether the family believed in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, the Jesuit Order, Islam, or else. But the last sub-question of this category also asked whether the head of the household was a Nationalist party member.

[220] The author explained later in the conclusion that a lot of men and women worked with reed, because they lived next to a lake, which produced an abundance of the material. See Wu 1935, 95.

[221] Wu, 83.

no windows at all for ventilation in their living space. Thirty-six families had paper on their windows, only fifteen had wood-board windows, whereas a meagre eight families had glass window(s), and there were another twenty families who only "poked a small hole in the wall for a window."[222] All the roofs were made of straw, and apart from three families that had brick floors, all the rest was dirt. The majority of the walls were made out of reed stalks, and in fact, 129 houses were made entirely of reed stalks, accounting for 71.67% of the total (Figures 2.17–2.18).[223]

The situations in Beijing were not much better for the city's poor. Surveys on the living standards and populations were also conducted as early as the first decade of the twentieth century.[224] Take the classic survey of Peking by the American sociologists Sidney David Gamble and John Burgess from September 1918 to December 1919, *Peking, a Social Survey* for instance.[225] As the authors explained, the city of Peking was chosen not only because it was the capital of China, but also because of its supposed "Chinese-ness." This was a comprehensive social survey of Beijing in aspects of its contemporary political, social and cultural life including government, population, health, education, commercial life, recreation, the social evil, poverty and philanthropy, etc.

---

[222] Ibid, 84.

[223] Ibid, 84 – 85.

[224] Although it seems to be general consensus that social survey in China were not taken up until the Republican period, some scholars argue that it really began during the late Qing period, in the first decade of the twentieth century. See Mou Yongru and Xu Xiaoqing, "Did social survey really start in the Republic of China?: discussion of late-Qing social surveys," *Gansu shehui diaocha* [*Gansu Social Survey*] 2008.2: 93 – 96. A small scale survey was conducted of a group of 195 Chinese and Manchu families living seven miles outside the city of Beijing in its northwestern rural villages, around the then newly-established Tsing Hua School (forerunner of present-day Tsinghua University), by C. G. Dittmer, a sociology professor (?) at the school, the result of which was published in 1918. The author stated that it was a study of the rural conditions of China, thus by extension atypical of the urban situation, but the work was cited as a source by Sidney Gamble, who also enlisted Dittmer's help in his work.

[225] Sidney D. Gamble, and John Stewart Burgess. 1921. *Peking a social survey conducted under the auspices of the Princeton University Center in China and the Peking Young Men's Christian Association*. New York: George H. Doran Co. http://books.google.com/books?id=5JsRAAAAIAAJ (accessed May 24, 2015).

Other than the first-hand material gathered from field work, the researchers also made use of much related information from published statistics, government agencies, and other scholars. Since one major aspect of the city, as the investigators viewed it, was the issue of poverty, the survey focused on populations that were not affluent; far from it, these were the people who barely survived the harsh conditions of living. According to the authors, "Ninety-six thousand eight hundred and fifty persons or 11.95 percent of the population of the city are listed by the police as "poor" or "very poor," or approximately one-third "poor" and two-thirds "very poor."[226]

Although the study did not focus specifically on the issue of housing, it was a problem that saturated the lives of those found on the streets: beggars, rickshaw pullers, and the homeless and jobless of the city. The various relief institutions and associations discussed in the survey, including the foundlings' home, all sorts of poorhouses, orphanages, the boys' industrial school and the girls' industrial home, reform school, old ladies' home, etc., all provided food and lodging to the people in need.

The social scientists were not the only ones conducting surveys at the time. The municipal government departments also had their statistics branches and conducted their surveys of the cities. Shanghai's Bureau of Social Affairs, for instance, was perhaps the most consistent and systematic in its surveys and publications of such statistics concerning economic and social aspects of life in the city, especially for the laborers, since its establishment in 1928.[227] The study on the living standards of Shanghai's

---

[226] Gamble and Burgess, 270. The authors also pointed out in the following paragraph that the official percentage of poverty might have been less than the actual situation because the police "have forced many beggars to leave the city and are careful about allowing any destitute families to move into the city," and that "if those living just outside the walls were included with those living inside, the proportion of destitute would be much higher than the present 11.95 percent."

[227] The Bureau of Social Affairs of the City Government of Greater shanghai was reorganized from its immediate predecessor, the Bureau of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce which was established in 1927,

working class was one such example. Compiled by the Bureau of Social Affairs of Greater Shanghai in 1934, it provided studies of 305 families working in thirty different industries, and living in different areas of Shanghai.[228]

At the end of the survey, suggestions were made for considerations of improving the living standard of the workers. Different types of food and eating habits, such as eating brown instead of white rice, and cooking to retain more nutrients of the food, were suggested. As for housing in particular, two improvements were recommended: A. Palliative approaches including setting up a committee for reviewing rent levels, "according to objective standards, to review the appropriateness of rents for the districts, and review and prevent rent-related disputes," and "abolish the exploitation of the second-hand landlords." And B. Holistic, that is, fundamental, approaches including taxing idle land and property; rewarding construction and advocating collaborative

---

after Shanghai obtained its Special Municipality status in that year. According to available sources, it had conducted a string of researches, especially into the labor problem in Shanghai, since 1928. See Bureau of Social Affairs of Greater Shanghai, eds., "Shanghai shi shehuiju laogong tongji gongzuo he jihua" ["The work and plan of labor statistics of Shanghai's Social Affairs Bureau"], *Shehui banyue kan* [*The Bi-monthly Journal of Social Affairs?*] 1.11-12 (1935):31 – 38. According to this article published in 1935, this kind of statistical work on Shanghai's laborers had been carried out for eight years. The *Monthly Journal of Social Affairs*, the predecessor of the Bi-monthly, published its first issue in January 1929, as an outlet of the Bureau of Social Affairs of the City Government of Greater Shanghai's statistical research. The publication was interrupted by the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in early 1932, and resumed in 1934 as a bi-monthly (publishing twice a month). For this information, see the foreword to the (second) launch issue. Wu Xingya, "Foreword," *Shehui banyuekan* [*The Bi-monthly Journal of Social Affairs?*]1.1(1934): 1.

[228] In the section on the scope and methodology, the compiler explained that the number of 30 industries was derived from deleting the 17 industries of "small scale" from the total of 47 industries, and the 305 worker families who supplied the statistic information for study, including both factory-workers and those working outside such as in transportation and service, lived in all 5 major residential areas of the city: 21% from Hudong (literally, East of Shanghai), 42.3% from Huxi (West of Shanghai), 18% from Hunan (South of Shanghai), 5.9% from Hubei (North of Shanghai), and 12.8% from Pudong (East of Huangpu River). It is also indicative that these areas were partitioned from "imagining Nanking Road [the central east-west boulevard in the International Settlement] as the city's center," with the Huangpu River and Suzhou Creek as major territorial markers, indicating the status of the foreign settlements and the rivers in Shanghai's economic and social as well as political life at the time.

housing efforts.[229] Judging from the government's point of view, it was appropriate that the administrative and legislative measures were recommended.

Although the study only included housing of the workers as one aspect of their living condition, the deteriorating situation of living standards, and the mounting pressure of housing in terms of the rising rent, could be gauged from a set of statistics from the same source. There was a table of cost of living index for workers in Shanghai published by the same author indicating the astonishing rise of rent levels, especially after the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937[230]. For example, from 85.63 in 1926, the housing/rent index experienced a relatively steady and reasonable rate of increase, to 96.38 in July 1937, at the time of the Japanese invasion and the official break-out of the Sino-Japanese war that was to last eight years. But immediately after that, in 1938, it rocketed to a shocking 247.58, and continued to climb, although not as steeply, until the end of 1940, to 348.19.[231]

Many discussions and suggestions ensued on how to solve the housing problem for the middle- and lower-middle-class population in the cities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, among these discussions were recommendations for establishing housing association and housing cooperatives,[232] and building more boarding houses for

---

[229] *Shanghai shi gongren shenghuo chengdu* [*Living standards of Shanghai workers*]. Compiled by Shanghai Bureau of Social Affairs, 1934, in Li Wenhai, et al, eds. 2014. *Minguo shiqi shehui diaocha congbian*. 2 bian, 2 bian [*An anthology of social surveys from the Republican Period*, 2 vols.] Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, vol. 2: 337 – 458. It was not clear from the text whether the tax mentioned was for land or house that was idle/ vacant.

[230] Cai Zhengya, 1934, *Shanghai shi shenghuo zhishu zhaiyao [Summary of the Index of living standards in Shanghai]*. The average of the year 1936 was taken as the base at 100.

[231] Ibid.

[232] For discussions on housing associations and co-operations, see Xiu Jue, "England and America's housing cooperatives," *Zhejingsheng jianshe yuekan* 1931 (5.2):20 – 25, and Tang Daohai, "Urban housing in our country and the housing cooperation movement," *Zhongguo geming* 1934(3.19): 10 – 14, and H. Bellman, *The building society movement*, Xu Xinwu, trans. Beijing: Zhuzhe shudian, 1933. Bellman's book was published in 1927, and a Chinese translation with a slightly different title, also by Xu Xinwu, came out in 1928, indicating the close attention paid to this kind of theory and practice in Europe and America at the time.

ordinary people.[233] There were also appeals for the government to build affordable housing, and design solutions for small, economic houses by professional architects.

The municipal governments' reactions to the call to resolve the housing issue and improve the living situation for the poor populations of the city were finally set in motion in the 1920s with multiple considerations. The official statement was to alleviate the difficult living situation of the urban poor, while one of the major concerns at least during the initial stage, was the issue of visual impact, that is, the negative image of the city reflected in the shantytowns and their residents and the issue of social security and administration had to be addressed. In fact, neither the public nor the government bothered to hide this as one of their primary considerations when it came to reforming and "modernizing" the city. Measuring the old Chinese city against the yardstick of Western cities in Europe and America, both parties articulated their anxiety over the "look" of the city. The city needed to look "right." The government documents constantly cited the issue of visual impact as a strong incentive for reforming the scattered, eyesore shantytowns by abolishing them, improving them in one manner or another, or relocating them to designated areas of the city in order to rectify the look of the city. The aforementioned survey of the shantytown residents at Mochou Lake in Nanjing also concluded that these shanties were "detrimental to the look [of the city], to hygiene, hazardous to fire control and social morals and orders," and therefore in absolute need of annihilation.[234] The same concern was carried on. As late as 1946, the newly-appointed mayor of Beijing, He Siyuan, stated that the strategy of building an up-to-date modern

[233] See for example Feng Zi, "Reforming the house," *Shenbao: benbu zengkan*, September 7, 1932, pages 20 – 21.

[234] Wu 1935.

city of Beijing was to keep the city "Peikingized on the outside, and modernized inside."[235] The most substantial measure taken by municipal governments such as Shanghai, Qingdao, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Hankou, and Beijing was perhaps building low-rent houses for the urban poor from the late 1920s onward.

These houses varied in number and quality. Some figures give us an idea of the extent of the experiments on the governments' part. Take Shanghai for instance. Between 1929 and 1931, there were three sites of this low-rent housing built for the laborers of the city with 810 *jian* of houses. In 1935, the city government allocated a million *yuan* for construction and by the end of that year, another 860 *jian* of low-rent housing was constructed in various locations of the city.[236] The Guangzhou municipal government provided affordable accommodation for the city's laboring class and the poor with various types of collective housing built throughout the city, totaling at over 3000 beds.[237] The Beijing government's construction of 140 houses at the Tianqiao area in 1936 was also exemplary, because it signaled a change in the understanding of such projects on the government's part, a shift from a cosmetic visual consideration for the city to a mechanism of providing social welfare to the urban poor.[238]

The Guangzhou Municipal Government's construction in 1931 of the *pingmin gong*, or literally, the People's Palace, was among the first cases of such effort to deal

[235] As quoted in Wang Yanan. Wang Yanan, 2008. *1900 – 1949 nian Beijing de chengshi guihua yu jianshe yanjiu* [*Research on the urban planning and construction of Beijing, 1900 – 1949*]. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, chapter 5.

[236] Wang Hua, "A preliminary study on social security of modern Shanghai: 1927-1937," *Historical Review* 2003.6: 61 – 69 + 98.

[237] Li Shupin, "Labor welfare policy of the early Nationalist government of Nanjing: a case study of workers' housing in Guangzhou during 1920s and 1930s," *Jinan xuebao* 35.12 (December 2013); 132 – 137.

[238] See Tang Bo, 2011, "Housing dream."

with the issue of urban housing on a large-scale, comprehensive manner.[239] Government bills for building low-rent accommodation for the city's poor were advanced by the head of the Land Bureau of Guangzhou as early as 1928, in order to "solve the problem of living" for the city's poor, and to expand the city by making use of the idle, uncultivated land [*huangdi*] in order to achieve a more balanced development of the whole city.[240] Deterred by a lack of funding for the proposal, it was not until 1929, when the municipal government acquired a large sum of money for the construction, that the project was initiated. The building was intended to provide temporary boarding – "however long- or short-term dependent on the need of the tenants, with the minimum level of rent" – for the laboring class of the city. The initial program included "the most affordable dining room/ cafeteria, a night school, to be complemented in the future by a production and consumption cooperative, play-ground, and a reading room."[241] A piece of land was secured right away, and the Public Works Bureau was charged to design "a hygienic" building, while a bidding competition was held to select the appropriate contractor in 1929.[242]

By the next year, the program of the building was more detailed: it was to be equipped with "many beds for plenty of accommodation, the latest toilets, bathrooms, a library and reading room, a night school, facilities and space for games and sports," and the jobless lot of the tenants could "have jobs recommended to them according to their

---

[239] It is said to have been modeled after the Public Plaza in England after WWI, according to Pan Yu, "Low-rent housing in Republican Guangzhou – the People's Palace," *Yangcheng wanbao*, December 1, 2012, B10.

[240] "Head of the Land Bureau advocates building state-owned houses for the poor," *Municipal bulletin of Guangzhou*, 301 (1928): 6.

[241] "Chen Jitang allocated huge sums of money to the municipal government for the people's palace," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 337 (1929): 14. Chen (1890 – 1954) was the de-facto political ruler of Guangdong province at the time.

[242] "Constructing the People's Palace," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 339 (1929): 28 and "Bidding for the People's Palace," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 346 (1930):19.

skills or sent to the workhouses for the poor to learn by the manager of the building."[243] Construction work started in 1930, and according to the report from the government about a year later, and a couple of months before the completion of the building, this was the description of the building:

> The building is a foreign style multi-storey structure, rising five stories including the basement. The floors tapers toward the top, with the topmost one being the most narrow, roughly at about 3/5 of the second floor. The basement is reserved for the kitchen, dining room, bathrooms, and the floors above the second storey will be rented out to boarders at an extremely low price. It can accommodate 500 people altogether. Wooden boards are used for partition on the floors and the exterior walls are embellished with reinforced concrete railings where the running water taps will be installed to save the unsightly look of having to install them separately. Interior walls are painted with lime, and the wooden partitions are painted with white paint. From the first floor up, all the staircases are spiral, constructed out of concrete. The balustrades of the staircases are of metal with all sorts of patterns. Everything was made to be beautiful and dignified. Now the construction of the entire building is finished.[244]

As was reported, it was a "foreign-style," modern-looking, minimalist building of four stories above ground, designed by the architect Lin Keming, who worked as an architect at the Design Department of the Public Works Bureau from 1928 to 1933 (Figures 2.19–2.22).[245] It seemed to have satisfied all the functional requirements in the original program; the kitchen and dining space, bathrooms, library and reading room, etc., were provided.[246] Both a day school and night school were opened to out-of-school girls and boys over eight years of age free of tuition in 1932. Rather harsh regulations were implemented in the daily management of the building. For instance, since it was intended

---

[243] "Construction of the People's Palace to be carried out," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 341 (1930): 52.

[244] "The structure and recent progress of the People's Palace construction," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 377 (1931): 25.

[245] Lin Keming (1900 – 1999) studied architecture at the Architecture School of Lyon (?) from 1922 – 26 and worked in Guangdong province, especially in the city of Guangzhou for all his long life, leaving behind many influential designs. For a general introduction to Lin's life and work, see his biography by Hu Rongjin, 2012. *The architect Lin Keming*. Guangzhou: Huanan ligong daxue chubanshe. This particular low-rent housing project did not figure into the body of the book.

to accommodate only single male workers, rather than providing for family living, requirement of strict moral conduct was expected of the tenant, including refraining from verbal abuse, drinking, gambling, smoking opium, and prostitution, etc. Female visitors could be received in the public living space and only be allowed to tour the rooms in the company of a staff member of the building and so forth.[247] The official regulations, including daily curfew hours read quite similar to those implemented in an army barrack. The aim of improving personal character through disciplined conduct was augmented by the "literacy movement" where Chinese characters were written on a classroom wall on the second floor, open to visitors every day from noon to three in the afternoon, and explained by a member of the management should inquires arise.[248]

In fact, the People's Palace was such a success among many walks of the city residents, not only the poor but also visitors who were attracted by the modern look and facilities of the building that it became a place of interest, a testament to the municipal government's accomplishment that it could show off. Newspapers reported routine visits by both people in an official capacity and as ordinary visitors.[249]

In the case of housing the urban poor, if the low-rent housing in Guangzhou was more for considerations of the visual impact, the houses constructed in 1936-7 by the Beijing Municipal government were institutionalized in an effort to solve the housing problem for its inhabitants. In the mid-1930s, there already appeared discussions on what is later known as the "*da za yuan*," the big, messy yard, the quintessential symbol of substandard living in post-1949 Beijing. The author of "the Problem of living in Beiping"

[246] I could only speculate at this point about the state of the actual building once it was built because of a paucity of materials on it.
[247] "Regulations and facilities at the People's Palace," quoted in Pan Yu.
[248] Pan Yu.
[249] Li Shupin, "Labor welfare policy."

categorized the houses and living spaces in traditional Beijing into upper, middle and lower levels. He thus described the lower-level living:

> The most representative of this kind of house is the *da za yuan*, the big, messy yard. The so-called *da za yuan* comes into being when dozens, even a hundred, of low rooms gather around a big yard. A family usually occupies one or more of these rooms, but rarely over nine. There are no flower or grass in the yard which is covered only by an uneven mud floor, scattered with dirt and broken bricks, and rotten vegetables, rags, and cinder and other garbage in the corners of the wall. … Windows are small, and light is insufficient.[250]

The government initiated the low-rent housing project near Beijing's Tianqiao area in 1936. At the same time as the Public Works Bureau was working on reforming the traditional courtyard house in Beijing, discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, they also started preparing for the construction of low-rent houses near Zhongshuli, west of the premise of the Temple of Heaven, according to orders from Song Zheyuan, counselor of the Hebei-Chahar Political Council.[251] The design of these houses referenced that of the low-rent houses designed and built by the Qingdao Municipal Public Works Bureau earlier. Single rooms were joined into rows, with ten rooms in one row, and the toilets were built at the end of each row. Constructed in the flush gable roof style, one of the lower roof types of traditional Chinese buildings, these houses featured barrel roof tiles and cinder flooring (Figure 2.23).[252]

According to the project plan, 140 rooms were eventually built with toilets, surrounding walls and gates.[253] Sixty of these 140 rooms were single-room

[250] Author unknown, "The problem of living in Beiping," *Shenbao*, June 15, 1936, page 9.

[251] Holdings at the Beijing Municipal Archives, "Petitions of the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau to select land for constructing low-rent houses near Zhongshuli, Tianqiao South Street, with results of the public bidding for construction and budgets and illustrated drawings of the project, and the government's orders and directives," archival number: J17-1-1353.

[252] Ibid.

[253] For a brief discussion of the project, see Sun Hongquan, Liu Su, "Song Zheyuan and Zhang Zizhong's low-rent houses at Tianqiao," *Beijing Archival Sources*, 1995(1): 77 – 78. See also Tang Bo's treatment of the subject in his doctoral dissertation and relevant journal articles. Tang Bo, *Studies on the real estate of the urban residents in Beijing during the late Qing and the Republican period, 1900 – 1949*.

houses/apartments. Besides a door and a set of windows, these single-room houses were nothing more than four walls and a roof. Compared with the reformed courtyard complex illustrated by the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau at the same time, the difference is indeed appalling.

Considering mainly in terms of construction materials, work load and schedule, costs, as well as construction management, these houses designed and built by the municipal governments for lower-class people – whether boarding houses or low-rent housing – all adopted the imported Western style plan, materials, technology and features. Do the buildings acquire a self-evident "modernity" through the imported plan and form? Have the assumptions of "modern" life presupposed the possible directions and ways of "modernizing" the traditional house? Or in other words, if we removed the alien marks and symbols of the so-called modernity, how does the Chinese house "modernize?"

With the help of historic hindsight, a recent study exemplifies the current critical view of these low-rent houses in the Republican cities such as Shanghai, although they were considered under quite different light at the time. The author notes,

> The people' villages/*pingmin cun* are fundamentally different from the usual *lilong* houses in that they were completely determined by considerations of function and economy. Their construction method decided that quantity rather than quality was the primary issue. Although an improvement over the shantytown dwellings, they were mostly singular in function, inflexible in layout, monotonous in appearance and rudimentary in facility.[254]

But nevertheless, the low-rent housing did "provide a new model of residential development and growth, that is, the unified and quantitative construction activities of the

---

Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue, 2009, and Tang Bo, "Republican-era low-rent houses and its institutionalization: a case study of Beiping," *Modern Chinese history studies* 2010 (4): 133 – 143, and Zhang Xiaoxiao's brief response to Tang's article, "Corrections to the Nanjing low-rent housing issue," *Modern Chinese history studies*, 2011 (3): 157 – 158.

[254] Wei Shu, 2011, 173.

government gradually became a force, not to be neglected, in urban housing development."[255]

Regulation, codification, and standardization

As mentioned earlier, one way for municipal governments of Republican China to standardize construction activity was to issue building codes and regulations. Many municipal governments did this for such purposes. In the peculiar circumstance of modern China's international settlements in various treaty cities, the foreign authorities took the lead in setting up the practice. In fact, the International Settlement of Shanghai was the first to have established a legal system of architectural regulations in China.[256] As early as 1901, the Municipal Council of the International Settlement published a set of regulations concerning the construction of new Chinese houses in the area. From the required procedures involved in the construction of a new house – that the owner needed to apply for a construction permit with a set of architectural drawings, – to its compositional and structural elements and requirement of the materials used, the regulations provided rather detailed information. The first article, for example, defined the term "house" used in the regulations as "a Chinese house, which is one that relies on wooden beams for load-bearing," emphasizing the singular importance of the wooden beams as the structure of the house. It stipulated that "an ordinary house – either as a residence or as a shop" – should be of "no more than two storeys in height."[257] Further on

[255] Ibid.

[256] Tang Fang, 2009. *Dushi jianzhu kongzhi: jindai Shanghai Gonggong Zujie jianzhu fagui yanjiu* [*City building control: building code of modern Shanghai's International Settlement*]. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 16.

[257] "Regulations for constructing a new Chinese house by the Municipal Council of the International Settlement," online source from the Office of Shanghai Chronicles:

the regulations defined "a *jian* [a room] of an ordinary Chinese house" as "a structure that is approximately by the size of 24X12 feet," giving a more accurate, measurable dimension to a familiar term.[258] The second article required that design drawings, including plans and sections of the first floor, be submitted for review and approval of the Municipal Council.[259] The article thus specified what needed to be "clearly shown" in the drawings:

1. The thickness of the walls and the average height of all the rooms;
2. All usable sewers on the site and new sewers to be put in place need to have their measurements indicated in numbers and their directions shown;
3. The relative location of the house to be constructed to the nearest street or road. Water supply methods to be used should be illustrated.[260]

These requirements illustrated a few things related to building activities of the time. Firstly, requiring a set of detailed, professional drawings of the proposed construction means that house design and construction in the settlement was to be entrusted to the professional architects who were trained for the trade. Secondly, the importance of sewage was stressed; indicating that all the new houses were to be equipped with this necessary facility for access to running water. As examined earlier in this chapter, the foreign settlements set the example of modern infrastructure for the city of Shanghai from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. Thirdly, the indication of the relative location of the house in the larger urban landscape, especially with regards to roads and streets, showed an awareness and effort to treat the individual house in a

http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node63852/node63965/node64503/node64511/userobject1ai58054.html (accessed March 11, 2015)

[258] This was for estimation of application fees for construction, which were determined by the overall *jian*/ rooms of the house. See article four of the same regulations, which also states that in cases where the partitioned room was only about half the standard dimension, it was regarded as "half a room", whereas in cases where a beam spanning a space of 24 feet to join two rooms as one, that space was to be counted as two rooms.

[259] Ibid. It was also specified in this article that if the new house was a structure other than an ordinary house or shop, an additional perspective drawing, in the same scale as the plan, was also required.

[260] Ibid.

holistic manner, in a system of communication and transport linking not only of its immediate environments, but also that of the city, or more precisely in this case, the whole of the International Settlement, into one larger urban network.

Detailed and specific requirements for the structural elements of the house resulted in its improved livability for the residents. For instance, the stress on the raised foundation, and the specifications of the wall-footing of the house read like a pointed corrective to the chronic complaint of the traditional Chinese house for its weak and "insignificant" foundation, echoed in earlier articulations of Chinese architecture dating back to the first Jesuits in China. In addition to the drainage system that was emphasized, viz., three articles were devoted to the issue of water discharge: surface drainage, piping, and underground drainage – ventilation was also highlighted. The regulations required that "in each group/set of houses, every room … should be provided with an open space of 120 square feet, which should ideally be allocated evenly among the rooms, for adequate ventilation of every room."[261] And that "every room, including the kitchen, should be at least eight feet in height, and equipped with at least one window leading directly to the outdoors, excepting side chambers of storehouses,[262] and the size of the windows should be at least 1/10 of the floor size."[263]

This set of regulations for constructing Chinese-style buildings was followed by a more elaborate and detailed set of regulations, a total of 75 articles, for Western-style buildings published by the Municipal Council in 1903. Two major fires in the

[261] Speaking of the houses as a "group/set," also indicated that the model was not a single-unit, freestanding house, but rather something similar to the traditional courtyard, where individual houses were grouped together to form a compound.

[262] The Chinese term used here, *xingzhan*, referred to a business of "storing stuff and introducing business transactions for other people," referring to a stockpile, a trading post? I have not been able to find the original regulations in English.

[263] Ibid.

International Settlement in 1914 prompted the Municipal Council Public Works Bureau to revise the regulations in order to better fire-proof the buildings.[264] The Chinese cities, following the example of these regulations and their later, revised versions, passed their own architectural regulations and codes, initiating a process of architectural codification which was an essential part of the modernization, not only of construction activity, but also of the system of architecture itself.[265]

The format of these regulations provided the blueprint for the Chinese governments in their attempt to standardize building activity. By the time the Beijing municipal government issued its *Building Regulations* in December of 1929, which were subsequently revised in March 1930, the procedures for construction were at the very core of this thirty-eight article building regulation. These included obeying the public street system designated with markers erected by the Public Works Bureau, and conforming to the foundation lines for buildings. It was also mandated that construction be entrusted to civil engineers or contractors whose credentials were approved by the Social Affairs Bureau and licensed by the Public Works Bureau. Other procedural measures included petitioning to the authorities for a construction permit, accompanied by architectural drawings including the site plan and illustrations of the buildings. The site plan, it

---

[264] Li Xia, "Shanghai Gonggong Zujie jianzhu guanli shuping" ["A description and analysis of the architectural regulation of the International Settlement of Shanghai"] in Ma Changlin, ed., 2003. *Zujie li de Shanghai/ Shanghai in foreign concessions*. Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan chubanshe: 293 – 306. The major revisions include those to both the Chinese-style and Western-style buildings in 1916, and then in the late 1930s, the combination of these two sets into one general set of architectural rules. See the same source.

[265] Lai Delin argues, in his study of a modern/ capitalist system of architecture in the case of Shanghai's International Settlement and its subsequent influence on the modernization of Chinese architecture, that a combination of a few factors including the mechanism of the International Settlement's civic administration and the commercial use of land and property, the codification of architectural activity through regulations and laws, and the development of real estate in the Settlement, among others, all contributed to modernize the system of architecture in the International Settlement. See Lai Delin, "Cong Shanghai Gonggong zujie kan Zhongguo jindai jianzhu zhidu de xingcheng" ["The formation of a modern Chinese architectural system as seen in the International Settlement in Shanghai"], in Lai 2007. *Studies in modern Chinese architectural history*. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe.

specified, should indicate the names of adjacent roads, streets or properties, site and orientation of construction, footprint of buildings, boundaries of foundation, size of adjacent streets and alleys, and outline of neighboring houses, etc. The requirements for the building itself were even more detailed: facade, elevation, cross section and longitudinal section, plans of each floor, roof structure, and foundation plan were required; as were size, structure, materials and function of each part of the building, interior floor height in relation to the outside road/ street, location, size and direction of conduits and sewers both old and new, names of architectural designer and contractor, and so forth.[266]

The regulatory rules governing the foundation lines of the street facade, mentioned in Beijing's building regulations, seemed to have provided a corner stone in that municipal government's attempt to build a uniform streetscape in the city. It was first drafted and published in 1929, then revised in 1930, and again in 1932.[267] In fact, in an 1929 collection of architecture-related regulations and rules of the government of Beijing/Beiping, this set of regulations, together with the rules for the sidewalk, for regulating both public and private structures and eradicating dangerous buildings, and for registering and certifying architectural engineers and contractors, and so forth, comprised the sum of the government's regulatory means for architecture and its practitioners.[268]

---

[266] "Building Regulations of the Beiping Special Municipality," in Public Works Bureau of the Beiping Special Municipality, ed. 1930. *Beiping tebie shi jianzhu guizhang huibian* [An anthology of architectural regulations of the Beiping Special Municipality]. Beijing Municipal Archives holding, archival number ZQ8-1-88.

[267] See an earlier collection of building regulations published by the same agency in 1929 about this set of regulations which appeared as the first in the collection. "Regulations of the foundation line of the Beiping Special Municipality," in *A collection of building rules and regulations of the Beiping Special Municipality Public Works Bureau* (1929). Beijing Municipal Archives holding, archival number: ZQ22-1-388, and a later version that was published in 1932, where these regulations appeared as an appendix to the Building Rules of the Beiping Municipal government. Beijing Municipal Archives holding, archival number: ZQ8-1-81.

[268] I did not see an earlier version of the building regulations in Beijing/ Beiping in the Beijing Municipal Archives. If this collection of building regulations in 1929 was the earliest in Beijing, then it did not have a proper "Building regulations/ rules/ codes" so named yet; the total sphere of regulation was divided in the different aspects discussed here in the text.

The purpose of these regulations were unequivocal: to "improve the traffic of the city and tidy the street-front." The same considerations for the traffic and visual impact were reiterated in the regulations of public and private buildings.[269]

The major considerations in the regulatory tools of the governments for building activity were security and safety of property and personnel, and visual impact of the city. The Beijing government was very clear about relegating the responsibility of design and construction to the qualified and certified professionals. The regulations for public and private buildings clearly spelt out that "All who wish to practice business as an architectural engineer must be certified by the Public Works Bureau with a permit;" otherwise they could not undertake any architectural projects.[270]

The regulations most specifically concerning the practitioners were the ones for the architectural engineers. For "eradicating harmful buildings of the city for the sake of safety," architectural engineers – a term referring to both architects and civil engineers – must be registered with and certified by the public works bureau in order to handle the "designing, drafting, estimation, supervision of construction, or auditing" of civil engineering /architectural work.[271] According to the qualification and experience of the architect/engineer – all of whom needed to be at least 25 years of age – they were registered into one of the three tiers of "Architectural Engineers." The requirements for the first-tier architect/ engineer, for instance, referred to any one of the following:

> 1. Graduated with a diploma from an architectural program, or civil engineering program with architectural courses of a university or advanced school either in or outside of China, and with two or more years of actual [architectural] experience;

---

[269] See the "Regulations for public and private buildings," in the 1929 collection of Beijing's regulations. The original text was: "Neither public nor private buildings should inhibit its neighbors, or obstruct the traffic. Nor should it be harmful to the visual effect [of the city]."

[270] Ibid.

[271] "Regulations for the occupation of architectural engineers of the Beiping Special Municipality," in the 1929 collection of building regulations in Beijing.

> 2. In charge of architectural/ engineering projects for over seven years with verifiable accomplishments and capable of designing and drawing.

And the second-tier qualifications were satisfied with either one of the following:

> 1. Graduated with a diploma from an architectural program or civil engineering programs with architectural courses of a vocational school either in or outside of China, and with two or more years of actual [architectural] experience;
> 2. In charge of architectural/ engineering projects for over five years with accomplishments, and capable of drawing.[272]

These two higher-level categories of credentials were acquired if one was educated in an architecture or related program, supplemented with actual experience, or if he/she was in architectural practice for a rather long time; that is to say, at least five years. Even so, he/she was expected to be able to design and draw. It was only in the third-tier, the lowest one, that the traditional builder – called *gongjiang* in Chinese, and designated by such terminology in the regulations – was accorded a place. He could apply to the public works bureau for the title of a third-tier architect/engineer if he had "sufficient architectural/engineering experience, or a particular extraordinary ability, and capable of drawing and calculation."[273]

These requirements for the certified architect and engineer were in keeping with other aspects of the government's regulation and standardization of building activity. For example, the building regulations required detailed architectural drawings – both site plans and drawings of the building[s] – be submitted; and the ability to calculate referred to the ability to measure and assess the physics of a structure or its component. For instance, in the "Regulations for building control and design principles of the Beiping Special Municipality," published in 1930, the building control referred to aspects such as

[272] Ibid. Both these quotes are from the "Regulations for the occupation of architectural engineers of the Beiping Special Municipality," in the 1929 collection of building regulations in Beijing.
[273] Ibid.

the height, construction size, the *li,* or alleys, flooring, and etc., whereas the design principles were dominated by considerations of the weight of the building materials themselves, the load of the floors, and the force of wind, snow, and so on. The calculation aimed to quantify the design and handling of architecture into a scientific endeavor, whose exactitude was shown in the meticulous process and details.

For the municipal governments of Republican China, modernity took a tangible, physical form in the city, on the visible streetscape with houses and shops, and in the invisible infrastructure underground. From the grandiose plans for the city with an imported paradigm of urban planning to the standardized and regularized street façade, from the reform of elaborate courtyard houses to the construction of single-room affordable housing for the urban poor, every effort was made to give the city and house a modern look; legible and uniform, promoting efficient management and effective control. But at the same time, everywhere was seen the differentiation of approach, a split of perception and action corresponding to the different strata of society. On the one hand, the higher classes' taste and preference, their living habits in a traditional Chinese courtyard, for example, did not invite questions of modernity or reform. On the other hand, the default style of low-rent accommodation for the urban poor seemed to be the "modern," new forms, on account of their economy in materials, construction and labor. The government's reconfiguration of both the urban landscape and society was met with collaboration from the professional group, who saw plenty of reason to do so.

Chapter 3: The Voice of the Professionals

Zhang Yingxu (1877 – ?) was one of the earliest Chinese engineers and architects to return from his engineering studies in Japan in 1902. Many more Chinese students followed him in the subsequent two or three decades, earning their professional architectural and engineering credentials overseas, mostly in America, Japan and Europe.[274] Their major occupation back in China could be roughly divided into two distinct yet related, in some cases highly integrated, categories of activity: professional design practice, and teaching and/or researching on Chinese architecture and its history. The involvement and concern of architects, engineers and builders with Chinese architecture, both traditional and modern, were demonstrated in essays published in newspapers and magazines, professional and academic journals, and books.[275] In general, these publications revealed the major issues that they tried to cope with at the time: reforming the traditional house to make it more suitable to "modern" life; providing design solutions, especially the so-called small and economic designs for the general public during a period of housing shortage and inflated housing prices; and educating the

---

[274] During the late Qing period (the beginning of the 20th century) when Chinese students were first sent overseas to study modern science and engineering, Japan was a popular choice of destination. After that both France and America exerted great influence on educating Chinese architects. American universities, especially the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and Cornell were by far the most popular choices for Chinese students pursuing an architectural and engineering degree from the 1920s onward. Judging from the member list of the 55 architects registered with the Society of Chinese Architects in 1933, 44 of them had overseas educational background, with 14 attending the University of Pennsylvania, 4 going to Columbia, and 3 each getting their degrees from Cornell and the University of Michigan respectively. Seven people obtained their degrees from universities and institutes in Europe (including Paris, London and Berlin). See Xu Subin, 2010. *The beginning of Chinese modern architecture.* Tianjin: Tianjin daxue chubanshe. And "Appendix Seven: Member list of the Society of Chinese Architects in 1933," in Qian Haiping, et al., 2012. *The course of the modernization of Chinese architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.

[275] To include engineers in this list of professionals in my discussion here is due partly to the fact that they appeared as a professional group earlier than the architects in modern China, and their influence on Chinese architecture, especially on the practice aspect, was undeniable. See Natalie Delande, "Gongchengshi zhanzai jianzhu duiwu de qianlie"/"Engineers as the pioneers of the architectural profession: the significance of technoculture in the architectural history of modern Shanghai," in Wang Tan, Zhang Fuhe, *Essays from the fifth conference on the architectural history of modern China*. Beijing:.Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe (1998): 96 – 106.

public and would-be professionals on architectural design, structure and construction, and its history and theory. The efforts of these Chinese architects, engineers and builders were preceded and accompanied by Sinologists who wrote on Chinese architecture, including both European and Japanese art and architectural scholars, connoisseurs, as well as foreign architects who practiced in China such as the American architect Henry K. Murphy who enjoyed an active professional career in Republican China between 1914 and 1935, and influenced many followers with his belief and efforts in bringing about a Chinese architectural renaissance through his "adaptive architecture."[276]

My focus in this chapter will be on the professional community in modern China. By examining the designs by influential architects of the time, especially in relation to their quest for an "ideal" form of a modern house for the re-formed family, and of modern Chinese architecture for the newly established nation-state of the Republic of China, I show how the legacy of traditional Chinese architecture was quietly yet decisively torn apart, reshuffled, and reassembled for the purpose of representing modern China. Both in discourse and practice, there was a departure from the historical materiality of Chinese architecture as an "organic whole;"[277] Instead, traditional Chinese architecture went through a process of modern (re)organization: dissembling the whole into separate elements which were then selectively put together to create something new.[278]

---

[276] Henry K. Murphy visited China eight times during 1914 – 1935, each for a varying period of stay. See Jeffrey W. Cody, *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's adaptive architecture,* Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2001.

[277] This view of traditional Chinese architecture as an "organic whole" was typical among the first generation of Chinese architectural historians represented by Liang. See Liang Sicheng. *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984.

[278] Here, I am inspired by Li Hua's analysis of the Beaux-arts design process as a modern knowledge system that dissembled and reorganized architectural – compositional – elements in creating neo-classical styles of the nineteenth century and many structures of the twentieth century. See Li Hua, "A 'new' and 'Chinese' architecture in relation to the Beaux-arts tradition as a system of knowledge," in Zhu Jianfei, ed.,

In this process, two results proved fundamental and far-reaching in their influence on the standardized historiography of Chinese architecture. Firstly, the professional discourse on Chinese architecture distinguished and established itself as the voice of the expert, as opposed to both the traditional master builder and the amateur public discussed in the previous chapters. Indeed, the professional architects have also been the "chosen" ones for writing the history of Chinese architecture, at least in mainland China. In other words, architectural history has become a subfield, a sub-division of the architectural (design) profession in China. And secondly, these multi-faceted divisions of discourse characterized by diverse perspectives were gradually channeled into a single consideration of architecture as an artistic creation that was predicated on the modern, "scientific" system of architectural representation. To put it differently, the history of Chinese architecture became a field of study reserved for someone capable of architectural design in the proper sense, of modern means of (re)presenting architecture.

Focusing on the design approaches and writings of the professional community including architects, engineers and the modern building professionals, both Chinese and foreign, this chapter will examine the process through which the architectural profession established itself as a field of experts in modern China. My emphasis will be on reforming the house for the general public, the issue of adopting traditional Chinese forms for something modern and/or foreign, and the problem of art in architectural design as represented by the example of Liu Jipiao. All these design efforts – explicated and buttressed by supplementary writings of the professionals – revealed a complex picture of

---

Sixty years of Chinese architecture (1949 – 2009): history, theory and criticism, Beijing: Gongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2009.: 33 – 45.

the various ideologies and forces at work in modern China, a "chaotic" confusion that was soon to be tidied up into the standard historiography of Chinese architecture.

Reforming the Chinese House

Opinions and actions to reform the traditional vernacular house were nothing new in major cities of China during this period. On the contrary, as discussed in the previous chapters, popular newspapers and journals were full of discussions on how to reform the traditional house, or sometimes termed dwelling, or architecture, in order to make it more hygienic, convenient, or simply, more suitable to "modern" life. The architects and engineers soon followed suit and shared their opinions. An early example was Sheng Chengyan's article, "Reforming the house" published in *Xueyi* magazine in 1921.[279] Returning to China in 1919 after obtaining his degree in architecture from Japan, Sheng's article presented many of the primary issues facing the Chinese architect and architecture in the first decades of the twentieth century. This 35-page article was published in four installments, and mounted a thorough attack on the traditional house type found mainly in south-eastern China.[280] It was divided into two major parts: the introduction, where the author discussed the definition and nature of the house, and the body, where Sheng drew on the evolutionary history of the house in Europe, America, and Japan, to explain why and how the Chinese house likewise needed reforming.[281] As the introduction showed,

[279] Sheng Chengyan, "Reforming the house/ Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 1921, volume 3, numbers. 3, 4, 5, and 7. All four parts of the article were the opening article of the journal in the respective issues.

[280] As the author explained himself, his analysis of the traditional Chinese house referred mostly to those found in the lower south of the Yangtze River region, the traditional Jiangnan area of China. See Sheng Chengyan, "Reforming the house," *Xueyi* 3.3 (1921):2.

[281] Sheng Chengyan, "Reforming the house/ Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 3. 3, 4, 5, 7(1921).

Sheng put the reform of the house squarely in the context of reforming the family and society of his time. In his own words, "Therefore the subject of this article is also the improvement of living, and the reformation of the family."[282] It is then understandable that according to Sheng, the house was "an architecture that was built to accommodate human life, and to satisfy the purpose of living."[283]

Sheng attributed the justification of the inevitable reform of the Chinese house firstly to its defects, to its utter failure to accommodate modern needs of the family. From the plan layout and spatial sequence of the traditional house, to its interior design and decoration, to the facilities and overall appearance; and from its material, structural to functional deficiencies and shortcomings, the author listed 36 items of the Chinese house that called for reform. One could group these items roughly into four categories according to Sheng's own wording: plan, appearance, structure, and decoration (including equipment/ facility, interior design, and even furniture and its arrangement).[284] For instance, in the category of decoration, Sheng pointed out, "There is usually no ornament in the interior. The purlins, joists and columns are all exposed. In a strict sense of the word, the Chinese house is almost an unfinished product." And even *with* ornament, it was, according to the author, "nothing more than red or dark paint, making the collection of dust completely inconspicuous, [which is]… very unhygienic."[285]

Concerning the way and method of reform, Sheng resorted to the evolutionary history, borrowed from the Japanese scholar Ito Chuta, of [Western and Japanese] architecture in general to demonstrate that (a), evolution, or change, was inevitable, seen

---

[282] Sheng, *Xueyi* 3.3 (1921): 2.
[283] Ibid, 3.
[284] Sheng, *Xueyi* 3.4 (1921): 4.
[285] Ibid, 3.

primarily in the change of design ideas and principles, and (b), "The evolution of architecture was almost always affected by outside influence, to a greater or lesser degree."[286] As for the specific transformation of the house in Europe, America and Japan over the centuries, Sheng argued that it was crystalized in the Hall's succession and replacement of the atrium as the primary and unitary element of the plan of the house.[287] That the Chinese house should, therefore, also improve on its plan layout, and center on the Hall was, by this point, a logical extension of the author's argument. In Sheng's own words, "Reforming [the house] through its plan is real; reforming it through its outer appearance is hypocritical. Hypocrisy is the Achilles' Heel of art."[288] Although disclaiming any preference for a particular style, be it the traditional Chinese, or anything borrowed from the West,[289] and admitting that "the method for reforming [the house] varies with time and location; it need not be the same in Japan as in America, or in America as on the European Continent,"[290] Sheng still concluded, however cautiously and tentatively, that "it seems easier to satisfy our needs by imitating the Western style."[291]

Sheng regarded plan, structure, and appearance as three major aspects of architecture,[292] an obvious legacy of his educational background in architecture (Sheng graduated from the Architecture Department of Tokyo Higher Technical School, the forerunner of Tokyo Institute of Technology, in 1919[293]). It is only reasonable that his

---

[286] Sheng, Xueyi 3.5 (1921): 5 – 6.
[287] The author used the English word Hall in his text, and it was capitalized, as shown here.
[288] Sheng Chengyan, "Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 3.7 (1921): 8.
[289] Ibid, 10.
[290] Ibid, 8.
[291] Sheng Chengyan, "Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 3.7 (1921): 10.
[292] Ibid, 9.
[293] For a brief treatment of Sheng's biology, see Xu Subin, "The instrumentality of overseas Chinese students in modern Japan for transmitting information as seen from *Xueyi*," in Zhang Fuhe, ed., *Study and preservation of Chinese modern architecture* (2), Beijing: Tsinghua university press, 2001: 32 – 49.

concrete recommendations for reforming the house also started with these three aspects. As mentioned earlier, the reform should first of all occur with the plan, the "life of the house."[294] The structure should be guided by scientific study of specific problems such as the material and load calculations, and follow the dictates of the plan. The appearance, once "a rational plan" and "scientific structure" were secured, would then follow "naturally."[295]

The practical, "feasible" level of reforming the house aside, Sheng dealt with the problem also on the theoretical level. He maintained that the solution to the problem of reforming the Chinese house, and by extension, of reforming Chinese architecture, resided ultimately with "the causal effect of its relation to its time, motivated by the evolution of politics, customs, and culture, etc."[296] And this explains why at the end of the article, the author pleaded to both society at large and the political authority of the municipal government for providing a favorable environment as well as an attentive ear to what he had said.

Sheng's opinion on the traditional Chinese house was echoed by fellow architects and engineers after him. Voices especially from the engineering sector offered strictly structural analyses of the failures of the Chinese house. One such example was an article comparing the structure and construction of both Western and Chinese houses by an engineering student Xu Lin.[297] The author chose eight elements of both the Western and

[294] Sheng, *Xueyi* 3.7 (1921): 9.
[295] Ibid, 9 – 10.
[296] Sheng, "Reforming the house (continued)" *Xueyi* 3.4 (1921): 1. Xu Subin points out in her book that Sheng's attack of Chinese architecture from the standpoint of its position and role in Confucianism and religion in traditional China was "fundamentally revolutionary since the late Qing period," because this was a noticeable departure from the prevailing understanding of architecture as a technical science as imported from modern Japan at the time. See Xu, 2010, 135.
[297] Xu Lin, "A comparison of structure and construction of Chinese and Western houses," *Fudan University Science and Engineering Journal* 1 (1928): 53 – 69. Xu, who was listed as the editor-in-chief

Chinese house for comparison, including the outer appearance, the foundation, the base, the walls and partitions, the girders and joist, the flooring, and the roof, etc. Except for a few components, among them the external appearance of the building, the Chinese house fared poorly in comparison. At the beginning of the article, Xu stated the reason behind the difference, which was that Western construction was based on scientific – and academic – studies of the structure, whereas Chinese houses were constructed by "masons and carpenters without the scientific knowledge," whose only resort was thus experience that was handed down.[298] The author employed analytical illustrations and calculations to give the analysis an "objective," "scientific" tone. But by setting up either the Western structure, or a "reasonable," "best" way of construction – which was also Western – as the norm, Xu effectively highlighted the drawbacks of its Chinese counterpart, arguing for its reform.

When it came to the flooring, for instance, the author first pointed out that materials other than timber were used in great buildings of the West for the floors, and there were usually two layers of them, with the bottom one commonly made up of concrete slabs. Onto the concrete slabs were added either a wooden floor, or tiles, or a floor of other materials. Xu included two illustrations showing the different structure of the floors (Figure 3.1). From these, the author argued that although the structure was more or less similar, the craftsmanship (execution) was vastly different which caused disadvantages for the Chinese house with such a floor. The latter included unsightliness and discomfort for walking due to the relatively large boards used that were not fitted

---

for this issue of the journal, wrote a preface to the issue. He seemed to have been a student of the department, or a recent alumnus from his contribution in this issue.

[298] Xu, 1928, 53.

tightly, and were prone to forming cracks which became nesting places for mice and insects. It was also easy for the single-layer flooring to warp and break.[299]

If Xu was still more or less neutral and "objective" in his examination of the structure and construction of a Chinese house in comparison to its Western counterpart, another author, writing a few years later, was not as diplomatic in his dealing with the "problems" of the Chinese house. In a short article entitled "The flaws of the Chinese house,"[300] the author pointed out the fundamental difference between the "undeveloped" state of Chinese architecture in comparison to the "near perfect" European and American architecture that arose from the different attitudes towards architecture and construction. While European and American scholars had been continuously "studying, inventing, and reforming" their architecture, Chinese architecture was relegated to the hands of "uneducated craftsmen who knew only to follow and imitate the old ways" as the literati did not regard construction as a worthy pursuit in traditional China.[301]

The Chinese house appeared unscientific, unhygienic (and thus unhealthy), and impractical to this author, whether the norm of the Western-style house was directly evoked or not. The dominance of *fengshui,* as a result of the "underdevelopment" of science, was the number one problem for building a house in China, causing the sacrifice of "practicality and beauty" of the house in many cases.[302] The lack of proper design prior to construction was also a major drawback. Other deficiencies included bad ventilation, inadequate lighting, poor arrangement of the rooms. This deficient spatial arrangement included the kitchen's close proximity to the bedroom which was seen as

[299] Xu, 61 – 62.
[300] Bao Dou (?), "The flaws of the Chinese house," *Fudan Civil Engineering Society Bulletin* 1 (1934): 131 – 133.
[301] Bao, 131.
[302] Ibid, 132.

unhealthy, and the wasteful reserve of the central hall for ceremonial circumstances only, which could be facilitated by renting appropriate public spaces as in the West. This was also an opinion voiced by the public commentator/reformer of the Chinese house as examined in the first chapter.[303]

To view the development of Chinese architecture hampered by the deficient state of professional, architectural studies in modern China seemed to be a consensus among architects, engineers and builders alike. The traditional craftsman builder appeared as the unworthy keeper of Chinese architectural tradition. Slighted as uneducated, not possessing the scientific skills of drawing or calculation, and unaware of the principles of structure or construction, the traditional builder was presented to the public as someone to avoid. Sheng Chengyan, in the aforementioned article on reforming the Chinese house, called to the public to steer away from them and, by implication, to commission an architect instead for their building projects.[304]

But as clearly as one could articulate the argument for the reform of the Chinese house, and as straight-forwardly as one could map out in writing the route of such reformation and improvement for Chinese architecture in general and for the Chinese house in particular, it was not an easily accomplished task in practice.

Reforming the Design: Modern and Economic House Designs

While articulating their discontent with the existing Chinese house in the urban landscape, engineers, architects and contractors also actively attempted to solve the issue of reforming the Chinese house from practical design perspectives. Academic journals,

[303] Ibid, 132 – 133.
[304] Sheng, *Xuyi* 3.7 (1921): 13.

newspapers, as well as books, especially from the 1930s, aimed at both the (would-be) professionals and the general public, and showcase many such efforts by members of the professional community. Replicating the old ways of "designing" and construction in toto was neither desirable nor possible; the designers were charged with creating a form that was modern and new, "reformed" or "improved" in one way or another.

The academic and professional journals were represented by such titles as *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan* (*The Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture*), launched in 1930 in Beijing, *Jianzhu yuekan* (*The Builder*), and *Zhongguo jianzhu* (*The Chinese Architect*), both first published in 1932 in Shanghai, and *Xin jianzhu* (*Die Architektur*), first published in 1936 in the southern city of Guangzhou.[305] The first one, *The Bulletin*, was concerned mostly with research on China's architectural past as shown in the pioneering work at the institute by Liang Sicheng (1901–1972), Liu Dunzhen (1897–1968), and Lin Huiyin (1904–1955). The other three journals, especially *The Builder* and *The Chinese Architect*, engaged more directly with issues of introducing and creating modern and new ways of construction and new forms of architecture for the newly re-formed urban families. In what follows, I will examine some of their proposals to solving the urban housing problem with small and economic house designs in particular.

Launched at the end of 1932 as the official mouthpiece of the Shanghai Builders' Association, a professional practitioners' association established in the previous year, *The Builder* offered an interesting case study for solving the housing problem.[306] From 1932

[305] The foreign names, both in English and German, of the journals are their original concurrent titles.

[306] The English names are more telling. The organization's name, *Shanghai shi jianzhu xiehui*, literally the Shanghai Architecture Association, was translated as The Builders' Association in the journal, and its journal, *Jianzhu yuekan*, meaning literally *The Architectural Monthly*, was likewise translated as *The Builder*. This is reflective of the fact that the association was a builders'/ construction practitioners'

to 1937 during the journal's existence, it published 49 issues in five volumes. As a journal of the construction practitioners, it suitably concentrated on problems more closely related to construction than design, such as new materials, new tools and technology of modern and contemporary architecture. This emphasis on the construction aspect was also shown by the copious advertisements of construction companies, building materials and their costs in the journal, not to mention the column on building/construction estimates by Du Yangeng, the initiator and long-time editor-in-chief of the journal.

To improve and reform were also the keywords for the journal editors. As declared in the launch issue, the journal's mission was manifold:

> A. To improve on the ways of construction with scientific methods in order to advance the development of the native cultural essence;
> B. To improve the native materials with scientific tools in order to block the channels of imported products;
> C. To advance the professionals' understanding and skill in order to promote new ways of architecture; and
> D. To award specialized publications in order to explore new creations of architecture.[307]

organization rather than that of the architects. It was founded by a group of builders from construction companies in Shanghai in 1931. One of the founders, also the initiator of the journal, was Du Yangeng (1896 – 1961), who came from a construction family in Shanghai, and taught himself architectural technology and English before establishing himself as a builder/ architect. During Du's tenure as editor-in-chief of the journal, *the Builder* focused on introducing progressive and modern ways of construction, by covering new construction projects in America and Europe, on new materials, tools, skills and technology from the West. Du was also a major contributor to the journal. He was the author of a few articles including "Yingzao xue/ The Study of Construction," "Jianzhu cidian/ Building Terms in English and Chinese," "Gongcheng gujia/ Building Estimates," as well as the translator of Western architectural history, all serialized in the journal. For a brief introduction to his life and career particularly in relation to the journal, see He Chongjian, "Du Yangeng and *The Builder*," in Wang Tan, Zhang Fuhe, eds., *Disici Zhongguo jindai jianzhushi yanjiu taolunhui lunwenji* [*The fourth research conference on the history of Chinese modern architecture: a collection of essays*]. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1993: 188 – 193, and also Qian Haiping, et al., *The Course of the Modernization of Chinese Architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2012: 28 – 29. Du was also listed in *Who's Who in Modern Chinese Architecture*. See Lai Delin, et al. eds. *Who's Who in Modern Chinese Architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo shuili shuidian chubanshe, 2006: 26 – 27.

[307] "Launch editorial," *The Builder* 1.1-2. (1933): no page number. The first two issues of the journal were published in November and December of 1932, and a combined/bound volume of these two issues was reprinted in August 1933.

In the launch issue alone, there were three articles discussing "reforming the building industry," "new trends of architecture," or how to reform Chinese architecture (or to be more precise, the relation between imitating Western styles and creating a new Chinese architecture), and "reforming the rental house."[308] The journal took up the issue of (urban) housing in its earliest issues. Discussed under the title of "*Juzhu wenti/residential houses*," the editors published drawings, illustrations and photographs of "various kinds of new, suitable and convenient houses" for the readers' reference.[309] What inspired them to provide these designs was the need to reform the urban house, and to "pursue the happiness of living" for the residents.[310]

A close look at their solutions is informative. In the second issue of the first volume, for the newly-introduced column of "Residential houses," a few "Western" designs were featured. The houses were found in the United States, and their forms differed: both the colonial and contemporary styles, and the Californian Spanish, served as examples. Other than photographs and drawings indicating the plan, elevation and cross-sections, there were usually only a few brief sentences explaining the advantages of the design. Whether the design promoted good livability was the major consideration. For example, a group of houses termed "cute little houses" showed two houses in

---

[308] See these three articles in the launch issue of *The Builder*. Du Jian, "Yingzao ye gailiang chuyi/ Preliminary remarks on reforming the building industry," Huang Zhonglin, "Jianzhuwu xin de quxiang/ New trends of architecture," and Huang Xiruo, "Chuzu fangwu de gailiang/ Reforming the rental house," *The Builder* 1.1-2 (1933): 15 – 22.

[309] The column *juzhu wenti (*literally residential, or housing, problems*),* under which the subject was discussed, was termed differently in different issues. Other terms included *zhuzhai [*houses*]* and *jingji zhuzhai [*economic houses*]*, and variously translated in the journal as Residential houses, or New houses, or Small dwelling house. The journal was not particularly regular in its treatment of the column, with coverage ranging from a few pages to none. The first two volumes, published in 1933 to 1934, seemed to have had the most concentrated discussion of the issue.

[310] "Residential Houses," *The Builder* 1.2 (1933): 33.

photographs and plans (Figure 3.2). The short text pointed out that the first one, with its chimney right next to the entrance, "had an added artistic flavor" resulting from this arrangement. The interior plan and decoration of the house also enabled the "convenience, comfort, and pleasure" of living for the residents. Likewise, the second house, with its garage by the side, was "especially convenient and good for use."[311]

Another page of the same issue showcased two "Californian small houses," about the same size and sharing similar designs (Figure 3.3). The photographs and plans of the houses were accompanied by the editors' glowing praise of the design of these "two beautiful little houses by the Pacific coast": the first one, according to the editors, demonstrated "great originality" in its "ingenious design of the plan," and the second one "always stands in an unbeatable position of advantage among the many forms and styles of small houses."[312] Other than the brief mention of the interior design and decoration of the first house, which offered the inhabitants "convenience, comfort, and pleasure," and the garage adjacent to the second house, making it "convenient and practical," the editors did not explain their advantages any further.[313]

More examples from the journal's pages would readily support the suspicion that imported Western styles of the urban and suburban houses were the models. For example, a design that was labeled "100% American Style" showed a colonial style house with a small drawing of the dining nook and the floor plans. The "neat" appearance of the house, together with "the tasteful exterior and interior," recommended itself as a "satisfactory house (Figure 3.4)."[314] Another design showed a Spanish style bungalow. The editor's

---

[311] "Residential Houses," *The Builder* 1.2 (1933): 34.
[312] "Small houses in California," *The Builder* 1.1-2 (1933): 36.
[313] Ibid.
[314] "Economic house, no.6: 100% American," *The Builder* 2.6 (1934): 50.

praise for this design was the "spacious living room" which was "very comfortable," and wooden ceiling and columns which gave the house "an aged flavor (Figure 3.5)."[315]

The journal was indeed rather eclectic about the styles it showcased on the pages: the American colonial, the Spanish, and the English seemed to be the favorites. But all sorts of revivalist architecture, as well as the modernist ones were also included. In the fourth issue of the first volume, an illustration appeared showing the "style and plan of the modern house of 1933," the year the journal was published (Figure 3.6). It was a modest-sized, rectangular structure with undecorated walls and a large protruding window for the living room. One bedroom and the bathroom, together with the kitchen, occupied the other half of the interior space. The brief text explained the construction materials of the house: reinforced concrete, which made safe living as it was fire resistant, and the cost of house, amounting to four thousand *yuan* including the fees for the toilet and light fixtures and wires, was rather affordable, making it "extremely suitable for a small modern family."[316]

In fact, other than borrowing Western designs to accommodate the urban populace, the journal also did its part in promoting, in the most direct manner, house designs from America and Europe. For instance, after the Pencil Points and Flat Glass Industry cohosted an architectural competition and selected 29 winning designs in 1934, *The Builder* decided to reprint all 29 designs on its pages "despite the high platemaking costs."[317] Except for the brief comments for the designs in the first four places that the journal copied (in excerpts of Chinese translation of the original text so that the readers

---

[315] "Economic house, no. 3," *The Builder* 2.3 (1934):46.

[316] "The modern house of 1933: style and plan," *The Builder* 1.4 (1933): 32.

[317] Lang Qin, "Unprecedented architectural competition results revealed in America," *The Builder* 2.8 (1934): 11. Although the journal intended to publish all of the winning designs, for reasons it did not

can “understand the merits of the design”)[318] from the selection committee of the competition, the rest of the designs were shown in architectural illustrations without any textual explanation. As would be expected, the houses displayed all kinds of styles ranging from the colonial, prairie, and modernist designs, contemporaneous and popular in the 1930s American built landscape (Figures 3.7-3.9). Besides probably saving on printing material and preparation time, the fact that there was no textual explanation accompanying the designs might also indicate that the editors thought of the advantages of the designs to be self-explanatory.[319]

Indeed, what was perceived as advanced, modern, and progressive styles of house designs were unquestionably Western, and the traditional Chinese vernacular was not even proposed as a foil for the fashionable Western single-family house so highly praised by the editors for their appropriateness for modern life. Nevertheless, the architects also devoted efforts to reform the more indigenous style, especially the *lilong* house type ubiquitous in Shanghai’s urban landscape of the time. Treated under the rubric of “Chinese style,” these designs were of the improved *lilong* type for urban Shanghai and the single-storey farm house of the countryside.

The *lilong* house, or sometimes referred to as the *shikumen lilong* house,[320] was a characteristic Western-Chinese hybrid house type that appeared in the 1860s in Shanghai,

---

indicate, in the following three issues (numbers 8, 9 and 10), it published only 20 of the 29 designs altogether.

[318] Ibid.

[319] The editors might also have been influenced by the aesthetic of the “speaking image” around this time, where the picture is put forward without words, or with only cryptic words, as though its content were self-explanatory. See for example, Le Corbusier, and Frederick Etchells. 1927. *Towards a new architecture*. London: John Rodker, Publisher. I thank Prof. Richard Wittman for pointing this out to me.

[320] According to one explanation, the term *shikumen* comes from the Shanghaiese term for the gate to the house or community which later became a metonym for the house type, *shigumen*, which literally means stone (*shi*) wrapped/ bound (*gu*, later morphed into *ku*) gate/ entrance (*men*), so called because of the framing stone slabs around the gate of the house or community. *Linong* means lanes, alleys, similar to the *hutong* in Beijing in north China.

as discussed in Chapter Two.[321] It was regarded as "hybrid," because in plan it resembles a traditional southern China courtyard house; and in spatial arrangement, it replicates the townhouse type of Britain where identical rows of usually two- to three-storey houses were adjoined together on a city plot, creating a uniform street-front facade (Figure 3.10).

By the time the aforementioned issue of *The Builder* came out in 1933, the old-style *shikumen lilong* house had already gone through phases of development from around the 1860s when it first appeared, but there was still criticism of its lack of convenience and comfort for the residents.[322] In other words, there was still room for improvement even for the newer form of the house type. Livability continued to be the primary concern in the newer design. In the example of the journal, the textual information on the designs gave a short critique of the urban house form in its plan and its negative impact on the residents, including the overcrowded space, and the "unhealthy" habits of living afforded by the house. As corrections to the traditional design, the new, improved designs added unbuilt spaces around the house to provide more room for activities, lower outer walls for better ventilation, and trees to indicate healthy living (Figures 3.11–3.12).[323]

As can be seen from the illustrations and first-floor plan of the reformed single-bay *lilong* house, the plan is of a narrow rectangle with the central main hall preceded by an open sky-well inside the entrance. The kitchen is located at the back, separated from

---

[321] See Lou Chenghao, Xue Shunsheng, *Old Shanghai's shikumen*, Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 2004. For background information on the uprisings in Shanghai during the 1853 – 1855 that had a direct impact on the population increase and consequential property speculation in the concessions, see Shanghai shehui kexue yuan. 1958. *Shanghai xiaodaohui qiyi shiliao huibian/ Historical sources on the Small Swords Society Uprising in Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.

[322] Lou and Xue provided a succinct, yet informative account of the structural and stylistic evolution of the *shikumen linong* house in Shanghai from the early 1870s to the 1930s. See Lou, and Xue, *Old Shanghai's shikumen*, 2004.

[323] "Residential houses," *The Builder* 1.3 (1933): 42.

the living room by the staircase to the upper floor (see Figure 3.11). Adjoined in rows, the stairwell and the living room on the first floor, except for the ones at the ends of the building lot, could still suffer from poor lighting and bad ventilation with only one side open to the sky-well in the front, the persistent problems of the older type that the architects wished to improve on. A similar problem could be found with the larger three-bay house's side-chambers (see Figure 3.12).

As if the architects, editors and perhaps the readers had noticed the problems themselves, in a later issue, a set of design illustrations for a double-bay row house appeared under the title of "An illustrated house," with textual information addressing the problems lingering in the previous exmples (Figures 3.13-3.14). According to the editors, these were the construction specifications of a house prepared by an architect.[324] The text discussed the major elements and qualities of the design that recommended itself: small/economic scale/footage, thoughtful design of the living room, the front gate, the side chambers, the staircase, the kitchen, the *tingzijian*, the bedrooms, the bathroom, the fire walls, and the built and open space ratio, etc. (see Figure 3.14). Other than the features specifically calculated to satisfy the building codes requirements, each section of the house seemed to have been designed with the "deficiencies" of the older type in mind with a conscious effort on the architect's part to address and correct them. For example, the plan of the house was changed from the usual narrow longitudinal rectangular to a more square one, enabling the major living spaces – the dining room on the ground floor and the principal bedroom on the first floor – to have a wider south-facing wall for more

[324] From the textual description of the design in the journal, one cannot ascertain whether this was an actual house design by the architect Shi Zhaoguang who prepared (and submitted?) the illustrations, or it was meant to be a "model" design of such a house for the readers of the journal. It could be the latter since the textual description of the design emphasized that it complied to the construction codes of both the

windows (see Figure 3.13). The stairwell was placed in the center towards the back of the house, well-lit, thus keeping intact the integrity of the rooms. The kitchen faced a secondary yard, with both window and door for better ventilation. The editors, or the architect, stressed one prominent improvement for the living room on the ground floor, that is, two small long windows were added at the back wall, making both Chinese-style and western-style interior decoration possible.

Reforming the *shikumen* house type that was prevalent in Shanghai's residential landscape was certainly a task that drew many architects' attention.[325] In fact, the aforementioned article on reforming the rental house in Shanghai, published in the launch issue of *The Builder*, focused its discussion on reforming the *shikumen* house for lease.[326] The author discussed the issues of hygiene, of utility, or [multi-purpose] usages for a space, and finances for constructing a reformed *shikumen* house as a rental unit.

Another professional journal of the same period, *The Chinese Architect*, also published design solutions to improve the house type. In the second issue of the first volume, the journal introduced residential architectural designs by architects, hoping to publish the new *lilong* house designs systematically.[327] The first issue featured designs for the "new-*lilong* houses/units" in a commercial project built for lease. The description of the houses, read as if the commercial advertisement for the project, gave information on the components of each house/ unit; there were altogether about ten rooms in varying sizes including living, dining, bedrooms, bath, toilet, closet, servant room and kitchen,

---

Chinese city and the International Settlement of Shanghai, and so could be built in either part of the city. See "Editorial footnote," *the Builder* 1.9-10 (1933):117.

[325] For example, the majority of the few design examples and solutions included in Xue Cixin's popular book to be discussed later, *Building construction*, were the reformed and improved *shikumen* houses.

[326] Huang Xiruo, "Reforming the rental house," 20 – 22.

[327] "Introduction to residential architecture," *The Chinese Architect* 1.2(1933): 27.

equipped with facilities such as water, gas and electricity. Every room was "well-lit, and well-ventilated, well-sized and perfectly equipped," making the house "perfectly suitable for a modern family's needs."[328] Labeled as a "top choice" among residences of Shanghai at the time, this was a reformed version of the *lilong* house type, retaining its essential spatial layout such as the front sky-well and kitchen at the back, but with a squarer footage and modern facilities, affordable only to the upper classes (Figures 3.15-3.16).[329]

Still, such efforts as shown above were an exception rather than the norm. The journals seemed incapable of addressing the ordinary residents' living situation in Shanghai which continued to deteriorate. This was evident in the manner in which the early *shikumen* houses' generous plan and spacious rooms, over time, were substituted with narrower divisions of space due to the increasing housing pressure for the ordinary folk, and the smaller family unit size.[330] Parts of the house that were not intended for living were also used as living quarters later. One notorious example was the space called *tingzijian*, a north-facing, usually window-less, cramped, mezzanine-level space that was added above the kitchen, which was probably intended for storage but later used for living because of its low renting price, stifling with heat during the summer and freezing during the winter.[331] In the example of the reformed *lilong* house in *The Builder* – mentioned earlier – likely provided as a "model" design (see Figures 3.13-3.14), the

[328] "Yugu village on Yuyuan Road, West Shanghai," *The Chinese Architect* 1.3 (1933): 28.

[329] Ibid, "plan," 29.

[330] Seen from the plan of the *shikumen* house over the years, the space seemed to keep getting smaller in scale while new ways of designing and using the space were contrived to achieve maximum usable footage, reflecting, on the one hand, the gradual transition of the family structure from the extended to a smaller unit, and on the other, the necessary adaptation of new designs in dealing with pressures of urban housing in modern Shanghai.

[331] See Lou and Xue's book for a description of the *tingzijian* from an architectural perspective as illustrated in figure 18. Life in the *tingzijian* was such a prominent phenomenon of Shanghai's ordinary people at the time, since it was the kind of dwelling space that most ordinary new-comers to Shanghai and low-income residents could afford, that it filled popular discussions such as found in Shenbao, professional architectural journals which discussed its reform and improvement, as well as literary works of the time.

architect, or editors, also discussed features of the *tingzijian*, pointing out that it had a north-facing window and the floor was made of reinforced concrete, thus fire-resistant from the kitchen below. This consideration could indicate how prevalent the *tingzijian* was in the overall design of even the reformed *lilong* house.

Although the journal editors' intention was to "pursue the happiness of living for the general folk," as they put it in the column, the houses were most suitable for the middle- and upper-class urban residents. Much of the time, the editors' – and architects' – target audience was the urban rich, rather than the poor. Additionally, the terms "economic" and "small" were only relative. For instance, one so-called "economic house"[332] design published in *The Builder* in 1934 consisted of "seven large rooms," including a kitchen, a bathroom, a dining-room, a living room, four bedrooms and spacious service areas in the two-storey house (Figure 3.17).[333] The promise to help the ordinary residents "pursue the happiness of living" seemed to have become, quickly enough, a forgotten slogan more than a real concern. Both the kinds of houses discussed on the pages of the journal – consisting of mostly Western designs, of either compact or spacious living spaces with modern facilities such as the garage, – and the fact that some designs were real-life commissions by professional architects advertised in the journal to entice potential client interest, showed that the designs were certainly beyond the means of ordinary urban residents.

Almost as a rule, these so-called small-house designs propagated a style of living more than a form of the house. As shown on the pages of *The Builder* in particular, the

---

[332] Although the English content of the journal usually translated *jingji zhuzhai* into Residential houses, the term in Chinese literally means "economic" houses.

[333] "Economic houses, no. 4" *The Builder* 2.3 (March 1934): 47.

idea of convenient, healthy, and comfortable living was synonymous with Western houses. Embodied by the material and formal qualities of the American house, whatever its specific form, the style of living in modern China's urban centers for the well-to-do was unquestionably Western, a fundamental shift from the traditional Chinese courtyard house.

It would be misleading, however, to assume that all design problems were such a straight-forward affair as some of the above examples might suggest, importing Western styles without any regard for alteration or adaptation. Even for the houses that were of an ostentatious "Western" look, such as the Spanish design with "seven large rooms" mentioned above, the editors stressed that such a design was "suitable to our living habits."[334] One prominent issue facing the architects was the tug-of-war between the "Chinese-ness" and "Western-ness" of the house. The architects worked with the client's requests to find a balance between those requests and their own aesthetic and professional predilections, while at the same time complying with the newly established building codes of the municipal government. The resultant solutions were sometimes unexpected, sometimes informative and evocative, and other times bordering on the absurd.

The design of a house at Hung-Jao Road of Shanghai, published in *The Builder* in 1933, provided such a peculiar case. From the block plan of the site, one sees that the house was situated in a triangular corner where Hung-Jao Road intersected with another public road (Figure 3.18). The south elevation of the house shows a stately edifice with symmetrical windows and columns flanking the central bay raised on a solemn platform, giving a strictly "Chinese" look which was completed and reinforced by the obviously "Chinese" ornaments of the roof ridge and the upturned roof corners (Figure 3.19).

[334] "Economic houses, no. 4" *The Builder* 2.3 (March 1934): 47.

According to the editors, this was a “very novel” house with “Chinese exterior, and Western interior.”[335]

The plan of the ground floor, however, tells a more complicated story. On the ground floor, a rather sizable space is divided along the north wall of the living room, sectioning the whole built area into a southern part, which is more or less completely symmetrical with two bedrooms flanking the living room in the center right behind the south-facing main entrance. The north-eastern part of the house follows the slanting triangular shape of the plot, taken up by the garage to the very top, and the kitchen, storage and other service areas in between (see Figure 3.18). This design, although showing “modern” facilities – synonymous with “Western” in the editor’s note – such as the bathrooms (in abundance), the ingle, the garage, the back-door leading directly into the primary living space, the plan was nevertheless rather “Chinese.” The “Chinese-ness” of the plan was recognizable in the conspicuous symmetry, and in the living room’s actual function as a central courtyard uniting and facilitating the movement flow of the living spaces (the bedrooms) around it as in a more traditional courtyard design. But of course this was a hybrid, incorporating not only western features mentioned above, but also the new building material of reinforced concrete, specified in the section of the roof structure (Figure 3.20).

Certainly the effort to fuse the two systems of construction, both in structure and form, was present in the attempt to incorporate “Chinese” features into the design, no matter how the building would look otherwise. The result of such effort, by one student at the architectural school affiliated with the Builder’s Association, was a somewhat

[335] “Editorial footnote,” *The Builder* 1.9-10 (1933): 117.

uncomfortable collage of elements from various sources (Figure 3.21).[336] A protruding entrance portico was added to the front of an otherwise rectangular structure with mostly undecorated exterior walls. The portico was reminiscent of a Western portico with classical orders, but here crowned with upturned rooflines which resembled a traditional *menlou* in southern China's vernacular architecture. The interior spatial arrangement looked like that of an I-house with a central passageway, but the staircase was relegated to the back corner of the house, most likely to accommodate living customs and patterns of the day.

A few slightly later examples show the extent to which the "Chinese" house had evolved and adapted to new materials, hybrid designs, and new methods of construction as well as changing aesthetic considerations. In an issue of 1936, *The Chinese Architect* published a set of designs for three individual houses by the architect Li Yingnian on a shared plot in Hangzhou. At the request of the clients who did not wish their residences to "appear novel," the architect provided three "Chinese-style" houses (Figures 3.22–3.26). All sharing similar designs and looking extremely alike (see Figures 3.23–3.25), the ground floor plan of the houses was divided along a lateral hallway into the south-facing living quarters and north-facing service areas (see Figure 3.25). Indeed the spatial layout of the interior was nothing like the traditional rectangular plan of the *lilong* house, but shared its pedigree with functional designs of the period, able to "accommodate the needs of both new and traditional families."[337]

If the Chinese character of the houses resided with the outer appearance as the architect indicated, one is left to wonder, then, to what elements exactly. Such a

[336] "Practice design by student," *The Builder* 2.9 (1934): 54.
[337] According to the architect's explanation of the designs.

concentrated assortment of irregular, perpendicular rooftops intersecting each other, for example, was certainly not characteristic of the traditional Chinese vernacular residences of the area. The placement of the entrances of the house, functional and reflective of the plan but unsymmetrical, likewise did not lend it the qualities associated with the "Chinese" style. Perhaps it was the roof tiles? Or the lattice-work of the balconies and the gate, which, although simplified, still vaguely resembled the abstract patterns of Chinese vernacular work?

That question was or is not easily answered, certainly not by the architects, although more examples would seem to confirm one's suspicion that the Chinese was indeed reduced to the decorative. Another example serves to illustrate the point. As the architects stated, the design in this case was of a house for a large family, whose hosts enjoyed entertaining their guests, which necessitated an opulent formal dining hall on the ground floor (Figure 3.27) and a hall-way spacious enough to receive a dozen guests at the same time should the need arise (Figure 3.28).

As seen from the plan, the house featured a central courtyard, flanked by rooms on all sides, resembling the spatial layout of a traditional courtyard house. This might be the architects' response to the client's requirement that the house "had to be of traditional style." [338] Other means of achieving a "Chinese style" for the house included the materials used, for example, dark "Chinese tiles" for the roofs, and the color scheme in the house, including crimson for the round columns of the covered veranda. The multiple, repetitive window openings at regular intervals on the first floor of the house also

[338] From the explanation by the architects on the design of the house. See "A house in Nanjing" *The Chinese Architect* 26 (1936): 37.

contributed a stately, orderly look suggestive of a traditional Chinese tower from earlier periods. Even the decorative protrusions bulging from the surface of the wall under the eaves evoked a sense of the traditional *dougong* motif, here most likely simplified as the architects indicated (see Figure 3.27).[339] But its "alien" character was almost as unmistakable; the pronounced entrance portico and the covered veranda were but two such cases in point.

Similar to the three houses in Hangzhou discussed above, this one was also undoubtedly a hybrid, as different from the "traditional" Chinese vernacular house as any of the others. Yet the houses were regarded as "Chinese." This could only indicate the extent to which the perception of what constituted "Chinese-ness" changed over the course of a few decades in early twentieth-century China. The indigenous Chinese house – if there were such a thing – and Chinese architecture, were taken apart into disparate and accessible parts and elements ready to be applied to a structure and construction that was alien to the tradition. In other words, Chinese architecture served as a ready repository to supply decorative motifs and embellishments for a building that was anything but Chinese.

Reforming Chinese Architecture: From Artistic to Decorative

It seemed that various attempts to make the design "Chinese" by incorporating Chinese elements into a modern building only ended up reducing the elements to a decorative motif, an embellishment. This was seen not only in the writings of the Chinese architects discussed above; in fact, many architects in modern China were confronted

[339] Ibid.

with the same problem of lending a Chinese character to their designs in this time of flux.[340] The problem was how; how did one do that in the design? In this section I will examine a few approaches to designing a "Chinese" building in modern China, as exemplified by the works of the American architect Henry Murphy, his Chinese colleagues and followers, and the architect Liu Jipiao who advocated an "art architecture" in modern China. These efforts are meaningful and deserve a closer look, not only because they constituted a fuller picture of what Chinese architecture was like at this historic point, but also because their influence and significance have been downplayed in the subsequent historiography of Chinese architecture, due to the fact that, as I will argue, they were seen as complying to and reinforcing the tendency to treat Chinese architecture as purely decorative, a derogatory term when one considers the structural as the absolute determinant of architectural form and historical development, a belief shared by Liang Sicheng and his predecessors and contemporaries in the West, including the great 18th – 19th century French theorist Quatremere de Quincy.

The lineage of writing on Chinese architecture by Western observers and historians will be dealt with more in depth in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that foreign observers of Chinese architecture in modern China certainly cast a more careful and inquisitive eye to their objects of interest or inquiry than their Chinese counterparts, if only because of the striking difference that Chinese architecture presented itself, which, to the Chinese eye, was but common-place because of its familiarity. Indeed more and more architects were designing and working in China's large cities, especially between 1927

[340] The issue of the decorative showed itself up most clearly in the design approaches, as can be seen in the rest of the current chapter. But if one goes back to the historic sources, one could argue that the basis for treating Chinese architecture as nothing more than decorative was laid down at least since James Fergusson, who famously regarded Chinese architecture as a lesser kind of art in view of what he saw as its artistic

and 1937, the so-called golden period for many endeavors in modern China punctuated by intervals of national strife and war with Japan. Many of these were foreign architects, who in their capacity to design and train their younger Chinese colleagues, exerted their peculiar influence on Chinese architecture. One of the most influential of these architects was Henry Killam Murphy (1877–1954), an American architect whose architectural firm had a presence for more than two decades in modern China. Murphy's fascination with traditional Chinese architecture represented by the Forbidden City was a familiar story.[341] But his efforts in theorizing the characteristics of Chinese architecture for the adaptation of its use in modern buildings are more closely related to what is discussed here.

Henry Murphy's successful professional career as an architect and a high-profile urban planning consultant to the Nationalist government in China spanned over two decades. His designs of the missionary universities in China, in particular the campuses of Yale-in-China in Changsha, the Ginling College for Girls in Nanjing, and the Yenching University in Beijing, had been highly visible and influential among his contemporaries, as was his strong belief in and promotion of a renaissance of Chinese architecture, if only by virtue of his prestigious position in the circle of professional architects in modern China. The first-generation young architects who either worked for or with him included Lv Yanzhi (1894–1929), Dong Dayou (1899–1973), (Robert) Fan Wenzhao (1893–1979), Li Jinpei (Poy Gum Lee, 1900–?), Zhuang Jun (1888–1990) and Zhao Shen (1898–1978), among others. Together with his China-based design practice, his experiments and their

---

heights: the use of polychromy and other decorative elements. See James Fergusson, 1891. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, vol.2, book IX: China.

[341] See Jeffrey Cody's book-length treatment of Murphy's career in modern China. Cody, Jeffrey W. 2001. *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's "adaptive architecture," 1914-1935*. Sha Tin, N.T., Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

consequence, in finding a Chinese Renaissance style in contemporary architectural design is also legendary.[342]

Murphy's short piece, a proclamation of the architectural renaissance that he sought to advance in China, summed up a few of the so-called characteristics of Chinese architecture:

> The most striking characteristic of Chinese architecture – so striking, indeed, as to have led most foreigners who attempted adaptations into the error of thinking it the only feature essential to preserve – is, of course, the curving roof, … Of nearly equal importance as an essential feature of Chinese architecture is its orderliness of arrangement, seen in the almost universal grouping of the principal buildings about great rectangular courts and in the marked adherence to axial planning. … The third essential feature of Chinese architecture is its absolute frankness of construction – "keeping the bones of the building on the outside," … The fourth essential element in Chinese architecture is its lavish use of gorgeous color, which glows from columns, lintels and beams, from richly bracketed cornices and from broad expanses of stuccoed walls as well as from the green, blue and imperial yellow of the roof-tiles in the most luxurious buildings.[343]

These were typical enough, but Murphy, as a careful observer and enthusiastic student of Chinese architecture, went further in noticing more subtleties, "To these four essential features of Chinese architecture, … must be added a fifth essential: the perfect proportioning, one to another, of its architectural elements."[344]

Some of these above sentences would readily remind us of earlier writers such as that of James Fergusson, but for Murphy, there was a very clear and pointed goal in essentializing Chinese architecture: as a practicing architect who believed that Chinese architecture, regarded "merely as archeology" by his colleagues both Chinese and foreign,

---

[342] See Cody, 5. The Chinese names here, mostly of prolific architects, referred to the first-generation Chinese (with the exception of Lee who was Chinese-American) architectural heavyweights in Republican China. The sheer fact that all of them worked for/with Murphy is astounding and enough to show the latter's legacy in architecture of modern China, whatever the particular form of that legacy.

[343] Henry K. Murphy. 1928. "An architectural Renaissance in China: the utilization in modern public buildings of the great styles of the past," *Asia* 28.6 (1928): 468 – 475 + 507: 470 – 472. The underlined emphasis is mine.

[344] Ibid, 472.

ought to have a new life, he was looking for guidance for contemporary design. Commissioned to design "Chinese-looking" buildings for missionary campuses to appease the anti-foreign sentiment of the early twentieth century, he sought to Sinicize his buildings by adopting Chinese features, or put it another way, by adapting the palatial style Chinese architecture to modern buildings. For this, Murphy deemed it necessary to theorize the architecture's characteristics. His last analysis was the "method of approach" in adaptation. He thus criticized the approach of some of his fellow architects in their new designs of "Chinese" buildings:

> I became convinced that the chief difficulty with the adaptations already made lay in the fact that their designers had started out with foreign exteriors and had merely, to a greater or lesser extent, introduced into them Chinese features, which of course could not keep the completed buildings from remaining essentially foreign. I decided that we must start out with Chinese exteriors, into which we would introduce only such foreign features as were needed to meet definite requirements.[345]

Murphy believed that this approach would result in a "really" "Chinese" building.[346] His design of the main building on the campus of the Ginling College for Girls in Nanjing during the early 1920s was a perfect illustration of his method.[347] From the outset, the issue of style was a major deliberation among the committee of the college. As eventually resolved, it was decided that the college would be Chinese "throughout," "instead of being Chinese only by virtue of large hipped roofs with overhanging eaves."[348] The main building of the college seemed to have possessed all the "Chinese"

---

[345] Ibid.

[346] Murphy, 473.

[347] It was the Social and Athletic Building in the original design, but being one of the most famous of the cluster of Republican-era buildings on campus designed by Murphy, it is now the de facto main building, canonized on the university logo of the Nanjing Normal University, the old college's contemporary descent, and behind the flag pole at the terminus of a major thoroughfare inside the main entrance.

[348] Cody, 113.

features on the exterior: the curved and upturned roof, the rows of *dougong*, the vibrant colors on the columns, etc., although the ridge animals seemed nothing more than a faint gesture to their prototype in the indigenous tradition. But as Jeffrey Cody has pointed out, by also using reinforced concrete in the buildings, these buildings, "from a structural point of view, could never be 'Chinese throughout.'"[349] Indeed it was more than just the materials that were substituted and updated; a closer look at the building's structure would reveal something similar. In this main building whose outer appearance had won many praises for the architect Murphy (Figure 3.29), the interior A-truss as well as the lighting source on the roof betrayed their origin as anything but "Chinese (Figure 3.30)."[350]

This approach to bringing Chinese architecture "back to life," as it were, was problematic to say the very least, and it incurred voices of opposition from the very beginning. One example could be found in Murphy's Chinese colleague, the aforementioned Robert Fan, a prominent architect of the time who also worked with him. Fan wrote a short article on the same topic a few years later, defending Chinese architecture while simultaneously reflecting on his own practice of adapting classical Chinese architecture for modern use and repudiating the approach taken by Murphy, his model and ally for the architectural renaissance until the mid-1930s when Fan was apparently won over by the modern movement in Europe.[351] In the article called

---

[349] Ibid.

[350] My photographs were taking during November 2013, when they were renovating it. I am not sure if the roof truss or the skylight was original from the 1920s.

[351] Fan Wenzhao (1893 – 1979), also known as Robert Fan, received his degree in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1921 and was among the first Chinese architects to open his own practice in Shanghai as early as 1927. He was one of the founders of the Society of Chinese (originally Shanghai) Architects established in the same year. Curiously enough, although as demonstrated by Cody, Fan was among those prominent early Chinese architects who "drafted or designed with the American [referring to Murphy]," and was quite obviously influenced by the latter at least before the mid-1930s, this was rarely discussed in Chinese sources. See Cody, 134, and Wu Jiang, 1997. *A hundred years of architecture in*

"Architecture of China," Fan started by asserting that architecture was first of all an art and that it needed to meet two requirements: suitability [for its purpose], and aesthetic quality. The author refuted the popular belief that Chinese architecture had but little to contribute to world architecture by pointing out that,

> Because Chinese architecture has not been systematically popularized, or scientifically studied, it cannot compete with the glory and splendor of Greek architecture, or the dignity and magnificence of Roman architecture. Nevertheless, it has its own value of being, its own independent style, in addition to its beautiful structure, and brilliant color painting, as well as such scientific elements as stability and practicality.[352]

Fan summarized what constituted the characteristics, or essential elements, of Chinese architecture: the plan, the structure, "the honest exposure of the load-bearing structure, hence the decorative came after the structural," the roofline and the "proportionate, accurate, complete, and graceful, resulting from the appropriate disposition and complementation of columns and beams, and walls and roofs."[353]

These points read like a verbatim copying of Murphy's idea discussed earlier, but Fan's article was really meant to reflect on and critique the palatial style architectural renaissance that Murphy advocated. Under new waves of influence, Fan was poised to criticize the same thing as he himself believed in and practiced only a few years earlier.[354] He thus wrote of the "mixed Chinese and Western styles" of architecture in Shanghai:

> These buildings are Western structures with a Chinese-style roof. We could imagine this as the Greek Socrates wearing a silk cap or Confucius of China

---

Shanghai, 1840 – 1949. Shanghai: Tongji university press. There is a short section devoted to Fan as one of the "important [Chinese] architects" in chapter four of Wu's book.

[352] Fan Wenzhao,"Architecture of China," *Wenhua jianshe* [*Cultural construction*] (Oct. 1934): 135 – 139.

[353] Ibid.

[354] See Wu Jiang who argued, through examining Fan's design works, and the addition of modernist architects to his architectural firm in 1933, as well as his travel to Europe in 1935, that Fan's architectural outlook was greatly changed under the new influence of the modern movement. Wu 1997, 154 – 155.

sporting a Western suit. This practice is really committing a crime, and harmful to the principle of architecture, and we should all try to correct this mistake.[355]

Like his colleague Murphy, Fan's ultimate concern was also the approach to design. He likewise believed that one ought to understand the "principal elements" of Chinese architecture as a starting point. For him, termed slightly differently, these elements included "the priority of composition," "the importance of structure," "the graceful roofline," "the proportion, refinement, perfection, and elegance" resulting from the rhythmic and appropriate disposition of columns and beams, walls and the roof. But then, with a peculiar change of tone and logic which seemed self-contradictory – one remembers his statement that "the decorative came after the structural" – Fan discussed the last element of Chinese architecture as follows:

> Chinese art is fundamentally decorative. Architecture is the mother of [all] art, because architecture precedes decoration, which in turn precedes other arts such as sculpture and painting. Therefore, the interior decoration of Chinese architecture can be used advantageously to develop art while satisfying its practical purpose.[356]

In a curious jump from the structural and compositional elements to the proposition that architecture is "the mother of all art," and that "Chinese art is fundamentally decorative," Fan was perhaps attempting to highlight the decorative effect and potential of Chinese architecture. Whether this was a deliberate consideration to promote his interior design company on the sideline is not entirely certain.[357] And yet as much as one might wonder how the author could arrive at a design strategy that sounded like a complete antithesis of Murphy's idea, Fan thus wrote, "China does need this

---

[355] Fan, 1934.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Fan was listed as the "Architect" and "Director of Design" for an interior decoration company in Shanghai in a short commercial design catalog (16 page in total) published in 1925. See Cathay Decorative Art Studio, 1925. *Chinese interior decoration*. Shanghai: the studio.

architecture [i.e., Chinese architecture]. Taking this one more step, I mean we must approach a building from the interior to the exterior, and not vice versa."[358]

Whether from the interior to the exterior, or the other way around, Fan's design around this time was rather eclectic, much in line with the larger architectural trend in the country. In an issue of 1936, which was intended to be a volume devoted to houses, *The Chinese Architect* summed up the trends of residential design in the following terms:

> There are many different kinds of houses, which must all be beautiful, practical, economic and [structurally] sound. Popular around the world are the following styles: one, English, two, Spanish, three, American, four, Colonial, and five, the International style. Our living conditions are slightly different from [those of] Europe and America, so even when there is much imitation of European and American styles on the exterior, the interior arrangement conforms completely to the living habits of our own country.[359]

If one takes a look at the houses that were featured in the journal and in this particular issue, one will find mixtures of "both Chinese and West accomplishments."[360] Take the opulent house that followed right after the editors' admonition to architects to take up the "great work" of designing for the ordinary people, which was more "meaningful" than designing luxury houses. This was, however, a luxury house through and through.[361] The outside was an unabashed imitation of the Spanish style, also labeled

[358] Fan, 1934. Wu Jiang thinks that this "from interior to exterior" approach shows the modernist influence on Fan at this time. See Wu Jiang, 2008. *A history of Shanghai architecture 1840 – 1949*. Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 151. Fan apparently explained this more clearly in an article he published in *People's Tribune* in March 1933, where he stated that "A Chinese building should, in all its major elements, be Chinese. In other words, architectural conception should go from the interior to the exterior, and not the other way around. Foreign features should only be adopted to satisfy requirements of modern comfort and convenience." I have not been able to locate the original piece in English; the translation here is my back-translation of the Chinese translation by Zhang Qinnan, "Charms of Chinese architecture" of the said article.

[359] Editors (?), "Introduction" *The Chinese Architect* 29 (1936):2.

[360] Ibid.

[361] Not only the design, interior decoration and furnishing including materials used, but also the size (about 36 *fang*) and cost of the house (180,000 *yuan*. Another house half the size, by the same architectural firm, in the same Spanish style, costed only 7,000 *yuan*. Yet a third comparison was a house slightly bigger in footage, in the style of "trendy/ popular," costing only 8,000 *yuan* with a swimming pool and tennis court. In comparison, this house costing 180,000 *yuan* was over-the-top luxurious) indicated that it was far beyond the reach of ordinary people. The editors/ architects themselves acknowledged this in the short text

so on the photograph of the house published in the journal (Figure 3.31). The interior, however, showed a spatial differentiation in terms of decoration styles related to the room's function and status in the house. In the "public" arena of the family, for example, the *keting* and *ketang*, the decoration was undoubtedly "Chinese," whereas the family living room, the boudoir and study were fitted with different styles of "Western" decoration, ranging from showy chandeliers and sleek modern figural patterns in the ceiling (Figures 3.32–3.35).[362]

The separation and differentiation of the Chinese and Western architecture and styles for different areas of the house were not the architect's invention, if one recalls that the approach was officially endorsed by the governments of this period. Chinese and Western architecture and decorative modes were assigned to different spaces with distinct, and hierarchical layers of significance. In the urban plan of the capital city of Nanjing in 1929, for instance, the most important public structures were to be of "the native Chinese style," in order to dignify the city, whereas other utilitarian buildings could be built in the modern/ Western style. And in Shanghai where the journal was published, the municipal government's guidelines for the architectural competition of the urban house-shops and rentals, as discussed in the previous chapter, stipulated that the designs should "adopt the advantages of Western architecture, while simultaneously keeping an Eastern flavor."[363]

Although Fan's own design philosophy had seen a swift change around the mid-

---

accompanying the photographs of the finished house. See houses designed by the Wah Sing architectural firm, in *The Chinese Architect* 29 (April 1937): 1 – 26.

[362] The designation and differentiation of the rooms in the house also shows how opulent it was. For occasions of formal reception, there was the *keting* and *ketang* – two rooms that had to be with the guests ("*ke*" in Chinese), and for daily family business, there was the drawing/ living room. The family hostess also had her space for receiving guests, the boudoir.

[363] See Chapter Six of the *Shanghai tebieshi gongwuju yewu baogao* [*Report of the Public Works Bureau, Shanghai Special Municipality*], 2.3(1928): 177.

1930s, when he began leaning more heavily towards a modernist approach, his early pieces such as the YMCA building at Baxianqiao, Shanghai, which he collaborated with his colleagues Gum Poy Lee and Zhao Shen in 1927, showed an unmistakable trait of compromise. On top of an otherwise heavy rectangular structure with little surface ornamentation was added two rings of rather delicate blue-tiled roofs, making a gesture, however faintly, to the Chinese tradition (Figures 3.36-3.37). It would seem that in such cases, the "Chinese" was indeed represented by and reduced to the roofs.

The war over the Chinese roof is examined more in detail in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that it was a problem at the heart of the debates on reforming Chinese architecture and creating a modern Chinese architecture at the time.[364] Featured prominently in the historiography of Chinese architecture by historians both foreign and Chinese, it was arguably an element most difficult to resolve in architectural design. Should one "reform" it? Should one retain it, or reject it? Where should it stand in a modern "Chinese" architecture? Vastly differently views and efforts were articulated and attempted, as seen in the aforementioned examples of Murphy and his colleagues. In a condensed piece discussing architectural creation by the eminent architectural historian Lin Huiyin published in *Shenbao* in 1933, the author turned this issue into a pointed argument about the relationship between the old and the new. After an implicit criticism of the "new methods" referring most likely to the palatial architecture style "Renaissance" of Chinese architecture, Lin wrote,

> You think that the old architecture is really good; pleasing to the eye, and comfortable and leisurely for living, but you cannot afford to say it that way lest others would think that you are going against the historical tide. So you say it

[364] The same problem was carried well into the later periods in China's recent history. In the early 1950s, for example, there was a wave of construction featuring this approach, aptly called "the big roof," to lend more Chinese-ness to a building, which was criticized and rejected immediately after Stalin's fall in 1953/1954, as both being wasteful in economic terms and revivalist in academic terms in China.

> circuitously: the old architecture really should be abolished, but the glazed tiles are worth preserving.[365]

The glazed tiles and the Chinese roof that they shielded had indeed caught the attention of virtually every architect and architectural historian of Republican China. Not everyone saw eye to eye on the matter, though; nor did everyone choose to say things "circuitously." Quite the opposite is true; take Tong Jun's article on the same subject of the Chinese roof. Tong Jun (1900–1983) was another University of Pennsylvania alumnus who had a prolific design practice in the 1930s. In an article published a few years after Lin's article, Tong offered his scorching remarks of the so-called palatial-style/ Renaissance architecture that had been prevalent in China for decades by the time. He started with a sarcastic analogy between the Qing-style queue, or the pigtail, and the Chinese temple roof:

> Contemporary Chinese architecture often reminds one of the pigtail legend. In the backwoods of China it may still be possible to find a man with a pigtail, more cherished than the head it adorns. … No less picturesque and just as antiquated is the Chinese temple roof, borrowed to cover a modern building: once a necessary evil, it later achieved the distinction of being the dominating feature in Chinese architecture. … The Chinese roof, when made to crown an up-to-date structure, looks not unlike the burdensome and superfluous pigtail, and it is strange that while the latter is now a sign of ridicule, the Chinese roof should still be admired.[366]

Deriding that "much eloquence has been wasted in the cause of the so-called Renaissance in Chinese architecture," Tong noted, "If this Renaissance is merely a matter of putting a temple roof over a factory, then adding a pigtail to a dead man ought to bring him back to life!"[367] But of course the problem did not reside with the temple roof per se.

---

[365] Lin Huiyin, "On architecture," *Shenbao, ziyoutan* October 12, 1933 (21).

[366] Tong Jun, 2000. "Architecture chronicle," in *Works of Tong Jun*. vol. 1. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe: 81 – 85. The article was first published in English in 1937 in the Tien Hsia Monthly journal.

[367] Ibid, 81.

Tong was quite clear that his objection was toward regarding the temple roof as the exemplary characteristic, or to be more precise, the defining element of Chinese architecture, and as an expedient solve-it-all solution to adding "Chinese" flavor to a western, or modern building. The real problem, then, was how to make a modern building look "Chinese." Tong cited one example of a newly completed building where the architect did not resort to the curving Chinese roof, but instead used a mixture of pitched roofs and flat terraces (Figures 3.38-3.39). He pointed out that this practice has a long vernacular tradition in "Tibet, Mongolia, Rehe and particularly Kokonor," where "the combination of the tile-roof and the terrace in one building has been typical for centuries." Tong elaborated,

> Most peculiar is the use of nothing but the flat roof, on one building after another, throughout many of the frontier regions; yet these buildings are astonishingly Chinese in appearance, and have attained an artistic level such as those in the so-called Renaissance style can never reach.[368]

Seeing the flat roof as a viable alternative to the palatial/ temple roof for creating a contemporary and modern Chinese-looking building, Tong Jun concluded, "If this Renaissance style is going to survive, not merely as "pigtail" architecture, it must reconcile itself with the flat roof."[369] Campaigning as he was for modernist architecture, Tong wrote,

> When we realize that the prime factor of modern civilization, the machine, is not only standardizing itself but also standardizing the whole world, we should not wonder that human thought, habit and action are adjusting themselves to it more and more. This change, or lack of change, in human life cannot but have a profound effect upon the buildings which shelter it.[370]

In Tong's argument, one aspect of the "profound effect upon the buildings" was

---

[368] Ibid, 83.
[369] Ibid, 83.
[370] Ibid, 85.

that the "façade" of a building, which was predicated on the plan, itself "a logical and scientific arrangement of rooms according to the most up-to-date knowledge available," "could be nothing but modernistic." Insisting on the structural for both design and construction, the logical continuation of this modernist outlook could only mean that modern materials and building technology had outdated the traditional Chinese architecture and transformed it into something merely decorative, since the adornments of Chinese features had no structural meaning. Tong stressed, "There is nothing that can substitute the flat roof of the modern building," and "At present, classical Chinese architecture has nothing to offer to the modern building except surface ornamentation."[371]

Whether it was merely "surface ornamentation" that Chinese architecture had to offer architects of Republican China, or that it was potentially a pool of decorative art, or the art of Chinese architecture that could be tapped into for architectural creativity and innovation, was not such an easily resolved debate. Another approach to regarding and treating the legacies of Chinese architecture was embodied by the writings and designs of the architect Liu Jipiao, which was equally influential at the time, but yet to be fully appreciated in its historical context and consequence.

Liu Jipiao (1900–1992, also known as Liou Kipaul) spent nine years in his youth studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, and later architecture and interior design at the L'Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts.[372] He returned to China in 1927, and quickly established himself in the professional and academic circles through his appointment at the newly-

---

[371] Ibid, 84.

[372] Print information on Liu seems difficult to find in Chinese, other than the bits and pieces of publication by and on him from the Republican period, possibly because he chose to leave China in 1947 for America. This piece of information comes from the content of a website named after him that seems to be maintained by his descendants in the USA. See "Biography: 1918 – 1927: study in Paris" http://liujipiao.com/biography/ (accessed 10/20/2015).

established National Academy of Arts in Hangzhou, and his designs at the West Lake Exposition held in 1929 in Hangzhou, among other endeavors.[373]

In a few articles, Liu explicated his ideas on what he termed as art architecture. The fundamental premise of architecture also as an art distinguished Liu's "art architecture" from the "engineering work" in his terminology, the latter referring to utilitarian designs such as "bridges, railways, factories, roads, ditches, houses, harbors, forts, etc."[374] Making a distinction, first of all, between *meishu* and *yishu*, the former including painting, sculpture and architecture, and the latter also including – other than the three components of *meishu* – graphics, drama, music, poetry, Liu further defined architecture as encompassing the following kinds: art architecture, engineering architecture, civil architecture, state architecture, religious architecture, and memorial architecture.[375] He criticized the general public's view of mistaking engineering work for [art] architecture.

Immersed as he was in Darwinian evolutionism of the time, Liu believed in the "evolutionary, revolutionary" changes of architecture, which was representative of a nation's spirit and culture.[376] He was therefore strongly opposed to imitating Western styles, arguing that "Western styles belonged to the Westerners; Chinese traditional styles are historical. We, as moderns, should create a new Chinese style, a modern style."[377]

---

[373] The Hangzhou National Academy of Arts was the forerunner of today's prestigious China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Liu was the founder and Head of Design in the new school. His immediate involvement with the professional circles could be seen from the special number on his architecture in the *Gognxian* magazine in 1928, and then again another one in the *China Traveler* in 1929. The influential *Eastern Miscellany* also reported on the West Lake Expo right before the latter's opening in June of 1929. For a glimpse of his versatile endeavors, see Jin Xiaoming, 2011. "Liu Jipiao: architecture and book designs," *Bolan qunshu* 2011.9: 92 – 97.

[374] Liu Jipiao, "Art architecture and engineering," *China Traveler* 3.4(1929): 3 – 5.

[375] Ibid, 3.

[376] Liu Jipiao, "Zhongguo xinjianzhu ying ruhe zuzhi," ["How to arrange a new Chinese architecture"] *Eastern Miscellany* 24.24 (1927): 81 – 84.

[377] Liu, "Art architecture and engineering," 4.

The problem came back full circle; how was one to design such a "new, modern" style of Chinese architecture? Liu resorted to his essential distinction that separated art architecture from engineering; that same distinction would necessitate two different approaches to different kinds of architecture. In his own words, "Engineering architecture should completely imitate Western [ways]. … I am absolutely for adopting the western methods, as they are fundamentally scientific, and I am absolutely against adopting Western styles."[378]

As an embodiment of his ideas, his designs for the West Lake Exposition that opened in June 1929 and lasted over 4 months were perhaps the best known of his realized work. Held at the opportune time of the national unification of China, after years of delay, the primary goal of the West Lake Expo was threefold: "to boost industry, improve [the quality of] merchandise, and promote domestic products."[379] Seizing the opportunity to execute his ideas in built form, Liu designed many buildings, on voluntary basis, for the West Lake Exposition including the main entrance to the fair ground, and the entrances to all the exhibition halls and galleries, as well as some other structures.[380] Liu's approach was a wildly eclectic one, fused with the Art Deco spirit of his time. The entrance to the fair ground, for example, was undoubtedly referencing the traditional form of the *pailou*, the memorial archway, albeit with simplified and geometric patterns and

---

[378] Ibid.

[379] Yang Shihu, "A general overview of the West Lake Expo and its mission," *Eastern Miscellany* 26.10(1929): 79 – 82.

[380] There were eight exhibition halls: The Hall of Revolution, the Museum Hall, the Hall of Art, the Hall of Agriculture, the Hall of Education, the Hygienic Hall, the Silk Hall, the Hall of Industry, and two galleries: the Specialty Hall and Reference Hall (Where foreign machinery and materials were on display for comparison and as reference?). Liu designed the main entrance in collaboration with Li Zongkan (who was soon to be his partner in the architectural firm Da Fang in Shanghai) and the number 1 dock with Chen Qing, and the entrances to all the exhibition halls by himself. See Xu Subin, 2006. "Jindai Zhonguo jianzhu de yishu yundong: meishu jianzhu de sixiang he shijian" [The art movement of modern Chinese architecture: the idea and practice of 'art architecture'"] in Zhang Fuhe, ed., 2006. *Zhongguo jindai jianzhu*

emphasis (Figure 3.40). As pointed out, Liu was not particularly interested in following the traditional wisdom on the proportions and other niceties of Chinese architecture.[381] What was perhaps even more striking to some contemporary eyes was the "face" of the building on the waterfront. This stacked-up façade facing the water was made of wood, emphasizing the mass of the building typical of modern architecture, as was its restrained approach (Figures 3.41-3.42).

Liu's preference for the traditional form of the Chinese *pailou*, which was used as the entrance to more than one of China's international and national expositions of the twentieth century, was repeated, together with the *dougong*, the bracket set under the eaves, in other buildings that he designed at the West Lake Expo. The entrance to the Hall of Revolution, for instance, used the same motif of the memorial archway, although with a pair of deliberately exaggerated columns (Figure 3.43). Simplified and striking accent lines and a graceful inverted form, reminiscent of the traditional *dougong*, adorned the theatre at the site (Figure 3.44). Other designs resorted to a more straight-forward celebration of the geometric shapes of the Art Deco movement, in which Liu was immersed while at Paris in the early and mid-1920s, such as the entrance to the Hall of Art and the Music Hall (Figures 3.45-3.46).

Although vehemently opposed to both slavishly imitating the old [Chinese] ways, and copying Western styles, Liu was nevertheless remarkably open to selecting from and synthesizing all styles, elements, and motifs to create his art architecture, a new architecture for modern China. As Xu Subin has pointed out, Liu's idea and practice of

---

yanjiu yu baohu, 5 [*Study and preservation of Chinese modern architecture*, no.5]. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe: 731 – 746.

[381] Xu Subin, 2006. "Jindai Zhonguo jianzhu de yishu yundong: meishu jianzhu de sixiang he shijian" [The art movement of modern Chinese architecture: the idea and practice of 'art architecture'"] in Zhang

the "art architecture" represented the architectural branch of the art movement that was initiated in late 1920s, at the very institution where he taught, and his approach to reforming Chinese architecture, which was really the Chinese incarnation of the modern movement, was "a landmark development of modernism in the East."[382]

To view architecture as a legitimate form of art in China, as "the mother of all art" might have been a popular view among the circles of artists, architects, and art as well as architectural historians of the time.[383] But the view of Chinese architecture from a perspective of the fine arts made a significant impact. The intertwined relationship between art and architecture will be discussed in the next chapter, but the problem at hand had more closely to do with the establishment of architecture as a modern discipline in China. As is commonly acknowledged, initial architectural studies in late Qing China owed a great deal to its model of modern Japan in terms of both curriculum configuration and instructor resources. Scholars have explicated on Japanese architectural historians' influence on the early historiography of Chinese architecture.[384] As Xu Subin has shown, the early stage of introducing into China and translating the European concept of architecture and its history via the mediating forces of Japanese scholars during the last years of the Qing Dynasty and early Republican period occurred as two consecutive currents related to the changing attitudes towards architecture. As the Qing court

---

Fuhe, ed., 2006. Zhongguo jindai jianzhu yanjiu yu baohu, 5 [*Study and preservation of Chinese modern architecture*, no.5]. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe: 731 – 746.

[382] Xu, 2006, 731.

[383] The art historian Lin Wenzheng urged his fellow researchers and educators not to forget about sculpture or architecture, likewise highly praising architecture as the "mother of all art." See Lin Wenzheng, "Mo wangji le diaoke he jianzhu" ["Don't forget sculpture or architecture"] *Guoli yishu yuan banyue kan* [*Apollo*] 4(1928): 261 – 267. Lin's example will be discussed in the next chapter.

[384] In this group of scholars, see especially Xu Subin, whose research on the Sino-Japanese exchange of architectural ideas during the late Qing and early Republican periods is exemplary. Her studies show the work of early Japanese scholars on Chinese (and Japanese) architecture, and how it was translated and transplanted into the Chinese context. Xu Subin, 1999. *Japan's research on Chinese cities and*

attempted to establish its modern educational apparatus after abolishing the millennium-long Confucian examination system, they viewed architecture as a practical science to serve the purpose of strengthening the country against Western encroachment. The study of architecture, therefore, was categorized as that of engineering science. Although Meiji Japan imported the modern concept of architecture mostly from Britain as both a science and a fine art, the other equally important component – architecture as a fine art – was bypassed in the early stage of transplanting the system from Japan into China through the curricula, similar to the earlier situation in Japan. As Xu has argued, it was not until the New Culture movement that architecture was able to break more completely out of the Confucian yoke of institutions and laws in which it belonged in traditional China, to be viewed and advocated as a fine art.[385]

Reforming Architecture: Educating the Professionals and the Public

Alongside the architects' effort to produce practical design solutions to reform the urban landscape, another strand of effort was devoted to educating the (would-be) professionals and the general public in the hope of fundamentally reforming the study of architecture. Like many other academic studies of late Qing and Republican China such as history, philosophy and philology, which went through a process of "modernization" on the principles of scientific and empirical inquiry, the study of architecture was no exception. Known and practiced in traditional China as the master builder's trade, it was a craft rather than a subject of intellectual pursuit. As an academic study imported from

---

architecture. Beijing: Zhongguo shuili shuidian chubanshe. And Xu, 2010. *The beginning of Chinese modern architecture*. Tianjin: Tianjin daxue chubanshe.

[385] Xu, 2010.

Meiji Japan at the end of the Qing dynasty, it was mediated through the dominant ideology of the late nineteenth century which viewed it as an applied science, as a "form" of Western technology which should be absorbed into the "essence" of Chinese culture.[386]

Amid this transformation, the engineers, architects and builders not only saw the need to reform design, structure and construction, but also to change the general public's attitudes toward architecture. The "poverty" of Chinese architecture was seen not only in the old ways of constructing buildings, but also in the lack of properly trained architects, and the lack of recognition and knowledge on the part of the public about architecture. Just like Sheng Chengyan called to society at large to respond intelligently to the need of reforming the house, the experts were aiming to educate the public with their writings. Other than the journal articles discussed above, many books were published at the same time, partly to convey architectural knowledge to a more sophisticated audience – the would-be professionals – partly to advertise and solicit commissions for the authors as practitioners, and partly to educate the general public on the matter of architecture. These publications covered the whole spectrum of professional, usually engineering, works on structure, construction, architectural drawings, and such collections of pattern-book-like illustrations for the reference of the general public as do-it-yourself house designs.

There were myriad approaches, as tried and demonstrated by the experts, to the issue of reforming the Chinese house and architecture. As shown in the previous section on the deficiencies of the Chinese house discussed earlier, many aspects were presented for discussions of reform, among them the issue of structure, and methods of construction and design in particular. *Building Construction*, by the engineer and architect Zhang

[386] Xu Subin gives a thorough account of the transformation of architecture that happened at the end of the Qing and Republican periods, tracing the "birth" of Chinese architecture at this time. See Xu, 2010. *The*

Yingxu, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was one of the earliest efforts to reform the study of architecture. It consisted of two major parts dealing with the general introduction (which focused on the processes and calculations of brickwork, carpentry, whitewashing and painting, and glasswork) and the facilities (such as ventilation, heating, lighting, sewage, etc.), designing (drawing and planning) and the application of architecture design (various types of construction such as the theatre, hospital, houses, schools, and factories, etc.). Published in 1910, this book represented an early "scientific" approach to both construction and design, incorporating modern studies of mechanics, materials, mechanical engineering, surveying and cartography and so forth in producing a subject of study drastically different from the traditional carpentry and masonry.[387]

Reforming structure and construction was seen as the basic step to reforming Chinese architecture. The architect Sheng Chengyan, discussed earlier, was among the advocates for reforming Chinese architecture through reforming its structure. In the wartime "ashes and rubble" [388] of the provisional capital of Chongqing in 1943, he wrote *A Preliminary Investigation of Architectural Structure* in order to illustrate and propagate the study of architectural structure, which, according to him, was "the number-one issue of reforming architecture."[389] Although not a textbook, as Sheng iterated, this book illustrated the "structural what-is and what-ought-to-be"[390] of architecture in plain and

beginning of Chinese modern architecture. Tianjin: Tianjin University Press.

[387] Lai Delin, 2007. *Studies in modern Chinese architectural history*. Beijing: Tsinghua University press, chapter 2. Although the concurrent English title of the book was *Building construction*, the Chinese title, *Jianzhu xinfa*, literally means "*New ways of architecture/ construction*."

[388] Sheng Chengyan, *A preliminary investigation of architectural structure*, Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan (first edition 1943, third edition 1945): 5. According to the author's preface, he intended the book for the general public, and so omitted the technical aspects such as calculations from it. As for the drawings explaining the structure and construction, he intended to leave those to an accompanying volume entitled *Illustrated architectural structure*, which was probably not published as I was unable to locate that volume in library search engines.

[389] Ibid, 2.

[390] Ibid, no page number.

accessible language, according to different types of materials and their respective usage in construction: brick and stone, wood, steel and iron, and reinforced concrete.

Writing during the time of war, Sheng emphasized the importance of architectural structure also because of practical considerations, which he discussed in the last chapter of his book: to reduce the risk of potential natural and man-made calamity to a building, whether it was natural decay, earthquake, fire, or bombs. For Sheng, the need for prevention of damage, especially against earthquake/ shock and fire, both closely related to war, offered a good opportunity to study architectural structure. But Sheng's investigation and promotion of architectural structure was more directly a response to the current conditions of architectural creation in China. As he explained:

> Saddened by how much calamity was done to the people after a building collapsed from the bomb and ensuing fire, I drafted this book in hard-found breaths of time during my chaotic displacement. Providing the minimal possible structural requirements of architecture, [this book was a response to] the tendency of society's embellishing only the outside of a building with no care for the "content;" of calculating only profit without attending to the security measure [of the construction]; of pretending to know-it-all without consulting the architect; and of trusting only the craftsmen without paying attention to architectural regulations or structural principles.[391]

Sheng was addressing two major forces in society that he deemed especially harmful for the development of Chinese architecture: the general public's ignorance about and indifference to what a house or architecture was or should be, and the craftsmen who, although possessing no scientific knowledge, nevertheless undertook architectural construction. Strutting all the evolutionary and developmental rhetoric about architecture in modern China was, then, the pivotal role of the modern architect in Sheng's argument. The concern for the architect's role (and Sheng saw himself playing his part), in the

[391] Ibid, 4.

process of architectural creation and production was a thinly-veiled echo of his earlier pledge for reforming the Chinese house. At the end of that article, Sheng warned that if one wished to build a better house to one's demand, one would only be dissatisfied with what a traditional craftsman had to offer. In other words, a modern architect needed to be consulted and commissioned for the purpose.[392]

Sheng's book on structure might not be a textbook, but many textbooks and quasi-textbooks appeared on the market, aiming to educate the general audience. More advanced readers such as vocational school students and (would-be) professionals were targeted for technical study of architectural structure. One early example, part of the Vocational School Textbook Series of the Commercial Press, was entitled *Structure of Houses*, first published in 1936. The editors of *Structure of Houses*, Tang Ying and Wang Shoubao, themselves instructors of civil engineering courses in universities and vocational schools, critiqued Chinese traditional architecture in the following paragraph:

> Our countrymen's appreciation of vernacular housing has always emphasized its formal qualities, at the negligence of its technological aspects. All construction projects were conducted in old ways by carpenters and other craftsmen with rough, superficial drawings. Technological innovation has been rare. The inevitable result of this practice is that, with the importation of Western studies, our country's architecture has gradually become outdated.[393]

The bulk of their book was taken up by the explication of structural elements, their measurements and calculations according to different categories of craftsmanship: earthwork, brickwork, carpentry, iron and steel work, and reinforced concrete construction. Meant to be used as a textbook, this work was an improved and extended compilation of the editors' lecture notes from the courses they taught, full of advanced

[392] Sheng, *Xueyi* 3.7 (1921): 12.

[393] Tang Ying, Wang Shoubao, eds., *Structure of houses*, Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan (first edition 1936, second edition 1938): 1.

mathematical calculations in tables and charts, and technical drawings and illustrations certainly beyond the grasp of the ordinary reading public.

A series of books entitled "Practical Architecture," more ambitious in scope although not necessarily so in content, followed in this line and afford us another look at these publications meant as textbooks. The author Chen Zhaokun, dividing his "practical architecture" into four separate volumes, treated a cluster of major issues related to architectural design and construction in each book: the mathematical principles (volume one), the design principles (volume two), the calculations (volume three), and the illustrations (volume four).[394] The four volumes together attempted to treat the study and practice of architecture as an all-around scientific affair, encompassing every step of the building activity. Like Zhang Yingxu's book mentioned earlier, these were the modern professionals' version of architecture.

According to the author, these books formed an accumulative process of studying architecture by oneself. Volume one provided "basic guidance on mathematics, physics and dynamics," and volume two, "elementary [architecture] with different types of design."[395] Volume three went a step further, with various kinds of calculation, which was supplemented by the author's illustrations from his own commissions. The last volume focused on architectural drawings. Chen's books were filled with advanced mathematical

[394] Chen Zhaokun, *Practical Architecture*, vols.1 – 4, Shanghai: Chen Kui Architectural Office and Publishing House, 1935 & 1936. These books, although entitled "architecture," were more on structural engineering, as the author himself indicated that he meant to "promote engineering studies" with these publications. Other than a mention that the author Chen graduated from the I.C.S. University in America by one of his preface writers, I have been unable to find more information on him or his educational background (although he did give his teacher's name in another book by himself but it seemed relatively obscure too), seemed to have been a structural engineer judged by the content of his books. He also published some other works related to architectural drawing/ structural engineering. See Chen Zhaokun. 1936. *Shiyong jianzhu huitu xue*/ *Practical Architectural Drawing*, vol.1 – 4. Shanghai: Chenkui jianzhu shiwusuo chuban. And Chen Zhaokun. 1936. *Jianzhu xue tigang*/ *An outline of architecture*. Shanghai: Chenkui jianzhu shiwusuo.

[395] Chen Zhaokun, "postscript," *Practical Architecture*, vols.1 – 4.

and technical calculations, tables and charts even in the volume on "design," and practical issues involved in the design and construction process certainly targeting a more sophisticated audience. As the author stated on the covers of the books, they were intended for "architects, engineers, surveyors and mappers, draftsmen, proofing masters, construction overseers," and their peers. Further enhanced by the architect's real-life commissions and copies of contracts, they were intended to be a reference book for the (would-be) professional practitioners.

One of the recurrent complaints about the traditional craftsmen from the modern architects and engineers was that the former did not possess the necessary training or skills of modern design, especially seen in their lack of the ability in architectural drawing and illustration. Inspired by the Western mode of writing on architecture and architectural history, the Chinese scholars started to pay particular attention to the study of architectural drawing. To some extent, the ability of architectural drawing was equated with the capability of architectural design in the proper sense, an understanding apparently shared by the public as shown in the first chapter. For this reason, many articles appeared both in the popular press and professional journals educating the readers on architectural drawings. For example, in the Architecture and Real Estate supplement of the popular newspaper *The China Times*, a short piece on architectural drawings was published for "the reference of the beginners of architectural drawings and illustrations" in 1931.[396] The author guided the reader through the whole process of making an architectural drawing, starting with the necessary and proper tools, including pencils, paper, rulers and knives and so forth.

---

[396] Chen Zhen, "An elementary introduction to architectural drawing," Architecture and Real Estate Supplement, *The China Times*, no.20. June 30, 1931.

A later work, published in 1941 also as a textbook for vocational school students, offered more substantial information on the topic. The author, himself a teacher of architectural drawing, provided a comprehensive study of architectural drawing in every stage of the work.[397] The author thus stressed the importance of architectural drawing:

> The drawing is the origin of construction; without it, construction would not have a starting point. And architectural drawings are very closely related to our life, since living/ the residence is one of the four major necessities of life….. Therefore, it is self-evident that knowledge of architectural drawing should be expected of us, just like writing and the numeric are.[398]

The book likewise provided the basics of architectural drawing, including the proper tools and ways of handling them, lettering, geometrical drawing and projections, etc. But what is shown as "generic" Chinese houses in the demonstration of the drawings are equally informative. The author devoted a chapter to "Architectural Drawing" which included four houses illustrated in details. The author pointed out that the first three houses were all of "Chinese styles," whereas the last one had "incorporated European-American influences."[399] The first house was a three-bay single-storey house with a symmetrical plan. The living/ reception hall is located right beyond the sky well inside the entrance, dividing the rooms along the middle of the house (Figure 3.47). As the section of the house shows, the structure was of *chuandou* construction, one of the most commonly used construction systems in traditional Chinese architecture.[400]

The second house, a single-bay *lilong* unit in a row, shows a more traditional plan with the staircase and kitchen buried in the depth. The house might look "Chinese"

---

[397] Huo Yongzhang. 1941. *Architectural drawing*. Changsha: Shangwu yinshu guan.
[398] Ibid. "Preface."
[399] Huo,
[400] According to *A visual dictionary of Chinese architecture* by Qinghua Guo, *Chuandou* post-and-tie construction: a type of building structure with purlins resting directly on posts, and with tie beams tying the posts together in the transverse directions. See Guo, 2002. *A visual dictionary*, 25.

enough with its modest scale, orderly facade and "red tiles" (red tiles looking Chinese?), but the section shows something different. The king post truss was such an alien element in the construction that the author had to give the term in English in his writing (Figure 3.48). Compared to the plan and look of the house with incorporated European-American influences, then, one might pinpoint the "Chinese-ness" of the other houses to perhaps the Chinese tiles for the first house that the author specified (even though other unconventional materials such as cement were also used)? To the symmetrical plan and look? There was certainly more than met the eye at first, but what met the eye seemed to be enough for identifying a "Chinese" style.

Other than the books for the professional reader, there were also those that were aimed at the general public. Take Xu Xintang's book on economic houses published in 1933 for instance.[401] Xu published his book as a guidance and reference for the readers who wished to be their own designers and overseers when building a house or (re)decorating a house or room. His rationale was that if the owner could be the designer and contractor of his own house, he would be both protected from the greed of the traditional carpenter/ builder and possible danger of the latter's often less-than-satisfactory work, and more motivated to seek the best result for his labor and finance. At the beginning of his book, the author offered his understanding of the prerequisites of a "perfect" house: that it should be practical, pleasant and structurally sound. An economic house should take the consideration of finances into the equation, that is, an economic house was one that was "the most practical, most sturdy, and most beautiful [obtained]

[401] Xu Xintang, 1933. *Economic Houses*, Shanghai: Xu Xintang Architect/ Engineer's Office. Xu Xintang (1895 - ?) received his degree in civil engineering in 1920. See a brief introduction to him and his work in Lai. Lai et al. *Who's Who*, 163.

with the least amount of expenses."[402] With the owner taking charge of all the work, the author argued, he would exert himself to seek such a result which was something even better than the "perfect" house: the economic house.

The majority of the book presented, understandably, many plates of architectural drawings of some forty houses, probably not all of the author's own design, to the reader as guidance and reference material. These drawings were usually in the form of line-drawn sketches of the exterior of the house, supplemented by more detailed plans, elevations and cross-sections (Figures 3.49-3.50). Arranged in the order of elaborateness and structural complexity in accordance with the author's categorization of the houses for their respective residents, that is, from the plainest house for the laborers in the city, to those for the country folk, for the ordinary people, and for middle-ranged and upper-class residents, the houses became more and more complex and "high-end" in both plan and elevation, ranging from single-storey to triple-storey structures. Many of the more general drawings and illustrations of the house designs turned out to be enticements for potential commissions: one had to purchase, sometimes with quite a sum, the complete set of detailed, scaled work drawings from the architect's office if one wished to build a house of one's favorite design featured in the book.

In the textual part of the book, the author provided a few different styles, or "exterior forms" of houses for the readers to choose from: Chinese, Italian, Spanish, American, and English. It is interesting to contrast these styles with what was offered in the drawings. Of all the forty houses, only a few were in the so-called Chinese style. Even then, the Chinese was reduced to be the decorative motifs. Similar to most house designs

[402] Ibid, 2.

featured in the professional journal *The Builder*, The prototype of the majority of the houses included in Xu's book was the detached house standing in the middle of an empty space, not the compositional unit of a typical courtyard complex whose existence and meaning depended on other buildings surrounding a courtyard.

Underlying all these publications on architecture, whether popular readers for the general public, or more advanced, technical readings for architecture and engineering students and would-be professionals, was an assertion or assumption that the "proper" way of building a house started with the proper mode of designing it, particularly the preparation of architectural illustrations. The traditional carpenter or craftsman, devoid of such training, knowledge and skill, and unfamiliar with structural principles in the eyes of the modern architect and engineer, should not be entrusted with "designing" or constructing a building. Therefore, the first step to reforming the house and Chinese architecture, as the professionals argued, was to guard the public and potential clients against the traditional master builder. On the one hand, the goal of publishing these popular series of architecture was to "liberate various studies from the hold of the intelligentsia for the enjoyment of the public" according to some editors,[403] on the other hand, they served to establish the intelligentsia's monopoly of expertise in such studies. It is obvious that all these publications, authored by professional architects and engineers, also helped to set the boundaries of the modern discipline of architecture, and establish the authority of the expert in the field of architecture embodied by the modern architect (and engineer), as opposed to the traditional craftsmen or his close ally in traditional China, the literati amateur builders, both in discourse and in design practice.

[403] Xu Weinan, "The purpose of publishing the ABC series," in Yang Junshi, *The ABCs of architecture*, Shanghai: ABC congshushe, 1930.

As a matter of fact, the final step to set up the boundary of the study of architecture was to transform its episteme by writing the hitherto unwritten history. In so doing, the authors – the architect-historians of Republican China, – killed a few birds with one stone: they refuted what they regarded as erroneous and derogatory claims of Chinese architecture by Western and Japanese scholars at a time of China's utter political weakness; they established their authority in the field as the embodiment of the expert over the traditional master builder and the general public through a "scientific" historiographical approach; and they fundamentally changed the nature of the study of Chinese architecture from an oral, material engagement to a modernized, intellectual pursuit fit for the academic setting.

Chapter Four: Writing a History of Chinese Architecture

What we know today about Chinese architecture and its history in a modern, academic mode of knowledge production and acquisition was indeed from the people who wrote about it less than a century ago. As shown in the previous chapters, the popular discourse on Chinese architecture found its main outlet in newspapers, magazines and journals of the time. The discussions ranged from redesigning the entire house to decorating the interior space with imported European-style furnishing. The professional group, including the engineers, architects, and builders, asserted their presence by forming their professional associations, publishing popularizing articles and books and do-it-yourself guidebooks, and most importantly, by erecting public edifices, whether government sponsored structures or houses for private individuals. The municipal governments assumed a somewhat different role. In their large-scale re-forming and reconfiguration of the urban space, they provided a modern infrastructure for the antiquated city, regulating construction activities through building codes and regulations, and providing shelter for the urban poor, all of which aimed at creating a uniform, regularized, and legible urban landscape.

But there were still more voices – heard by a large or small audience – other than those with which we are familiar today. Various attempts were made to articulate both Western and Chinese architecture during the period under investigation. Seemingly outlandish approaches and styles of writing appeared and they deserve a closer look, not only because they reveal a vibrant period when alternative understandings of Chinese architecture were vying with the professional discourse that subsequently relegated them to the dustbin of history, but also because they offer us fresh, and potentially alternative

ways to understand Chinese architecture outside the straightjacket of structural rationalism that the first-generation architectural historians put it in.

This chapter focuses on some of those alternative approaches to articulating Chinese architecture. These alternative approaches constituted the historical milieu from which the standard historiography of Chinese architecture was soon to emerge. Some of them were from outside the western academic tradition of professionalism, i.e., the Beaux-Arts tradition of architectural history that dominated architectural education, theory and practice during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Exemplified by Yue Jiazao, this was the amateur historian's approach having its roots in the classical *biji* tradition, albeit with a distinctly modern twist. Another contribution came from the foreign architects then practicing in China, who were confronted with an alien architecture with an undeniably striking – *Chinese* – character both in its traditions and practice. Noticing the drastic differences between what they saw in China and what they knew about (Western) architecture, they articulated and pondered over those differences, effectively reducing a living tradition into a set of "characteristics" of Chinese architecture in their effort to grasp the matter in its whole, a strategy shared also by their counterparts among Chinese historians.

Yet another issue was the relation between the history of fine art and that of architecture. As modeled after its European and American predecessors, the equivalent of an architectural history education and understanding in contemporary China displays a different character, per the role of art history and its relation to architectural history. It followed a long trajectory to come to today's state of affairs. The situation in the 1920s and 1930s might have been different. The few examples of a history of Chinese architecture published in English during this period, for example, showed their

unmistakable roots in the Western tradition of uniting both fine art and architecture onto one plane, architectural history being an integral part of a general history of art in the West.[404] Chinese art historians trained in the western, academic tradition, including those whose education was mediated by Japanese academia, followed suit. Both Jiang Danshu and Teng Gu, for instance, treated architectural history as a "natural" element of the history of Chinese art, which was the subject of their treatises published in the 1910s and 1920s.

A common strategy, as mentioned earlier, was to condense Chinese architecture into a set of "characteristics," a belief and practice that many observers and writers had shared. Deducing a set of characteristics from Chinese architecture produced one direct consequence: it disintegrated and shattered the "organic" whole of the entity into a group of disparate parts that possessed, and indeed encouraged, the potential of its reassembly into something quite different. This was what happened with the Chinese Renaissance style buildings – modeled after the imperial palaces in China – of Henry K. Murphy and others, and it was true of architectural designs of many architects at the time when the compositional elements of Chinese architecture were freely appropriated into producing an effect of Chinese-ness of the building as desired. In other words, Chinese architecture became decorative components for embellishing an otherwise completely "un-Chinese" building, as discussed in the previous chapter, and as occurred, one might add, to its western counterparts of the different historical styles that were used to embellish and add meaning to otherwise completely "unhistorical"– i.e., modern – buildings.

[404] This is of course a simplified statement of a much more complicated situation, which was, although not always like this, by 1900 or so, more or less the case.

It is only in this context that we are able to understand the subsequent efforts, epitomized by Liang Sicheng and a group of his fellow Chinese architectural historians at the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture during the 1930s and 1940s, to reassert the “structural” back into the disintegrated and “decorative” picture of Chinese architecture as the popular belief and practice would have it, and to reclaim a wholesome quality, an “organic whole,” in Liang’s words, of Chinese architecture, buttressed and reinforced also by none other than his Beaux-Arts training and influence from the modern movement. On the one hand, the awareness and admiration of a modern aesthetic predicated on structural clarity and dominance of the tectonic system had directed and focused Liang’s attention to and faith in the structure of traditional Chinese architecture, and its promise in providing a basis for a modern Chinese architecture in the future. On the other hand, he deemed abhorrent the disintegration of Chinese architecture into individual components for free appropriation, and sought to put an end to it through his historical writing. His goal was to reconstruct the scattered pieces back into its “original” and “indigenous” whole, albeit according to a set of dictums and principles that were anything but original or indigenous.

Outside the Academy: Yue Jiazao’s *A History of Chinese Architecture*

The puzzle over building materials used in Chinese construction was perhaps one of the earliest questions asked regarding the difference between Chinese architecture and its European counterparts by the Europeans, or someone acquainted with such a European vision and version of classical architecture. The Jesuits of the sixteenth century onwards in China certainly had spilled plenty of ink over the question of why even Chinese monuments – granting there was such a category of buildings – were built in the

perishable material of wood, and not the more appropriate and durable material familiar to them such as stone masonry. The puzzle remained unresolved, as did the debate. New materials also constituted one of the major breakthroughs in construction technology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; one thinks of the 1851 Crystal Palace of Joseph Paxton and the Eiffel Tower of 1899. Fundamentally different from the traditional materials of earth, wood, stone, brick and so forth, reinforced concrete, iron and steel construction brought a transformation in architecture not only in its general form and scale, but also in structure and artistic expression and sensibility. It is no wonder, then, that as early as 1920, there appeared a short treatise on the history of architectural materials in China before another equivalent history, however brief and rudimentary, of Chinese architecture was attempted in Chinese.

Published by Dai Yue in 1920, this short text was written in classical Chinese – in opposition to the vernacular Chinese that was gaining popularity during the New Culture Movement of the time – and dealt with the history of building materials in China.[405] The author Dai Yue, probably a lecturer at Peking University then, traced the development of building materials from classical sources, citing instances – as well as existent structures as illustrative examples occasionally – on commonly used materials such as earth, stone, brick, tiles, lime, wood and so forth. By comparing the textual sources on the materials for building walls in historic records of such activities, for instance, the author concluded, "So the sequence of the development of the wall in our nation must be that stone walls

[405] Information on the author Dai Yue is difficult to access, but from what I can get from the primary sources, he seemed to have been a lecturer (?) at Peking University during the early 1920s. Other than his piece discussed here, he was also the translator of Bushell's book on Chinese art, to be discussed later in the current chapter, which was published by the Commercial Press in 1923, the later edition of which was proofread by Cai Yuanpei, the renowned educator and former president of Peking University.

appeared first, then there were walls of [pounded] earth, which was then followed by those made of bricks."[406]

Although short and terse on the whole, the author's agenda in writing this piece was clearly articulated: "Materials are the first consideration for any revival of architecture."[407] The aim, therefore, was to achieve at the "natural" end of an evolutionary history of building materials, that is to say, to use metal and stone to replace the more familiar materials of earth and wood in Chinese architecture. The supporting evidence and model for the author came from all around the world, both ancient and modern, especially the United States in the latest stage of development. Writing in 1920, the author connected the "revival" of Chinese architecture, which could be procured only through reforming the construction materials in his opinion, to that of the grandeur of the nation in comparison to an array of other nations of "ancient civilization," a nationalist sentiment representative of the time. At the end of the article, Dai asserted:

> Recent new buildings in America all use metal columns. And most ancient architecture of Egypt and India were built in stone, so that today there still are gigantic pyramids standing along the banks of the Nile, reminding the visitor that it is an old nation of ancient civilization. The great buildings erected by our ancients, [however], although filling the pages of history books, are very rare to find. If we wish to see grand buildings from a thousand years ago, the chances are very small, as they were built of earth and wood. …. There is a lot of metal in the [northern] provinces such as Shanxi and Shaanxi, and the ground is covered with stone, which is not hard to quarry. ... Today if we talk about reforming architecture, hoping to lay the foundation for thousands of years of grandeur, and boasting our spectacular vision to the five continents, there is no other course than to reform our building materials.[408]

This practice of measuring Chinese architecture against the yardsticks of other

[406] Dai Yue, "A history of building materials in China," *Beijing daxue yuekan*/ *Peking University Monthly* 1.7(1920): 55 – 62, 59. The English is my translation, as are all the quotations from Chinese sources in this chapter.
[407] Ibid, 55.
[408] Ibid, 62.

models and standards, whether African or Asian, European or American, thereby finding it in need of reform, was typical of the era. Chinese architecture, just as every aspect of political, social, and cultural life that needed reforming, was no exception. And yet the scholar, caught in the zeitgeist of reform, still clung to aspects of old familiarity, such as the classical prose adopted in Dai's article – whether by preference or for mere convenience – was not an anomaly at this time of transition. More prominent was his methodology of historical research; his was the evidential learning immensely popular and influential before the advent of modern historiography of the early twentieth century in China, the latter being a self-conscious reform of methodology in the field of historiography as pioneered and advocated by such cultural luminaries as Wang Guowei (1877–1927), Liang Qichao (1873–1929), and Hu Shi (1891–1962).[409]

A better known example in a similar vein can be found in Yue Jiazao's work on the history of Chinese architecture, *Zhongguo jianzhu shi* [*A History of Chinese Architecture*]. Published more than a decade later, Yue Jiazao's book has seen an interesting trajectory in the eighty years that have elapsed since its publication. In the past decade or so, it has been rescued from a state of historic oblivion. The "rediscovery" of the book coincides with the call from contemporary Chinese architectural historians such as Zhao Chen to write a history of Chinese architecture from "a theoretical framework induced from the indigenous history and civilization." [410] Now widely

[409] Evidential scholarship, or *Kaozheng xue* in Chinese, was an influential historiography and the primary form of Confucian scholarship prevalent in the late Ming and Qing periods [roughly 14th – 18th centuries in China]. Its advocates emphasized on textual analysis and critique to authenticate the classics, leaning toward the Han Learning (*Han xue*) against the Song-Ming idealism and scholasticism. For a thorough treatment of the origins, development and implications of evidential history, see Benjamin A. Elman, 1984. *From philosophy to philology: intellectual and social aspects of change in late imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University.

[410] Zhao Chen, 2007. *Limian de wuhui* [*Misunderstanding the facade*]. Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian. Zhao's original sentence is, "It should be possible to theorize Chinese architecture from its indigenous history and civilization." See Zhao, 2007, 43.

acknowledged and generally accepted as the first book on Chinese architecture authored by a Chinese scholar, this work deserves a closer examination and analysis.

Born in the 1860s, Yue (1867 – 1944) was an unquestionable product of his time: a successful imperial examination candidate who was also an advocate of political and industrial reform in the late Qing period. His interest in modern forms of public education led him on a self-financed tour to Japan to observe its modern educational apparatus in the late nineteenth century, before setting up a secondary public school in his hometown in Guizhou province in southwestern China in the early 1900s. His expedition to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 greatly bolstered his passion for Chinese architecture, a passion that he had harbored for a lifetime according to the preface to his work on the subject published in 1933.

Yue's *Zhongguo jianzhu shi* [*A History of Chinese Architecture*] consisted of three volumes in its initial publication, devoted to the history of Chinese architecture (volume one and part of volume two), a few essays on architectural beauty and preservation of Chinese architecture (volume two), and a book of drawings (volume three). In the preface, Yue gave an informative account of his desire to write such a book. Apart from his own interest in the subject, his observation and understanding of Chinese architecture also contributed to the project. After discussing the incompetence of the Chinese architecture that he saw, he wrote,

> Whenever I saw European architecture in pictures and illustrations, I could not help but admire the perfection of their design. After I was twenty, I was absorbed in ideas of reforming [Chinese architecture]. … Only since the Republic did I know, from traveling to Beijing and Tianjin, that the study of architecture is a learning of its own in the world. I have glanced over some of these publications,

> and thought that their discussion of our country's architecture was cursory at best, in fact far from the reality of it.[411]

In subscribing to the same conviction as the modern architects and architectural historians that China lacked a "proper" study of architecture and its history, Yue showed himself in line with his successors more fundamentally than was perhaps realized. His amazement at finding out about architecture as a "proper" subject of study alluded to the traditional attitude in China, especially of the cultivated literati of which he himself was a member, which viewed the practice of construction as a lowly profession – suitable only for practical purposes and not for intellectual pursuit. Having set the subject of Chinese architecture squarely in the reformist mindset of his time, although without showing exactly how reform was to be carried out on the material and tangible level, Yue sought to make changes nevertheless. One way would seem to be epistemic: by writing the hitherto nonexistent history. His wish to write an architectural history of China was finally intensified by what he saw at the Panama-Pacific International Expedition in 1915 where he went as a member of the delegation:

> Our government's buildings, due to the lack of proper design [and planning] of architects, did not show the inherent spirit [of Chinese architecture]; and their shoddiness and neglect often became the outsiders' laughing stock and objects of ridicule. It was then that I realized that the systematic organization of our country's architectural studies was a task not to be delayed any further.[412]

It seemed that once he became aware of the profession of architecture, he quickly adopted its disciplinary tenet that the modern architect, instead of the traditional carpenter or mason or any other craftsman, was the proper instigator of architecture. Yue appeared acutely aware of the architecture profession not only as a subject of scholarly pursuit, but

---

[411] Yue Jiazao, 2005. "Preface," *History of Chinese architecture*. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1 (first pub. 1933).

[412] Ibid, 1.

also as the proper starting point of professional design and perhaps "appropriate" architecture, as demonstrated by his attribution of the inadequacies of the Chinese buildings at the exposition to the lack of professional design. Yue did not seem much bothered or deterred by the fact that he was not "properly" trained for such an undertaking as a modern architect or architectural historian would have been.[413] He then explained his method in organizing the material and completing the project, which reads today like a pointed rebuttal to the subsequent criticism by his contemporary architectural historian, i.e., Liang Sicheng, for its alleged lack of logical coherency and internal structure:

> First was preparing the material, such as observing buildings and collecting drawings and illustrations, prints and photographs; then I searched textual sources, such as the *Three Rituals on Palaces and Halls* from the *Classics*, local histories and geographies from the *Histories*, references and novels from the *Masters*, and various anthologies from the *Collections* were also consulted. I sorted the material according to its kind and stored it away; I kept at this for another couple of decades.[414]

In other words, Yue's primary sources were textual. He continued to explain the internal structure of the book which was based on his understanding of the difference between Chinese and European architecture. First was the difference in composition:

> Chinese architecture is different from European architecture, and therefore the method for classification should also be different. European buildings, whatever the number of their rooms, are all gathered into one mass; whereas in China, single-storey houses of three or five *jian*, or bays, form a three-sided or quadrangle courtyard which is then multiplied to form a big house. This is the difference in their composition.[415]

Then there were the typological differences in the buildings' purposes:

---

[413] Ibid.

[414] Ibid. The different categories of works that he mentioned here, the *Classics, Histories, Masters* and *Collections*, were the four categories of written works in classical Chinese, compiled into an ambitious *Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* in the early Qing period under Emperor Qianlong's (r. 1735 – 1799) decree, that absorbed over 300 scholars a decade's effort in the late eighteenth century. It became very influential in subsequent scholarship. Yue's point seemed to show that he conducted an extensive research on the classical textual sources of Chinese architecture to prepare for his book, an arduous task, to say the very least, at a time prior to the Internet, online search engines and digital open sources.

[415] Ibid, 2.

European architecture is also divided into palaces, temples and residences, due to their specific structural organization. But in China, from the [residences of the] Emperor to [those of] the ordinary people, to religious edifices such as temples and monasteries, all consist of three- or five-bay single-storey buildings. Their difference is in the level of intricacy and scale, not in peculiar structural requirement. Other than single-storey houses, there are *tai* [terraces], *lou* [multi-storey buildings], *ge* [pavilion with balconies?] and *ting* [pavilions], etc. These are all different in form from the single-storey buildings, and they are used by different people. This is the difference [between Chinese and European architecture] in their utility.[416]

Therefore, for Yue, it made sense to divide the body of the book on the history of Chinese architecture into two volumes: the first one according to architectural form included single-storey buildings, terraces, multi-storey buildings, *ge*, pavilions, *xuan*, pagodas, *fang*, bridges, gates/ entrances, the roof, and the *dougong*. The second volume, "following the European way of categorizing buildings according to their utility, included cities, palaces, *mingtang* [ceremonial halls], gardens, and temples and monasteries, also encompassing what was included in the first volume." The essays on architectural beauty and preservation were grouped in the second volume, supplemented by illustrations in the third volume that his daughter had done for him.[417]

Even when Yue mentioned that he also relied on photographs and prints of buildings as a necessary source, in particular to make up for the lack of in-person field study as he had wished, his primary sources remained textual (including visual material in ancient texts). The traditional approach to history writing, relying heavily on carefully combing and analyzing the classical texts, dominated his prose. This was most clearly shown in the sections devoted to the singular building types according to their form,

[416] Ibid. The English translations of the Chinese terms in brackets are mine.

[417] Ibid. The various types of architecture that Yue discussed in this book were classical, many associated with ritual and garden architecture (?). *Xuan* is either "an exposed building located on high ground with good views both from and into the building, usually in gardens," or "a double-roofed building:

which was also the most important part of the work and arguably the most significant of its contribution to the study of Chinese architecture. The author would usually start with his research on the etymology of the word for the building type, and then trace its development in subsequent uses as found in different sources in the classics and literary texts, and visual material such as traditional paintings, in order to illustrate the development of the type as it grew through historic periods. Take the example of the *ting*, the pavilion. The author wrote,

> One popular kind of pleasure structure today is the *ting*, since it is a beautiful form accomplished with little labor [and material?], that provides a sweeping broad view on a small footprint. The original meaning of the word *ting* included "a place to stay." *Shuowen* explains, "A *ting* is where people stop [and settle]." *Shiming* states, "*Ting* is to stop." [According to] *Fengsu tong*: "*Ting* is to stay, a resting place for travelers to stop." Starting from the *Qin*, it was used as a proper name for this kind of structure, as recorded in *Shiwu jiyuan*, "There is a *ting* every 10 *li* in the *Qin*." It was not until the *Han* that it was used to refer to a pleasure structure.[418]

Existent structures of the various building types, whether as quoted from written sources, or as seen in contemporary photographs and prints – although very sparingly – were also used as examples of illustration.

As stated in the preface, the influence of European architecture in particular, and Western academic studies in general, is clearly present in Yue's work. After treating more or less in depth the building types, most of which were peculiar to the Chinese building tradition, the author continued to deal with the group of entities such as cities, palaces, gardens, and religious buildings in one section, the organization of which induced harsh

a hall with a *renzi xuanding*, popular in Southern China," according to Guo Qinghua, 2002. *A visual dictionary of Chinese architecture*. Mulgrave, Vic: Images Pub.

[418] Yue Jiazao, 2005. "Chapter Five: *ting*," Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 31. *Qin* and *Han* refer to the two of the earliest unified kingdoms in China, *Qin* from 221 – 207 BCE, *Han* from 202 BCE – 8 CE.

criticism from Liang Sicheng, who thought it completely senseless and confusing.[419]

Nevertheless, this could be seen as a reflection of the author's dilemma: on the one hand, he was aware of the differences between Chinese and European architecture, and highlighted them by focusing on the building types peculiar to the Chinese tradition. He also conducted his research of architectural history in the indigenous approach of evidential historiography. On the other hand, he not only acquainted himself with the knowledge of European architecture – he cited an English source[420] and used some examples such as the dome, the Doric and Ionic columns for comparison [421] – but also endorsed the attitudes and values of the modern architect in belittling the traditional craftsmen for not knowing the "proper" way of design or construction.[422] An outlook of the general "decline" of Chinese art and architecture from its apex to his own period dominated Yue's text. For instance, while discussing the various forms and styles of executing the rooftop, Yue pointed out that many earlier examples, existent only in old catalogs and paintings by his time, were unknown and lost to the contemporary craftsmen. He therefore concludes, "So I'm afraid that our countrymen, when it comes to architecture, cannot even retain what they knew, let alone improve on it." He further

---

419 See Liang's review of the work published shortly after the publication of the book. In terms of structural organization, Liang also criticized Yue's grouping the roof and garden together into one chapter. Liang Sicheng, 2001. "Yue Jiazao's *History of Chinese architecture*: a review and its errors," in Liang Sicheng, *Complete works of Liang Sicheng*, vol. 2: 291 – 296 (first published in *Dagong bao [Ta Kung Pao*], March 3, 1934, page 12).

420 While discussing the entrance/ gate/ door, Yue cited the example of the pylon wall (?) in Egypt from Timothy Richard, a well-connected and influential Welsh Baptist Missionary in China. See Yue, 2005, "Chapter 10: *men* [entrance/ gate/ door]."

421 Yue cited the examples of the Doric and Ionic orders from John Lambert Rees's *History of ancient and modern nations,* which was translated into Chinese as *Wan guo tong shi qian bian* in ten volumes in 1900 (published by the *Guangxue hui*, whose precedent was the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, the publishing house that Timothy Richard was in charge of 1891-1916, which would probably explain Yue's familiarity with it), while discussing the *dougong*. See Yue, 2005, "Chapter 12: *dougong*," 119.

422 See the section on rooflines for the comparison between the concave roofline of China and the dome, and the section on *dougong* for the comparison with the orders. His scorn for the traditional craftsmen might have been a confluence of Western influence and the Chinese literati's sentiment.

attributed this to the lack of architectural studies in China.[423] To view the development of contemporary Chinese culture as degenerate in comparison to what had been achieved in history was also a shared sentiment among Chinese intellectuals of his time.

In a quite peculiar manner, Yue also paid attention to the material and structure of the buildings he analyzed, perhaps yet another consequence of his observation and knowledge of European architecture. For example, while discussing the origin of the upturned eave of the Chinese roof, he thus reasoned from the use of timber – which was "solid and pliable, strong in compression yet weak in tension" – as the main building material:

> Chinese framework has always employed only the vertical and horizontal stress, the vertical being carried by the columns, and the horizontal by the beams. As the building gets bigger, more columns are needed, which could impede the interior spaciousness when they line up like a fence. The remedy is to cut down the number of columns, and transfer the load to the beams, which will have to be enlarged in span. The beam, while enlarged in span and carrying more load, becomes inevitably bent [in the middle]. Since the middle section of the beam is already bent, the eaves will have to be bent accordingly, and this is why the eaves are upturned. The corners are where two eaves meet; since the eaves are bent, the corners will also need to be bent in correspondence. Hence the upturned corners.[424]

The building material of wood with its inadequate tensile strength could only be highlighted in comparison to iron and steel, the quintessentially modern structural materials. Yue's discussion of the curvy Chinese roofline also inadvertently brought his work in a long line of essentializing "characteristics" of Chinese architecture. Although as Wang Minying argues, the fundamental difference between Yue's history of Chinese architecture and the official version of the subject penned by such architectural historians

[423] When discussing the styles of the roof, Yue made a generalizing comment, "All of modern China's culture is in a state of regression; this is no taboo." The example of the "lost" rooftops was used as evidence to support this statement. See Yue, 2005, "Chapter 11: rooftops," 105.

[424] Ibid.

as Liang Sicheng a decade later, lies in their different understanding and approaches to historiography. One adopted the classical Chinese *biji*, a prose form which could include anything from "anecdotes, quotations, random musings," to "philosophical speculations, literary criticism and indeed everything that the author deems worth recording,"[425] whereas the other was a product of modern, scientific scholarship. Yet, the difference might have not been as great as has been suggested. Underlying the formal difference in their writing is a similar perception of Chinese architecture both in the past and at present, a perception which was greatly informed and shaped by the academic understanding of architecture as a disciplinary study in modern Europe and America. It is perhaps this similarity in the general outlook of what constituted architecture at the historic juncture that is more useful in informing us of the historians and their time.

The Chinese Roof and More: from the Characteristics to a History of Chinese Architecture, and Vice Versa

It is understandable that an impressionist account of Chinese architecture, as shown in early English treatises such as that of Paul Decker's wildly fanciful illustrations of Chinese architecture, William Chambers's hodge-podge collection of Chinese buildings, dresses, machines and utensils into one volume, James Fergusson's scant account of Chinese architecture, and Quatremere de Quincy's system of understanding the three major schools of architecture – i.e., Egyptian, Greek, and Chinese – according to their respective characteristic types of society – would devote their attention to the visually compelling elements of Chinese architecture, an architecture that was altogether

[425] Wang Minying, 2010. *The historicization of Chinese architecture* (Diss.) Columbia University, 152.

foreign to the European eye.[426] Such prominent features that received repeated treatment included both the peculiar or "exotic" such as the roof (with its glazed tiles), the color scheme, the decorative motifs, the proportioning, and pattern-work of the windows, doors, balustrades, and even the spatial arrangement, but also such "inadequacies" as the lack of a proper foundation or platform, the lack of formal, or structural, clarity, and the ill consideration in the use of perishable materials such as wood for construction among others.

The following sentences by the Scottish architectural historian James Fergusson (1808–1886) might have been read and taken as unequivocal truth by his contemporary and following readers when it came to Chinese architecture:

> It generally consists of a square apartment with a highly ornamented roof, and with one of the side-walls removed. The entrance is never at the end, nor the end wall ever removed, as would be the case in the West, but always the side; and it is by no means clear that this is not the right and reasonable way of arranging matters.[427]

The approach to a Chinese building, apart from the "highly ornamented" roof, was among the first differences noticed by a European, who was accustomed to approaching a [monumental] building from one gable end.[428] Knowledge like this was diffused and

---

[426] See Paul Decker. 1759. *Chinese architecture: civil and ornamental: being a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of plans and elevations etc., from the Imperial Retreat to the smallest Ornamental Building in China: likewise their marine subjects. The whole to adorn gardens, parks, forests, woods, canals, etc.* London: Henry Parker and Elizabeth Bakewell. William Chambers, and John Haberkorn. 1757. *Designs of Chinese buildings, furniture, dresses, machines, and utensils*. London: Published for the author, and sold by him next door to Tom's Coffee-house, Russel-Street, Convent-Garden; also by Mess. Dodsley, in Pall Mall; Mess. Wilson and Durham; Mr. A. Millar, in the Strand, and Mr. R. Willock, in Cornhill. James Fergusson. 1899. *History of Indian and Eastern architecture*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

[427] James Fergusson, 1891. *History of Indian and Eastern architecture*, 1891 reprint. Book IX "China:" 300 – 325, 309.

[428] It is interesting to note the difference in perception as well: whereas the early European travelers to China seemed to have noticed this phenomenon of approaching a Chinese building from a "side" rather than a gable end almost instantly – there were plenty of later accounts attesting the same observation – it took the Chinese architects and historians decades and much reflection to realize the difference, if we are to believe in Zhao Chen when he stated his discovery of that difference as a surprise, that is to say, a fact never before noticed by a Chinese scholar. See his *Misunderstanding the facade*, where he argued that Chinese

perpetuated, as was the way of observation and writing. The tendency and desire to grasp the concept or idea, the "essence" of Chinese architecture in its whole, to draw a full mental or verbal picture of it, proved to be a long-lasting and enticing one. The result was an abstraction of a live and living entity into a set of characteristics, ready to be packed and stored away in the repository of knowledge, with its highly selective representative and characteristic specimen, a practice of the modern era across the continents.[429] A few more recent examples from the period under investigation will suffice to illustrate the point.

The renowned sinologist of his day, the British connoisseur of Chinese art Walter Perceval Yetts wrote a short piece summarizing the literature on Chinese architecture in 1927.[430] Surveying briefly the earlier and the more up-to-date writings from both foreign sources and the Chinese publications on the topic, Yetts perfectly captured the tangible form and shape of the influence of that body of literature on a Western reader of Chinese architecture such as himself:

> For many years before its destruction in the middle of the last century, the so-called Porcelain Pagoda at Nanking was rated as one of the Wonders of the World,

---

architecture does not have the equivalent of a "facade" to its Western counterpart. Was it because that the Chinese architects and historians, ever since the first generation who were trained in Japan and the West, were so "naturalized" in their understanding of architecture predicated on the Western tradition that they were able only to see Chinese architecture as a variant or perhaps deviant of "Western" architecture, instead of as something whose alien character was so plain to an early European observer?

[429] This was inspired by Zhu Tao's analysis of Lin Huiyin's early writings on Chinese architecture, where he stated that "We are uncertain whether the 'Chinese architecture' she discussed was a theoretical paradigm or a historic process. The former could be, to a large extend, synchronic, where the scholar reduced or abstracted 'Chinese architecture' into a set of principles (or characteristics) based on a certain theoretical stance or purpose, whereas the latter had to be diachronic/ historical, where the researcher had to examine very closely the complexity of 'Chinese architecture,' and how it changed through time." See Zhu Tao, 2014. *Liang Sicheng and his time*. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 22.

[430] W. Perceval Yetts (1878 – 1957) was trained as a physician and surgeon in England and became interested in Chinese art and culture during his post to China as a medical officer. He was the first Chair and held a professorship of Chinese Art and Archeology at the London University's Courtauld Institute from 1932 to his retirement in 1946, working mainly on Chinese ritual bronzes and Buddhist sculpture. See a brief introduction to his life in his obituary. S. Howard Hansford, "Walter Perceval Yetts," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1-2 (April 1958): 110 – 112.

> and the fact encouraged our popular acceptance of this style of structure as typical of Chinese architecture.[431]

It was certainly more than just the "so-called Porcelain Pagoda" that permeated and dominated the Western observation and articulation of Chinese architecture. Attempting to find the "typical" was the irresistible norm.[432] Alongside the pagoda, another type that was effectively canonized was the Buddhist temple hall, arguably the singular model of architectural composition for all Chinese architecture, monumental or vernacular, religious or secular. One such modern piece of writing centered solely on the Chinese temple hall. Writing in direct response to the call of Archbishop Celso Costantini (1876–1958), then Delegate Apostolic to China, for the need of developing a Sino-Christian architecture for Catholic missions amidst rising tensions of political unrest and anti-missionary sentiment following the May Fourth movement in 1919, the Dutch architect Dom Adelbert Gresnigt (1877–1965) argued for the adaptation of the Chinese temple hall, the "type *par excellence*" of Chinese architecture in his view, for Christian missionary churches in China.[433] This is how he understood the Chinese temple hall in terms of its composition and principal features:

---

[431] W. P. Yetts, 1927. "Writings on Chinese Architecture," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 50 (288): 116 +119 – 121+123 – 124+126 – 129+131: 124. Yetts went on to discuss how the popular perception tracing the origin of the pagoda to India was not necessary accurate historically, and that part of its influence might have been the native tower-building of China, such as the *tai* [terrace] discussed by Yue Jiazao.

[432] Yetts, for example, discussed some other types that were "typical" in Chinese architecture: the roof and the memorial arch, the *pailou* or *paifang*.

[433] Dom Adelbert Gresnigt, O.S.B. "Chinese Architecture," *Bulletin of the Catholic University of Peking* 4 (1928): 33 – 45. Information on this architect is difficult to find in English, although his architectural works are the subject of a few articles by a Chinese architectural historian. See Dong Li, "Formal composition and transformation of meaning: a review of Gresnigt's architectural works," *Huazhong jianzhu* 14. 3 (1996): 34 – 37, and Dong Li, "Buildings in mission schools and the Renaissance of Chinese traditional architecture," *Journal of Nanjing University* 5 (2005): 70 – 81. There is a short note of his work on the website "New Liturgical Movement." See Shawn Tribe, "The Chinese works of Dom Adelbert Gresnigt, OSB," http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2012/03/chinese-work-of-dom-adelbert-gresnigt.html#.VbtzQ_mrR1N, and a recent article in Dutch. See Thomas Coomans, "Dom Adelbert Gresnigt. Agent van de roomse inculturatiepolitiek in China (1927 – 1932)," *Bulletin Knob* 2014.2: 74 – 91. I thank my colleague Suzanne van de Meerendonk for her help with this article.

> Three major motives enter into the composition of the Temple structure, viz., the base, the body, and the roof. The socle or base is of great importance in Chinese architecture. It ranges all the way from a low platform to a conspicuous terrace with balustrades and with flights of steps leading up to it. … The body of the Chinese Temple Hall exposes to view its entire wooden structure of pillars, architraves, beams, rafters, and consoles. Rows of pillars supporting a roof for shelter: this is the fundamental idea, not only in theory but also in practical execution.[434]

And the last "motive" was the ubiquitous roof:

> The roof is the culminating motive in Chinese architecture. The sweeping curve of its lines and surfaces conveys the impression of a woven canopy of heavy texture in which the vertical lines of the roof-tiles correspond to the lengthwise threads of the warp.[435]

At once noticing the impression of the curving roofline – "a woven canopy of heavy texture" – and the correspondence between the verticals and lengthwise warp of the tie-beams and architraves, Gresnigt's statement echoed, however faintly, both the popular age-old canopy/ tent theory of the Chinese roof of the West, and Yue Jiazao who, as we would recall from the previous section, explained the curvature of the roof in terms of the material of timber and concentrated stress on the horizontal members of the building, resulting in the warp, which was exploited and corresponded by the upturned eaves and corners.

These preceding lines on the three major "motives" of Chinese architecture would appear very familiar to a student of Chinese architecture, especially if they were written in Chinese. In fact, a few years later, when the architectural historian Lin Huiyin (1904–1955) published her article on the characteristics of Chinese architecture, she summed up the three "basic elements of the initial prototype of Chinese architecture" as comprising exactly the same: "the base, the columns and beams, and the roof," which was skillfully

[434] Ibid, 34.
[435] Ibid, 35 – 36.

illustrated by Liang Sicheng, her husband and colleague at the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, as the quintessential "principal parts of a Chinese building," with the addition of the indispensable *dougong* in between the columns and the roof (Figure 4.1).[436]

And it was difficult, if not impossible, not to notice the clusters of bracket sets, or the *dougong*, in a ceremonial or any other high-ranking architectural edifices in traditional China. In terms of structural and artistic effect, Gresnigt described and discussed the role of the *dougong*, based on an architect's careful observation:

> The tie-beams are laid directly on top of the columns. Instead of a capital, the wooden pillar has a pair of brackets outstretched like arms or wings. The chief function of the latter seems to be that of tempering the severity and stiffness of the long horizontal lines of the tie-beams and architraves. Above the architrave, too, attached to the beams of the entablature, are rows of far-protruding brackets or consoles, which support the overlying eave-beams. These, together with the ornate roof-ledge and its double row of underlying eave-rafters, constitute the highest plastic effect of the facade, playing in light and shadow and all sorts of capricious silhouettes. They are, as it were, the transition motive from the verticals of the roof-tiles to the horizontals of the entablature.[437]

The "three major motives" also provided the basis for "a striking point of contrast" with Western conception of construction in the author's view, which consisted firstly, the base, "never minimized" in Chinese construction, and secondly, the body in terms of approach to the building and its resulting effect, as the author explained,

> [T]here is a fundamental divergence with respect to the body. The facade of the Chinese Temple is on the long side of the building, and not on the short side or gable-end, as in Western churches. The facade in Chinese architecture always faces the South. … The consequences of this universal tendency are important. For the resulting elongation of the southern front brings into dominance the

[436] Lin Huiyin, "On a few characteristics of Chinese architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture* 3.1(1932): 163 – 179. Although Liang's posthumous book that contains this drawing, *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture*, was not published officially until 1984, the drawing was done during the 1930s/ 1940s when the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture was taking refuge from the war in south China's Sichuan province. See the note by Wilma Fairbank, long-time friend of Liang and Lin, and the book's editor for the clarification.

[437] Gresnigt, 35.

> horizontal lines and proportions, in contrast to the dominating verticals of the narrow European gable-end facade.[438]

And finally, the ubiquitous Chinese roof:

> The Western tendency is to lessen the importance of this part, or to hide it altogether by means of cornices and parapets. The Chinese, on the contrary, make it the crowning feature of their buildings, and find in its surfaces an outlet and medium for the free play of their artistic fantasy.[439]

It was only one step further from what the author had already analyzed so far to connect the formal appearance of the architecture to the psychological effect it causes in the viewer, and to read Chinese architecture in the historical context of its culture and tradition, perhaps most clearly articulated by the contemporaneous German architect Ernst Boerschmann in his interpretation of Chinese architecture to its culture.[440] Gresnigt wrote,

> It is to this consistent cultivation and stressing of the horizontal line and proportion that Chinese architecture owes its power of producing in the soul a sense of peacefulness and peace. … The importance of Chinese architecture resides in the indubitable fact that it embodies, to a very considerable extent, the history and traditions of China.[441]

To abstract and distill a set of characteristics that are "Chinese" has been a recurrent pattern with which to view Chinese architecture. For a student of Chinese architectural history, the best-known, and almost definitive piece of writing discussing the so-called characteristics of Chinese architecture would have to be the article by Lin Huiyin, mentioned earlier, which was published in the Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture in 1932. As indicated by its title "On a Few Characteristics of Chinese Architecture," it joins a long line of debate on the subject, and

---

438 Ibid, 36 – 37.

439 Ibid.

440 Ernst Boerschmann, 1912. "Chinese architecture and its relation to Chinese culture," *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, 1911. 24: 539-567.

441 Gresnigt, 37.

as one of the earliest works by a professional Chinese architectural historian, it has understandably become a study topic in and of itself.

The specific characteristics of Chinese architecture as summarized and analyzed in Lin's article was a familiar story.[442] But she was aiming at more than simply identifying a few points of significance in Chinese architecture. As has been pointed out, Lin's article was "the first to set the precedence of interpreting Chinese architecture with the principle of structural rationalism,"[443] where the structure, what she termed the "framing system" of timber, was underscored to such an extent as to be the decisive factor in effectively outlining a "history of Chinese architecture." Lin wrote,

> The history of Chinese architecture, seen from what extremely limited materials we have available today, already shows approximately the wax and wane, the rise and fall of each period. We have arrived at an age when examination and study need to be done. We can well observe and investigate, [even if only] from the few extant structures at hand dating from different historical periods, the characteristics of its structure and style, and illustrate whether the architectural spirit and technology of a particular period was an improvement or decline, whether it was better or worse.[444]

The purpose of Lin's article was multifold. Not only did she characterize Chinese architecture, but she also had a keen eye for its past and future, which were linked into a seamless continuum by the present, "an age when examination and study need to be done." In other words, the past of Chinese architecture, viz., knowledge of its historic development facilitated by historical study, would supply the foundation, the rationale, as

---

[442] For a recent and thorough reading of Lin's article, see chapter one of Zhu Tao's book, where Zhu compares it with the Japanese scholar Ito Chuta's book on Chinese architecture and analyzes the difference between the two scholars. Zhu argues that although borrowing many ideas from the Japanese scholar, Lin's concern was entirely different. What she and Liang were trying to accomplish was to establish a theoretical framework of Chinese architecture, a receptacle into which their fieldwork on Chinese architecture, which had yet to begin, would supply concrete examples of illustration. See Zhu 2014, chapter 1.

[443] Zhu 2014, 29.

[444] Lin Huiyin, "On a few characteristics of Chinese architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture* 3.1(1932): 163 – 179.

well as inspiration for the future creation of a new architecture for modern China. Lin was critical of the approaches of some of her colleagues who "either completely abandoned the old ways, or followed the westerners in their meaningless attempt to blindly copy the palaces of China."[445] A new Chinese architecture ought to be derived from a means different from these approaches. The modern system of European and American construction provided her with a prospect of a new architecture in China, especially because she believed that this newest system of construction shared the same basic structural principles with classical Chinese architecture, i.e., the skeletal framework, although one of steel and reinforced concrete, and the other of timber. On this common ground she envisioned a future Chinese architecture, which could be achieved through "changing the construction materials without drastically altering the main structural elements. And because of the potential of new materials, new development is possible to produce a new architecture that is most satisfactory."[446]

But a change in materials just might change everything, according to other observers. The issue of material was central in the argument of another colleague of Lin, the architect Tong Jun, whose analogy between the picturesque Chinese temple roof and the picturesque pigtail/ queue we have learnt in the previous chapter. Although he concurred with his contemporaries at acknowledging the similarity between the traditional timber "framing system" of Chinese architecture and that of the modern steel framework, the similarity might have stopped there for him. In another article on Chinese architectural characteristics published in 1940 at the height of the Sino-Japanese war,

[445] Ibid, 179.
[446] Lin, 179.

Tong began by drawing out the difference in construction materials with his signature sarcasm:

> It is the Warring States period again. To discuss architecture, especially architecture in China, at this time, I am afraid that the thatched roofs will not withstand the European wind, nor can the bamboo windows keep out the American rain.[447]

Highlighting the material which, for Chinese architecture, was predominantly wood, Tong asserted, "Chinese architecture is soulless without wood; this is one characteristic."[448] The difference in the materials, argued Tong, had also led to the major difference in Chinese and western systems of construction; that is to say, the structural framework of timber bearing the load of the building versus the walls performing the same function. Admitting that modern western construction's "scientific solution to the structural problem" promised "unmeasurable future development," Tong did not think it tenable to simply substitute the wood in Chinese architecture with new materials to achieve the same goal, as his colleague Lin Huiyin had argued. He continued,

> Some people might ask, if we completely changed the wooden framework of a Peking palace building into one of reinforced concrete, wouldn't that give us a building both strong, scientific and beautiful? No. This palatial-style Western "book/ look" is no good.[449] The difference in material should also dictate difference in proportion and arrangement. Chinese style architecture, if materialized in reinforced concrete, will probably have to modernize its look drastically, although a little Eastern embellishment is acceptable for the decorative program.[450]

---

[447] Tong Jun, "Characteristics of Chinese architecture," *Zhanguo ce* [literally "*Strategies of the Warring States*," referring to an ancient text *Records of the Warring States* on the said period of China, 5th to 3rd BCE] 8 (1940): 11 – 14.

[448] Ibid.

[449] Tong used a pun here; the original Chinese, *dian ban xi shu*, means literally "a Western book of the imperial/ palatial version."

[450] Ibid, 12. It is also worthwhile to note that these were precisely the terms of the debate that had occurred in 19th-century Europe regarding the implications of iron architecture and the conflict between traditional aesthetics/proportions and those of the very thin vertical supports iron permitted.

The change of construction materials was of course directly related to the change of modern life and its culture, which was what made the traditional way of Chinese architecture obsolete in the first place. Wood, Tong wrote, "cannot withstand fire, or earthquake, or bombing, thus was completely unsuitable for modern times."[451] The timber framework, together with such other characteristics of Chinese architecture as the frank exposure of the roof structure, the singular achievement in decoration, and the regularity of compositional arrangement, etc., once meritorious of Chinese architecture, now became weaknesses with the advent of metals and reinforced concrete, and the precision in calculation for economy and appropriateness in construction. Time and tide of the world meant that Chinese architecture, "if progressing with the trend of the world," could only be "a part of world architecture in the future," and "does not have to be fundamentally different."[452]

These were certainly highly polemical articulations and positions for his colleagues who held quite different positions. As if a direct response to Tong Jun's argument put forth in his writings, Liang Sicheng's article in 1944 aiming to argue for the significance of Chinese architecture, and by extension for its scientific and systematic study, analyzed the so-called palatial-style architecture represented by Murphy in a different light.[453] Likewise conceding that "We must also adopt Western methods to comply with the scientific trend in architecture," Liang was convinced that the spirit of Chinese architecture must be kept alive in its future incarnation. In the palatial-style architecture that was much derided by his former classmate and colleague Tong Jun,

---

[451] Ibid, 13.

[452] Ibid, 14.

[453] Considering that Liang was rather critical of Murphy's approach by the 1930s after his years of research on Chinese architecture, his effort to accord more positive value to Murphy's attempt seemed even

Liang saw a "creative spark" that had nevertheless contributed to the "renaissance of the Chinese spirit." Liang thus wrote,

> This style grew out of an appreciation of the appearance of Chinese architecture. The architect wishing to retain the majestic glazed roof tiles ended up only approximating the look of the Chinese hall, using new materials and new technology. … It is an uncomfortable collage of elements from Eastern and Western systems, usually those from historic periods.[454]

Notwithstanding the failure of its clumsy mannerism, what was more important for Liang was the embodiment of this creative effort. As he put it, "[B]ecause even this kind of effort evinces the Chinese spirit raising its head, the palatial style is significant."[455] Liang's position was firm; it was not that traditional Chinese architecture had nothing to offer the modern architect in their quest for a new form of Chinese architecture, which had to comply with the "trend of the world." Quite the contrary, as Liang argues, if "our architects [could] look to the gems of our own artistic treasury," and "learn something fresh from reexamining something old," their ability at creating a new Chinese architecture for the new age would be greatly improved.[456]

Tong seemed to have stood on common ground with Liang over the issue of studying the "old" in order to derive at something new. He did not show any inclination in under-evaluating what had been accomplished in Chinese architecture; rather, he held it in very high esteem, and was hopeful for something comparable in the modern age. As he wrote, "Any attempt to give it local 'color' would require study, research, and originality, which constitute China's contribution to world architecture." But of course,

---

more of a pointed rebuttal to ideas such as held by Tong. See Zhu Tao's note on Liang's opinion of Murphy in his book. Zhu 2014, chapter 7, note 17.

[454] Liang Sicheng, 2014. "Why study Chinese architecture?" trans. Yan Wencheng. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73.1 (March 2014): 8 – 11 (first pub. 1944).

[455] Ibid.

[456] Ibid.

this contribution should "have structural significance, which was so ingeniously displayed in the design of the Chinese temple."[457] He further elaborated,

> China has made a unique contribution to wooden architecture, and it can be expected to display a genius, in due course, in handling the new-style steel and reinforced concrete to create an architecture which would be readily recognized as something of the Middle Lands even if unawares to the beholder. Chinese architecture was much influenced by Buddhism during the Han and Tang dynasties and yet it came out of the encounter with nothing lost, only more classical and graceful. We who are concerned with the destiny of China's architecture in the future, could only hope for another golden age.[458]

Although not delineating the exact form of a future Chinese architecture in the new materials of steel and reinforced concrete, Tong was nevertheless confident of its realization. Referencing the Han and Tang dynasties, the unequivocal zenith of the Chinese civilization and its cultural influence for the intellectuals of Tong's time, Tong was hopeful that the new waves of influences from the West, just like that of Buddhism in the earlier periods, would produce a new Chinese architecture with "nothing lost, only more classical and graceful."

The Problem of Art History: Where Does It Fit?

The persistent conviction and practice of using Western architectural history as measure and model for its inadequate Chinese counterpart has manifested itself in multiple ways fraught with issues that remain to be resolved even today. As an academic discipline transplanted from Japan, Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century, a confluence of Western and Eastern cultural traditions have helped shape Chinese architecture into its present state. At least in the context of mainland China academia, the history and theory of architecture is generally regarded as a weak offshoot

[457] Tong, "Architecture chronicle," 85.

of its much more powerful and glorious brother, the architectural design branch. The relation between architectural history and design practice was a particular problematic one in Republican China, as shown in the previous section of this chapter.

Another problem was the uncomfortable relation of art history to the Chinese architectural history that was taking official form in the 1930s and 1940s. On the one hand, the traditional attitude of regarding architecture as something fit for a lowly hand – rather than for the cultivated literati – persisted even within the turn-of-the-century art history circles saturated with western influences. The problem was indicated by an article by Lin Wenzheng (1903–1989) calling for his fellow art historians' attention to sculpture and architecture. On the other hand, such art historians as Jiang Danshu (1885–1962), Teng Gu (1901–1942) and Zheng Chang (1894–1952), began writing on Chinese architecture as a "natural" component of a general art history of China, following the lead of foreign works published on the subject in the western art history mode, such as Stephen W. Bushell's *Chinese Art*, first published in 1904, and John Calvin Ferguson's subsequent *Survey of Chinese Art*,[459] an ambitious collection of ten volumes on various topics of the Chinese arts, including a chapter/ volume on Chinese architecture.[460]

---

[458] Tong, "Characteristics of Chinese architecture," 14.

[459] Stephen W. Bushell. 1924. *Chinese art* (first edition 1904, reprinted 1907. 2nd edition 1909, reprinted 1911, 1914, 1921, 1924). The number of reprints indicates its popularity. John Calvin Ferguson. 1971. *Architecture: Being Chapter 7 of survey of Chinese art.* Taiwan: The Commercial press, Ltd (first published in 1939).

[460] Ferguson's *Survey of Chinese art* includes a set of 10 volumes, each being a chapter devoted to a different category of art: volume/ chapter one on bronzes, chapter two on stone monuments, chapter three on calligraphy, chapter four on painting, chapter five on jades, chapter six on ceramics, chapter seven on architecture, chapter eight on furniture, chapter nine on textiles, and chapter ten on miscellaneous arts, first published by the Commercial Press in 1939 and 1940. John Calvin Ferguson (1866 – 1945) was an art historian, collector and connoisseur of Chinese art who had a long and high-profile career in China for over half a century in education and governmental positions. He was responsible for acquiring part of the Chinese art collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and his two indexes of writings on Chinese paintings and bronzes were important reference works for a generation of Chinese art scholars after him.

Yet a third problem concerns the literati's role in architectural design and creation. If it was once the traditional Chinese practice for literati amateurs to engage with local carpenters, masons and bricklayers, in the creation of architectural spaces, and particularly private gardens, this practice was discontinued during this period and the ties between the literati, the craftsmen, and architecture were severed. The repercussions of this rupture have only been recognized quite recently.[461]

Lin Wenzheng's article, aptly entitled "Don't Forget Sculpture or Architecture," published in 1928, effectively illustrates the art historian's, instead of an architect's, awareness of the changed state of affairs concerning architecture and its relation to the other genres of art, particularly traditional painting in modern China. Lin graduated from the University of Paris in 1927, and then became a professor of Western Art History at the newly established National Academy of Art in Hangzhou, the forerunner of the present-day China Academy of Art. In this article, Lin urged his fellow artists, art instructors and historians, to include the two other usually neglected categories of art, i.e., sculpture and architecture, in their purview as serious academic pursuits. Aiming to broaden the field of art, which was very narrow in his view, by arguing for a legitimate place for sculpture and architecture in the general rubric of art, the article questioned the assumption of the literati, as well as the Chinese society at large, that painting was the sole worthy form of artistic pursuit in traditional China. Describing sculpture as the "most perfect of the visual arts according to the principle of aesthetics," [462] Lin noted,

---

[461] The contemporary Chinese architect Wang Shu's practice of bringing simultaneously the traditions of the literati and the craftsman in both his architectural design studio and practice can be seen as an attempt to retrieve the lost link, to reveal what was once an integral part of architectural design and practice in traditional China.

[462] Lin Wenzheng. "Don't forget sculpture or architecture," *Guoli yishuyuan banyuekan/ Apollo* 4 (1928): 261 – 267. The Chinese title of the journal translates literally as the Semi-monthly of the National Academy of Art, the institute being established in Hangzhou in 1928.

> We know the many reasons that have contributed to the impoverished state of sculpture in China, the most remote reason being the long-held, impenetrable prejudice of the literati who would have nothing to do with anything that would require physical labor. And sculpture, being the most cumbersome, messy and laborious, was relegated to the stupid and ignorant lot – the stonemasons – so that the literati could live their leisurely life accompanied by the "zither, chess, poetry, calligraphy and painting," cultivating a custom of contempt for the art of sculpture. … It is fortunate that the ignorant masons happened to be anonymous geniuses who sculpted whole mountains into magnificent and glorious Buddha statutes, which has brought a name of Chinese sculpture to the art of the world.[463]

Although exalting the achievement of the masons as "magnificent and glorious," Lin nevertheless shared a contempt for the laborer's lowly lot with the traditional Chinese literati, his object of critique. He regarded painting, sculpture, and architecture as the three main branches of art, and always considered them together. He wrote, "Paintings of the new era cannot be without the company of new sculpture, nor, especially, without the architecture of the new era to contain them. These three arts would be out of harmony with the lack of any other." [464] Establishing that architecture was "half art, and half science" as a premise, the author concluded, "The biggest problem of architecture, whether ancient or contemporary, Chinese or foreign, converged on two points: it cannot sacrifice suitability for the sake of aesthetics, nor can it abandon aesthetics for the sake of suitability."[465] In other words, architecture needed to be both appropriate for its function and aesthetically pleasing, echoing an opinion commonly held by the community of the architects. And of course, architecture was even more important than sculpture on many levels. As a "comprehensive artwork," architecture was fittingly the highest form of art because of the vast scope it embodies: the life of man and its history, the spirit of the time,

[463] Lin, 263-4.
[464] Lin, 261.
[465] Ibid, 264.

the character of the nation and so forth. He explained the development of architecture in relation to those of the culture and human life:

> A history of architecture is therefore also a history of the life of man, encompassing all the cultural transformation and evolution. It was the cultural dawn when man migrated from his caves to the pavilions on the water; many of the thatched houses of the agrarian replaced the tents (and yurts) of the migratory to form a clan, a city, a town. Houses, so long as they are built on permanent land, produced nations, and because of the land and climate, a nation's true character is thus manifest in the form of the house.[466]

Lin lionized architecture as the pinnacle of formal arts that "unites all, controls all, and directs all, subordinating all sorts of art."[467] As such, it was certainly more than form; it was also the physical manifestation of a people's character and the spirit of the nation. Therefore, the duty of architects was "to synthesize the character of the nation/ people and the milieu of the time, in creating an art of the new era."[468]

At the same time, however, there were art historians and educators who regarded architecture as a "natural" part of a history of Chinese art. A few comprehensive histories of Chinese art, together with treatises on Chinese painting, were published by historians at the beginning of the century, such as Jiang Danshu, Teng Gu, and Zheng Chang, mentioned briefly before. Take for instance Jiang's *A History of Fine Arts*, generally considered to be the first book on the subject.[469] Jiang compiled this book as a response

---

[466] Ibid, 264-5.

[467] Ibid, 265.

[468] Ibid, 266.

[469] There has been controversies on whether this book should be regarded as the first art history of China, the nature of which is briefly discussed in an article by Yu Xiaoqin. See Yu Xiaoqin, "Jiang Danshu's *Art History* and its controversies," *Meishu daguan/ Art Panorama* 2008.3: 20 – 21. The so-called controversies, according to this short piece, seem to be none other than the snobbish prejudice against the book, which was published as a textbook, rather than as a "proper" scholarly piece of writing, and perhaps also implicitly against the author Jiang's lack of overseas educational credentials. Yu argued that the other "proper" art histories of China, such as those by Teng Gu and Zheng Chang later also grew out of demand of (popular) art education in China, and that Jiang, although not receiving his degree from Japan or any western institution, was deeply influenced by the Japanese system of art history, and by extension, western art history training. This kind of social, professional and institutional prejudice against Jiang, manifest by the neglect of him and his works in Chinese art history, is confirmed in another article by a well-known contemporary calligrapher in China, who argues that although a pivotal figure and pioneer of art historical

to the Ministry of Education's requirement that art history be included in the curriculum standards for students of teachers' colleges in the newly established Republic of China, which was approved by the Ministry and first published in 1917 as a textbook.[470] It comprised two thin volumes, the first one on Chinese art history, and the second one on Western art history. The difficulty of writing such a book, according to the author himself, lies in the availability of [written] materials, which was a complicated issue closely related to the knowledge system of traditional China. The author explained such difficulty of amassing materials for the first volume in his preface to the book. He started with an explanation of the terminology:

> [The term] fine arts – business of the arts – is not an indigenous term of our country. Ours has been a tradition, since the earliest times, of upholding things related to *wen*, [the written word?] at the negligence of the arts and [artistic] skills, therefore while business of the word has been recorded, there is no recordings of the arts or crafts. Arts that are closer to literary pursuit are recorded, whereas arts that are purely skills are not. Or even if they are, it is nothing better than bits and pieces scattered here and there in miscellaneous sources, without any sort of a system. Painting is an art, a close cousin to the written word, and has been regarded on equal footing as calligraphy. So there are histories of calligraphy as well as histories of painting. Although there has been no comprehensive history [of painting or calligraphy] to document their development since the origin or their evolution through the ages, there are plenty of specialized studies to be referenced [in this writing]. When it comes to sifting through and selecting

---

education in China, Jiang was neglected because of his educational background as a graduate of a teachers' college in China, his emphasis on foundational and popular art education rather than on art production, despite the fact that he himself was a versatile artist, and his willingness to devote himself to education and scholarly pursuit rather than becoming a cult hero of his tumultuous time, among other factors. See Chen Zhenlian."Jiang Danshu's significance in art history." *Qianjiang wanbao/ Qianjiang Evening News*, October 21, 2013. Chen's article was written prior to a fall auction of Jiang's artworks to be held in November of 2013, under the theme of "The forgotten masters," indicating a revival of his name and notoriety by the contemporary market along the academic circle. See the same newspaper article.

[470] The said Ministry of Education's curriculum requirements decreed in 1913, right after the establishment of the Republic of China, could be found in "Shifan xuexiao kecheng biaozhun/ Curriculum standards for teachers' colleges," *Jiaoyu zazhi /The Chinese educational review*, 5.2 (1912): 24 – 32. [Wencheng's note: there might have been an error in the publication date of the journal (1912); as the decree was published March 19, 1913 according to the heading of the document in the journal]. Jiang's book, *A History of Fine Arts*, was based on his own lectures of the topic after a few years of teaching, approved by the ministry as a textbook of the subject in 1917, and revised (?) and republished later in 1922. The book is difficult to access now, but the reference book that he wrote, i.e., *History of Fine Arts: a reference book for normal schools*, to accompany the book, seems easier to access, and was also published by the Commercial Press in 1918.

historical material [on calligraphy and painting], my concern is that there is too much. But whence does one source the material for sculpture, architecture, or the arts and crafts? … It is therefore difficult to compile this art history, but the biggest difficulty resides in the volume on Chinese art history.[471]

But such difficulty did not stop the author from including the topics into his history of fine arts. Jiang's volume on Chinese art history was further divided into four chapters: one on architecture, one on sculpture, one on painting and calligraphy and the last chapter on the arts and crafts. To include architecture and sculpture into a book on a history of fine arts in China, the first two chapters no less, was an outstanding, yet simultaneously "spontaneous" choice on the part of the author Jiang, as he did not see any further need for justification, an obvious legacy of his modern education in Western art history. And of course, according to later art historians who were trained in the West, such as Teng Gu, architecture was also the most "natural" starting point of a history of Chinese art.

Teng Gu studied in Japan before going to the University of Berlin in 1929 for his doctoral degree in art history. Being the first Chinese student to obtain a doctorate in art history [from Germany],[472] and immersed in both Chinese classics and Western history of art and archeology, especially the German model of stylistic analysis championed by Heinrich Wolfflin (1864–1945) who taught at the university, Teng is now generally considered a pioneer of modern art history studies in China.[473] In *A Short History of*

[471] Jiang Danshu, 1917. "Preface," *A history of fine arts*. Shanghai: Commercial Press.

[472] See "Editor's note" in Shen Ning, ed., "Chronicle of Teng Gu's artistic activities," *Art Research* 2001.3: 37 – 43.

[473] See, for example, Shen Ning who states that "modern art history studies in China began with Teng Gu." Shen Ning, "Teng Gu boshi xuewei kao/ On Teng Gu's doctoral degree," *New Arts* 2003.4: 38 – 43, and also Chen Ping who expresses the same view. See Chen Ping, "Reading Teng Gu," *New Arts* 2002.4: 69 – 81. Teng is, similar to Jiang Danshu, also among the ones excavated from the neglected history of art in China in the past decade or so. According to Tang Shanlin in his article published in 2012, there have been one doctoral dissertation, four master theses and about 40 articles on Teng in recent years. See Tang Shanlin, "On 'stylistic evolution:'Teng Gu's art history and its cultural origin," *Yishu pinglun/ Arts criticism* 2012.8: 55 – 59.

Chinese Arts first published in 1926, an abbreviated and condensed version of his lecture notes on the subject, Teng outlined a brief history of Chinese art according to its stylistic development through the ages, dividing the general outlook of artistic development from prehistoric China to the Qing dynasty into four periods, each treated in a separate chapter. These are the first period of origination and growth, referring to the "indigenous" growth and development of Chinese art during the "primitive age," the "three dynasties," i.e., of Xia, Shang, and Zhou during 2100 BCE and 300 BCE up until the Han dynasty, prior to the advent of Buddhism and Buddhist art in the first century. The second period of hybridization/ cross-pollination referred to the introduction of Buddhism and Buddhist art and its far-reaching impact on Chinese art. The third period of prosperity occurred during the Tang and Song periods when the foreign influence of mainly Buddhist art and architecture was completely synthesized into a full-fledged form of Chinese art and architecture to produce a "golden age." And the last period of stagnation indicated the general state of "non-development" after the Song, especially after the Yuan dynasty (1269–1368) to the day of the author's own time.[474] Although Teng was cautious and clear – and he was applauded for this – to point out that "stagnation is definitely not decline,"[475] the influence of a progressive history of upward improvement was undeniable. One is reminded of Liang Sicheng's characterization of Chinese architectural development, represented by colossal wooden structures, delineated about two decades later in the 1940s, as the period of origin at its earliest stage, the period of vigor of the Tang dynasty [early 7th–10th centuries], the period of elegance of the Song [10th–13th

[474] Teng Gu, 1929. *A short history of Chinese arts*. Shanghai: the Commercial press (first pub. 1926).
[475] Teng, 33.

centuries], and the period of rigidity, i.e., of an overall decline, during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties [13th–early 20th centuries].[476]

That there was similarity between the historical outlook of both Teng and Liang should not be surprising, as they were both influenced by the same source: Liang Sicheng's father, the aforementioned Liang Qichao (1873 – 1929), the prominent and powerful intellectual, historian, thinker, educator and political activist whose prolific writings on historiography and politics have greatly influenced Chinese intellectuals of his time and later.[477] The elder Liang advocated the New Historiography at the start of the twentieth century which should replace the old model of dynastic historiography, and which was suitable for the "New People" he was also calling for. In the older Liang's influential "On the new historiography" first published in 1902, he drew the clear parameter of historiography as narrating certain phenomena outside the boundary of Nature/natural phenomena.

> Firstly, history narrates the phenomena of evolution. What are phenomena? The change in things. There are two kinds of phenomena in the universe, namely, those that take a circular order of development and those that take an evolutionary order of development. What is circularity? It refers to things whose changes occur in a certain period of time governed by a regularity, and [thus] cyclical, such as the change of the four seasons and the movement of heavenly bodies. What is evolution? The changes [of evolutionary phenomena] show a certain sequence, from origin and growth to maturity, such as the phenomena found in biology and the human society. Cyclical phenomena are those that reoccur, and are static and not progressing. Studies that deal with this kind of phenomena belong to the studies of the natural world. Evolutionary phenomena are a one-way-street, going towards a direction without returning, its progress unlimited. Studies that deal with this kind of phenomena are historic studies. … The universe seen from historic perspective appears growing endlessly, progressing without a destination.

[476] Liang Sicheng, 1984. *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.

[477] Liang Qichao, a highly prolific, polemic, and charismatic figure of modern Chinese history, is well-studied in both Chinese and other languages. For some English works on him, see Joseph Levinson, 1953. *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the mind of modern China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Philip Huang, 1972. *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and modern Chinese liberalism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. And Tang Xiaobing, 1996. *Global space and the nationalist discourse of modernity: the historical thinking of Liang Qichao*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, among others.

> Its structure is thus incomplete, and its progress not a straight line. It is either a major progress with a minor regress, or a small ebb following a big flow. Its image is like a spiral. Whoever understands this understands the truth of history.[478]

Teng's approach at this point was heavily influenced by the elder Liang's new historiography as he acknowledged in his preface to the short volume, and as pointed out by contemporary scholars.[479] The general outlook of history, taking the image of a spiral, had a direct impact on Teng's overall periodization of Chinese art and the characterization of each period, as indicated by the subsections of the book. But first of all was the choice of what could be included into a history of Chinese arts. In fact, workable materials was a sore problem. Similar to his immediate predecessor Jiang Danshu, Teng expressed the formidable difficulty of amassing available and reliable sources for his writing. In the elder Liang's words as Teng transcribed, "The most difficult and debilitating point of writing a history of Chinese arts is the paucity of materials. With what materials are available now, the most that could be done is to infer historical developments as hypotheses."[480] And similar again to Jiang, Teng started with the most "natural" starting point in his history of Chinese arts, that of Chinese architecture. After briefly discussing the ideological characteristics of the early Chinese's reverence for the "heavens," which was Nature in his interpretation, he began with

---

[478] Liang, 57 – 58.

[479] Many scholars of Teng Gu seem to hold that Teng was influenced by the evolutionary historiography via Liang Qichao, which is simplistic to say the least. See Wang Hongwei's article presenting such views on Teng Gu's works and his refutation of them. Wang Hongwei, "On the errors concerning the influence of Liang Qichao's 'evolutionary' historiography on Teng Gu's art history," *Wenyi yanjiu/ Literature & art studies*, 2014.2: 122 – 130. Wang argues that although Liang did advocate "evolutionary theory" in 1902, he had set very specific boundary on the extent to which historic study should take a biological evolutionary model, not to mention his more accurate modifications of the theory twenty years later. Teng's adoption of the theory was also selective and with much reservation; and his was not a cyclical historiography either. Wang argues for more attention to Liang's later understanding of cultural history on Teng's subsequent intellectual development.

[480] Teng,"preface."

classical documents on architectural structures such as the *tai* [terraces], the ceremonial *ming tang*, the early palaces and architectural decoration, and so forth. This was similar to Yue's *A History of Chinese Architecture* discussed earlier, unfamiliar topics of traditional treaties on the Chinese fine art of painting and calligraphy. Architecture and sculpture continued to be the primary embodiment of artistic creation and spirit in the later periods of the book, especially in the period of hybridization with the introduction of Buddhist and Indian art and architectural forms.

It was more than just the inclusion of materials on architecture and sculpture into the book, but also Teng's method of working with the materials that indicated his debt to the elder Liang's new historiography and that had established him as a new breed of modern historians of Chinese art. For instance, from the decorative imaginary of birds and animals of Han architecture, the author inferred, "From this we can imagine that the ancients had complex artistic ideas; both birds and animals were things vivacious and fluid, agile and free. We can be certain that the ancients lived with a belief in freedom and agility, which was symbolized by their architecture."[481] Analyzing and interpreting the materials to make a sensible narrative history according to a certain historical ideology; or to paraphrase the elder Liang as quoted above, to infer from available materials in order to hypothesize, before one could "find the general truth and principle [*gongli gongli*];" that was arguably what set Teng's book apart as modern scholarship of Chinese art history, distinctly different from his predecessors such as Zhang Yanyuan, the Tang dynasty author of a canonized treatise on Chinese painting, which was marked by art criticism, connoisseurship, and the artist's biographical information, a standard model of traditional art historiography in China.

Moreover, the repeated attention to certain topics and subjects effectively canonized them, just like the cases with the Chinese roof and so on in Chinese architecture. The best example might be the Wu Liang Shrine, a topic that has commanded scholarly attention for "a thousand years." In discussing sculpture and mural paintings from the Xiaotangshan Mountain and Wu Liang Shrine, the author stated, "These two sculptures occupy an extremely important position in the history of art of the Han dynasty, and deserve our utmost attention."[482] The Wu Liang Shrine has indeed received the lion's share of scholarly research in Chinese art history, whether in Chinese or other languages, both by art historians or architectural historians.[483]

The architectural transformation wrought by Buddhist influence was placed at the foreground of artistic development of the second period. Calling the period during which the Buddhist temple became popular in China "a different epoch."[484] Teng eulogized this period of hybridization of the Buddhist influence into China, stating that,

> The most glorious period in history was the period of hybridization. Why? Because during this period, a foreign culture interfered to subtly integrate with the unique national spirit of the [host] nation. After [a process of] blending and reconciliation, an extraordinary brilliance was produced. The structure of a culture is extremely complicated, and if the living conditions were all spontaneous and introvert, it tends to be monotonous, and therefore is in need of outside nutrients and stimulation. With the outside nutrients and stimulation, the development of the culture was instantly advanced.[485]

---

[481] Teng, 5.

[482] Teng, 6.

[483] There is much treatment of this famous shrine since the early stages of modern Chinese art and architectural history, when just about every book on Chinese art would discuss it, not to mention the thousand years of scholarship before the modern era. In modern and contemporary scholarship, Wilma Fairbank's study of it, well-known to a student of Chinese architectural history, was published in 1941, and the works of contemporary art historian Wu Hung, whose persistent and definitive study of the subject has all but made this topic – tomb art and architecture – into a sub-field of its own. See Wilma Fairbank, "The offering shrines of 'Wu Liang Tz'u," *Harvard journal of Asiatic studies* 6.1(Mar., 1941): 1 – 36. And Wu Hung, 1989. *The Wu Liang shrine, the ideology of early Chinese pictorial art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[484] Teng, 14.

[485] Teng, 13.

The subsequent apex of the Tang and Song periods' artistic development, as outlined by Teng, seemed to have provided a bright precedent for the author's own time, a time although of "stagnation," nevertheless could possess the potential of equally astounding future development, even if his tone was rather reserved. His ultimate goal was also made clear; what was needed for "a renaissance of the national art" was, first of all, a revival of the national spirit, which was then dominated by Western influences. He wrote,

> In this time of stagnation, our unique national spirit has but all disappeared. The recent decade has seen Western flow of studies and ideas in greater force each day, and the arts have been receptive of outside ideas and foreign flavors. Judging from the principle of history, there should be an improvement of the situation to follow. But foreign ideas are no good if the national spirit is not revived. Because the national spirit is the blood and bones of national art, and outside ideas are but its supplements. It is impossible to depend one's improvement solely on the supplements without strengthening oneself! Therefore a renaissance movement of the national arts awaits if [we wish to] turn the fortune wheels of history and open up a new phase of development for Chinese art.[486]

Not only was Teng's general outlook of Chinese art history similar to that of Liang Sicheng's architectural history soon to follow – in that they both saw a trajectory more or less analogous to the evolutional/progressive development – but their cultural expectations were also similar. Both Teng and Liang saw the need, and possibility, of reviving Chinese art and architecture, even at a time of "stagnation" or downright decline, and the prospect of producing something as glorious as the highest achievement ever accomplished in Chinese history.

Writing A History of Chinese Architecture

[486] Teng, 43.

Where would one start with writing a history of Chinese architecture? Those who took up this question emphasized two interconnected aspects: collecting material as a first step, and organizing the material into a coherent and logical narrative about the subject.

With the first step the related questions of what and how was incurred; how does one collect the material? Or, where does it come from? What is relevant, worthy and what is not? The answers as demonstrated in the writings of the period suggest two major sources of historiography of Chinese architecture: textual research and field work, both of which covered vast territories of investigation which would subsequently necessitate a set of logical criteria for careful selection. What, then, are the criteria?

With the second one comes the ideology of historiography: what is the guiding principle of history? What is the narrative mode and its ultimate goal? Where does the narrative lead to? Is there a model to emulate and aspire to?

The aforementioned article by Dai Yue on the history of building materials in China is an example of working with one aspect of Chinese architecture. By combing through traditional textual sources of historic writings, Dai constructed a "natural" developmental history of construction materials used in China, to arrive at his conclusion of an "evolutionary" history of building materials: that they must evolve to more durable alternatives such as stone and metal, from the traditional favorites of wood and others.

The history of architectural drawing in traditional China by Chen Zhongchi is an example of working with a different aspect of Chinese architecture. Another piece of evidential history, this short article was published in 1936 by Chen, a member of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture.[487] The author's main purpose was to glean

[487] Information on the author Chen Zhongchi is hard to gather, except for one short piece by Cui Yong. According to Cui, Chen joined the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture in 1933, and assisted Liu

evidence from classical sources to argue that architectural drawing was also an important part of building activities in traditional China, such as practiced in modern architectural design of the West. His premise, not surprisingly, was that "Architectural drawings precede [construction] in modern, scientific architecture."[488] Citing examples from the Song dynasty, for instance, he argued that "We can see that both architectural drawing and construction skills are mutually beneficial at this time, really not dissimilar to [the situation] today."[489] After providing a very concise history with related information on architectural drawing gathered all the way down to the Qing dynasty, the author concluded,

> In summary, albeit a brief and incomplete one, the architectural drawing that today's architecture is so dependent upon, had already appeared in China two thousand years ago, and continued through the dynasties [to this day]. It is a pity that the old literati, ashamed of labor and wishing for leisure, looked down on construction work and never thought of learning about it. This is really a disgrace in our cultural history.[490]

By aligning the traditional practice of architectural drawing prior to construction with the modern Western model of architectural design and construction, Chen effectively "modernized" the ancient study of Chinese architecture, whatever the fundamental differences in the two systems of design and construction, or however brief and incomplete his study was.

Much more complete and substantial study on the subject of Chinese architectural history came from the turn-of-the-century Japanese scholars, in particular Ito Chuta

---

Dunzhen, the Director of Documents, in locating classical textual sources. He published a few articles in the bulletin of the society in 1935 and 1941, and was promoted to the status of "Researcher" (?) in 1936-37. He seemed to have continued working on the *Yingzao fashi* after 1949. See Cui Yong, 2004. *Studies on the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 148.

[488] Chen Zhongchi, "An outline history of architectural drawing in China," *Yi jing* 7 (1936): 338 – 341.

[489] Ibid, 339.

[490] Ibid, 341.

(1867–1954) who first published his *History of Chinese Architecture* in Japanese in 1931, which was translated into Chinese in 1937. This was a vastly influential book although it was only “partial” in many historians’ eyes: its history of Chinese architecture stopped short at the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 CE) although the title might have suggested a more comprehensive treatment of the subject. Its influence rests not only with the systematic, scientific study of Chinese architecture, but also the prepositions it put forth in the book which gained wide acknowledgement in subsequent studies of the subject. More noteworthy is perhaps the methodology of the author’s study, which makes this early work stand out from contemporaneous and later similar efforts.

At the onset, the author set out to position Chinese architecture in the world. Disputing European derogatory views of Chinese architecture, the author asserted its difference from the European system, and classified it as belonging to the Eastern group of architecture, which was itself independent of the Western group represented by the Greco-Roman tradition. This also explained why in the preface of the book, the author located his study of Chinese architecture, “from the artistic point of view, rather than from the tectonic point of view of materials or structure,” in the Chinese classical tradition of the so-called “Six Arts,” namely, the mastery of six skills: the rites, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics. Clarifying that the six arts were not equally “arts” in the proper sense of the word, – some being a specific skill or technique, such as knowledge and mastery of mathematics and archery, and the various rites, – the author pointed out, “In summary, what is meant by the word ‘art’ in Chinese encompasses

a far more broader scope than what we mean by the word 'art' today; it generally refers to the skills acquired by an educated person, and not particular specialized [forms of] art."[491]

"Particular specialized forms of art" in traditional China, in Ito Chuta's opinion, referred to epigraphy (which included sculpture and other "various arts and crafts"),[492] calligraphy and painting. Architecture, being the work of the carpenter, was not "regarded in high esteem" in ancient China or Japan. What is more, epigraphy was emphasized and studied not as art works, but as valuable antiques.[493] The author thus justified his study of Chinese architectural history in relation to that of epigraphy, calligraphy and painting, what he termed "archeological art, or artistic archeology:"

> Although architecture is a form of art, it is different from Chinese sculpture and painting in that it is not closely related to epigraphy. So my account of the history of Chinese architecture does not need to touch upon [the subject of] epigraphy. And yet the latter cannot be completely disregarded. To some extent, epigraphy and architecture are related while examining ancient architecture, and their development was mutually beneficial.[494]

The difference drawn out thus far between Eastern architecture and its Western counterpart provided the basis for the author's history of Chinese architecture, especially in regards to methodology. In his own words, "My account of Chinese architecture, although done in the progressive European research method, pays attention, which generally escapes the Europeans, to the necessity of treating Chinese architecture as a special [category of] architecture. My research method thus tries not only to extend the Chinese-style focus on calligraphy, painting and epigraphy beyond the boundary of their

---

[491] Ito Chuta, 1937. "Preface," *A history of Chinese architecture*, trans. Chen Qingquan. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1 – 2.
[492] Ibid, 2.
[493] Ibid, 2.
[494] Ibid. 3.

value as objects of antiquity, but also to give them sufficient attention in order to draw helpful inferences."[495]

Not only was the difference between the Eastern and Western architectural systems highlighted and used to justify the author's approach, but the internal difference between Chinese architecture of various locations of China's vast geographical sphere also necessitated the distinction and division of it into three major locales, or regions of influence in Ito Chuta's book: the northern, the middle and southern varieties each with their distinctive character. The author wrote,

> The arts of China vary with location, just as the arts of Europe do. Architecture of China is different in flavor from north to south, to the middle section [of the country], just as the local colors of Germany, France and Italy in Europe are all different. Really, the term "Chinese architecture" is as vague and sloppy as the so-called "European architecture."[496]

The difference between Eastern and Western architecture — however "sloppy" and "vague" the terms were — was shown not only as physical attributes of the respective architectural and constructional systems, but also as reflections of observation and perception, and constructions and articulation, dependent on and determined by the viewer's position of power vis-a-vis that of the perceived. As an object of curiosity to early European observers, architects or otherwise, Chinese architecture was an exotic anomaly or illogical novelty in its many beguiling deviations from the European standard. Aware of the unfavorable construction of such an image of Chinese architecture, Ito Chuta was ready at the very beginning of the book to refute this kind of Western misunderstanding of Chinese architecture. In fact, it can be argued that Ito's book was a direct answer to correct the many erroneous understandings of the Europeans and

[495] Ibid, 3.
[496] Ibid, 19.

Americans concerning Chinese architecture. Pointing out that although Europeans and American scholars working on Chinese architecture had shown improvement in the past 100 years, Ito thus analyzed the reasons for their "stalled progress:"

> Firstly, the Europeans and Americans hold China in contempt as old and weak, and thinking the architecture must likewise be underdeveloped, do not accord serious attention to it. Secondly, they know next to nothing about the interior of China, and judging Chinese architecture on the few examples along the seaboard areas, whose forms and styles differ so completely from European and American architecture, they dismiss it as an oddity with a laugh. Thirdly, they do not know Chinese history, so even when they encounter the architecture, its historic significance is lost and they are not intrigued.… Fourthly, they cannot read books in Chinese. … And because of this, they cannot comprehend the origin or history of the architecture, and thus are incapable of [Chinese] architectural studies.[497]

Accordingly, the main chapters and sections of the book dealt with the aspects of methodology of research, geography, and history of Chinese architecture. For example, the author's "progressive European research method" means not only the standard textual research and "investigation of relics," but also the peculiar study of its writing, because in the author's view, "China is the country of writing; Chinese writing is entirely different from writings of other nations, making it a valuable research material. Insofar as architecture is concerned, studying the words and terms related to architecture in Chinese is studying [Chinese] architecture itself."[498] Similarly, while dealing with Chinese history, the author gave a highly abbreviated chronological development in order to draw out his conclusion on the general historical tendency of art and architectural development in China, which followed a general trajectory from "the apex of Chinese civilization" during the Tang dynasty, to the Republic of China, which "has been such a state of entanglement

---

[497] Ibid, 7 – 8.

[498] Ibid, 15. It is worth noting that Nancy Steinhardt holds a similar view, characterizing Chinse architectural writings as a distinctive category of Chinese architecture in and of itself. See Nancy Steinhardt, "Chinese architecture on the eve of the Beaux-arts," in Jeffrey Cody, Nancy Steinhardt, and Tony Atkin, eds. 2011. *Chinese architecture and the beaux-arts*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

with little attention to spare for art," a period when the author believed that "there is no noteworthy art in today's China."[499]

The equally important agenda of the book, other than disputing the European and American misconception of Chinese architecture, was of course the end of the book, or, where and how it ended. Ito Chuta has been criticized for not "completing" the history on Chinese architecture for stopping short of the sixth century in China's long history. Liang Sicheng, for example, commented that "It can be said that the best part of the book has yet to be written."[500] And Xu Subin has argued that since the primary goal of Ito Chuta's investigation of Chinese architecture was to find the origins of Japanese architecture, the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, where the book ends, was a fitting place to end the project, since he has already had his queries answered by this point.[501] But if we examine more closely how it ended, we may have a slightly different conclusion. Put it differently, according to the author Ito Chuta, stopping at the Southern and Northern dynasties was perhaps enough, but for different reasons.

One of the author's principal concerns, and strategy of refuting the aforementioned misconception, was to locate Chinese architecture in the family of world architecture and in the world. By insisting that Chinese art was "an indigenous growth and development, and not transplanted or copied from other nations,"[502] Ito Chuta freed Chinese architecture from the Euro-centric discourse of viewing it as a weakling on the

---

[499] Ibid, 34.

[500] Liang, "Review of Yue," 291. Liang's original words were, "Ito Chuta's book ends at the Six Dynasties, and is a history indirectly researched out of the writings and sculptures related to architecture, and has not arrived at the study of real physical materials of Chinese architecture. It can be said that the best part of the book has yet to be written."

[501] Xu Subin,

[502] Ito Chuta, 6.

trunk of the Greco-Roman tree of architecture, as depicted in the infamous Tree of Architecture in Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (Figure 4.1).[503] Other instances were about Chinese architecture in the cultural interchange between Chinese and other cultures, particularly Greek and Indian/ Buddhist art and architecture. In fact, cultural exchanges between Chinese architecture and outside influences were highlighted to such an extent that they directly influenced the periodization of Chinese art history. The author explained, "The history of Chinese art, if to be divided into two phases, can only be so done along the end of the Han dynasty. That is to say, the early phase was a period of prosperity of the ingenious Han people's art, and the later phase was a period of influence of various nations after the introduction of Buddhism."[504]

The book was accordingly divided into three chapters: other than the first chapter of a general introduction including specifications of primary terminology, the two chapters of the body were devoted each to a period; thus chapter two dealing with the first phase ["The early phase"] and chapter three the later phase after Buddhist influence ["The later phase"]. The last section of the later phase, also of the whole book, on the Southern and Northern Dynasties architecture, included "a general introduction," "Contemporaneous art of central and western Asia," "Analysis of Southern and Northern architecture," and "the eastward infiltration of Sothern and Northern architecture." The book ended with the eastward infiltration of Chinese architecture during this period. Allow me to cite a few extraordinary paragraphs at length:

[503] Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. This book, considered to be the most authoritative and influential text on the subject, was first published in 1896, and is now in the 20th edition (1996). The "Tree of Architecture" first came out in the fifth edition in 1905.

[504] Ito Chuta, 36.

> The art of the Southern and Northern dynasties was produced by indigenous Chinese culture and various cultures of the western nations. That is to say, the artistic waves of western countries spread eastward to cover all of China, and combining with the indigenous waves, to produce a spectacular [artistic] wave which further infiltrated Korea, and eventually reached Japan.
>
> Illustrating this fact were numerous relics from the Three Kingdoms period of Korea and the Asuka period of Japan. … The raging cultural waves from the west cut across the barbarian states [of the north and northwest], and spread further east, but were checked both in the north and south directions. Along the northern frontier, they would disappear into the conflict with the southward movement of the northern [tribes]; besides, the north, being barren deserts and inhabitable frozen lands of the Mongols, provided no ground for cultural penetration. The indigenous culture of over two thousand years of the Han people, together with their formidable walls, would not permit its southward movement to the South Seas. Therefore the cultural waves had no other way than to enter Korea before reaching across to Japan. The north of Korea at the time had already transplanted Han culture, and its central and south parts were left with fertile, uncultivated lands. The culture of Sothern and Northern Dynasties would, of course, enter and exit from here. Japan [at the time] had but a culture of an immature, childish sort, which made it susceptible to cultural infiltration from the west.
>
> In this manner, the art of Southern and Northern dynasties, starting from the epi-center of northern China, spread southward only along the banks of the lower Yangtze River and barely reached the south sea areas of Fujian and Guangdong. The northern frontier outside the Great Wall such as Mongolia was also just minimally influenced. Comparatively, the strongest influence was found in Korea and Japan. It is difficult to come to a rushed conclusion, because of the incomplete investigation, concerning [the situation] west of Xinjiang, where the cultural wave originated. I hope there are more important discoveries later to facilitate the illumination of the question involved.[505]

Ito Chuta's "hidden" agenda was made abundantly clear here. In a remarkable way, Ito Chuta outlined the overall eastern movement of Chinese culture, right before the apex of its achievement at the Tang dynasty, toward its final destination of Japan, and thus laid the foundation to his claim, which was shared by many of his fellow Japanese scholars, that Japan was the true heir of Chinese culture, and, by extension, of Chinese architecture.[506] Put it in another way, according to the logic of the author Ito Chuta, there

[505] Ito Chuta, 257 – 259.

[506] This could be juxtaposed to the legendary claims of Japanese scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century that one could only find Chinese timber architecture after the Tang dynasty in Japan, - prior to the discovery of the Tang-dynasty Foguang monastery by Liang and his colleagues in 1937, – a

was no “Chinese” architecture after the Southern and Northern dynasties in China; it was to be found in Japan. Hence the proper place to end the history of “Chinese” architecture.

Ito Chuta’s book has been highly influential in the field of Chinese architectural historiography for all its merits and faults. Although Ito Chuta also argued that the Japanese were “better equipped for the study of Chinese architecture,”[507] in comparison to the Europeans and Americans, perhaps even to the Chinese themselves, there has been a long line and tradition of western writings on Chinese architecture, especially in English, a few early exmples of which have been alluded to earlier in this chapter. But more specifically, and more relevant to the current chapter are a few examples from the period under investigation, including Stephen Bushell’s popular *History of Chinese Art*, John Ferguson’s chapter on architecture in his comprehensive *Survey of Chinese Art*, and Dennis Miram’s *A Brief History of Chinese Architecture*, all published during the first decades of the twentieth century. Of these, the history by Mirams was typical in many ways, demonstrating a range of familiar tendency and revealing problems of historical writing more than the others.

In 1940, Dennis George Mirams, a London-born and trained architect working for the Shanghai Municipal Council for a decade, published *A Brief History of Chinese Architecture* in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore shortly after he left his position at the Municipal Council in 1938. This was a rather slim volume considering its vast scope covering 3000 years from “the Shang dynasty (1766–1122 B.C.) to the end of the Ch’ing dynasty in 1911.”[508] Calling it an “outline history of architecture,” the author attempted

claim not favored by many Chinese scholars at the time. See Lin Zhu, 1995. *A brief history of the Society for Research in Chinse architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 88.

[507] Ito Chuta.

[508] Dennis George Mirams, 1940. *A brief history of Chinese architecture*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh. “Author’s preface,” xiv – xv. Background information on Mirams is hard to find, but according to the

to restrict the extent of his subject by cutting out what he considered extraneous and thus making it manageable. In his own words,

> In tracing the development of Chinese architecture reference has been made, as far as possible, only to buildings of the main line of culture, as local varieties, however interesting, detract from the main issue, so it has been considered the wisest course to make no reference to them. [509]

It is indicative that the author, although aware of the "local varieties" in the development of Chinese architecture, had nevertheless decided to "make no reference to them," and one has to wonder about what exactly he referred to as "the main line of culture," and "the main issue" in Chinese architectural development, as no further explanation or clarification was provided.

What is most striking about this book is its structure and organization of the short chapters, which read as if a combination of a history and the so-called characteristics of Chinese architecture. After a very brief introduction to the "geographical and historical" conditions for the "origins of Chinese architecture," which were the first two chapters, the author proceeded to discuss "design" and "plans," before treating some of the structural and compositional elements of the building: "platforms," "roofs, columns and brackets," "gates, doors and windows," "balustrades," and "pagodas" and "p'ailou" and

---

"Dictionary of unsung architects" at the Built Heritage website, he was born in London in 1904, and got his diploma in architecture from London University's Bartlett School of Architecture between 1922 and 1927. In 1928, he travelled to China and worked as an assistant architect at the Shanghai Municipal Council for the next decade, when he became interested in Chinese architecture, which culminated in the publication of the current volume in 1940. He later relocated to Australia in 1948, and stayed and worked there as an architect until his death in 1984. See the entry "Dennis Mirams (1904 – 1984)" in Dictionary of unsung architects, Built Heritage website: http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_mirams.html (accessed June 10, 2015).

[509] Mirams, xv.

"architectural and sculptural embellishments."[510]

Generalized, sweeping statements adorned the text from time to time in order to create a general impression of Chinese architecture. Consider this short paragraph:

> The traditional type of Chinese building consists of a platform of stone or mud, on which is erected a wooden building with wood posts and sloping tiled roof. Walls which are of stone, brick, mud or wood framing are only used as filling, playing no part in the construction.[511]

This remarkably flat-toned two-sentence paragraph is packed with a slew of general impressions of Chinese architecture, from its formal order (wooden building with sloping roof on platform of stone or mud), materials used (including wood, stone, mud, brick, etc.), to the constructional/ tectonic organization (walls as filling and carrying no load). It sounds almost identical to the "official" history of Chinese architecture that the professional architects such as Liang Sicheng were to publish shortly afterwards. It should not be surprising if this was a direct borrowing from the scholars at the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, established in 1929 as the sole research institution devoted to the study of traditional Chinese architecture in Beijing at the time. In fact, Mirams seemed quite familiar with the work of the members of the Society, at the time relocated to the southwestern part of the country in Chongqing because of the Sino-Japanese war. Influence from that institute in general and from Liang Sicheng in particular on the author was undeniable. The author cited works from the institute frequently and held Liang in high esteem, referring to him as "Professor Liang Szu Ch'eng" although at this point Liang did not hold any professorial position.[512]

---

[510] Each entry in the quotation marks is a separate chapter in the book.
[511] Ibid, 10 – 11.
[512] For example on p.24.

The desire to grasp things in a holistic manner, as previously discussed, was reflected in the principles that the author compounded, including those governing the design process. This also had methodological import when discussing an architectural culture that favored wooden construction and few earlier exmples survived as a result. In the author's opinion, since the design of Chinese buildings "has varied to so small an extent for the past 3,000 years," the existing structures, mainly the palaces and temples in Beijing for his purpose, offered him specimen to study and extract principles that would have governed Chinese architectural design "for the past 3000 years."[513] Sometimes the author's inclusion of materials seemed as ambiguous as his omission. For instance, toward the end of the book, Mirams thus offered this excuse for including a very short chapter on bamboo and reeds: "No book on Chinese architecture would be complete if reference was not made to the bamboo. Its praises have been sung by poets and painters alike. It is a national institution and China would not be China without it."[514] Other than vaguely referencing bamboo, one of the favorites of traditional painting in China, the author nevertheless was not quite sure what else to do with it.

The axiality and regularity of the plans were also observed, seen in connection to the approaches to a Chinese building, although the author's frame of comparison was often, – and not surprisingly, – the western tradition. Citing the example of the T'ai Miao, or the imperial ancestral temple in Beijing, the author wrote:

> This whole design is perfect seen from any angle, even from the air. This was the aim of Italian Renaissance architects, but rarely was this achieved so successfully

[513] Ibid, 24. Although the author did concede later in the case of the brackets, or *dougong*, stating that "The brackets are the chief source of interest in the development of Chinese buildings, as it would seem that this *motif* is one of the few that show any real evolution." This view of the development of the brackets is also very similar to the views held by Liang Sicheng. See Mirams, 26.

[514] Ibid, 118.

> as it has been in China. The desire to make their buildings beautiful when seen from all sides is a Chinese characteristic.[515]

Likewise attaching high value on the recently republished *Ying tsao fa shih* [*Yingzao fashi/ The Building Standards*], likening its significance as "having the same relation to Chinese architecture as had Palladio and Vignola's works to the English and French Renaissance,"[516] the author considered that treatise as the saving grace for Chinese architecture in a period of general degeneration for the other arts. In his own words, "Chinese tradition was so strong that the building designs did not fail when the inspiration had gone, but builders continued to adhere to the correct traditions right up to the latter part of the nineteenth century, so that when the other arts had declined, architecture continued relatively unaffected."[517]

In the subsection detailing the "types of buildings" in China, the author gave a few examples: palaces (including audience halls, ancestral worship halls, ceremonial halls, emperor's and courtiers' private houses and large private houses), temples, walls and gateways, pavilions, terraces and platforms, pagodas and stupas, bridges, P'ailou, and balustrades. One is reminded of Yue Jiazao's work, published a few years earlier. It might be difficult if not completely impossible to establish a direct link between these two publications, but the similarity is obvious, not only in the buildings types enumerated, but also in the manner in which the individual elements were treated.[518] For example, while discussing the platform, the author referred to the "old books:" "This platform was called

---

[515] Ibid, 39.
[516] Ibid, xiii.
[517] Ibid, xiv.
[518] And it could be safely assumed that the author knew of Liang's series of catalogues of Chinese architectural types/ components published in the 1930s as a practical guide for design. That series of works likewise treated different elements in a chapter. See Liang Sicheng, Liu Zhiping, 1934 – 1937 (?). *Jianzhu sheji cankao tuji/ Illustrations for design reference*, which included platforms, stone balustrades, store fronts, *dougong*, glazed tiles, and others.

T'an in the old books, and the height of the platform was proportioned in accordance with the importance of the owner." [519] But the similarity might have ended here; where the Chinese scholar Yue started with etymology and textual information, Mirams started with the latest development in the field, whether scholarly publications or archeological finds of the time. Take the example of the platform one more time. This is how Mirams began: "The earliest known building platforms to be found in China are those built of mud at Anyang and considered to be of the Shang dynasty."[520]

In the chapter on "Architectural and sculptural embellishments" following the curious excursion of the pagoda and the *pailou*, the author thus justified his choice:

> A full picture of Chinese architecture cannot be had until the fixed and moveable embellishments of the temple and palace courtyards and approaches are visualized. [521]

The author's approach to Chinese architecture was made abundantly clear here: to present a moving and mobile impression of Chinese architecture, likely exemplified and epitomized by the palaces and temples in Beijing, as he led the reader through its various spaces, noticing all its magnificent and peculiar characteristics. After absorbing all the fantastic structural motifs, the reader was now presented with the "fixed and moveable embellishments" of the building, including flag poles, bronze incense burners, gigantic marble or bronze lions, peacocks, tortoise and gilded water kongs, beautiful trees, drum and bell tower, etc. After leaving this "walled" – walls being the subject of the next chapter – compounds, the reader was led outside to explore the landscape on a larger scale: the bridges, the graves and tombs, the gardens.

---

[519] Mirams, 44.

[520] Ibid, 43. Anyang is the site of the first archeological excavations of the late Shang dynasty capital of the Bronze Age in China, starting from the late 1920s, and the excavations of this site have been virtually non-stopping to this day.

[521] Ibid, 90.

The book ends with a chapter on modern building, where the author pondered the future of Chinese architecture:

> With the introduction of modern building materials such as reinforced concrete and rolled steel joists, it became apparent that China was in danger of being swamped with a kind of modern international architecture, so losing its traditional building character…. Chinese architectural students had already received their training in America and Europe, and these men decided on the bold scheme of building in the Chinese style, but planning to modern requirements and using new materials. A composite type of building has evolved which seems to fully justify this attempt to keep alive the traditional Chinese architectural style.[522]

The author's conclusion to the chapter and to the whole book reads very similar to both Liang's urging of studying the past of Chinese architecture for a viable future, and Henry Murphy's call for a Chinese architectural renaissance:

> In conclusion, it may be said that the only way to ensure that Chinese architecture of the future is carried on as a vital development, is to study the past in order that the best may be selected for continuation. Chinese building calls for a renaissance, or a re-birth of the pure construction of the earliest times.[523]

None of these English books or chapters on Chinese architecture has been referenced, discussed, or has received much attention from the scholarly community of Chinese architectural historians ever since. As a meticulous scholar devoted to his trade, it was very likely that Liang had known some, if not all, of these works; particularly in consideration of Bushell's popularity and Ferguson's comprehensive scale in his survey of Chinese art. More likely, however, was that Liang did not regard these writings as serious studies of the topic to warrant much attention. The writings of amateur scholars such as Yue Jiazao, and both Chinese and foreign art historians such as Bushell and Ferguson, Jiang Danshu and Teng Gu, and discussions of foreign architects from a more practical, design perspective such as Murphy's and Gresnigt's effort to find a

[522] Ibid, 125-6.
[523] Ibid, 127.

contemporary language of Chinese architecture, all had contributed to our present day understanding of Chinese architecture, regardless of the scale of their impact, and regardless of whether the debt to them was explicitly acknowledged or not. Yet their fate differed vastly in Chinese architectural historiography, which could be argued to have been related to, to a large or small extent, the gap between these histories and the historical outlook of the dominating figure of modern Chinese architectural historiography of Liang Sicheng, encapsulated in very plain language by himself in 1934. In the review of Yue's book, discussed earlier, Liang offered a sketch of what he believed and expected of a "Chinese architectural history," i.e., of writing a "proper" history of Chinese architecture:

> In the most simplified terms, this book, since entitled "Chinese" "architectural" "history," should be expected to give an account, in the very least, of architectural activities through the historic periods illustrated with extant physical materials across China as well as written records, noting or analyzing the characteristics of each region and period, while providing us accordingly with other historical background of each period, such as politics, religion, economics, science, etc., that influenced the architecture of the period to make it the way it was. Then, [it can] either compare the overall achievements of the periods, or examine the structural evolution of the architectural members with a modern perspective, and discuss its strength and weakness, advantage and disadvantage. Only after this can the book measure up to its name.[524]

But understandably, everyone did not see eye to eye on this matter, as shown in the previous chapters. Completely opposing views, as well as everything in between, were put forth for deliberation and consideration during the Republican period. In the vast transformation taking place in this period, the disciplinary autonomy of Chinese architecture came to the fore. In other words, – and as convincingly argued by Xu Subin, – Chinese architecture was freed from Confucian ideology tied up to ritual and code, as

---

[524] Liang, "Review of Yue," 291.

symbol and marker, to become a subject and entity in its own right during the republican period.[525] Liang's subsequent history of Chinese architecture seemed to have functioned further along the line: to yank architectural history free of the hold of even art history, to become its own subject of its own history. By writing a history of Chinese architecture independent of art history of China, Liang was placing it on more of an equal footing with its Western inspiration and model.

Not only that, Liang's history was also simultaneously acting on other planes. All manner and mode of writing produced all sorts of problems for Liang. The early Western writers' derogatory and erroneous views of Chinese architecture needed to be refuted; the various so-called histories of Chinese architecture, bits and pieces of this or that aspect, needed to be synthesized and united into a whole; the emphasis on the decorative, the "belittling" of Chinese architecture as merely decorative, needed to be shifted to the structural; the humiliating characterization of Chinese architecture as being static and non-changing, i.e., "ahistorical," needed to be shown as otherwise. But in the first place and in the final analysis, a "proper" history of Chinese architecture needed to be written. A model was needed, as was an interpretative lens. An archaic grammar was to be decoded; and a historical narrative was to be produced, in order to support a coherent argument that would answer such questions as: What was Chinese architecture? What was its history? Where was it going? And more.

Liang's model was Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, and his interpretive lens was structural rationalism from his Beaux-Arts education and the influence of the international movement of the 1920s and 1930s.

---

[525] Xu Subin, 2010. *Jindai Zhongguo jianzhuxue de dansheng [The beginning of Chinese modern architecture]*. Tianjin: Tianjian Univeristy Press.

In aspiring to write a history of Chinese architecture on par with its Western classical models, Liang was accomplishing multiple tasks in his historical writing, as brilliantly analyzed by Zhu Tao in his recent study. Zhu thus explained,

> In order to prove that Chinese architecture was not an "ahistorical architecture," nor a lone leaf away from the trunk of the "tree of architecture," Liang and his colleagues had to fulfill three formidable tasks in the very least: First, to clarify the origins of Chinese architecture; to prove that Chinese architecture originated from its independent source, that is to say, its own trunk, and not merely an offshoot dependent on a tree of Western architecture. Second, to depict its history, to draw the evolutionary process of Chinese architecture, i.e., its own diagram of growth and branching, through a complete writing of its history. And third, to advance its evolution, to propel Chinese architecture, or to at least prove its potential, to move forward and evolve further [into a modern architecture].[526]

As discussed earlier, the Japanese scholar Ito Chuta's theory of the Western and Eastern architectural systems with their parallel, independent origins provided Liang with the foundation of his first task. His methodology of working with both textual sources and physical remains, together with his academic training and "apprenticeship" with the old masters of traditional craftsmanship,[527] as well as his progressive and evolutionary historical outlook influenced by his own father Liang Qichao, all facilitated his research and historical writing of Chinese architecture. The accidental similarity of the structural framework of Chinese wooden buildings and the most up-to-date skeletal structure of steel and reinforced concrete strengthened Liang's belief and that of many of his colleagues in the potential of Chinese architecture to evolve into something analogous to the skyscrapers, the latest offspring of Western architecture in the modern era.

Whether or not acknowledged or even realized, and no matter how different Liang's history of Chinese architecture might appear from its predecessors, both in

---

[526] Zhu 2014, 58.

[527] In his study of the Qing dynasty construction manuals and building terminology, Liang procured the help of some old traditional master carpenters. See Liang Sicheng. 2001. *Complete works of Liang Sicheng*,

Chinese and other languages, his was also a product of the same historical period, a latest comer, during the 1940s, to the long line of discussants on the topic, and another piece of the puzzle of Chinese architecture. Liang's writing had more in common with his colleagues and opponents than might have been realized. The most common ground that many of them shared was the reformative, and adaptive attitude toward Chinese architecture and the means through which to produce a suitable form for the modern era. Chinese architecture had to be reformed and there was no questioning of that. Modern development of new materials and new demands of the machine age must be complied to, and that was that.

In this they likewise drew similar conclusions in regard to the role of history; history was meticulously studied, carefully analyzed, and selectively presented to advance one's agenda, whether it was refuting outrageous misconceptions, or asserting that Japanese architecture was the true heir of Chinese architecture, or providing practical guidance for architectural design.

---

vol. 6. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, "Preface" to the *Qingshi yingzao zeli* [*Qing style construction regulations*].

Conclusion

For both Liang and his colleagues, as well as their immediate predecessors such as Yue Jiazao in Republican China, the effort to establish Chinese architecture once and for all on a world stage culminated in writing the first history of Chinese architecture by a Chinese scholar, thereby putting it on a par with the Western models that they admired. Liang's version of Chinese architectural history, which is now the established historiography in China, has outdated the knowledge system upheld and sustained by the traditional craftsman community. But does it mean that we know more about Chinese architecture with a written history? According to one of the most vehement contemporary critics of the established Chinese architectural historiography, Zhao Chen, the "modernized" version of Chinese architecture from the Republican period is itself antiquated now, by the very same factor that had superseded the indigenous knowledge of Chinese architecture less than 100 years ago for the first-generation of Chinese architectural historians: that of the power structure and power relations in the world. China's position of power today, argues Zhao Chen, necessitates a reinterpretation of Chinese architecture and its history to replace the one that was written during a period of China's utter powerlessness in the Republic of China.[528]

As examined in the previous chapters, discussions and actions concerning the Chinese house and Chinese architecture during the Republican period formed a more vibrant scene than we might have realized. Different constituencies holding various forms of power and resources – the general public, municipal governments, and the professionals – all had their part to play in changing understandings of Chinese

[528] Zhao Chen, 2007.

architecture. Sharing the basic premise that reform was necessary, each of these constituencies focused on a particular cluster of issues.

The public's discussion of the house, as examined in Chapter One, was triggered and intensified by the violent change in social structure, most directly brought about by the fall of the millennium-long imperial rule, but even before that by the rapid decline of the established order of the Qing dynasty. This transformed perceptions of the house and of the individual's relation to it. Indeed this was an age of the discovery of the individual, and of his/her changed relation to the house, family, and society. The house, no longer a physical embodiment and microcosm of Confucian decorum, now needed to accommodate the modern life of the modern man and woman.

For the urbanites, modern life revealed itself as the physical, that is architectural, sensorial, and spatial experience of the modernizing city, in both image and imaginary. The "LIGHT, HEAT, POWER!" of modern life in port cities such as Shanghai presented the imagery of the quintessentially modern, and defined the urbanites' experience of modernity through body and space. The modern city also invited its inhabitants to imagine new possibilities, and if the ideal house for the ideal/standard/model family was just a bit different for everyone, the perceived reality was more or less the same: every aspect of the Chinese house needed reforming, the service spaces of the kitchen and bathroom being the most urgent of them all. The era's dominant rhetoric of health and hygiene was used to justify this reformist approach.

For the fortunate urbanites, the modern seemed to equate with the Western. Western ways of building a house with open spaces all around, Western styles of decoration and furnishing, Western schedules of daily life, Western rhetoric of health and hygiene, etc., all were avidly emulated by those who could afford them, albeit after a

short period of shock and envy as had encountered in the treaty port cities after the first Opium War. Popular discussions centered on the livability and convenience of the house, its appropriateness for modern life, and how its exterior and interior décor indicated the owner's taste and status in society.

But for the least fortunate who lived in shantytowns across the city and who could barely scrape together a living, what did modernity represent? For these people, did the advent of modernity mean their displacement from the countryside and/or their replacement by the machine in the city? Or did it mean that they were provided with "affordable" low-rent housing in the city, a "modern" provision of a modern era? Unable to give their own voice, as most of them were illiterate and excluded from the reading circles of the newspaper and magazine, it was the city's self-conscious reformist-minded middling class who called for the governments to build affordable accommodation for the poor, with co-operative housing emerging as one of the most appealing options.

The municipal governments' concern, as discussed in Chapter Two, was likewise manifold. Having at its disposal legislative and administrative resources – not to mention the personnel and finances (although quite limited during this period as a general rule) – the municipal governments who looked to the systems of administration in the foreign settlements and concessions as models, realized the process of modernization through infrastructural projects: the roads and streets, bridges and ditches, pipes and sewage, etc. For the street front, the public edifices of the city needed to represent the nation's dignity and the glory of its culture; in other words, it needed to look *Chinese*, even though the lure of the West, especially in the realm of physical and material comfort, proved strong.

Carried out simultaneously with the physical transformation of the built landscape was the reform of social behavior, the ways of living and behaving like a modern man

and woman. Like the cityscape that was regularized and standardized, the issue concerning the people was the efficacy of management and control; regularization and standardization of both the system and people were also in place, as seen in the laws and regulations governing the processes of architectural design and construction, and those governing the actions of the professional crew. In fact, these building codes and regulations effectively "created" both the modern profession of architecture and the figure of the modern architect and engineer, by establishing a set of professional requirements not to be met by the traditional craftsman.

The problem of housing the city's poor, a civic task expected of the modern municipal government, was partially dealt with by wrenching them out of their shantytown dwellings and providing them with affordable housing, although these were few in number and did not amount to more than some model houses. As a matter of fact, many such actions were seen as little more than providing a favorable image of the government itself: here one thinks of the Guangzhou government's early effort in building the *Pingmin gong*. In terms of providing housing for these people, the primary concerns were economic: the cost of materials and construction, the problem of work load and efficiency were overriding considerations, although the minimum requirements of hygienic living had to be satisfied. Although many adopted a minimalist, modernist approach, itself equated with the "new" and modern – the issue of form, style, or symbolic meaning of the houses simply did not register very high in the overall consideration.

For the professionals, discussed in Chapter Three, the core issues were related to the establishment of the profession first and foremost. Whether by providing a satisfactory design solution for a client, or admonishing that the Chinese house, erected

by the local craftsmen until now, was deficient and needed reform at the hand of the modern architect (and engineer), or educating the general public about the practice and history of architecture, the architect educator/practitioner/historian aimed at carving out an image of the modern architect as someone superior to the traditional carpenter for activities related to architectural design and construction.

For this group of professionals, reforming the study of architecture turned out to center around the discourse; that is, writing a "proper" history of Chinese architecture. But the professional community of architects, engineers, and builders were not the only ones writing on the subject of the Chinese house or architecture. The public's discussion of the same topic has not been accorded much attention by the professional community, who, after all, belonged to the elite strata of society. The "indigenous" effort at the same attempt was scathingly criticized for its inadequacy in scientific approach, the latter expected of modern scholarship. The other sorts of writing – such as the likes of Jin Xianfa who attempted to write about a "living" tradition with a "living" language, i.e., a literary and personable one – could have been, as it probably was, brushed aside even more easily. Reforming the historiography was itself another piece in the puzzle of reforming the system of knowledge production and acquisition in modern China.

A slew of Western publications appeared before and during the Republican period. Taken as a whole, the scope of these publications was broad, the issues they dealt with were multifarious, and the implication was far-reaching. More important than their scholarly merit is the fact that these publications formed a lineage of knowledge representation and accumulation of their own. The modern scholarly representation's own way and logic of dissemination, for example, the repetition of the "typical" so as to canonize it, were seen most clearly in such cases as the Chinese roof, the pagoda and the

pailou, the material of timber for construction, etc. The desire to grasp things in their entirety was a shared incentive for scholars both Chinese and foreign.

More implicit were the approaches and underlying principles concerning what constituted architecture. The early Western approaches to writing Chinese architecture were also rejected on many levels. On the empirical level, for example, they were rejected for being erroneous. On the level of representation, they were rejected for not being conducted in the strict scholarly – that is to say, architectural historical – manner. The Chinese scholar's revisionist effort to articulate Chinese architecture was, however, shot through with contradictions, some of which they were aware of, and others that never surfaced. The nationalist sentiment in a time of China's complete impotency in front of the West perhaps figured disproportionately in their conscience or subconscious. The pointed correction of Western errors only worked to emphasize the same stereotypical types and elements of Chinese architecture, perhaps also disproportionately. It can be argued that the completed history of Chinese architecture, with a Western history of architecture as its model, was only a version of China-centric view of things. As such, it only supplemented its precedent counterparts of the Euro-centric, and Japan-centric views of architecture and the world.

What requires a closer reexamination is the relation of China to the West, which was the key factor in shaping the discourse of Chinese architecture during this period. Bewildered and humiliated by China's repeated losses to foreign powers since the middle of the nineteenth century, Chinese intellectuals, on the one hand, clung to the old illusion of the Middle Land's cultural superiority, and on the other hand, relentlessly advocated studying the material, artefactual, and technological advances of the West, in the hope of eventually superseding it and reclaiming China's superiority.

In the realm of architecture, this meant that the age-old confidence and repose were shattered, and a wildly eclectic array of styles from the West was tried and wholeheartedly embraced by the public at large, while the architects, seeing themselves as the cultural and social elites as they were, deemed it their responsibility to educate the public, instill the Chinese "spirit" if not the "style" in their architectural designs, and find an appropriate form for the future of Chinese architecture, while simultaneously accommodating the client's requirements and preference in their professional commissions. The result was the fragmentation of the traditional system predicated on the interconnectedness of the material, structural and artistic expression and appearance. In this endeavor, the professional community was supported by the municipal governments of China, whose administrative and legislative measures did nothing short of ensuring the professionals' claim to expertise.

As a matter of fact, it was exactly through claims of expertise that the professional community established itself, in a short period of three decades, as the modern interpreter and worthy trustee of the Chinese building traditions, as the replacement of the traditional figure of the craftsman. I have shown in the previous chapters that the professional's voice was but one of the multiple articulations concerning Chinese architecture during this period. The other equally powerful voice – the public discourse on the built landscape of the modern city and the lived environment of the house, closely related to the bodily and spatial experience of daily life in the modern era – was seen as sensorial, capricious, irrational and thus untrustworthy. Although emerging prior to the professional presence, the popular voice shared the basic premise on reforming life and architecture in China with the latter, and quickly adopted some of the latter's fundamental presuppositions about architectural design and building activity, i.e., that a house should be "properly"

designed by a modern architect before construction could begin. Similarly, on the ground of accusations of being "unscientific," "unhistorical" were the alternative modes of writing Chinese architecture, such as that of Yue Jiazao and the English publications discussed in the previous chapter, rejected, neglected, or forgotten by the professional architect-historians of Republican China. A vibrant scene at the beginning of the twentieth century was channeled into a singular consideration of Chinese architecture and its history as measured by the yardstick of structural rationalism.

But there is still the issue of Chinese architecture, long practiced as an oral, crafts tradition in China that was severed from the spatial experience of modern life during the period under investigation. Historiography or not, it has had its own history and mode of knowledge acquisition and accumulation, dissemination and practice. The effort of the first-generation Chinese historians at writing a history of Chinese architecture, a fundamental step in organizing the national knowledge of the New Culture intellectuals, supposedly produced a systematic, organized, written version of China's architectural history, suitable for dissemination in an academic setting. The question is, when both model and measure, both terminology and methodology are imported from the West, how far is Chinese architecture as (re-)presented in the established historical narrative from the material facts of it?

To put it in another way, aside from the written histories and away from academia, does Chinese architecture have something different to teach us? Remembering that it has been an oral, and tactile on-site process of learning until very recently, and a practice that was intricately linked to the realm of literati creativity in traditional China, one realizes how drastic the conflicts must have been between the imported architectural studies in the

beginning of the twentieth century, and the traditional practice, which was subsequently cut off from its historical continuity.

What would Chinese architecture look like if the craftsman tradition – or whatever is left of its remnant today – was carefully examined and studied, as in the contemporary architect Wang Shu's studio design courses and architectural practice? There will undoubtedly be different responses to such questions, but most likely, Chinese architecture would look quite different from the palaces and temples of traditional China whose images adorn just about every book on the subject.

References

Archival Sources

The archival materials come mostly from the holdings of the Beijing Municipal Archives. Below are some examples.

Beiping tebieshi gongwuju jianzhu guizhang huibian [*A collection of building rules and regulations of the Beiping Special Municipality Public Works Bureau*]. Archival number: ZQ22-1-388.

Mei Jia. ed. "*Materials on reforming the courtyard house in Beiping in the 1930s*," in Chen Leren, et al eds. *Ershi shiji Beijing chengshi jianshe shiliaoji (shang)* [*An anthology of materials on Beijing's urban construction in the twentieth century*], vol.1. Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2007: 131 – 137.

"The petition of the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau to reform the courtyard house and the government's directive," archival number: J1-4-53.

"Petitions of the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau to select land for constructing low-rent houses near Zhongshuli, Tianqiao South Street, with results of the public bidding for construction and budgets and illustrated drawings of the project, and the government's orders and directives," archival number: J17-1-1353.

"The petition of the Beiping Municipal Government Public Works Bureau to reform the courtyard house and the government's directive," archival number: J1-4-53.

Public Works Bureau of the Beiping Special Municipality, ed. 1930. *Beiping tebie shi jianzhu guizhang huibian* [An anthology of architectural regulations of the Beiping Special Municipality], archival number ZQ8-1-88.

Primary Sources

Primary sources cited in the text come from Republican-era newspapers, magazines and journals, as well as government bulletins and work reports. This is a vastly mixed pool, with many materials from *Shenbao, Shishi xinbao*[*The China Times*]*, Jianzhu yuekan* [*The Builder*]*,* and *Zhongguo jianzhu* [*The Chinese Architect*]. The last two categories, *The Builder* and *The Chinese Architect*, contributed many pictorial materials for the dissertation, which were noted in the illustrations, so they are not included here in this bibliography. Below are a selection of the most often cited sources for articles and separate book-length publications.

1. ***Shenbao*** Articles

Author unknown. "The problem of living in Beiping." *Shenbao*, June 15, 1936, page 9.

Bi Bo. "My idea of the ideal family." *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, February 25, 1923, page 8.

Chen Shida. "My views on reforming the inland house." *Shenbao: changshi*, October 31, 1921, page 22.

Feng Jiang. "Reference material for constructing a house." *Shenbao: changshi*, February 19, 1924, page 17.

Feng Zi. "Reforming the house." *Shenbao: benbu zengkan*, September 7, 1932, pages 20 – 21.

Huafo louzhu. "Key elements in forming a model family." *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, February 19, 1922, page 8.

Huang Housheng. “The true principle of a small family.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, August 21, 1921, page 18.
Jian Yi. “The new, reformed family.” *Shenbao*, September 4, 1923, page 19.
Jun. “Must-knows for building a house.” *Shenbao: changshi*, September 29, 1920, page 16.
Lin Huiyin. “On architecture.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, October 12, 1933, page 21.
Lingnan liantang sheng. “On the filthy streets of Shanghai which ought to be cleaned and repaired.” *Shenbao* April 19, 1873, page 1; “Dirty streets,” *Shenbao* Sept. 21, 1882, page 3; and “On repairing and managing the roads and streets,” *Shenbao* March 10, 1883, page 1.
Pei Yu. “On house decoration.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, April 29, 1923, page 8.
Shou Zhang. “The small family and the big family.” *Shenbao*, July 14, 1923, page 19.
Shuang manaozhu (?). “The ideal small family.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, November 23, 1924, page 12.
Wei Chen. “My views on setting up the house.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, October, 28, 1923, page 8.
Wu Jizhi. “Handling the chamber pots.” *Shenbao: changshi*, June 28, 1921, page 18, 17.
Wu Xiaochu. “Route to the ideal family.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, December 24, 1922, page 19.
Xin Yi. “A good model for the small family.” *Shenbao: changshi*, March 31, 1923, page 20.
Yi. “The ten ought-to-bes for the new family.” *Shenbao: changshi*, August 18, 1923, page 19.
Yi. “A good model of the small family.” *Shenbao, changshi*, August 3, 1923, page 19.
Yi Guan, “On family reform,” *Shenbao: ziyou tan*, January 21, 1923, page 8.
Yu Cangyuan. “The new family and Europeanization.” *Shenbao: zityoutan*, September 16, 1923, page 23.
Zhong Mou. “Designing the small family.” *Shenbao: ziyoutan*, June 27, 1929, page 19.
Zhu Yunzong. “The most hygienic orientation for a house.” *Shenbao: changshi*, August 22, 1923, page 21.

2. *China Times* Articles

Chen Zhen. “An elementary introduction to architectural drawing.” *The China Times,* Architecture and Real Estate Supplement, no.20. June 30, 1931.
Jing Zhou. “The new trend of our compatriots’ preference for foreign-style buildings.” *The China Times*, Architecture and Realty Supplement*,* August 13, 1931, page 2.
Shen Luming. “The Engineer and the drawing.” *The China Times*, Architectural and Realty Supplement*,* September 16, 1932, page 6.
Zhang Shaoyu. “Why hire an architect to build a house.” *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, September 16, 1932, page 6.
Zhang Shaoyu. “The issue of self-built houses for our compatriots.” *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, July 20, 1932, page 3.
Yuan Zongyao, trans. “Ramblings on the architect.” *The China Times,* Architecture and Realty Supplement, February 28, 1931, page 3.

3. Other Primary Sources

Bao Dou (?). “The flaws of the Chinese house.” *Fudan Civil Engineering Society Bulletin* 1 (1934): 131 – 133.
Bellman, Harold. *The building society movement*. Xu Xinwu, trans. Beijing: Zhuzhe shudian, 1933.
“Bidding for the People’s Palace.” *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 346 (1930):19.
Boerschmann, Ernst. 1912. "Chinese architecture and its relation to Chinese culture." *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, 24 (1911): 539-567.
Bulletin of the Shanghai Municipal Public Work’s Bureau, 2-3 (1928).
Bureau of Social Affairs of Greater Shanghai, ed. “Shanghai shi shehuiju laogong tongji gongzuo he jihua” [“The work and plan of labor statistics of Shanghai’s Social Affairs Bureau.”] *Shehui banyue kan* [*The Bi-monthly Journal of Social Affairs?*] 1.11-12 (1935):31 – 38.
Bushell, Stephen W. 1924. *Chinese art* (first edition 1904, reprinted 1907. 2nd edition 1909, reprinted 1911, 1914, 1921, 1924). London: Pulished under the authority of the Board of Education, Victoria and Albert Museum.
Cai Zhengya. 1934. *Shanghai shi shenghuo zhishu zhaiyao [Summary of the Index of living standards in Shanghai]*.
Cathay Decorative Art Studio. 1925. *Chinese interior decoration*. Shanghai: the studio.
Chambers, William and John Haberkorn. 1757. *Designs of Chinese buildings, furniture, dresses, machines, and utensils*. London: Published for the author, and sold by him next door to Tom's Coffee-house, Russel-Street, Convent-Garden; also by Mess. Dodsley, in Pall Mall; Mess. Wilson and Durham; Mr. A. Millar, in the Strand, and Mr. R. Willock, in Cornhill.
“Chen Jitang allocated huge sums of money to the municipal government for the People’s Palace.” *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 337 (1929):
Chen Yuelin. *Nanjing’s housing problem*, in Xiao Zheng (Tseng Hsiao), ed. *Data on Chinese land problems in the 1930s: A collection of surveys and field studies*, vol. 91. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe youxian gongsi, and San Francisco: Zhongwen ziliao zhongxin 1977: 47771 – 48370.
Chen Zhaokun. *Practical Architecture*, vols.1 – 4. 1935 – 1936. Shanghai: Chen Kui Architectural Office and Publishing House.
Chen Zhongchi. “An outline history of architectural drawing in China.” *Yi jing* 7 (1936): 338 – 341.
Chen Zhongming. “Preliminary remarks on establishing housing cooperatives.” *Xin Zhonghua/ The New China magazine* 4.1(1946): 28 – 30.
Chuta, Ito. 1937. *A history of Chinese architecture*, trans. Chen Qingquan. Shanghai: Commercial Press.
“Construction of the People’s Palace to be carried out.” *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 341 (1930): 52.
“Constructing the People’s Palace.” *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 339 (1929): 28.
Dai Yue. “A history of building materials in China.” *Beijing daxue yuekan* [*Peking University Monthly*] 1.7(1920): 55 – 62.
Decker, Paul. 1759. *Chinese architecture: civil and ornamental: being a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of plans and elevations etc., from the Imperial Retreat to the smallest Ornamental Building in China: likewise their marine subjects. The*

whole to adorn gardens, parks, forests, woods, canals, etc. London: Henry Parker and Elizabeth Bakewell.
Fairbank, Wilma. "The offering shrines of 'Wu Liang Tz'u," *Harvard journal of Asiatic studies* 6.1(Mar., 1941): 1 – 36.
Fan Wenzhao. "Architecture of China," *Wenhua jianshe* [*Cultural construction*] (Oct. 1934): 135 – 139.
Ferguson, John Calvin. 1971. *Architecture: Being Chapter 7 of survey of Chinese art.* Taiwan: The Commercial press, Ltd (first published in 1939).
Fergusson, James. 1891. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, vol.2, book IX: China.
Gamble, Sydney D., and John Stewart Burgess. 1921. *Peking:a social survey conducted under the auspices of the Princeton University Center in China and the Peking Young Men's Christian Association*. New York: George H. Doran Co. http://books.google.com/books?id=5JsRAAAAIAAJ (accessed May 24, 2015).
Gao Lao. "Reforming the family." *East Miscellany* 14.4 (1917): 8 – 11.
Gresnigt, Dom Adelbert. O.S.B. "Chinese Architecture." *Bulletin of the Catholic University of Peking* 4 (1928): 33 – 45.
"Head of the Land Bureau advocates building state-owned houses for the poor." *Municipal bulletin of Guangzhou* 301 (1928).
He Li. "How do we handle our family now?" *Jiating yanjiu [Family research]* 1.3(1921): 66 – 69.
Hua Weisheng. "On the problem of living in Shanghai." *Xin yu* 2.9 (1934): 1 – 2.
Huo Yongzhang. 1941. *Architectural drawing*. Changsha: Shangwu yinshu guan.
Jian Hu. "Rent and housing co-partnership." *Eastern Miscellany* 18. 21(1921): 4 – 6.
Jiang Danshu. 1917. *A history of fine arts*. Shanghai: the Commercial Press.
Jiang Danshu.1918. *History of Fine Arts: a reference book for normal schools*. Shanghai: the Commercial Press.
Jiang Kun. "Construction method of a hygienic toilet." *Zhonghua yixue zazhi [The National Medical Journal of China]* 24.7 (1938): 539 – 548.
Jin Xianfa. "Designing and drawing a residence." *Zixiu*, various issues from no.115 to no.151, 1940 – 1941.
Kuai Shixun, ed. *Shanghai Gonggong zujie shigao [Historical sources on the International Settlement of Shanghai]*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe (first published in the 1930s, reprint in 1980).
Li Lifu. "Gailiang jiedao shangdian zhuzhai jihua." [Plans to reform streets, stores, and houses] *Hubei jianshe yuekan* 1.1 (1928): 30 – 33.
Li Wenhai et al, eds. 2014. *Minguo shiqi shehui diaocha congbian*. 2 bian, 2 bian [*An anthology of social surveys from the Republican Period*, 2 vols.] Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe.
Liangyou editorial (?). 1936. *Lixiang de zhuzhai [The ideal house]*. Shangahi: Liangyou Publishing House.
Liang Sicheng. "A Review of Yue Jiazao's '*A History of Chinese Architecture'*: repudiating its errors." first published in 1934, reprinted in Liang Sicheng. 2001. *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng*, vol. 2, 291 – 296.
Liang Sicheng, and Liu Zhiping. 1934 – 1937 (?). *Jianzhu sheji cankao tuji/ Illustrations for design reference*.

Liang Sicheng. 2001. *Complete works of Liang Sicheng*, vol. 6. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Liang Sicheng. *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984.
Liang Sicheng. 2014. "Why study Chinese architecture?" trans. Yan Wencheng. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73.1 (March 2014): 8 – 11 (first pub. 1944).
Lin Huiyin. "On a few characteristics of Chinese architecture." *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan [Bulletin of the Society for research in Chinese architecture]* 3.1(1932): 163 – 179.
Lin Wenzheng. "Mo wangji le diaoke he jianzhu" ["Don't forget sculpture or architecture"] *Guoli yishu yuan banyue kan* [*Apollo*] 4(1928): 261 – 267.
Lin Zhensheng. "Evils of the family and ways to reform it." *Jiating yanjiu [Research on the family*] 1. 2 (1921): 49 – 52.
Liu, Dunzhen. 1957. *Zhongguo zhuzhai gaishuo* [*A general study on Chinese residential architecture*]. Beijing: Jianzhu gongcheng chubanshe.
Liu Dunzhen. 1980. *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* [*A history of ancient Chinese architecture*]. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Liu Jipiao. "Zhongguo xinjianzhu ying ruhe zuzhi." ["How to arrange a new Chinese architecture"] *Eastern Miscellany* 24.24 (1927): 81 – 84.
Liu Jipiao. "Art architecture and engineering." *China Traveler* 3.4(1929): 3 – 5.
Lu Qianshou, and Wu Jingqi. "Our opinion." *The Chinese architect* 26 (July 1936): 55 – 56.
Lu Xun. "What happens after Nora left?" *The Ladies' Journal* 10.8 (1924): 1218 – 1222.
Mirams, Dennis George. 1940. *A brief history of Chinese architecture*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh.
Murphy, Henry K. 1928. "An architectural Renaissance in China: the utilization in modern public buildings of the great styles of the past," *Asia* 28.6 (1928): 468 – 475 + 507: 470 – 472.
"Shantytown improvement bill." *Nanjing Municipal Government Bulletin* 1933 (135): 52.
Sheng Chengyan. "Reforming the house/Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 1921, no. 3, 4, 5, and 7.
No author. "Canton's public health by the editor of the Canton Gazette." *Annual report of the Department of Health of Canton Municipality*. Guangzhou: 1923.
Pan Wenan. "Two essential elements of a new family." *The modern home* 1.1(1931): 1 – 10.
Rutherford, Alcock. 1863. *The capital of the tycoon; a narrative of a three years' residence in Japan*. New York: Bradley.
Shanghaishi shizhongxin quyu jianshe weiyuanhui [Civic Center Building Committee]. 1930. *Jianshe Shanghai shi shi zhongxin yuqu jihuashu* [*Plan on the construction of the city center of Shanghai*]. Shanghai.
Shanghai tebieshi gongwuju yewu baogao [*Report of the Shanghai Special Municipality Public Works Bureau*] 2-3(1928).
Sheng Chengyan. "Reforming the house/ Reforming the house (continued)," *Xueyi* 1921, volume 3, numbers. 3, 4, 5, and 7.
Sheng Chengyan. *A preliminary investigation of architectural structure*. Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan (first edition 1943, third edition 1945).

"Shifan xuexiao kecheng biaozhun" [Curriculum standards for teachers' colleges]." *Jiaoyu zazhi [The Chinese educational review*] 5.2 (1912): 24 – 32.
Shi Yan. 1933. *Decorating the modern home*. Shanghai: Dadong shuju.
Tang Daohai. "Urban housing in our country and the housing cooperation movement." *Zhongguo geming* 1934(3.19): 10 – 14.
Tang Ying, and Wang Shoubao, eds. *Structure of houses*. Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan (first edition 1936, second edition 1938).
Teng Gu, 1929. *A short history of Chinese arts*. Shanghai: the Commercial press (first pub. 1926).
"The structure and recent progress of the People's Palace construction," *Municipal Bulletin of Guangzhou* 377 (1931): 25.
Tong Jun, 2000. "Architecture chronicle," in *Works of Tong Jun*. vol. 1. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe: 81 – 85 (first published in English in 1937 in the Tien Hsia Monthly journal).
Tong Jun. "Characteristics of Chinese architecture." *Zhanguo ce* 8 (1940): 11 – 14.
Wu Wenhui. 1935. *Survey of Nanjing's shantytown residents*. Nanjing: National Central University.
Xiao Tong. "Revolutionize the kitchen and toilet." *Xiaoguan*g 1.1 (1927): 14 – 16.
Xiu Jue. "England and America's housing cooperatives." *Zhejingsheng jianshe yuekan* 1931 (5.2): 20 – 25.
Xu Gongsu, and Qiu Jinzhang. 1980. *Shanghai Gonggong zujie zhidu [The institution of the International Settlement of Shanghai]*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe (first pub. 1930s, reprinted in 1980).
Xu Lin. "A comparison of structure and construction of Chinese and Western houses." *Fudan University Science and Engineering Journal* 1 (1928): 53 – 69.
Xu Weinan. "The purpose of publishing the ABC series." in Yang Junshi. 1930. *The ABCs of architecture*, Shanghai: ABC congshushe.
Xu Xintang. 1933. *Design of economic houses*. Shanghai: the Architectural engineering office of Xu Xintang.
Yang Junshi. 1930. *The ABCs of architecture*. Shanghai: ABC congshushe.
Yang Shihu. "A general overview of the West Lake Expo and its mission." *Eastern Miscellany* 26.10(1929): 79 – 82.
Yetts, W. P. 1927. "Writings on Chinese Architecture." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 50 (288): 116 +119 – 121+123 – 124+126 – 129+131.
Yi Nong. "Housing shortage of the world, part 1." *Yinhang zhoubao [The Bankers Weekly]* 5.38 (1921): 10 – 11.
Yi Nong. "Housing shortage of the world, part 2." *Yinhang zhoubao [The Bankers Weekly]* 5.40 (1921): 7 – 8.
Yi Nong. "Housing shortage of the world, part 3." *Yinhang zhoubao [The Bankers Weekly]* 5.41 (1921): 6 – 7.
Yu Fu. "My thoughts on the issue of the family." *Jiating yanjiu* [*Family research*] 1.1(1921): 64 – 65.
Yue Jiazao. 2005. *A history of Chinese architecture*. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe (first pub. 1933).
Zhang Liu. "Shanghai fangwu jiufen de toushi" ["Perspectives on Shanghai's housing disputes."] *Xiandai Zhongguo* [*Modern China Weekly Review*] 1.8 (1939): 13 – 14.
Zhang Renjun. 1941. *Architecture of Toilets*. Guiyang: Wentong shuju.

Zhang Sheng. 2009. *Living in Shanghai was not easy: study on the housing shortage of modern Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.
Zhang Xiaoxiao. "Corrections to the Nanjing low-rent housing issue." *Modern Chinese history studies* 2011 (3): 157 – 158.
Zhang Yuanshan. "The structure of residences." *Ladies' Journal* 2.4 (1916): 3157–3159.
Zhang Zonghan. "The housing issue amidst the cries for lowering the rent." *The municipal review* 3.21(1935): 8.
Zi Tai. "Designing the kitchen: points of consideration." *Fangzhou* 28 (1936): 25 – 27.
Zhu Suiqiu. "Selecting a house and designing its architecture, I and II." *The Ladies' Journal* 2.6 (1916): 3499 – 3503, and 2.7 (1916): 8 – 13.

<u>Secondary Sources</u>

Chen Ping. "Reading Teng Gu." *New Arts* 2002.4: 69 – 81.
Chen Zhenlian."Jiang Danshu's significance in art history." *Qianjiang wanbao*[*Qianjiang Evening News*], October 21, 2013.
Chen Zhihua. 2010. "Forever vernacular: villages, museums, libraries," in *Jianzhu lilun · lishi wenku. di1 ji/ Essays on architectural theory and history* vol. 1. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Cody, Jeffrey W. 2001. *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's adaptive architecture,* Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.
Coomans, Thomas. "Dom Adelbert Gresnigt. Agent van de roomse inculturatiepolitiek in China (1927 – 1932)." *Bulletin Knob* 2014.2: 74 – 91.
Cui Yong, 2004. *Studies on the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe.
Delande, Natalie."Gongchengshi zhanzai jianzhu duiwu de qianlie" ["Engineers as the pioneers of the architectural profession: the significance of technoculture in the architectural history of modern Shanghai]." in Wang Tan, and Zhang Fuhe, eds. 1998. *Essays from the fifth conference on the architectural history of modern China*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe (1998): 96 – 106.
Dong Ke. "Yang Liang and the program of Beiping's Three-year Urban Planning." *Beijing Archival Sources* 1999 (2): 312 – 317.
Dong Li. "Formal composition and transformation of meaning: a review of Gresnigt's architectural works." *Huazhong jianzhu* 14. 3 (1996): 34 – 37.
Dong Li. "Buildings in mission schools and the Renaissance of Chinese traditional architecture." *Journal of Nanjing University* 5 (2005): 70 – 81.
Du Songzhu. "Yue Jiazao and his *A History of Chinese Architecture*." *Guizhou wenshi tiandi* 1 (1995): 62 – 63.
Elman, Benjamin A. 1984. *From philosophy to philology: intellectual and social aspects of change in late imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University.
Glosser, Susan L. 2003. *Chinese visions of family and state, 1915-1953*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Guo Qinghua. 2002. *A visual dictionary of Chinese architecture*. Mulgrave, Vic: Images Pub.
Han, Baode. 1982. *Ming, Qing jianzhu er lun* [*Two essays on Ming and Qing architecture*]. Taibei Shi: Jing yu xiang chubanshe (first pub. 1969).

Han Jianchen, and Zhang Qun. “Minguo shiqi Shanghai shi zhengfu de fanghuang jiuji” [Housing relief efforts of the Shanghai municipal government during the Republican era] *History teaching* 587 (2009): 45 – 47+53.
Hu Rongjin. 2012. *The architect Lin Keming*. Guangzhou: Huanan ligong daxue chubanshe.
Huang, Philip.1972. *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and modern Chinese liberalism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
Jin Xiaoming. 2011. “Liu Jipiao: architecture and book designs.” *Bolan qunshu* 2011.9: 92 – 97.
Nancy Steinhardt. 2004. "The Tang Architectural Icon and the Politics of Chinese Architectural History." *Art Bulletin* 86 (2): 228 – 254.
LaCouture, Elizabeth. 2010. *Modern homes for modern families in Tianjin, China, 1860-1949*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--Columbia University.
Lai Delin. 2007. *Zhongguo jindai jianzhushi yanjiu/ Studies in modern Chinese architectural history*. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe.
Lai Delin. “Old in new: reflections on the influence of the traditional study of Classics, Ming and Qing Pragmatism, and late Qing New History on the historiography of Chinese architecture” *Architectural Journal* 2014. 9-10:108 – 116.
Lai Delin et al. eds. 2006. *Who's Who in Modern Chinese Architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo shuili shuidian chubanshe.
Lee, Leo Ou-fan. 1999. *Shanghai modern: the flowering of a new urban culture in China, 1930-1945*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
Levinson, Joseph. 1953. *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the mind of modern China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Li Kaizhou. “Meiyou nvce zenmeban?” [“What to do without a restroom for women?”] *Wenshi cankao* [*History reference*] 64 (2012): 72 – 73.
Li Shupin. “Labor welfare policy of the early Nationalist government of Nanjing: a case study of workers' housing in Guangzhou during 1920s and 1930s.” *Jinan xuebao* 35.12 (December 2013): 132 – 137.
Li Xiaohong. 2007. *Shanghai's intellectual women and the public media in Republican China: studies on the women's journals* (Diss. Xiamen University).
Lin Zhu. 1995. *A brief history of the Society for Research in Chinse architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Liu Huiying. “From the *New Youth* to the *Ladies' Journal*: women's issues articulated by the May Fourth male intellectuals.” *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* [*Chinese Culture Research*] 2008.1: 118 – 126.
Lou Chenghao, and Xue Shunsheng. 2004. *Old Shanghai's shikumen houses*. Shanghai Tongji daxue chubanshe.
Lu Hanchao. 1999. *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press. http://ark.cdlib.org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/ark:/13030/ft6z09p124/ (accessed February 23, 2014).
Lu Hanchao. “Western material culture in modern China.” *Historical review* 2 (1987): 112 – 120.
Lutpon, Ellen, and J. Abbott Miller. 1992. *The bathroom, the kitchen and the aesthetics of waste: a process of elimination.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Ma Changlin, ed., 2003. *Zujie li de Shanghai* [*Shanghai in foreign concessions*]. Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan chubanshe.
MacPherson, Kerrie L. "Designing China's urban future: the Greater Shanghai Plan, 1927 – 1937." *Planning perspectives* 5.1(1990): 39 – 62.
Mittler, Barbara. 2004. *A newspaper for China?: power, identity, and change in Shanghai's news media, 1872-1912*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Asia Center.
Qian Haiping et al., 2012. *The course of the modernization of Chinese architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Rogaski, Ruth. 2004. *Hygienic modernity: meanings of health and disease in treaty-port China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Rujivacharakul, Vimalin. 2006. *The rise of Chinese architectural history: cross-cultural studies and the making of modern knowledge*. Thesis (Ph. D. in Architecture)--University of California, Berkeley, Spring 2006.
Sand, Jordan. 2003. *House and home in modern Japan: architecture, domestic space, and bourgeois culture, 1880-1930*. Cambridge (Mass.): Distributed by Harvard University Press.
Shanghai shehui kexue yuan. 1958. *Shanghai xiaodaohui qiyi shiliao huibian [Historical sources on the Small Swords Society Uprising in Shanghai]*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.
Shen Ning, ed. "Chronicle of Teng Gu's artistic activities." *Art Research* 2001.3: 37 – 43.
Shen Ning. "Teng Gu boshi xuewei kao" ["On Teng Gu's doctoral degree."] *New Arts* 2003.4: 38 – 43.
Shi Meiding, Ma Changlin Ma, and Feng Shaoting. 2001. *Shanghai zu jie zhi*. [*A history of Shanghai's foreign settlements*] Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe.
Song Jun. 1996. *Shenbao de xingshuai*. [*The rise and fall of Shenbao*] Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe.
Steinhardt, Nancy. "Chinese architecture on the eve of the Beaux-arts," in Jeffrey Cody, Nancy Steinhardt, and Tony Atkin, eds. 2011. *Chinese architecture and the beaux-arts*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Sun Hongquan, and Liu Su. "Song Zheyuan and Zhang Zizhong's low-rent houses at Tianqiao." *Beijing Archival Sources*, 1995(1): 77 – 78.
Tang Bo. 2009. *Studies on the real estate of the urban residences in Beijing during the late Qing and the Republican period, 1900 – 1949*. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe.
Tang Bo. "Republican-era low-rent houses and its institutionalization: a case study of Beiping." *Modern Chinese history studies* 2010 (4): 133 – 143.
Tang Bo. "The housing dream of Republican China." *National History* November 2011: 106 – 111.
Tang Fang. 2009. *Dushi jianzhu kongzhi: jindai Shanghai Gonggong Zujie jianzhu fagui yanjiu* [*City building control: building code of modern Shanghai's International Settlement*]. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe.
Tang Shanlin. "On 'stylistic evolution:'Teng Gu's art history and its cultural origin." *Yishu pinglun [Arts criticism]* 2012.8: 55 – 59.
Tang Xiaobing. 1996. *Global space and the nationalist discourse of modernity: the historical thinking of Liang Qichao*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Tribe, Shawn. "The Chinese works of Dom Adelbert Gresnigt, OSB." http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2012/03/chinese-work-of-dom-adelbert-gresnigt.html#.VbtzQ_mrR1N (accessed March 20, 2015)
Tsai Weipin. 2010. *Reading Shenbao: nationalism, consumerism and individuality in China, 1919-37*. Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan.
Upton, Dell. "Architectural History or Landscape History?" *Journal of Architectural Education* 44.4 (1991): 195-199.
Wang Hongwei. "On the errors concerning the influence of Liang Qichao's 'evolutionary' historiography on Teng Gu's art history." *Wenyi yanjiu* [*Literature & art studies*] 2014.2: 122 – 130.
Wang Minying. 2010. *The historicization of Chinese architecture* (Diss.) Columbia University
Wang Tan, and Zhang Fuhe, eds. 1993. *Disici Zhongguo jindai jianzhushi yanjiu taolunhui lunwenji* [*The fourth research conference on the history of Chinese modern architecture: a collection of essays*]. Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Wang Yanan. 2008. *Studies on the urban planning and construction of Beijing, 1900 – 1949*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe.
Wei Shu. 2011. *"Da Shanghai jihua" qishilu: jindai Shanghai Shi zhongxin quyu de guihua bianqian yu kongjian yanjin* [*The Greater Shanghai Plan revelation: the planning and spatial evolution of the urban center of modern Shanghai*]. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe.
Wells, Camille. "Old claims and new demands: vernacular architecture studies today." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 1 – 10.
Wen Yuqing. 2005. "A summary of Chinese architectural history research (1949 – 1958)." *Architect* 2005.1: 48 – 50.
Wu Hung. 1989. *The Wu Liang shrine, the ideology of early Chinese pictorial art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Wu Hung. 2005. *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the creation of a political space*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
Wu Jiang. 1997. *A hundred years of architecture in Shanghai, 1840 – 1949*. Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe.
Xiao Di. "Salary and expenditure of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou during the Republican period." *Shanghai Business* 2013.9: 60 – 61.
Xiong Yuezhi, et al. "Lve lun jindai Shanghai shizheng" [A preliminary investigation of modern Shanghai's civil engineering"] *Xueshu yuekan* 6 (1999): 85 – 93.
Xu Subin. 1999. *Japan's research on Chinese cities and architecture*. Beijing: Zhongguo shuili shuidian chubanshe.
Xu Subin. "The instrumentality of overseas Chinese students in modern Japan for transmitting information as seen from *Xueyi*." in Zhang Fuhe, ed. *Study and preservation of Chinese modern architecture* (2). Beijing: Tsinghua University Press 2001: 32 – 49.
Xu Subin. "Jindai Zhonguo jianzhu de yishu yundong: meishu jianzhu de sixiang he shijian" [The art movement of modern Chinese architecture: the idea and practice of 'art architecture'"] in Zhang Fuhe, ed., 2006. *Zhongguo jindai jianzhu yanjiu yu baohu,* 5 [*Study and preservation of Chinese modern architecture*, no.5]. Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe: 731 – 746.
Xu Subin. 2010. *The beginning of Chinese modern architecture.* Tianjin: Tianjin daxue chubanshe.

Yang Ruisong. 2010. *Bingfu, huanghuo yu shuishi: xifang shiye de Zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai Zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang* [*The sick man of Asia, the yellow terror, and the sleeping giant: the image of China in Western perception and the national narrative imaginary of modern China*]. Taipei: Chengchi University Press.
Yu Hualin. "Jindai Zhongguo jiating yanjiu de xingqi." ["The rise of family research in modern China."] *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 4 (2003): 102 – 106.
Yu Xiaoqin. "Jiang Danshu's *Art History* and its controversies." *Meishu daguan [Art Panorama]* 2008.3: 20 – 21.
Yu Zuhua. 1996. *Shenchen de minzu fanxing: Zhongguo jindai gaizao guominxing sichao yanjiu* [*Profound national reflection: a study on reforming the national character in modern China*]. Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe.
Yuan Xieming. "The Municipal Council and Shanghai's early roadworks," *Shanghai shehui kexueyuan xueshu jikan [Quarterly of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences]* 4 (1988): 77 – 85.
Zhang Fan. "The study on Yue Jiazao's *Chinese Architectural History*." *Zhongguo jianzhu shilun huikan* 2011: 337 – 365.
Zhang Sheng. 2009. *Living in Shanghai was not easy: study on the housing shortage of modern Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe.
Zhang Xiaochun. 2006. *Wenhua shiying yu zhongxin zhuanyi [Cultural adaptation and translocation of the city center]*. Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe.
Zhang Xiaoxiao. "Corrections to the Nanjing low-rent housing issue." *Modern Chinese history studies* 2011 (3): 157 – 158.
Zhang Zhongli. 1990. *Jindai Shanghai chengshi yanjiu* [*Research on modern Shanghai*]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.
Zhao Chen. 2007. *Limian de wuhui* [*Misunderstanding the facade*]. Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian.
Zheng Zu'an, "The origins of the ring road Zhongshan Road." *Shanghai urban planning review* 2001: 34 – 35.
Zhu Jianfei. 2009. *Architecture of modern China: a historical critique*. London: Routledge.
Zhu Jianfei, ed. 2009. *Sixty years of Chinese architecture (1949 – 2009): history, theory and criticism*. Beijing: Gongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe.
Zhu Tao. 2014. *Liang Sicheng yu ta de shidai* [*Liang Sicheng and his time*]. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe.

Illustrations

Figure 1.1 "A Western housewife's daily schedule." The captions read up and down from right to left, reflecting the traditional Chinese typography. They are, from the top right to the bottom left: 8:00, after breakfast, do dishes and soak laundry for washing; 8:30, wake up the kid(s) for school and wash clothes; 11:30, prepare lunch after laundry; 3:00, fold or iron the clothes when dry; this proper handling will save time and energy for the next day; 4:30, rest an hour before dinner and after household chores are basically done; 6:00, parents and kids, the whole family sits on the dinner table, the hostess is both happy and unhappy (?)
(Source: *The Ladies' Journal* 1.6 (1915))

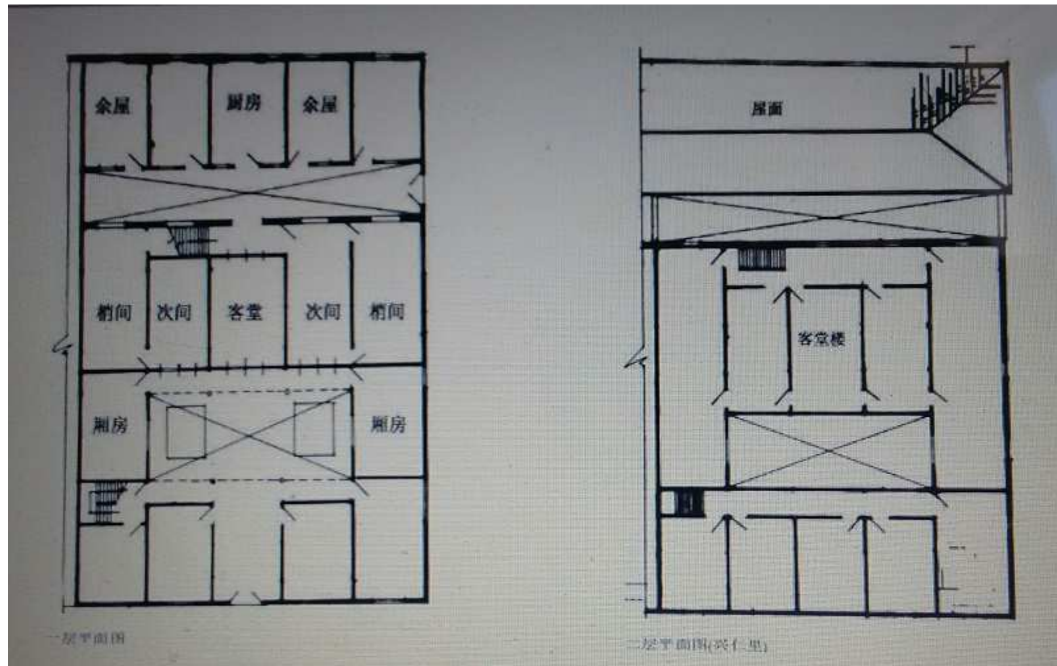


Figure 1.2. A typical early *Shikumen* house, plan, first floor (left) and second floor (right). The areas marked with crosses are courtyard spaces (Source: Lou Chenghao and Xue Shunsheng, 2004. *Lao Shanghai shikumen*. Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 7)

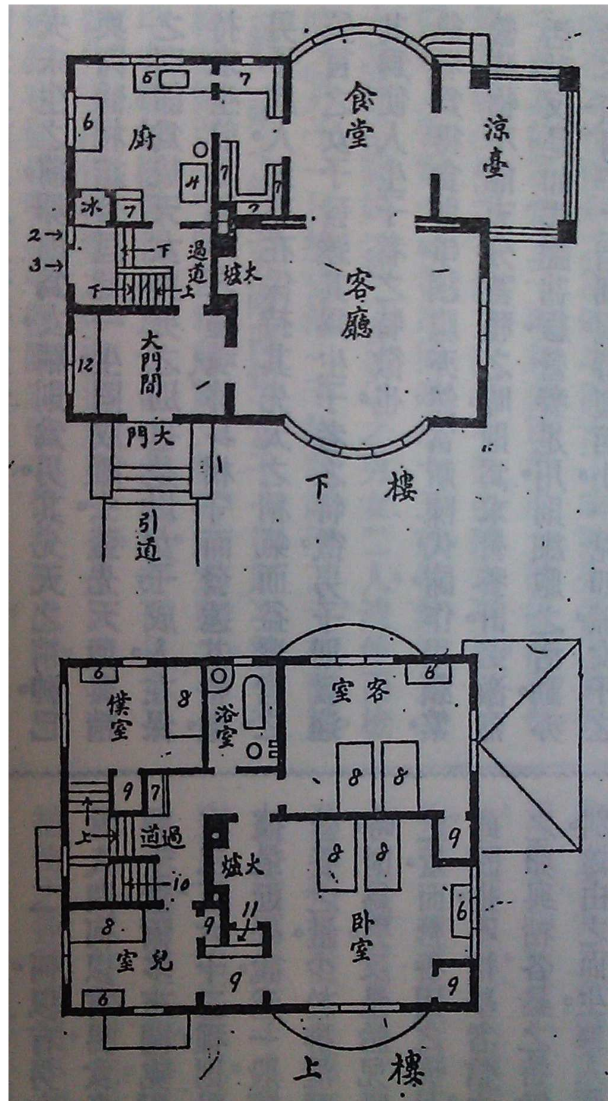


Figure 1.3. "The Western house," ground floor (top) and upper floor (below) plans, taken from an unspecified American newspaper
Key as supplied in the illustration: 1. Pantry; 2. Entrance for milk delivery; 3. Back/side door; 4. Stove; 5. Sink; 6. Table; 7. Cabinets or cupboards; 8. Bed; 9. Closet; 10. Stairs to the third floor storage (attic?); 11. Long table for utensils in the bedroom; 12. Bench
(Source: Zhang Yuanshan, "The structure of residences," *The Ladies' Journal* 2.4(1916): 3159.)

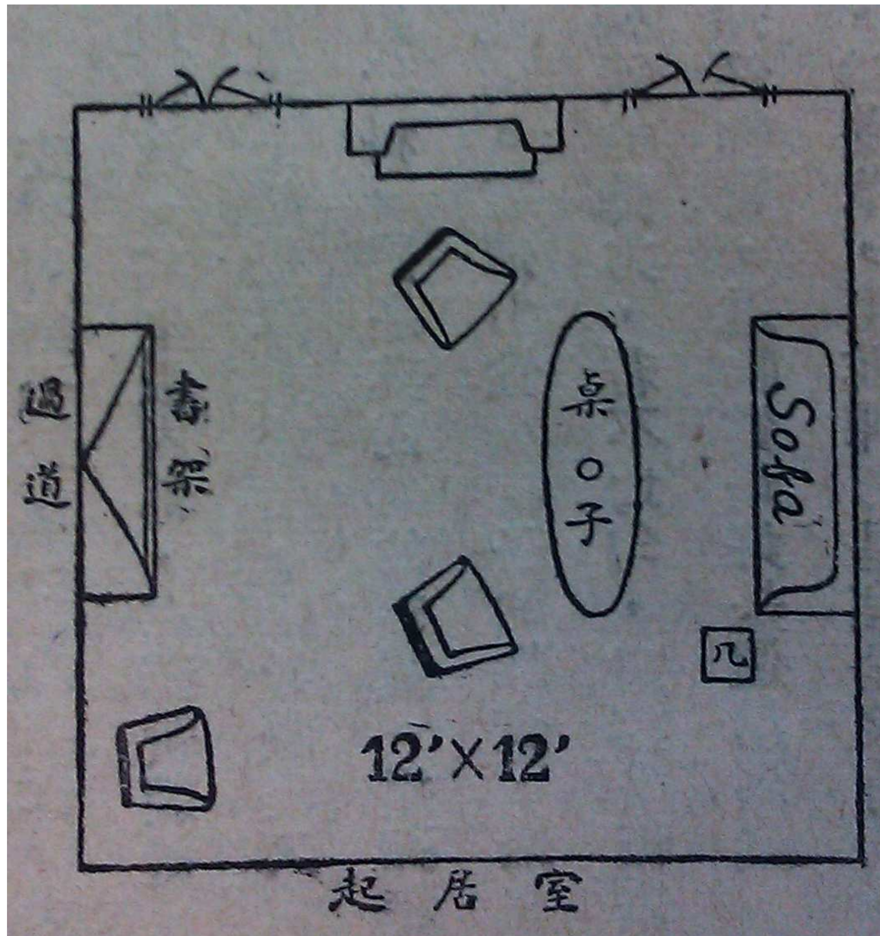
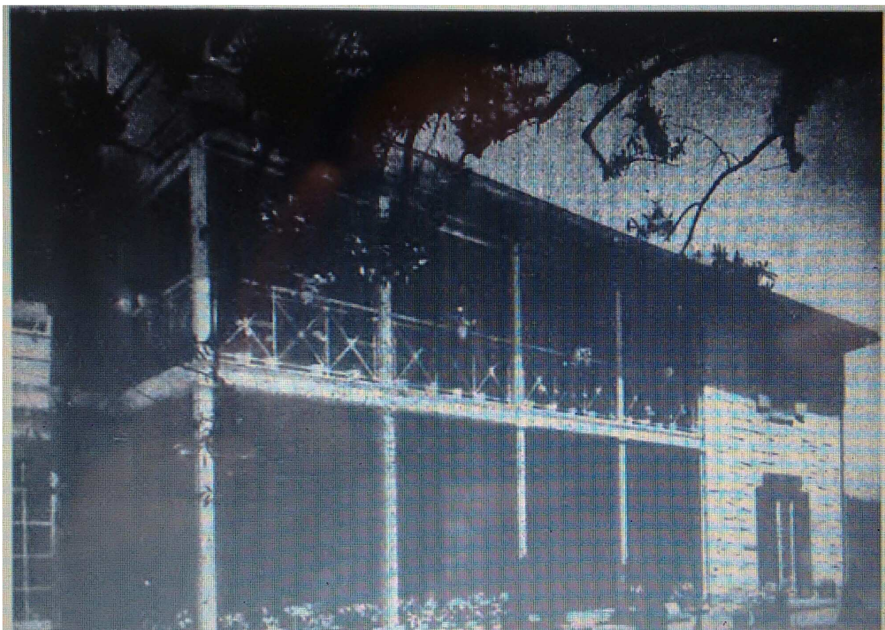


Figure 1.4. A properly decorated living room (Source: Shi Yan 1933. *Xiandai jiating zhuangshi*, 89)



Figures 1.5 –1.6. Models of the ideal house (Source: *The ideal house* 1936)

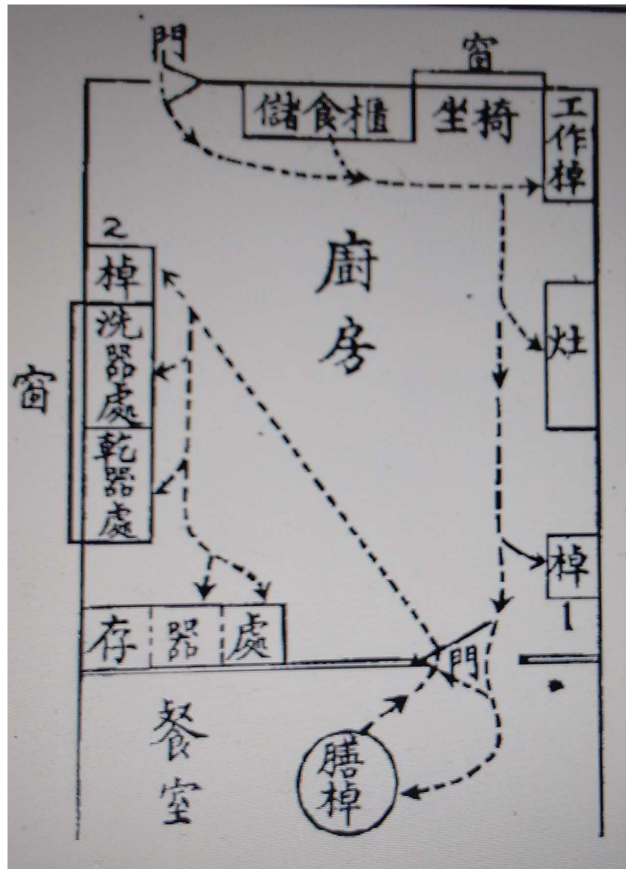


Figure 1.7. “A simple and reasonable kitchen.” 1 & 2 refer to two tables. The door at the upper left corner opens into the kitchen while the one at the lower right corner opens into the dining room. The dotted lines in this diagram indicate the orderly movement of the two clusters of activities centering on food preparation and removal and cleaning of the dishes after the meal. The major elements inside the perimeter of the kitchen, counterclockwise from the upper-left door are, food storage cabinet, stool/ chair, worktable, stove, table (1), door [to the dining table], dish storage, dish rack/ drain, sink, table (2) (Source: Zi Tai, “Designing the kitchen: points of consideration,” *Fangzhou* 28 (1936))

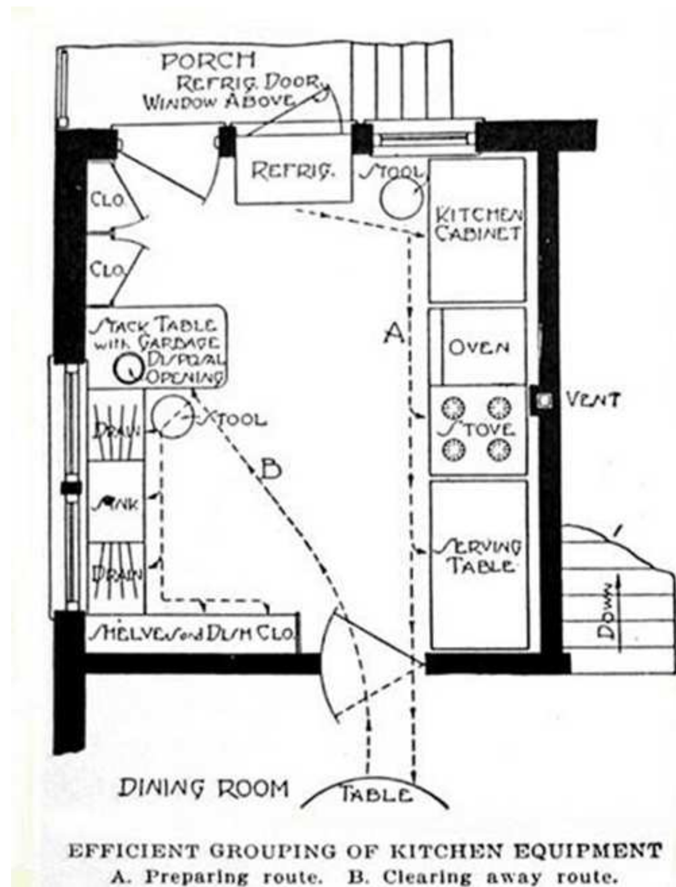


Figure 1.8. Christine Frederick's efficient kitchen. The similarity between this design and the one above is obvious and striking (source: Lupton and Miller, 1992: 47)

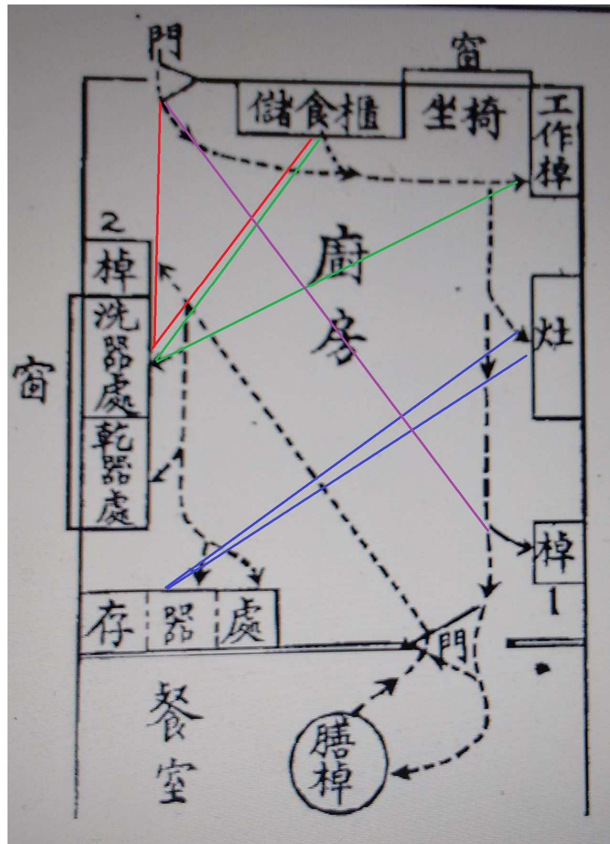
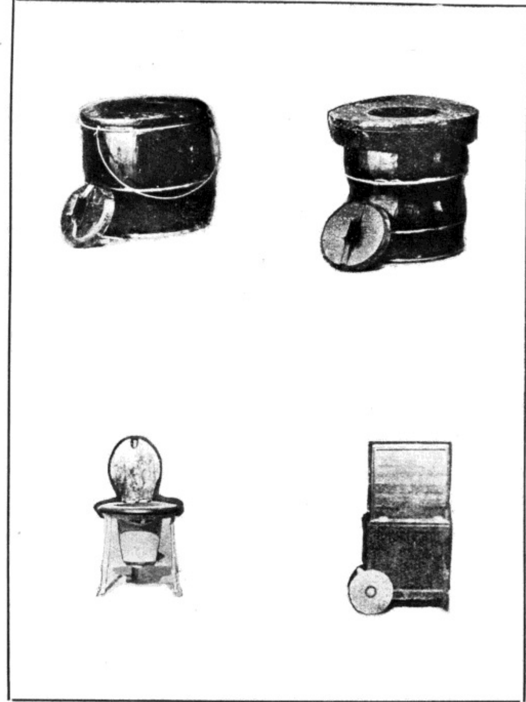


Figure 1.9. The same kitchen as in Fig.7 with the color lines added to show what might really have to happen even in such a well-organized, efficient kitchen. The red and green lines show the steps of food cleaning prior to cooking; the blue line shows the cook's movement during cooking, and the purple line introduces the servant into the kitchen, all without any further complication of repetition (needed when, for example, cooking more than one dish)

廣州市舊式廁所

廣州市糞桶之改良



Figures 1.10-1.11. The old public toilet (left) and reformed chamber pots (right) of Guangzhou, 1923 (Source: *the Municipal Review* 1923)

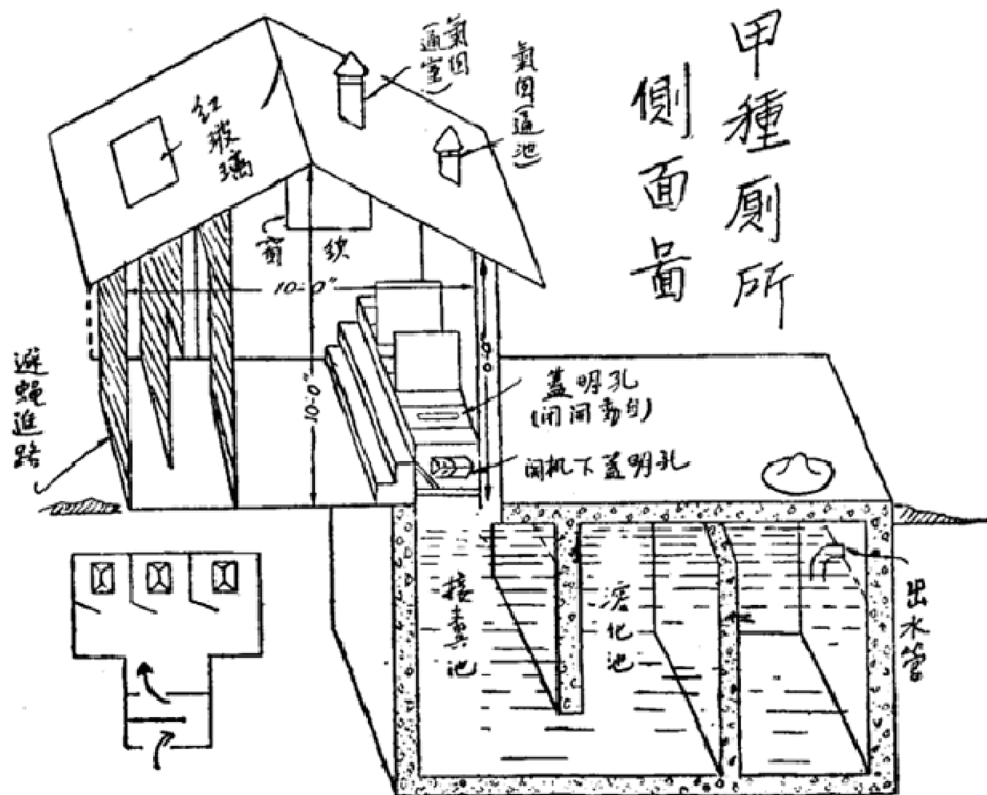
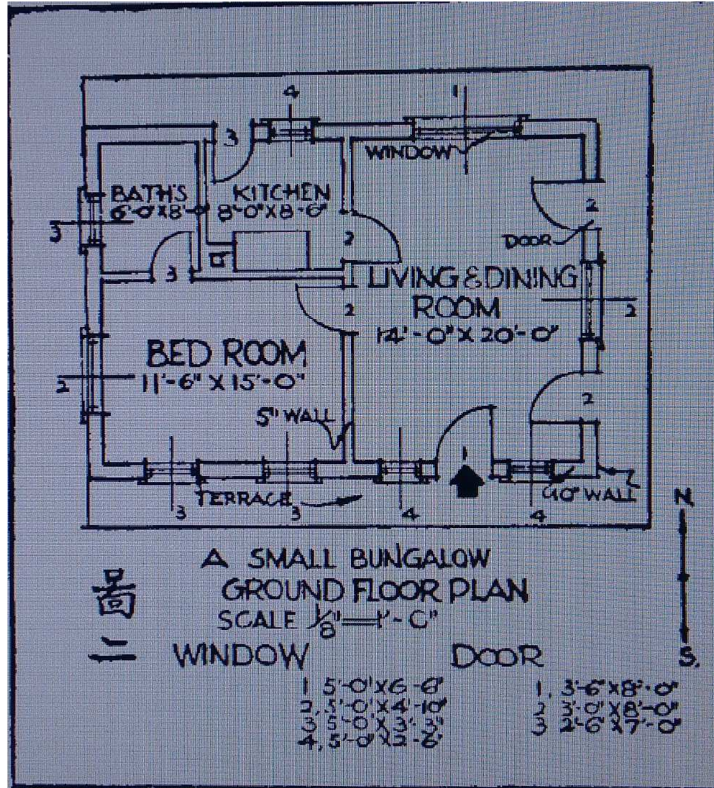
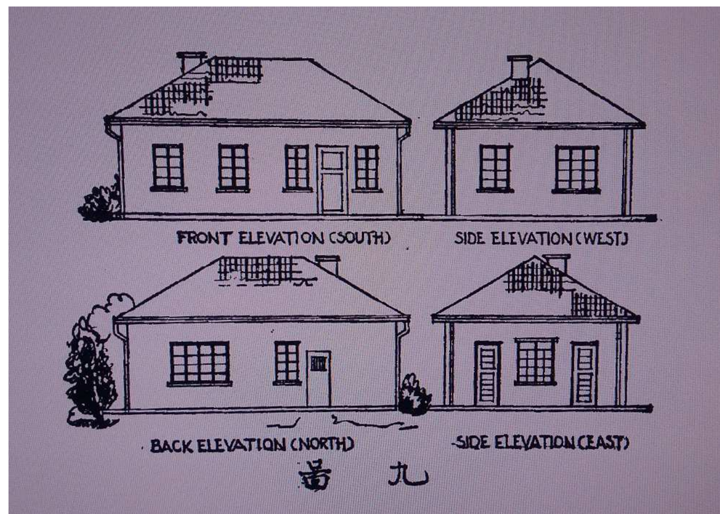


Figure1.12. The *Xiangya* toilet (The name *Xiangya* comes from the medical institute/ hospital where the toilet was invented)
(Source: Jiang Kun, "Construction method of a hygienic toilet," *the National Medical Journal of China* 24.7(1938): 540)

A few means to make this toilet hygienic: the zig-zag, darkened entry way (with a diagram of it on the lower left corner) to discourage flies from entering the bathroom (with the additional help of a red sky-light to repel them); the (rather complicated) lever-controlled automatic toilet cover ensures that the toilet is covered all the time for the same purpose of preventing flies in the septic tank; the "fly-proof window" with two layers of screens, the outer layer covering all the window frame while the inner layer missing the top so that the flies, once inside, can crawl upward out.

Figure 1.13. Some of the toilets discussed in Zhang's book, including a Java toilet and the boring equipment (in center of illustration) mentioned earlier (Source: Zhang Renjun 1941)





Figures 1.14 –1.15. Plan and elevations of house design by Jin Xianfa (Source: Jin 1940, 115-116)

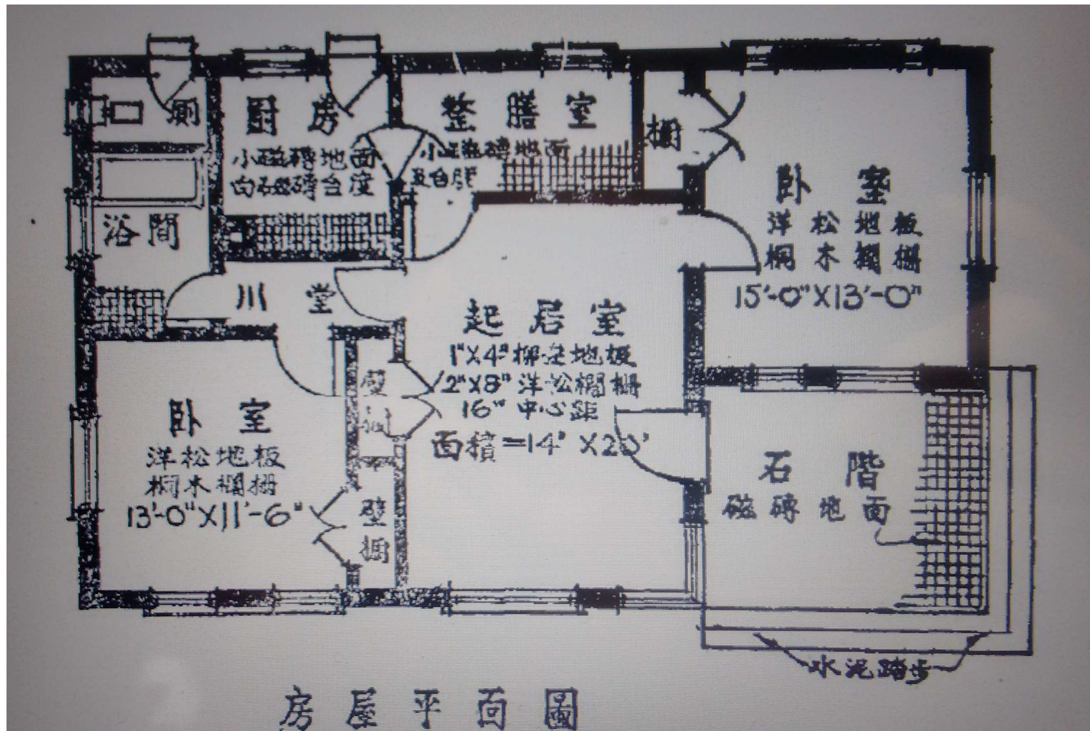


Figure 1.16. K’s design of a country house in plan. The author also indicated the materials on the plan here (Source: Jin 1940, *Zixiu* 120)

Figure 2.1. “City streets: filled with rubbish,” illustration on *Shenbao*, Oct 9, 1920. The author asked, on the right of the illuration next to the title, “Pardon, what is the street-sweepers’ job? And what is the policemen’s job?” The second question was answered by another author, to the left: “The policemen’s job is to prohibit meetings and gatherings, celebrations and demonstrations.” The sign in front of the house, in the left corner of the illustration, reads “District police station.” (Source: *Shenbao*, October 9, 1920, p.16)

Figure 2.2. Map of Shanghai showing the foreign settlements and the Chinese city in the 1880s. The S-shaped Huangpu River is shown dominating the landscape with ocre (on top) indicating the original American Settlement, blue the English, faded pink the French Conseccion, and the walled Chinese city with its outskirts shown in yellow towards the bottom half of the map. Orignally drawn in 1875, and updated with current place names of the foreign settlements and redrawn in 1884 in Shanghai. (Source: The Library of Congress, retrieved from its online maps collection: http://www.loc.gov/resource/g7824s.ct000648/)

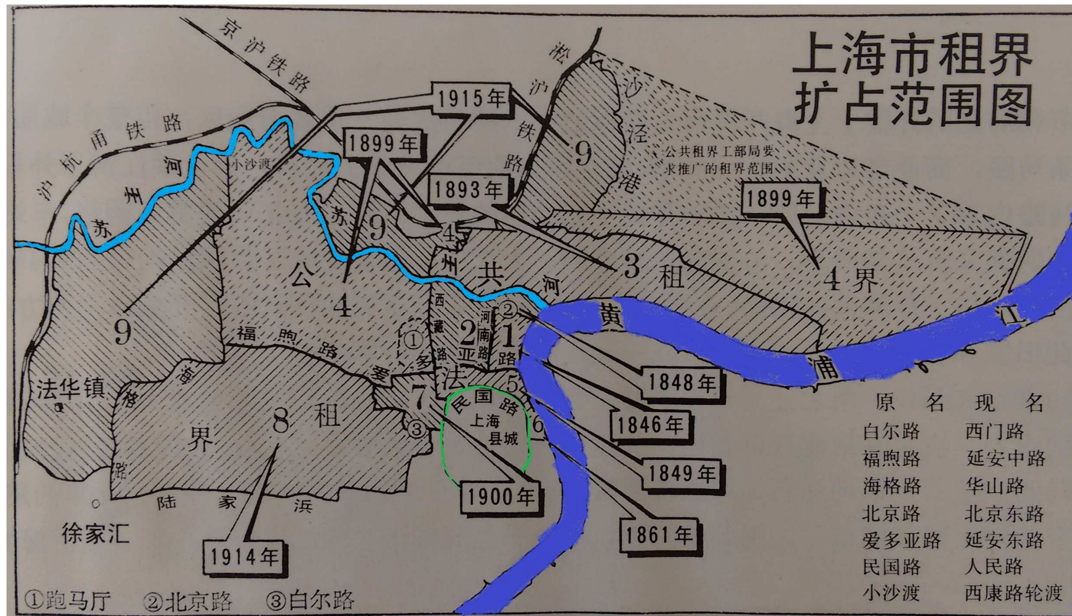


Figure 2.3: Schematic map showing the establishment and subsequent expansion of the International Settlement and French Concession of Shanghai between the 1840s and 1910s, indicated by the large numerals on the map accompanied by the years when the expansion took place. The Huangpu River and Suzhou Creek are marked in blue on the map, whereas the green encircles the old Chinese city. (Source: Chen Congzhou, 1988. *Shanghai jindai jianzhu shigao* [*History of Shanghai's modern architecture*]. Shanghai: Sanlian shudian.)

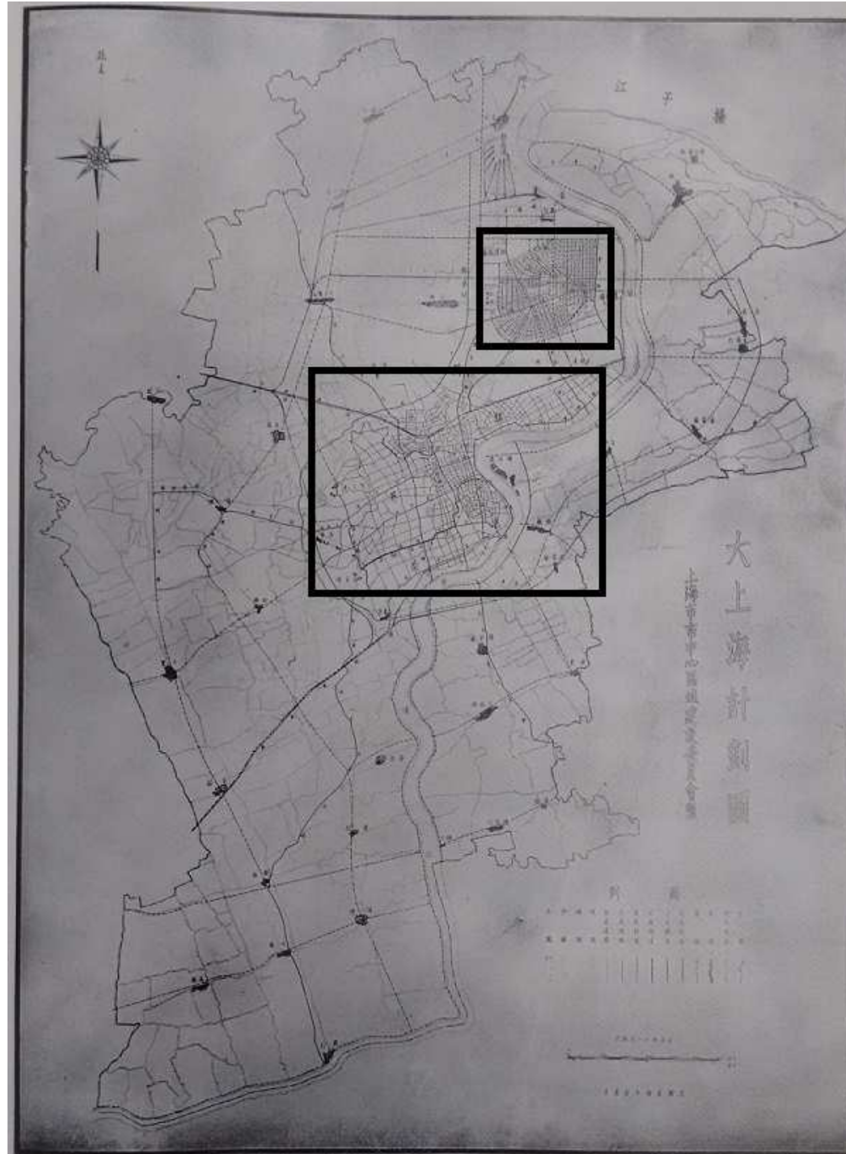


Figure 2.4. Map of Shanghai from the 1930s showing the relative spatial relations of the new civic center (the smaller rectangle on top of map) and the more developed parts of the city (the bigger rectangle) including the foreign settlements. The explicit intention of the new urban center was to curb the development of the foreign settlements by developing a competing Chinese center that would diminish the relative importance of the foreign settlements. (Source: "Plan of Greater Shanghai", from *Ten years of the Shanghai Public Works' Bureau, 1927 – 1937*, Shanghai: 1937)

Figure 2.5. The civic center road system, published in august 1932 (Source: *Lao Shanghai ditu* [*Maps of Old Shanghai*] 2001, 94)

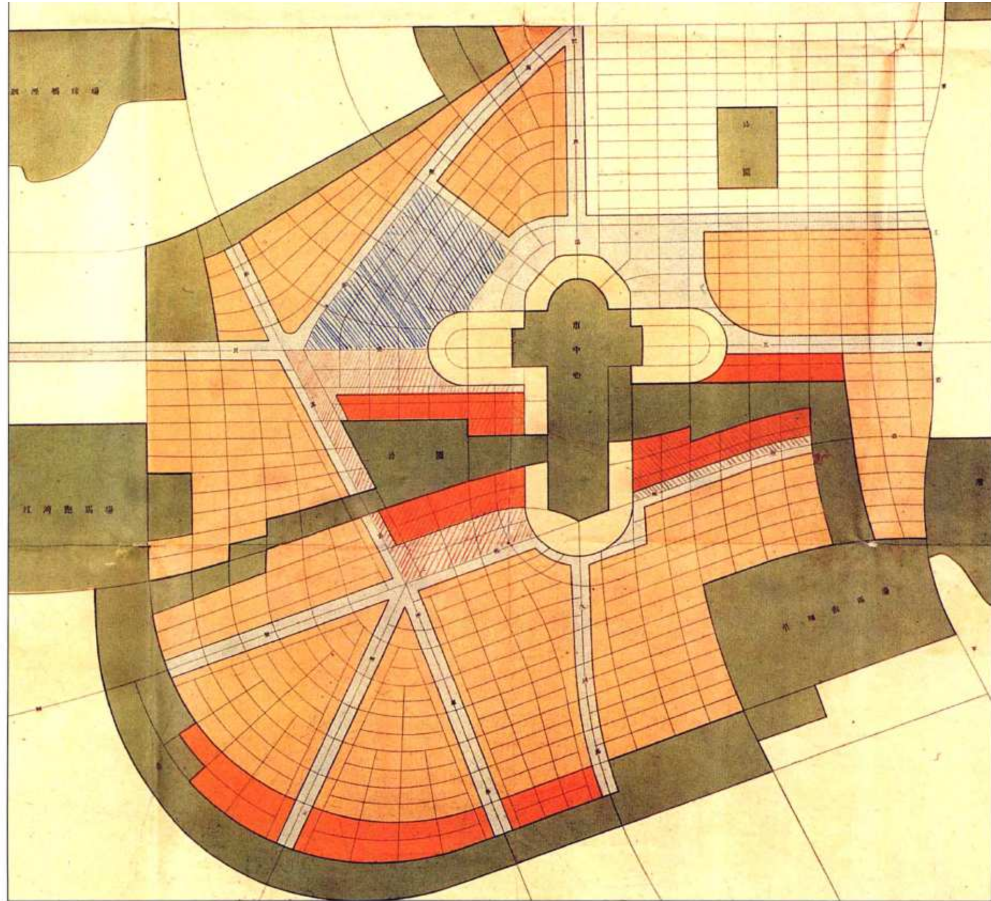
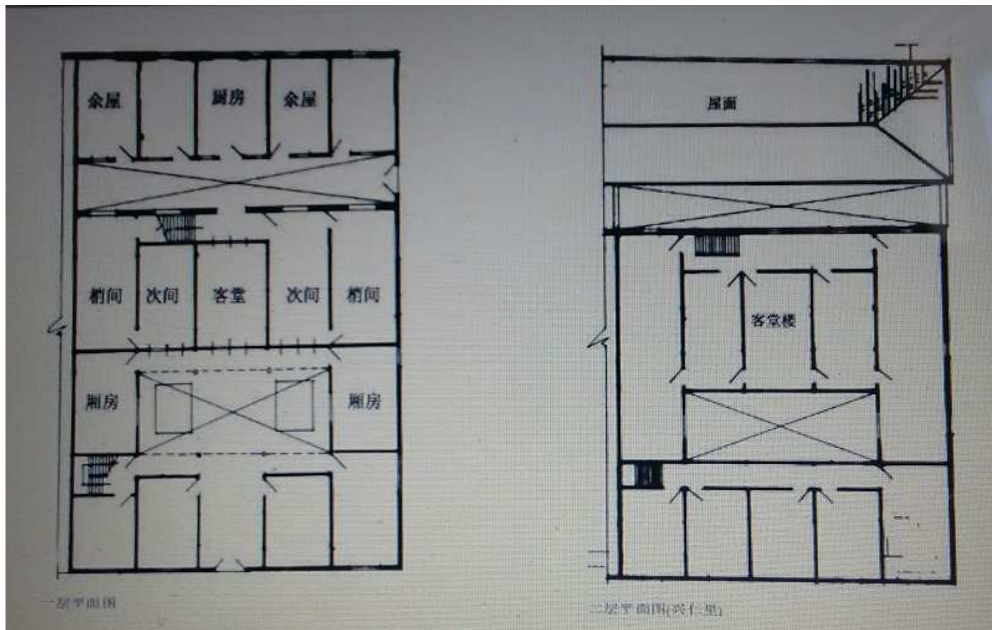


Figure 2.6. Map of Shanghai's new civic center zoning plan, published in July 1930. The green zone indicated the civic center (cross-shaped in the middle) and recreation areas (parks surrounding the residential areas and a race track to the left of the map). Residential areas were marked in orange (elite villas) and pink (ordinary houses) (Source: *Lao Shanghai ditu* [*Maps of old Shanghai*] 2001, 86)



Figures 2.7–2.9. Appearance and plan (bottom left: ground floor, bottom right: upper floor) of early *shikumen lilong* house. The transverse crosses in the plans mark the sky wells in the house (Source: Lou 2004, 5 & 7)

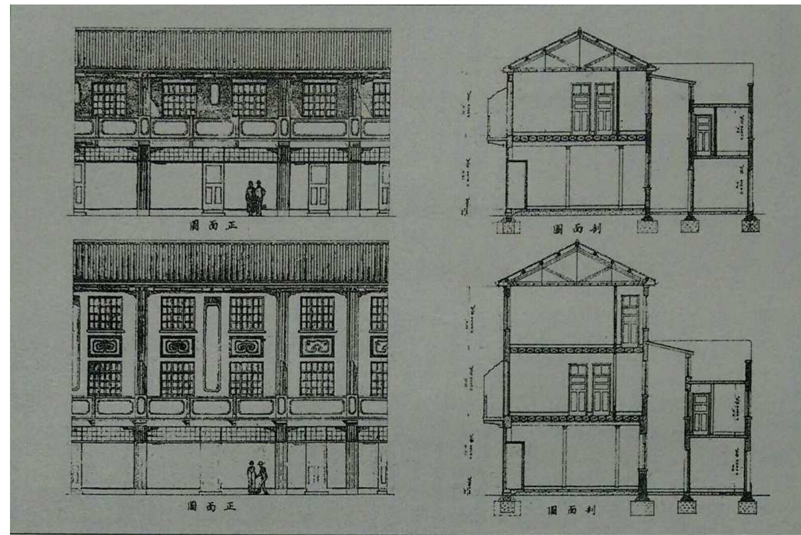


图 2. 184　市房第一名　李锦沛、张克斌

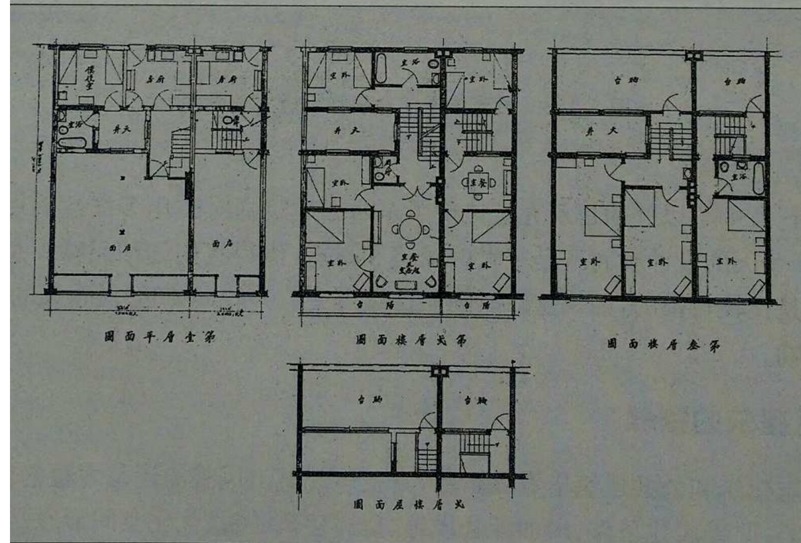


Figure 2.10. First-place house-shop design by Poy Gum Lee and Zhang Kebin in 1929, facades, sections, and plans. The plans below show, from left to right, the first, second and third floors with the second-floor roof top at the bottom, of two units sharing a wall. Notice the size of the store/ shop in the first floor plan, which, in the bigger unit, also accommodates the kitchen and a servant's room and the bathroom (Source: Wei Shu, 2011, 134)

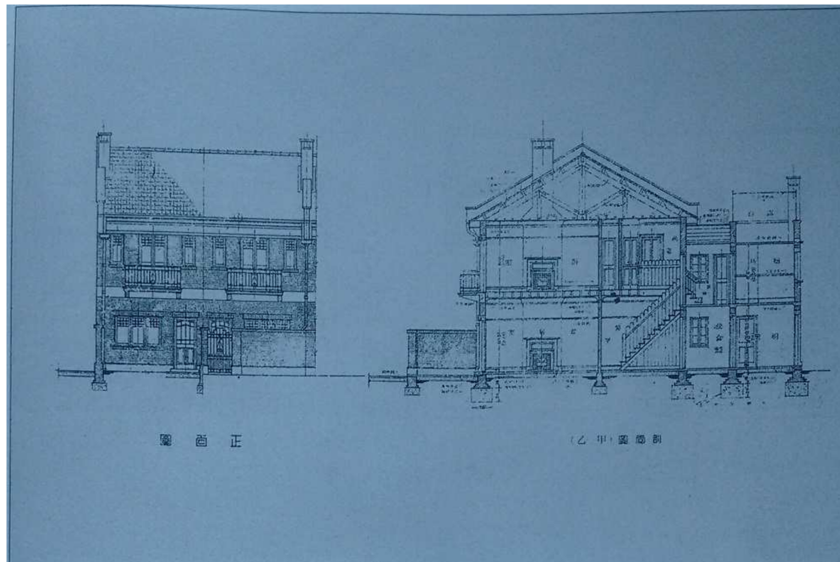


图 2.190　住宅第一名 许瑞芳

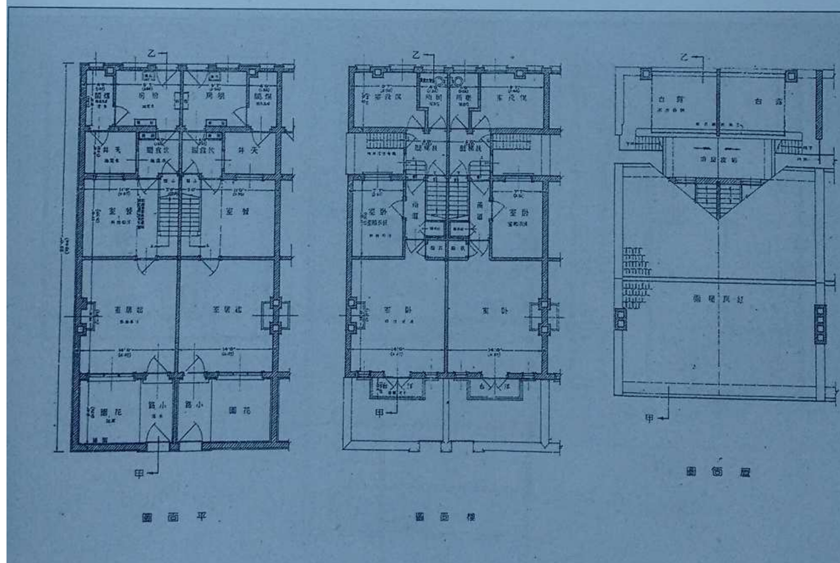
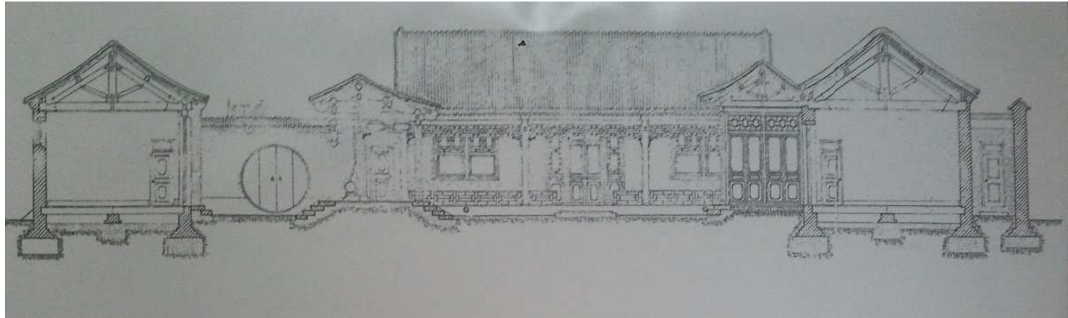
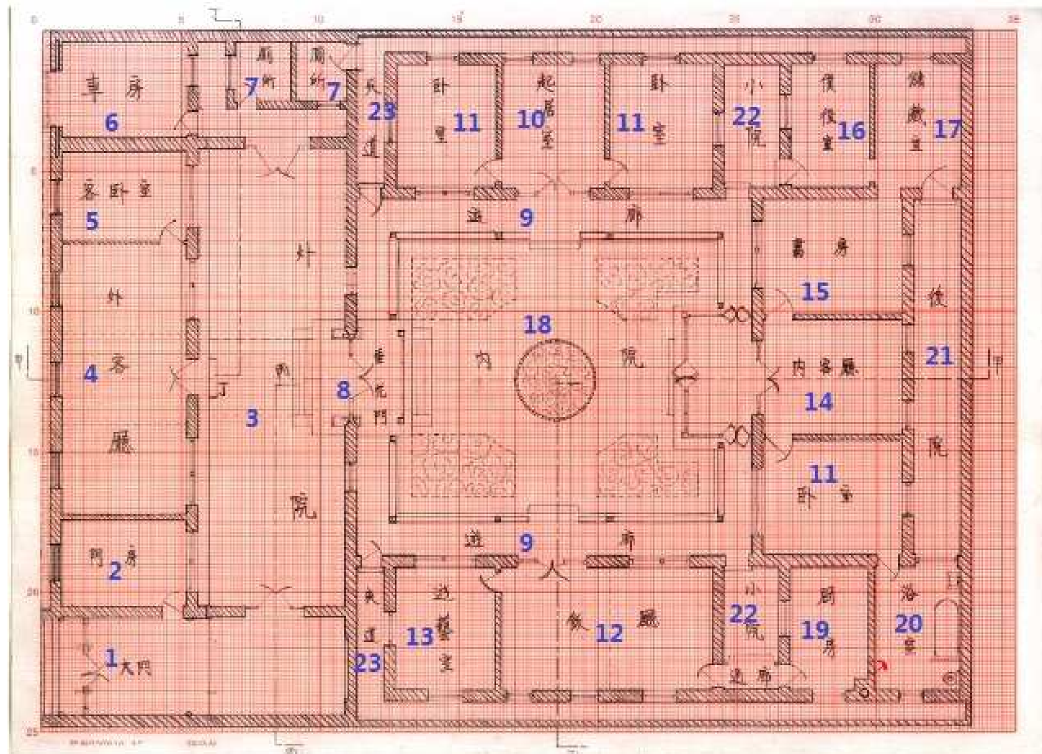


Figure 2.11. First-place design rental-house by Xu Ruifang, facade, section and plans
(Source: Wei Shu, 2011, 137)





Figures 2.12–2.13. The reformed courtyard house in Beijing by the Municipal Public Works Bureau, longitudinal section and plan. Note the circular door outside the toilets and the hanging-flower door on raised platform in the section (Source: plan copied from holdings at the Beijing Municipal Archives, archival number: J1-4-53. Original of section from the same source)

Legend of plan: 1.Gate/ Main entrance; 2. Doorkeeper; 3.Outer yard/ court; 4.Outer reception/ living; 5. Guest bed-room; 6.Garage; 7.Toilet; 8. Hanging flower door [Inner gate]; 9. Covered veranda; 10.Living; 11.Bedroom; 12. Dining; 13. Board/ game room; 14.Inner reception/ living; 15.Study; 16.Servants; 17.Storage; 18.Inner yard/ court; 19.Kitchen; 20.Bath; 21.Back yard; 22. Small yard; 23.Walk way/ Lane

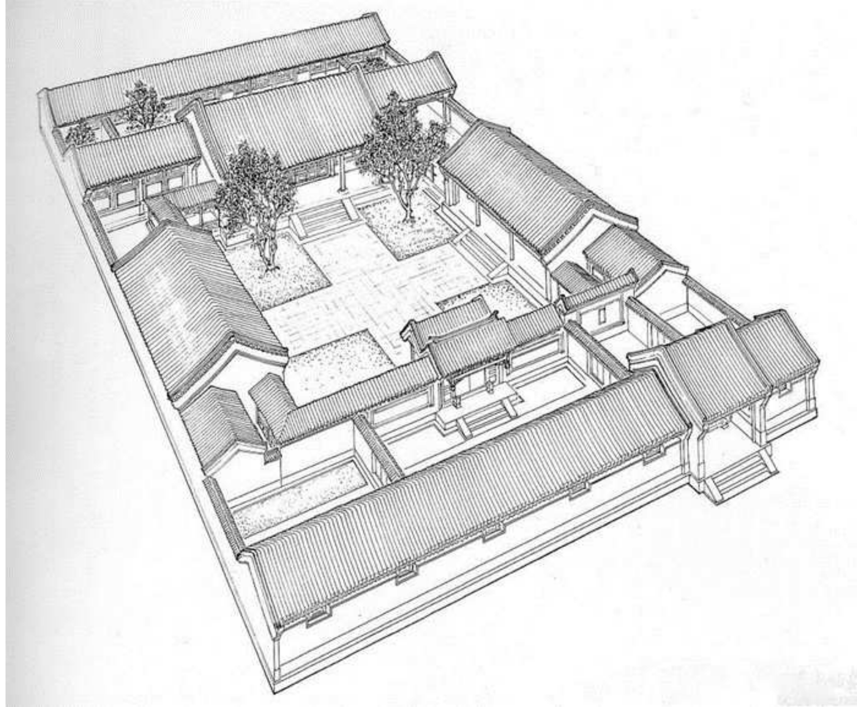
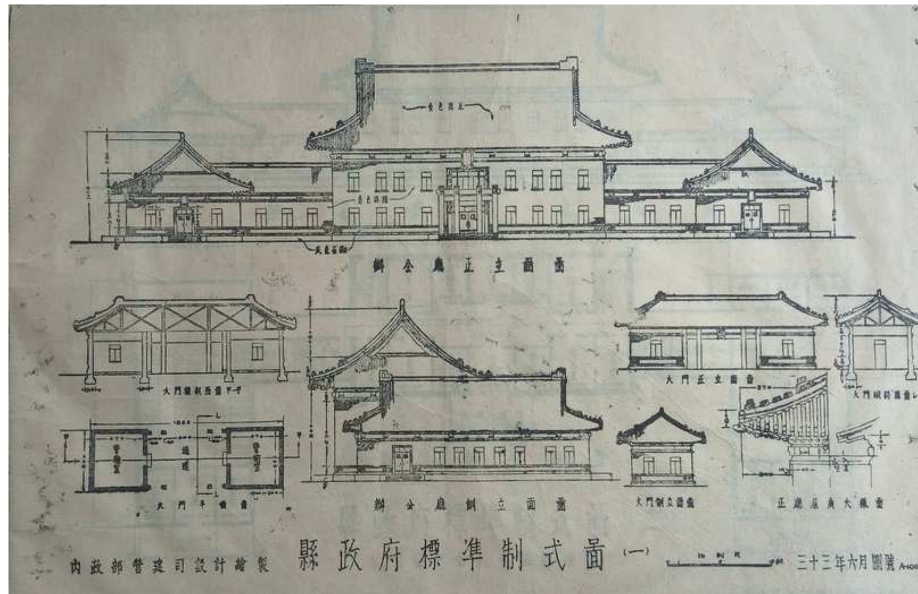
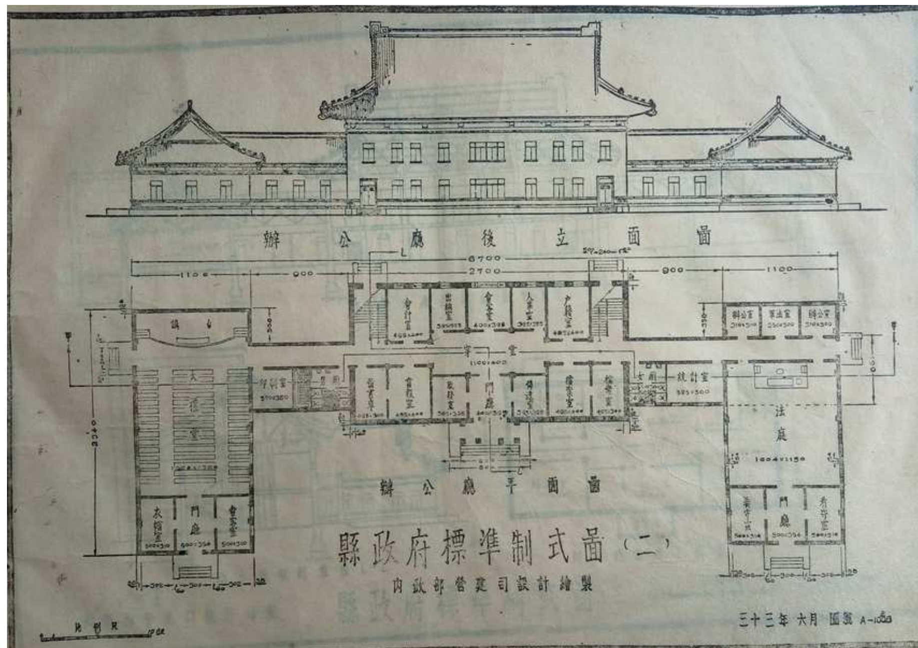
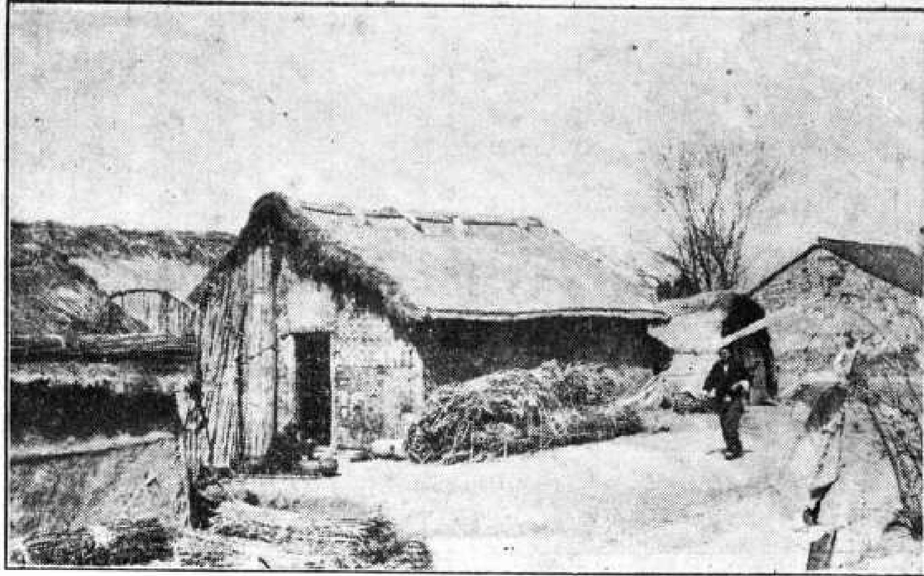


Figure 2.14. Birds-eye-view of a “typical” Qing-dynasty courtyard house in Beijing. Note the extraordinary similarity of the spatial arrangement of this courtyard complex to the one in the previous illustration (Source: Liu Dunzhen, ed. *A history of ancient Chinese architecture*, second edition, p. 319)





Figures 2.15–2.16. Standardized design of the County Seat (front and rear elevations, sections and plans) by the Construction and Planning Agency of the Ministry of the Interior, 1944. Note the combination of formal grandeur in classical Chinese architectural silhouette and symmetry and a structural pragmatism and expediency shown in construction (Source: online from http://linguizhen.blog.sohu.com/308882763.html, accessed December 5, 2015)



棚 戸 住 宅 之 一

次 等 棚 戸 住 宅 之 一

Figures 2.17–2.18. Two examples of shantytown dwellings in Nanjing (Source: Wu Wenhui, 1935)

Figures 2.19–2.22: People's Palace in Guangzhou, front (upper image), back (middle), the more expensive beds on the third and fourth floor (lower left) and spiral staircase with metal railings (Source: *Yangcheng wanbao* 2012-12-1 and *Guangzhou ribao* 2014-2-12)

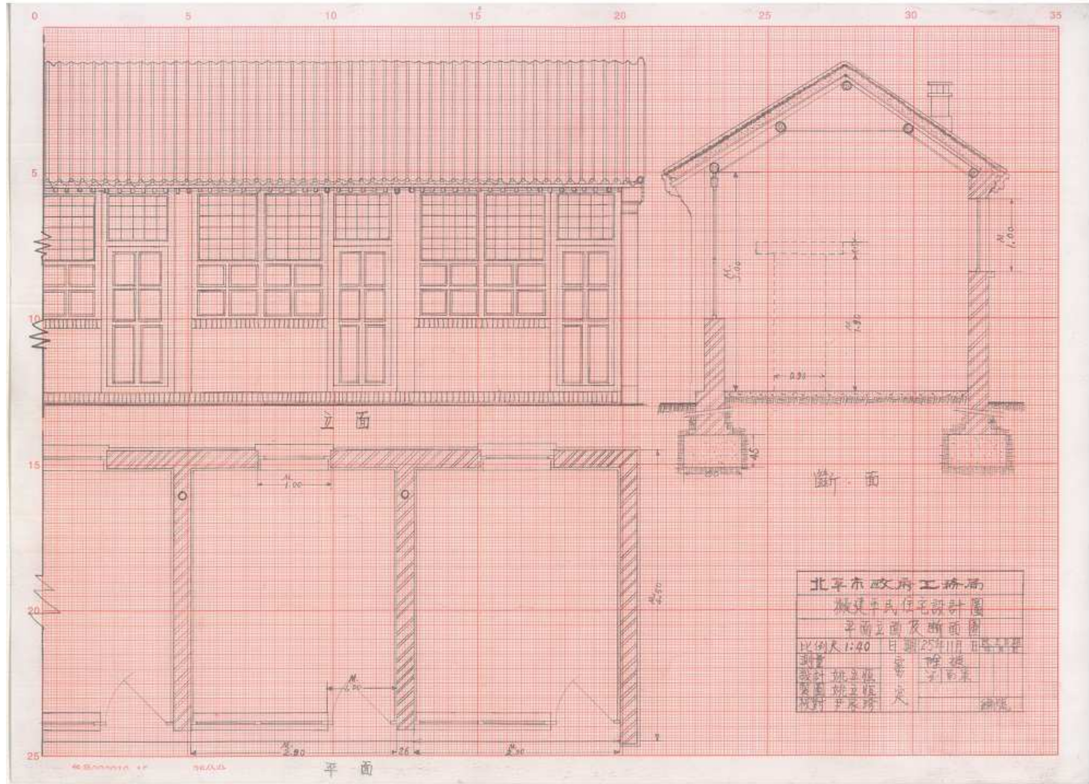


Figure 2.23. The row of single-room low-rent houses at the Tiaoqiao area by the Public Works Bureau of Beijing, 1936 (Source: copied from Beijing Municipal Archives holding, archival number: J17-1-1353)

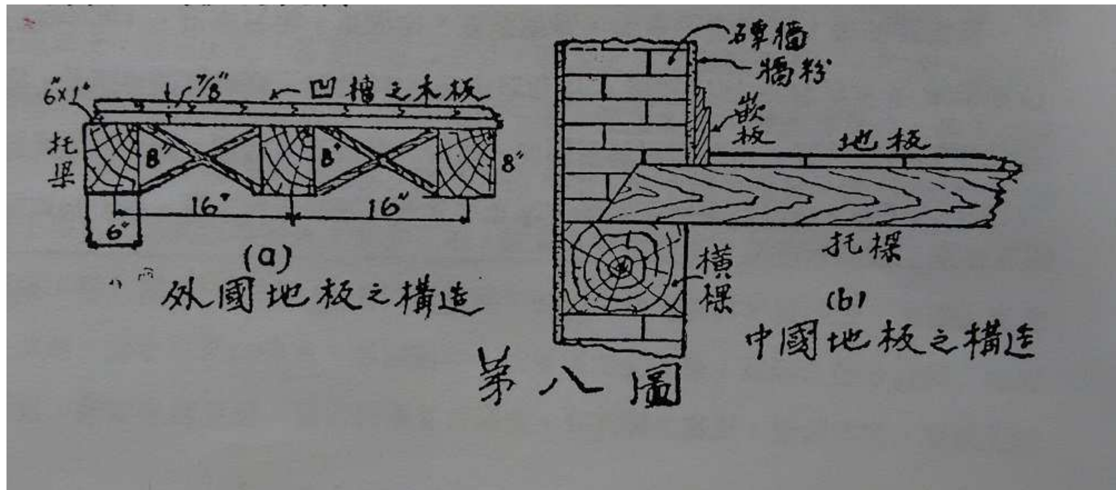
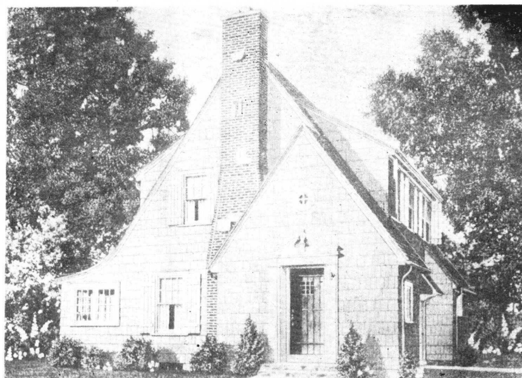
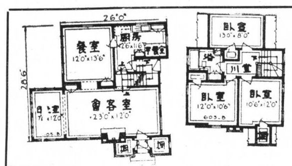


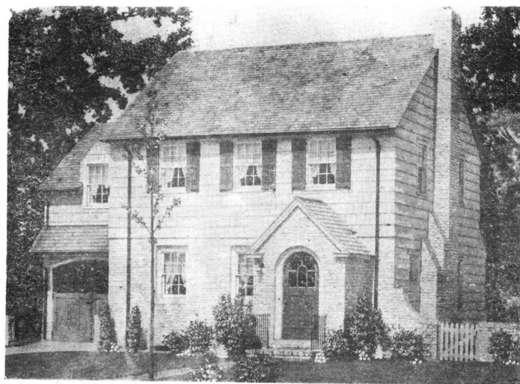
Figure 3.1. Illustrations showing Western (left) and Chinese (right) floor structure
(Source: Xu Lin, 1928, "A comparison," fig. 8)

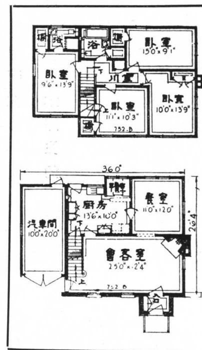


可愛的小住宅

上面是一所精巧住宅的攝影，在大門旁邊矗立一個煙囪，平添不少藝術的意味。內裏的部序與裝飾亦在在予居住者以便利安適與愉快。下面是一所殖民式住宅，和汽車間連着，尤其便利與合用。

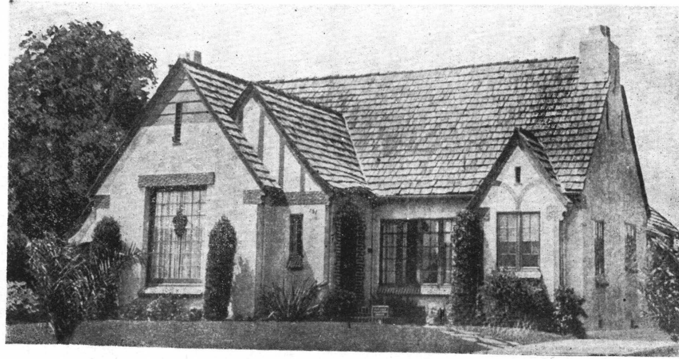






— 四三 —

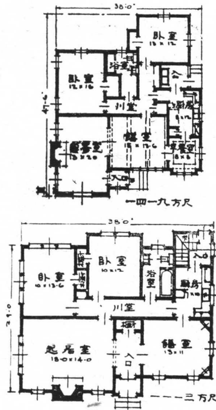
Figure 3.2. Two “cute little houses” (Source: *The Builder* 1.2 (1933): 34)

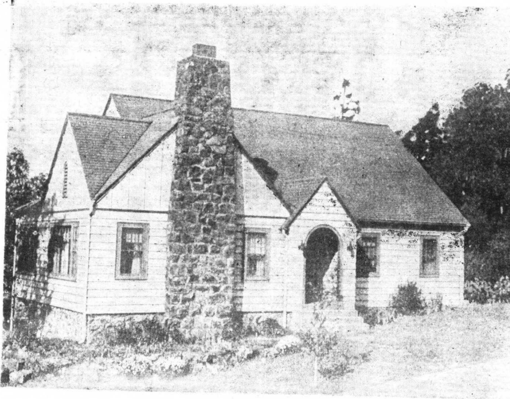


美國加利福尼省的小住宅

在太平洋沿岸，矗立着本頁所列的二所美麗住宅。上圖是英國式，地盤設計的巧妙，眞是獨具匠心。

設計小住宅的樣式，很多很多；可是下圖的樣式，常站在不敗的優越地位。





— 三六 —

Figure 3.3. “Small houses in California” (Source: *The Builder* 1.2 (1933): 36)

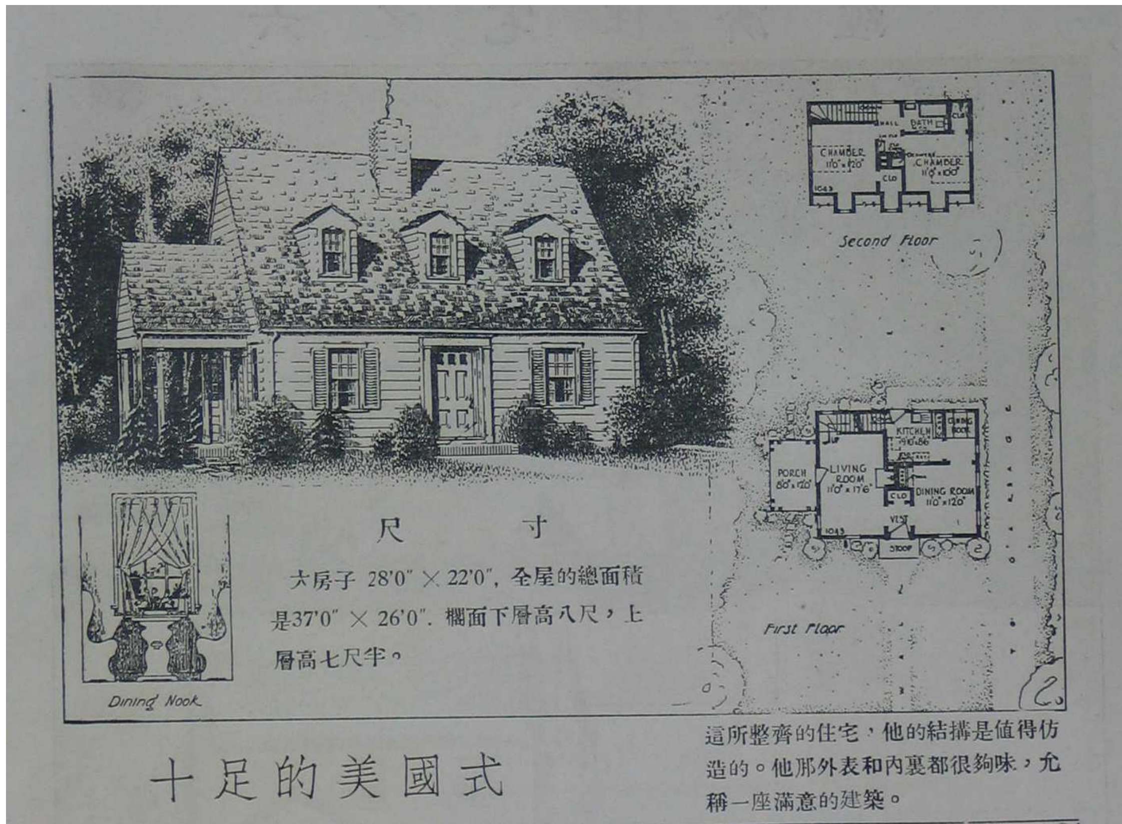


Figure 3.4. “Economic House, no. 6: 100% American style,” (Source: *The Builder* 2.6 (1934): 50)

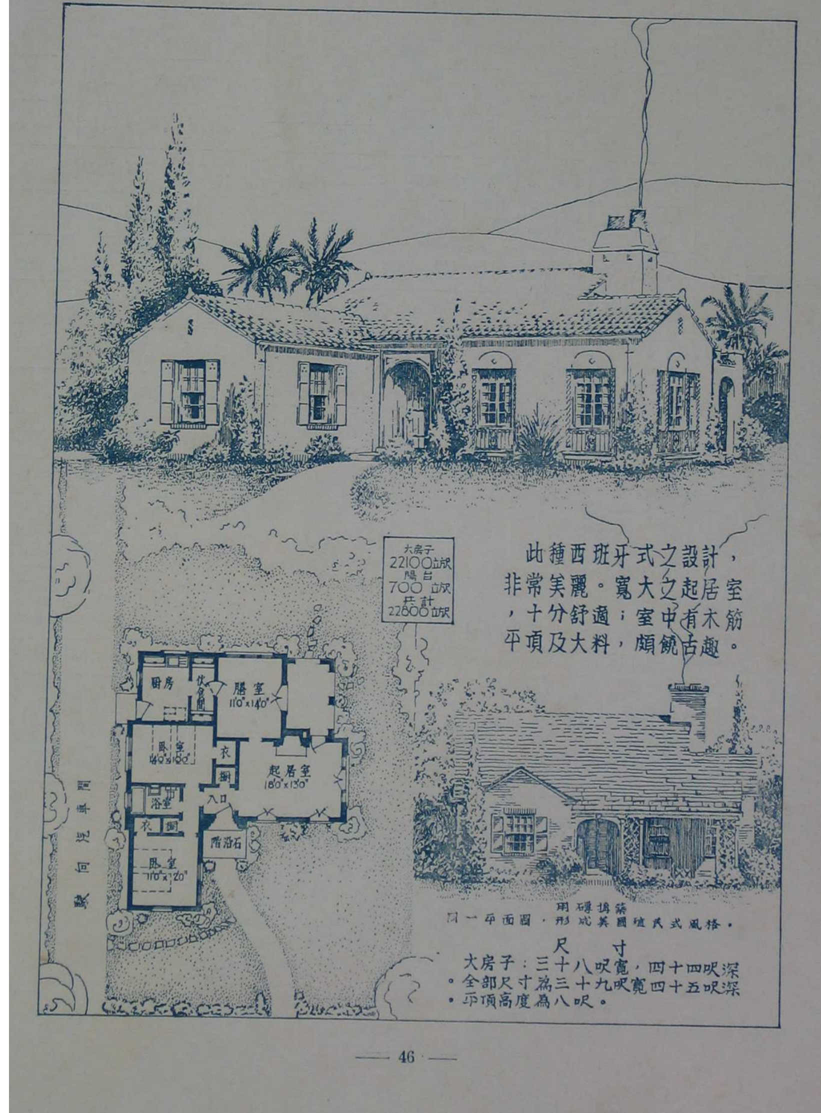


Figure 3.5. “Economic house, no. 3: Spanish design” (Source: *The Builder* 2.3(1934):46)

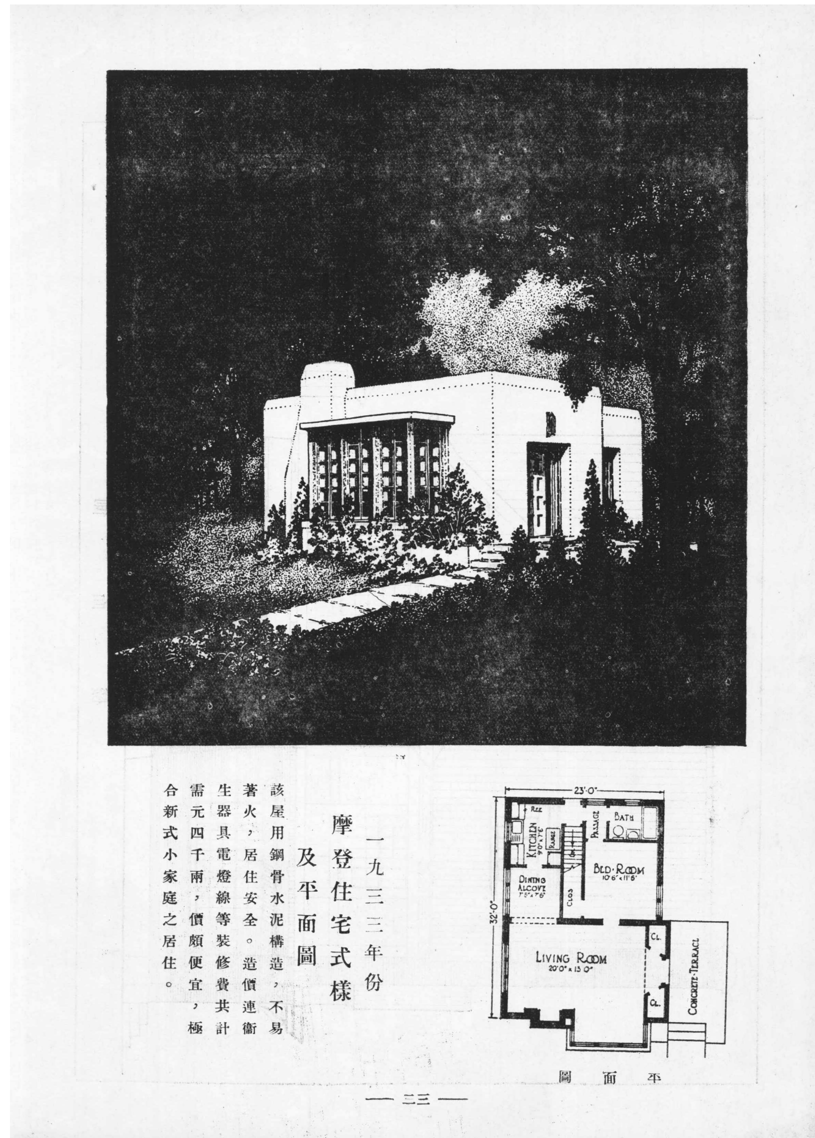


Figure 3.6. “The modern house of 1933: style and plan”
(Source: *The Builder* 1.4 (1933): 32)

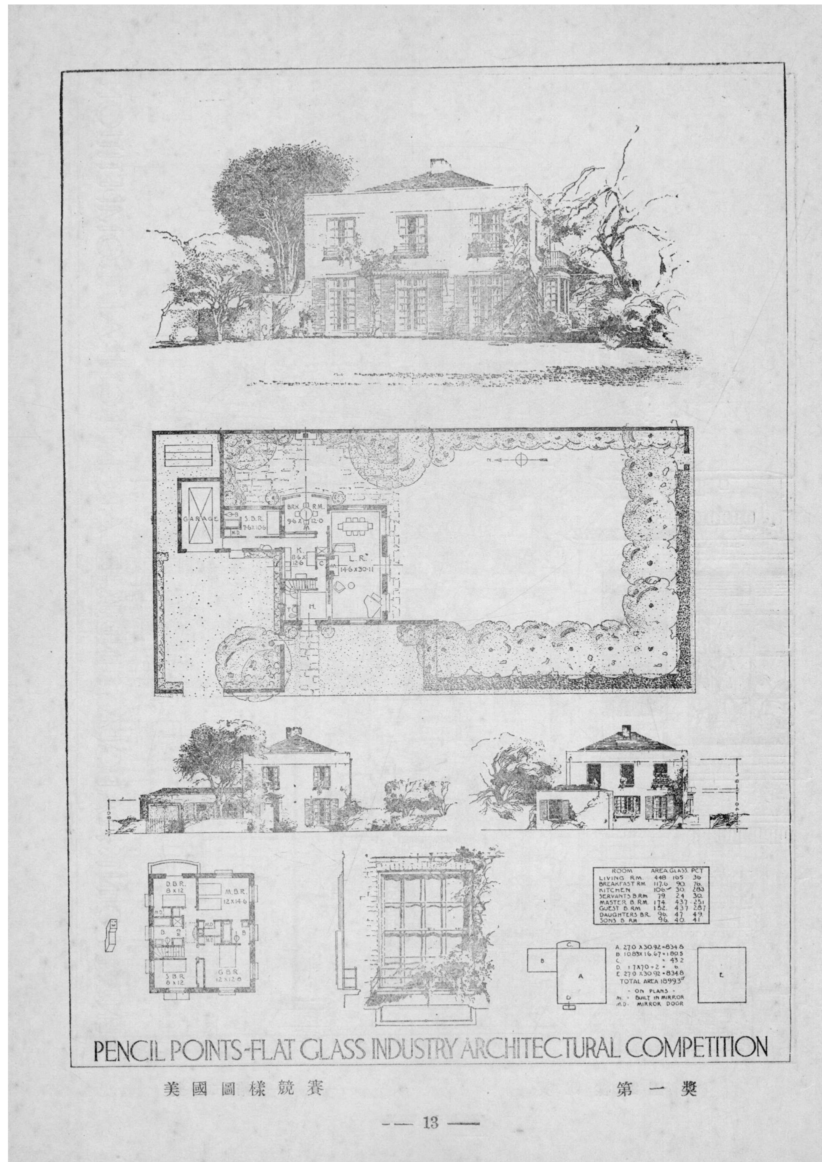


Figure 3.7. First-prize winner of the Pencil Points-Flat Glass Industry Architectural Competition held in America in 1934, by Mr. Geoffrey Noel Lawford (Source: *The Builder* 2.8 (1934):13)

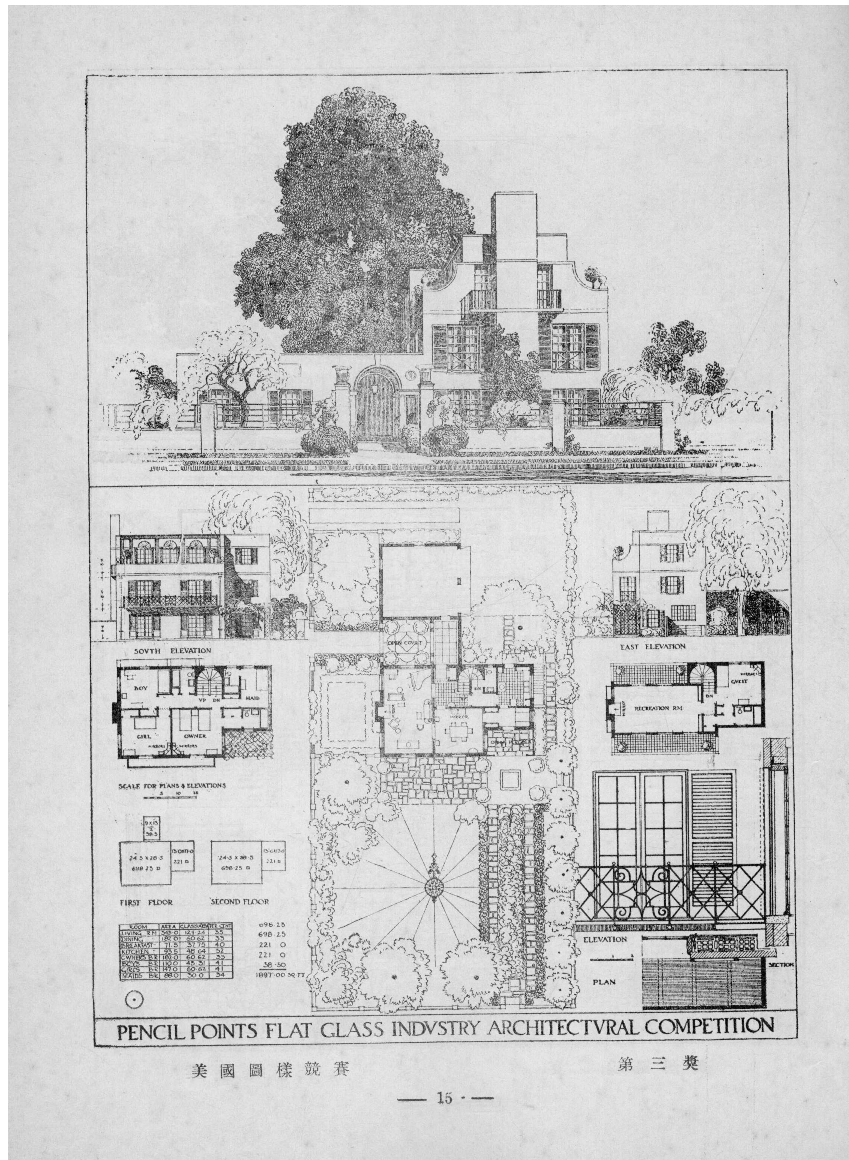


Figure 3.8. Third-place winner of the same completion, by Mr. Antonio Di Nardo (Source: *The Builder* 2.8 (1934):15)

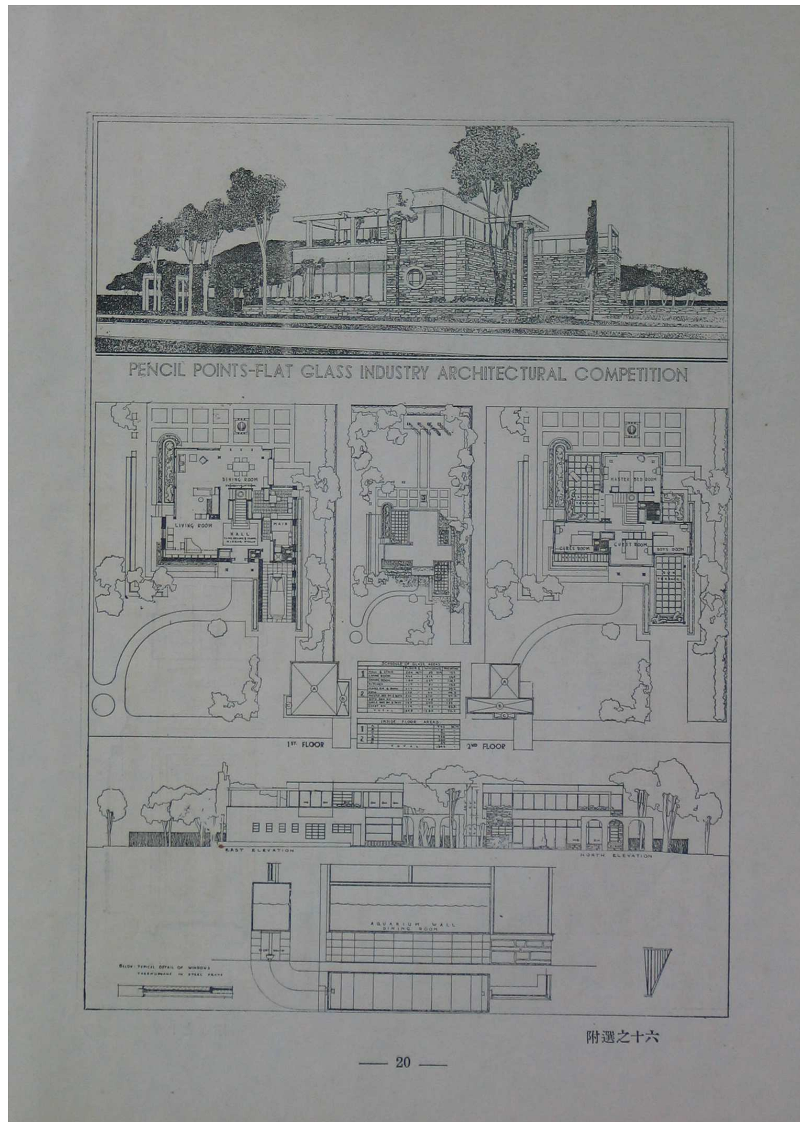


Figure 3.9. Winning entry from the same completion (Source: *The Builder* 2.10 (1934):20)

Figure 3.10. Early *lilong* house in Shanghai, as depicted in the *Dianshizhai huabao* (Source: Ming Fu, “Rats in performance” *Dianshizhai huabao*, book *Shu*, vo.7: 56)

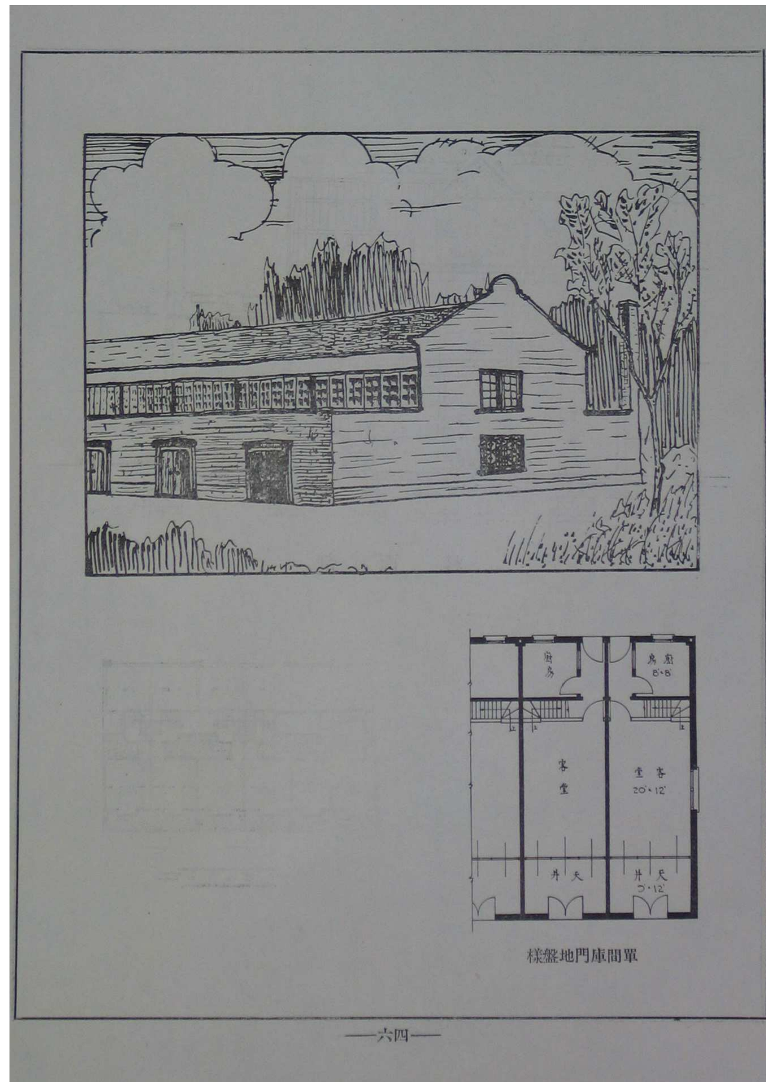


Figure 3.11. Improved single-bay *lilong* house (Source: *The Builder* 1.3(1933):46)

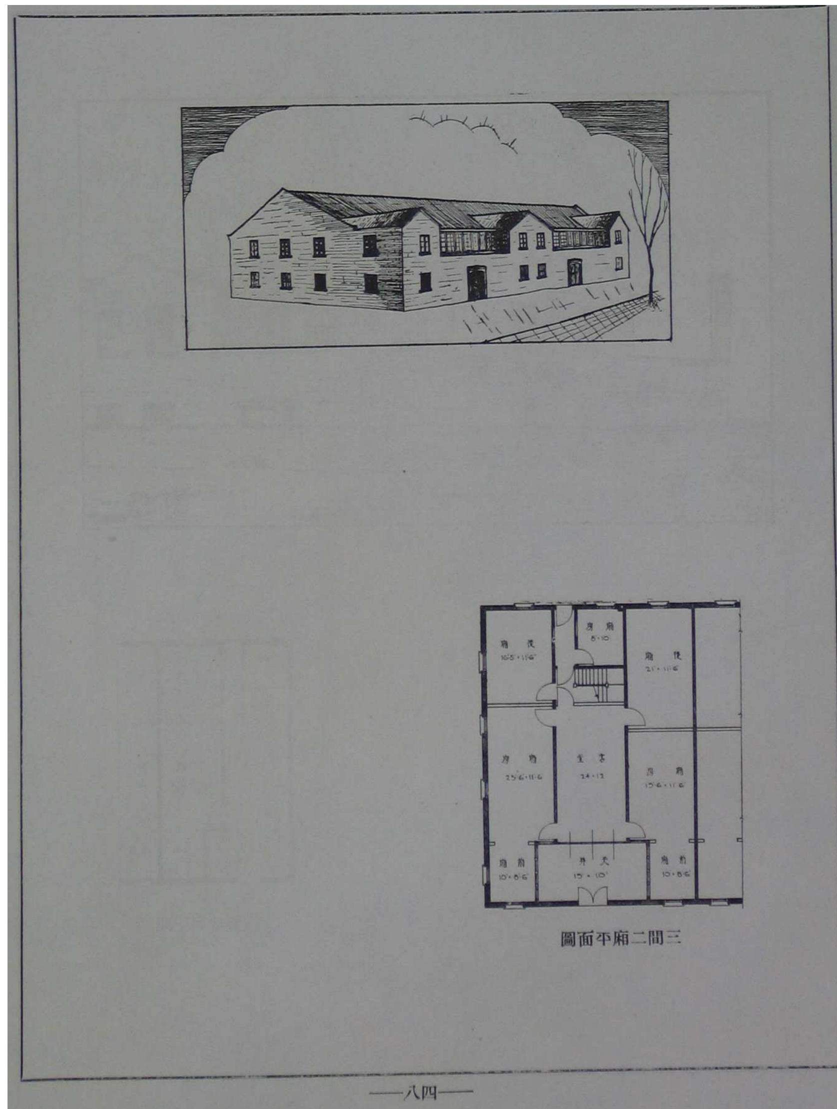


Figure 3.12. Improved 3-bay with 2-chamber *lilong* house (Source: The Builder 1.3(1933):48)
Note the sparseness of the typography of these Chinese examples in comparison to the western-style houses in the same journal, as quoted above. The open space and trees for "healthy living" might have been wishful thinking more than anything else considering how expensive land was in Shanghai at the time

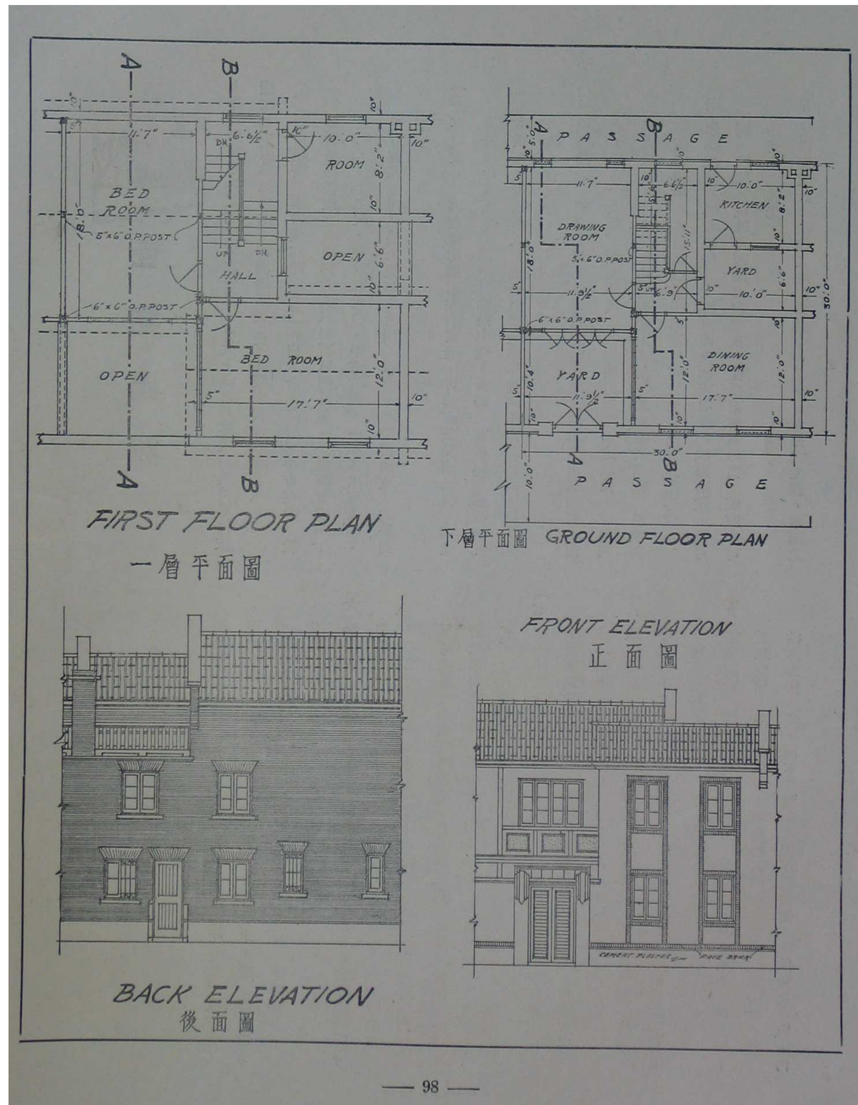


Figure 3.13. "An illustrated house," plans and elevations. Note the squarer plan (40X30feet according to the architect), and the narrow windows at the back elevation, which afforded the possibility of decorating the drawing room in either Chinese or western style (Source: *The Builder* 1.9-10(1933):98)

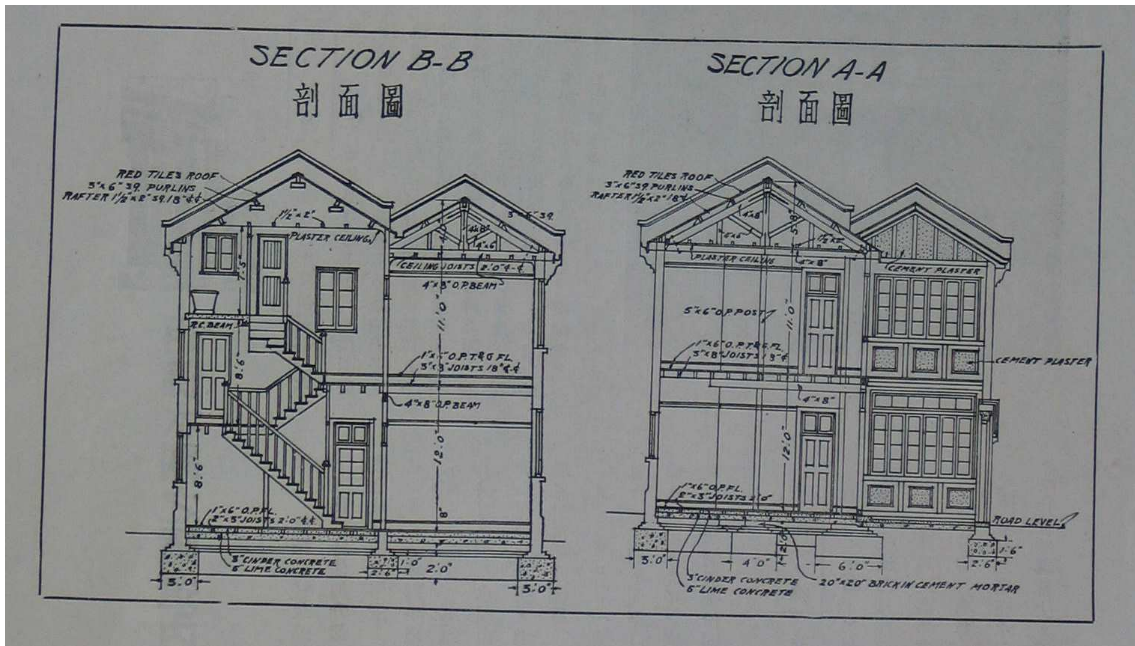
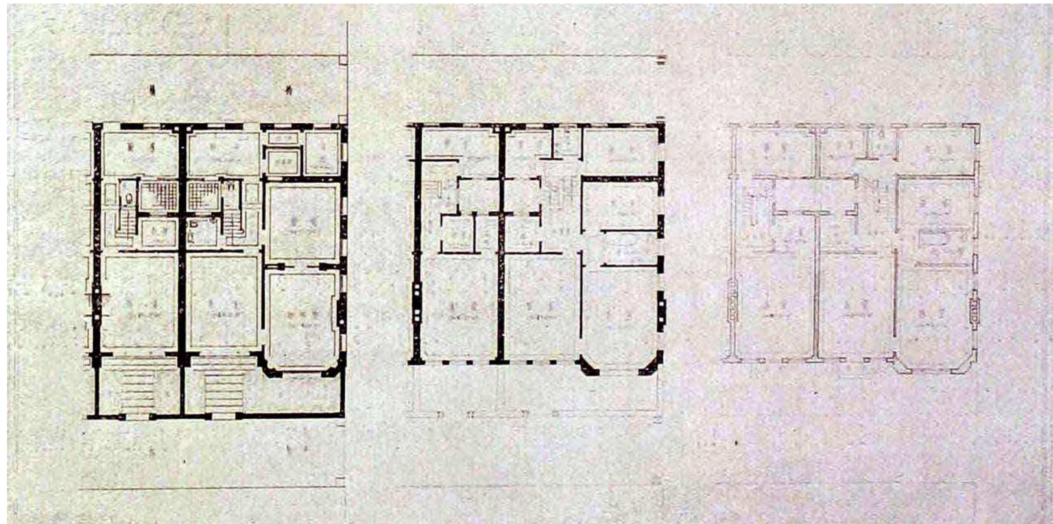


Figure 3.14. Same house as in Figure 13, sections. Note the design of the *tingzijian* at the mezzanine level in section B-B (Source, ibid, 99)

愚谷邨斜視圖　　華信建築公司設計



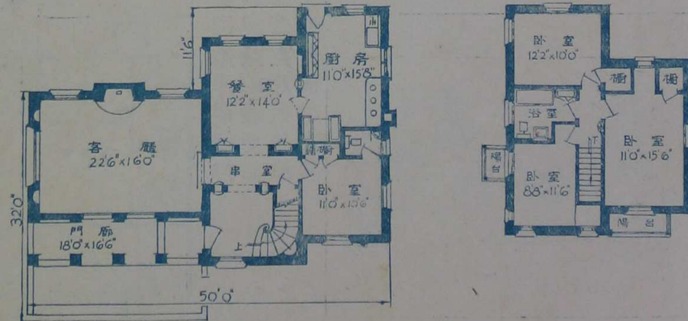
Figures 3.15-3.16. *Yugucun* in Shanghai, reformed *lilong* house (Source: *The Chinese Architect* 1.2(1933):28 & 29)

經濟住宅之四

七個大間及浴室廚房等

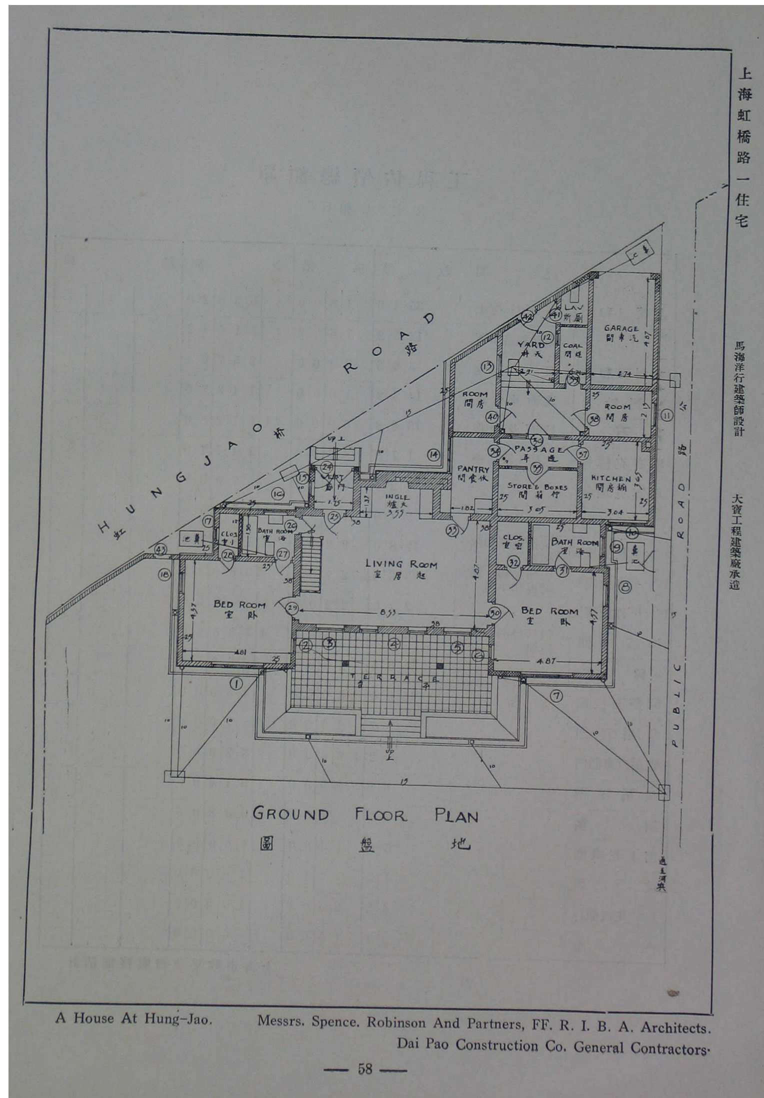
美觀與經濟

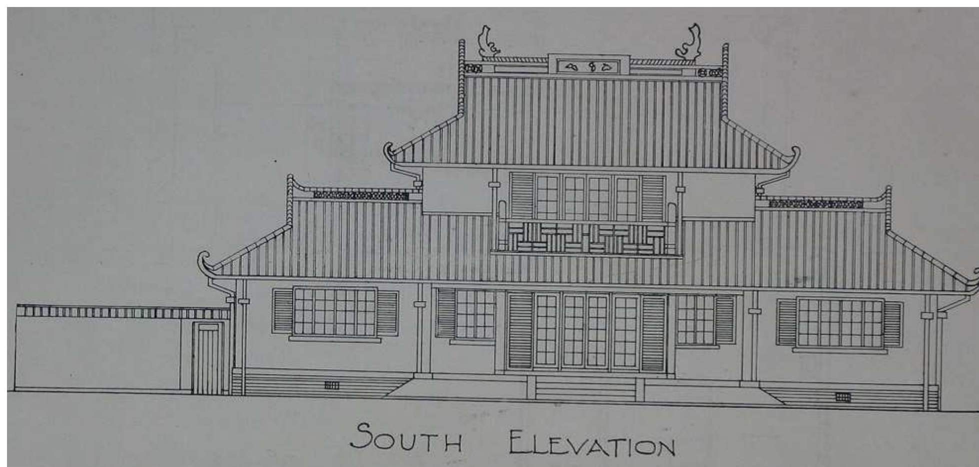
上圖係一所西班牙式之住宅，頗適合我人居住。屋面蓋以捲筒瓦，起伏如鱗狀，靈巧雅緻，不染俗調。且屋前臨園地，從臥室步出陽台，滿目青翠，彷彿置身仙境。室中裝飾又純粹現代化，廚房之佈置，碗碟櫥之安放，以及電話櫥之設備等，莫不盡設計之能事。



— 47 —

Figure 3.17. "Economic houses, no.4: Beautiful and Economic:" house with seven large rooms and more (Source: *The Builder* 2.3(1934):47)





Figures 3.18 -3.19. A house at Hung-Jao Road, ground floor plan and south elevation (Source: *The Builder* 1.9-10(1933): 58, 60)

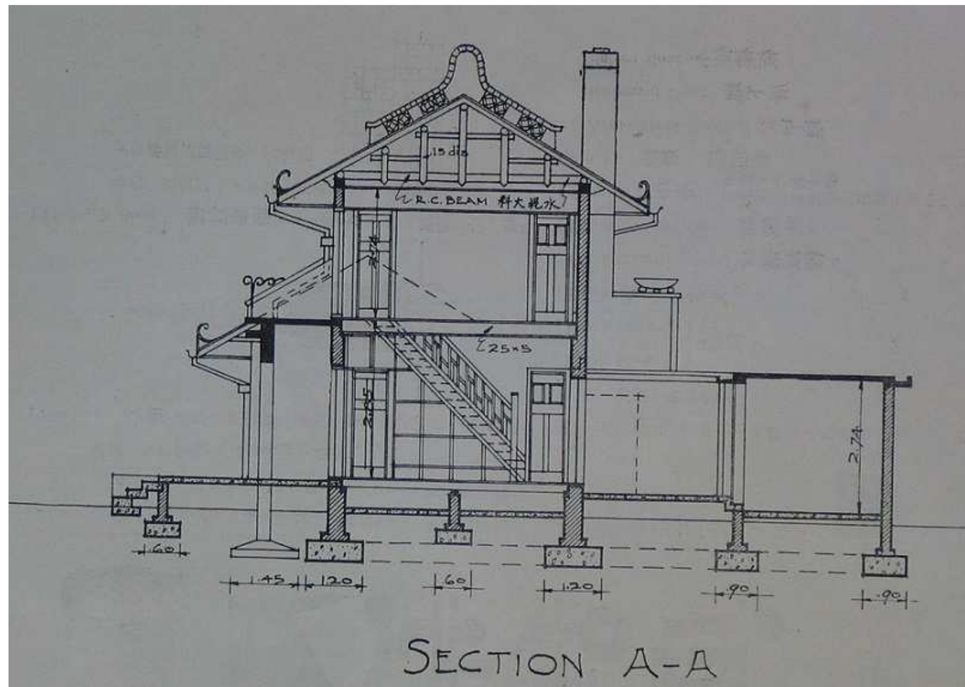


Figure 3.20. Section of the same house showing reinforced concrete as beam (Source, ibid, 63)

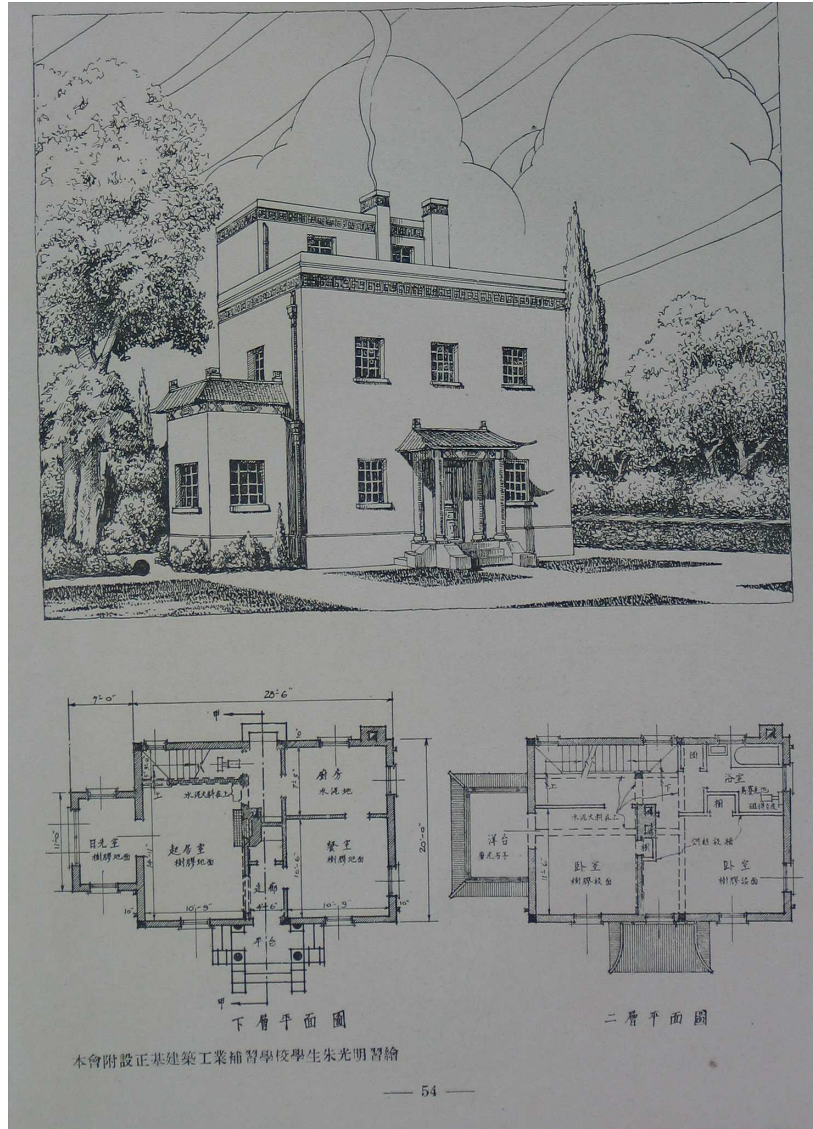


Figure 3.21. “Practice design by Zhu Guangming,” a student at the architectural school affiliated with the Builders Association (Source: *The Builder* 2.9 (1934):54)

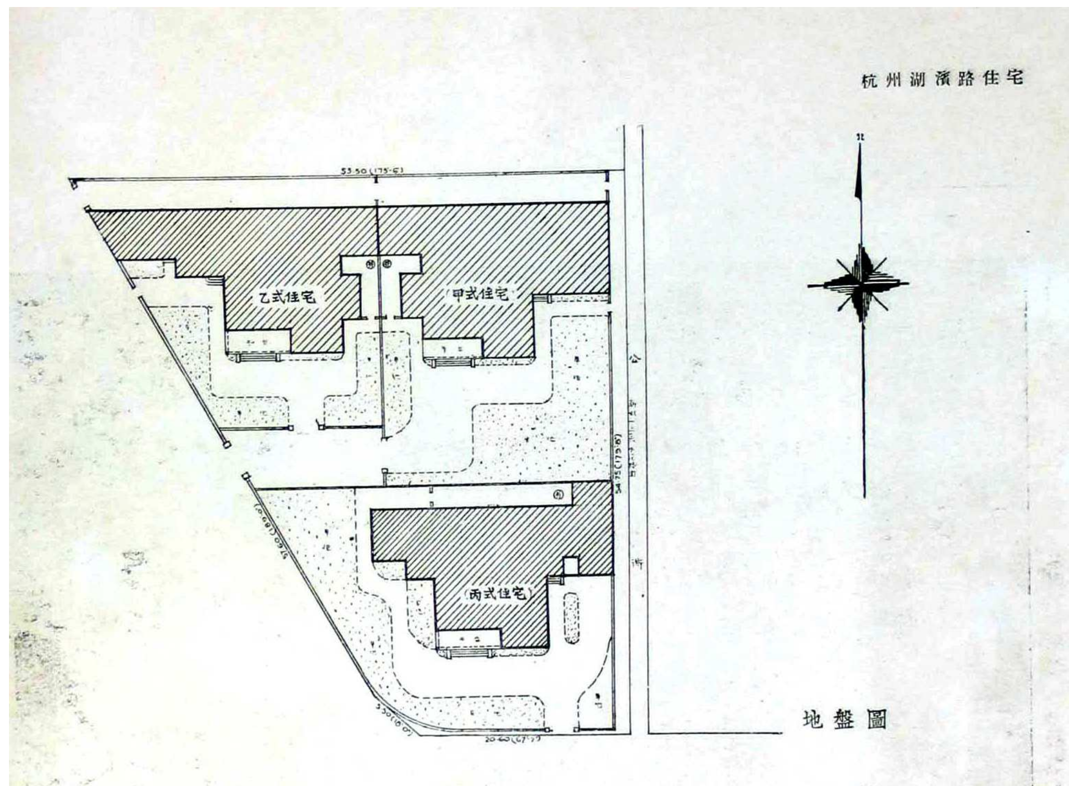
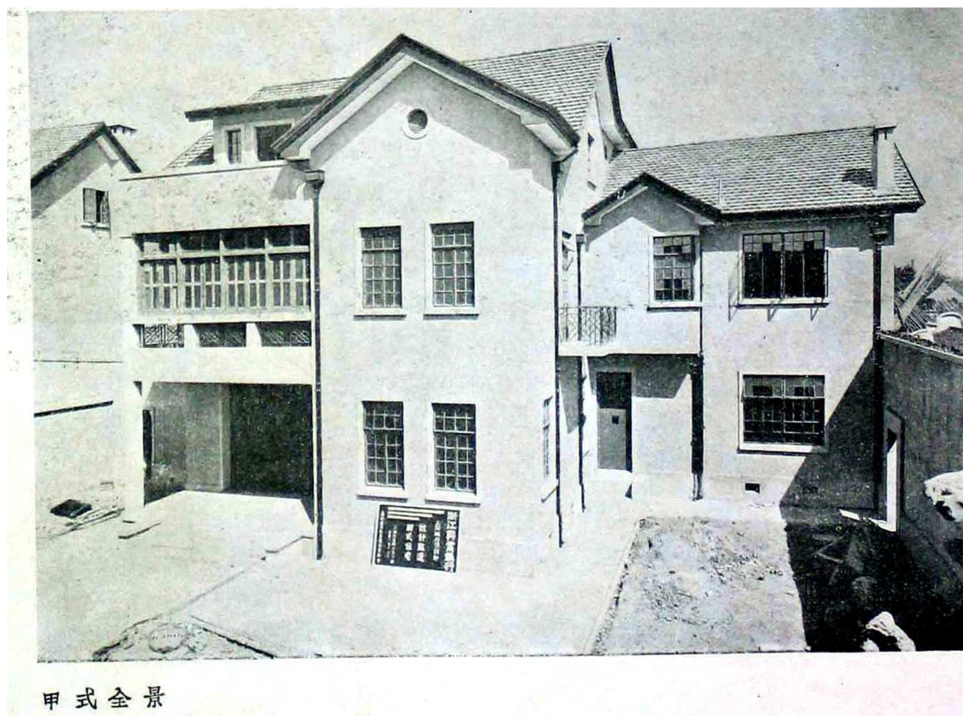
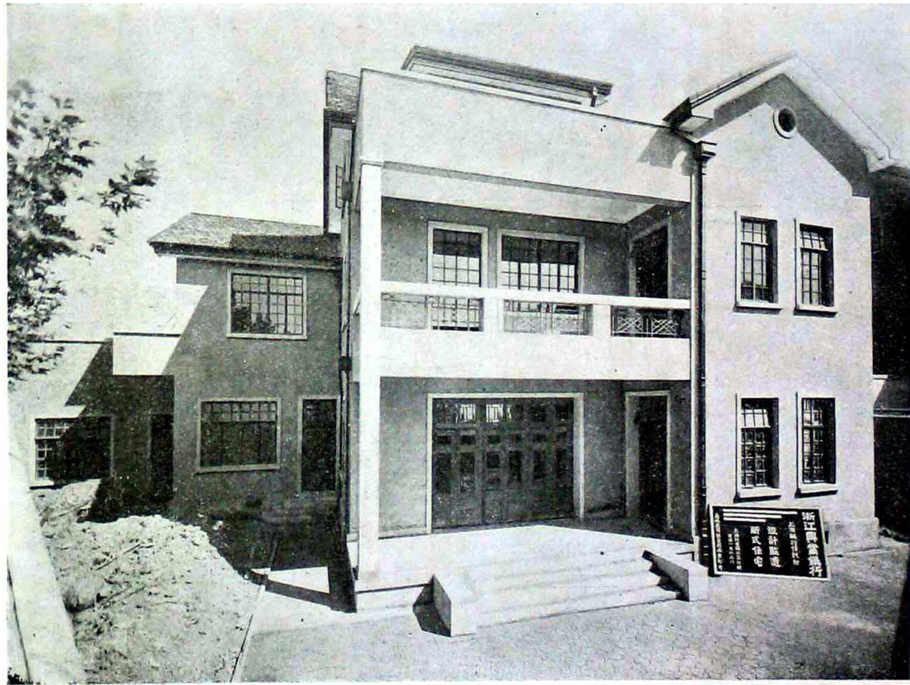


Figure 3.22. Block plan of three “Chinese” houses in Hangzhou, designed by the architect Li Yingnian. Counterclockwise from top right: House A, House B, and House C (Source: *The Chinese Architect* 27 (1936): 47)





乙式全景

丙式全景

Figures 3.23– 3.25. The three houses, from A to C, exterior (Source: ibid, 46 – 48)

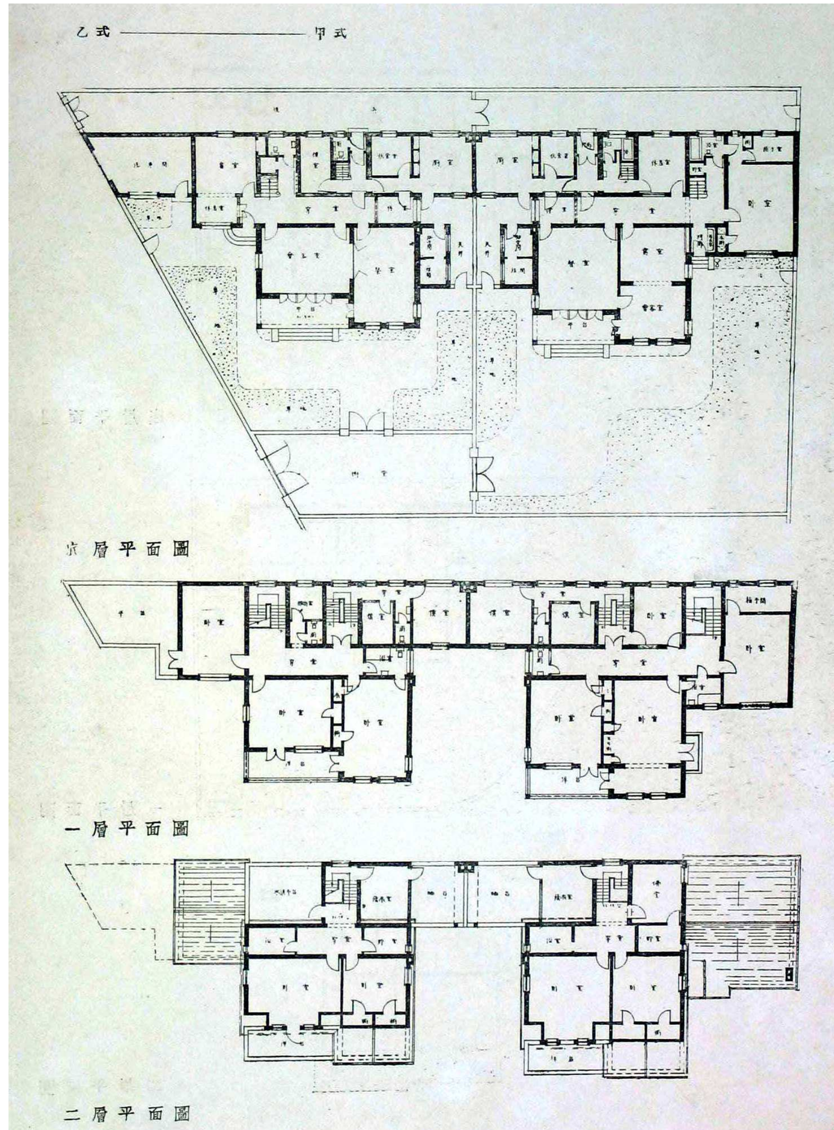
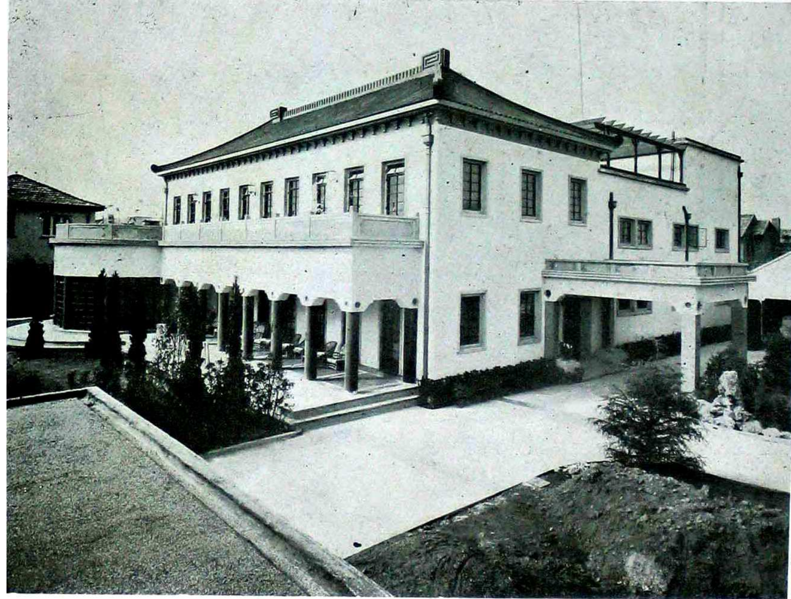


Figure 3.26. House A (right) and House B (left), ground floor, 1st and 2nd floor plans (Source: ibid, 49)



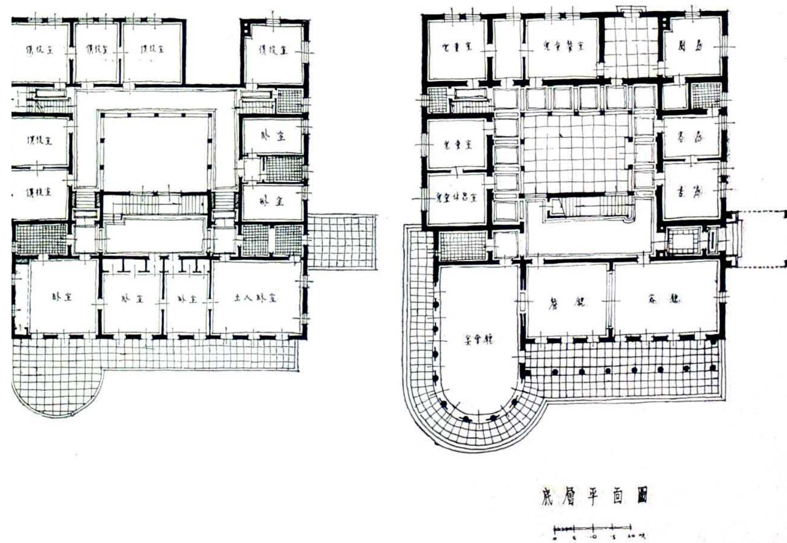
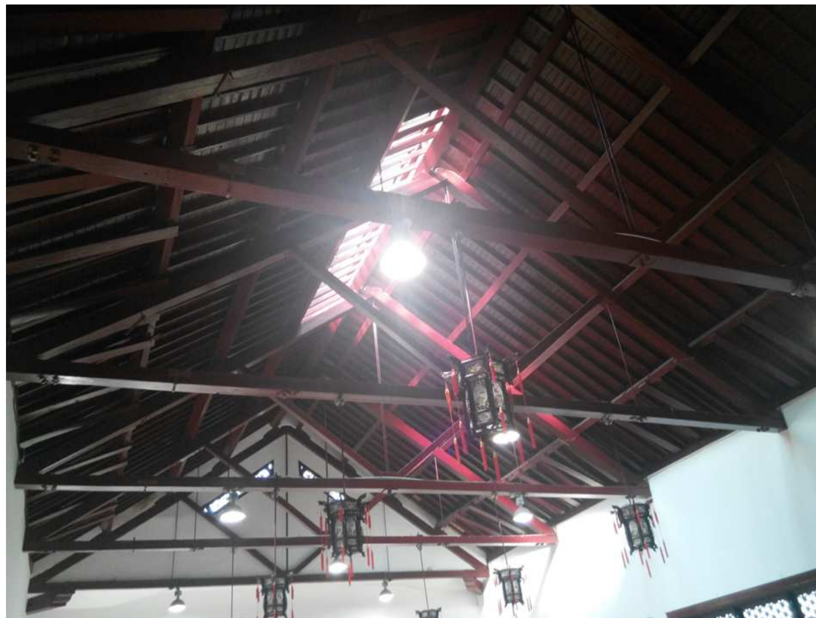


Figure 3.27. A house for a big family in Nanjing; inside the partially oval shape was the formal dining hall (Source: *The Chinese Architect* 26 (1936):45)

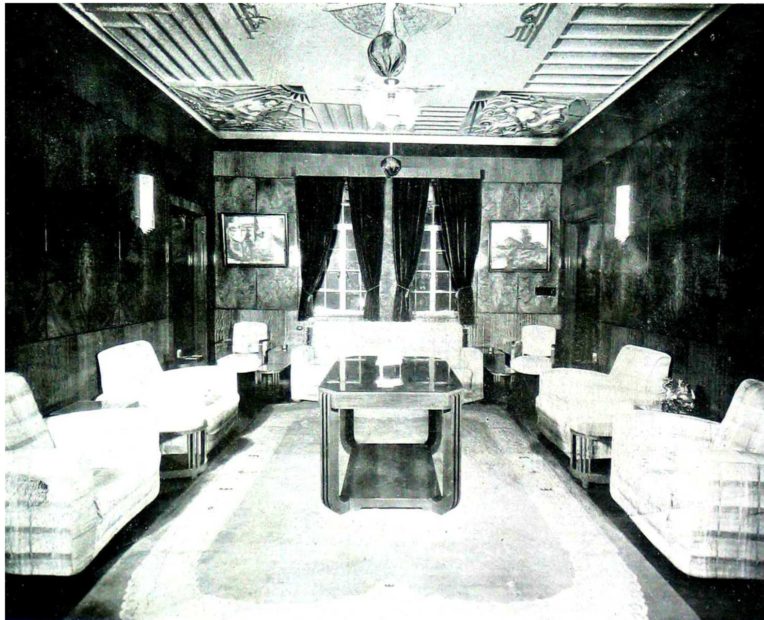
Figure 3.28. The spacious hallway of the house. Note the Chinese-style furnishing and decoration (Source: ibid, 46)



Figures 3.29– 3.30. The Ginling Girls' College main building, front exterior and interior roof structure. Note the A-truss and the skylight (Source: my photos taken in November 2013)

Figure 3.31. Spanish house on Yuyuan Road, designed by the Wah Sing, Architects
(Source: *The Chinese Architect* 29 (1937): 3)

Figures 3.32-3.33. *Keting* (upper) and *ketang* (lower) of the same house as in Figure 31, both lavishly decorated in "Chinese style" (Source: ibid, 4, 5)



Figures 3.34-3.35. The living room (upper) and boudoir (lower) of the same house, fitted in “Western style” with matching curtains, rugs and upholstery in the former and “western modern” with figural sculptures in the ceiling in the latter (Source, ibid, 6, 8)

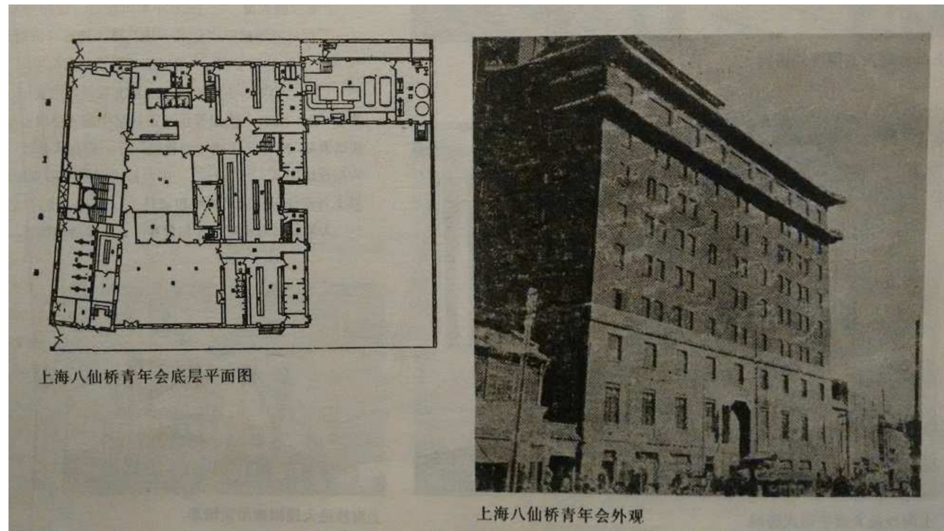


Figure 3.36. Exterior and plan of the YMCA at Baxianqiao, Shanghai (Source: Wang Shaozhou, ed. 1989. *Zhongguo jindai jianzhu tulu*)

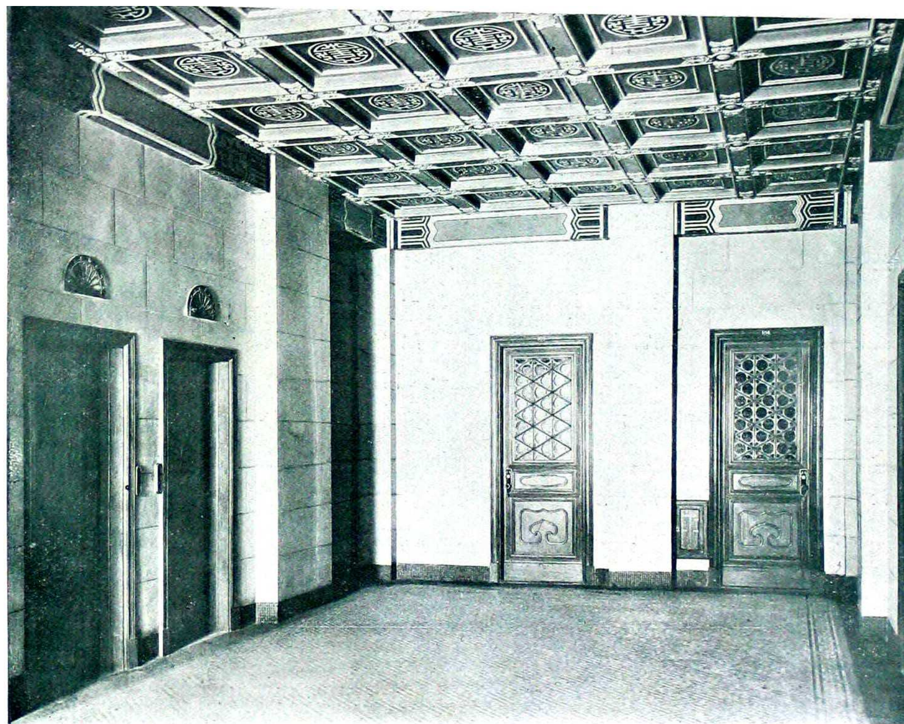


Figure 3.37. Interior of the YMCA at Baxianqiao, Shanghai, by architects Poy Gum Lee, Robert Fan and Zhao Shen, 1930 – 31 (Source: *The Chinese Architect* 1.3(1933): 15)

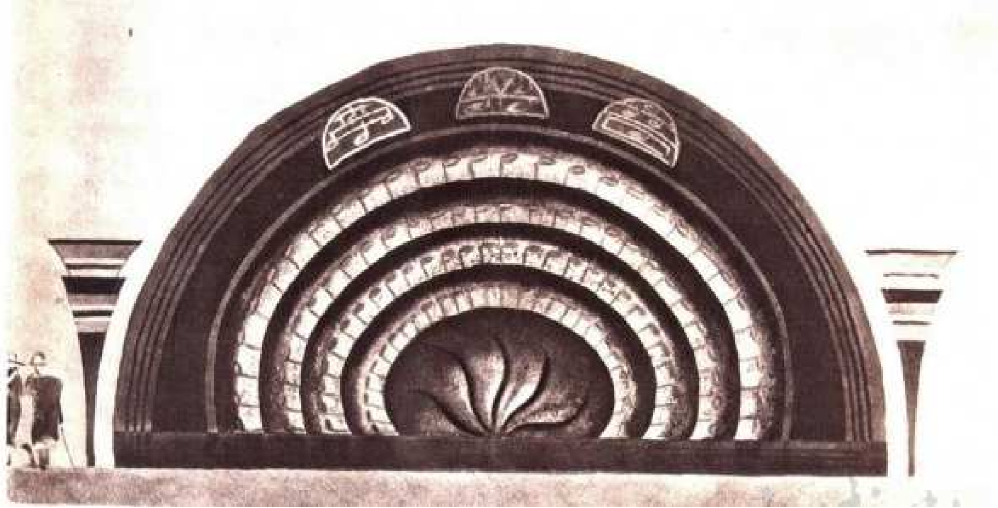
Figures 3.8-3.39. Front and rear view of Zhongshan Hospital in Shanghai, designed by the Kuan, Chu and Yang Architects and Engineers (Source: Chen Congzhou, Zhang Ming, eds. 1988. *Shanghai jindai jianzhu shigao*, 134&135)

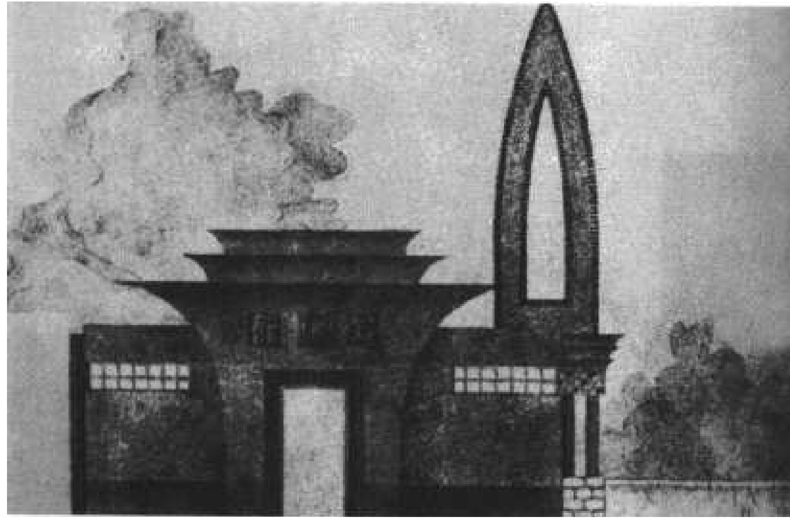
Figures 3.40-3.41. Front and waterfront view of the main entrance to the fairground of the West Lake Expo, designed by Liu Jipiao and Li Zongkan (Source: http://liujipiao.com/pictures-of-westlake-expo-1929/)

Figure 3.42. Water front view of the same entrance. The dragon-embellished columns of the front could be seen in the middle of the entrance. Note the vastly different "faces" of the same building (Source: http://bbs.voc.com.cn/archiver/tid-1905915.html)

Figure 3.43. Entrance to the Hall of Revolution, design by Liu Jipiao, note the creative reference to the Chinese memorial archway (Source: *Eastern Miscellany* 26.10(1929))

Figure 3.44. The number one theatre, design by Liu Jipiao (Source: http://bbs.voc.com.cn/archiver/tid-1905915.html)





Figures 3.45-3.46, two more designs by Liu, the Music Hall (above) and the entrance to the Hall of Art (below) (Source: *Eastern Miscellany* 26.10 (above), and Xu 2006 (below))

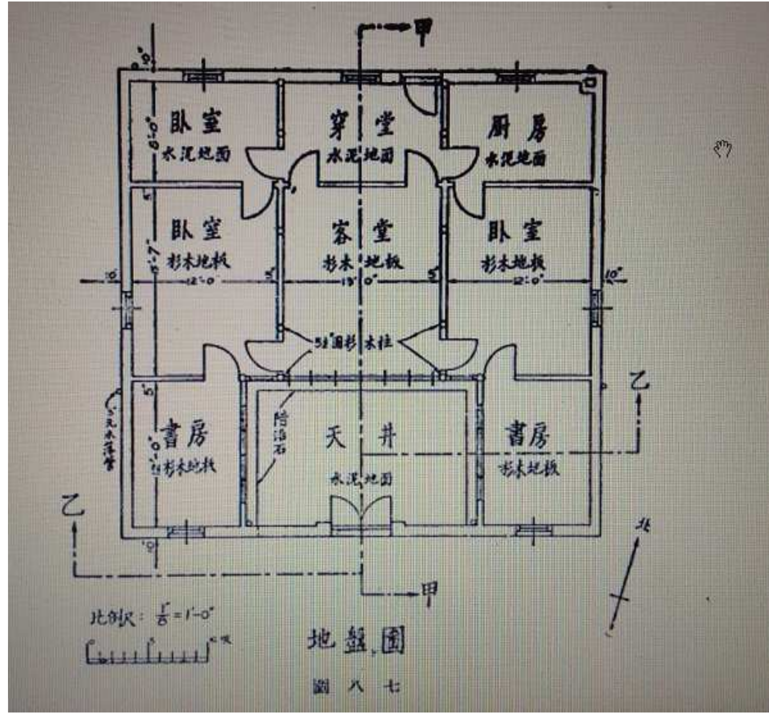


Figure 3.47. Plan of house (Source: Huo 1941, fig.87)

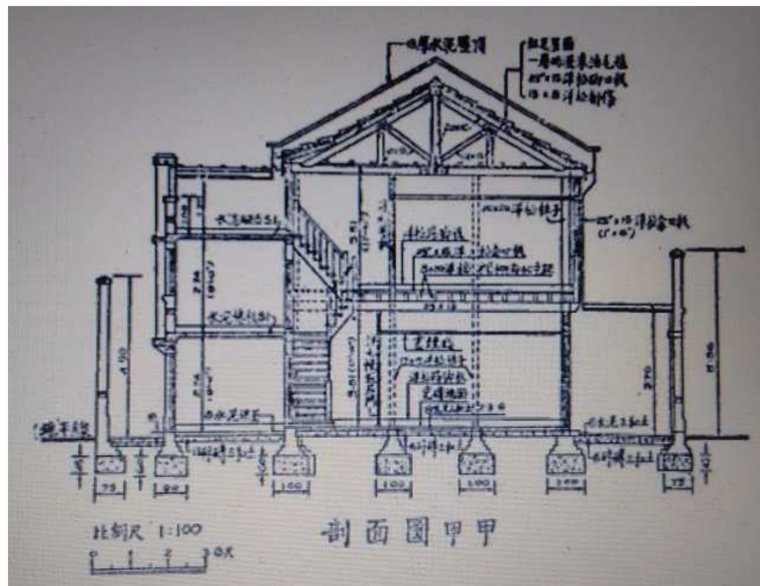


Figure 3.48. Section showing kingpost (Source: Huo1941, fig.96)

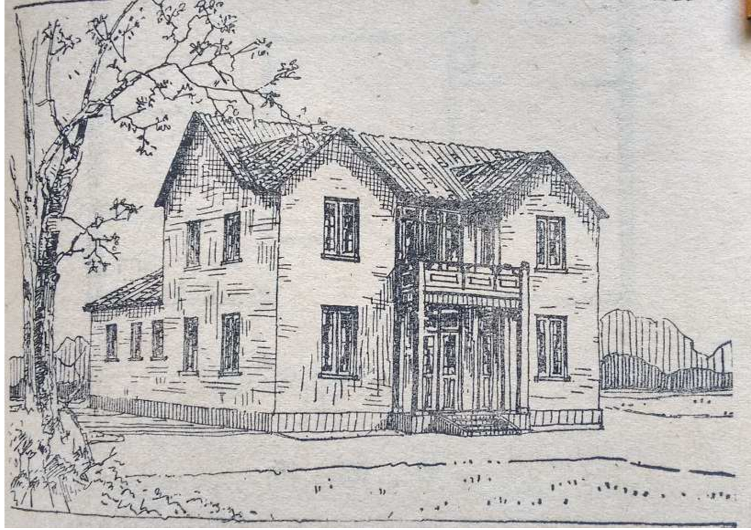


Figure 3.49. Two-storey house (Source: Xu Xintang, p135)

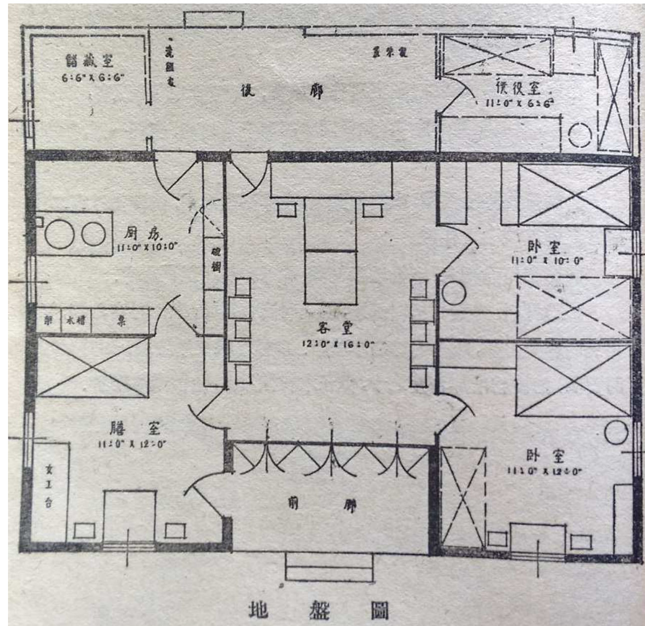


Figure 3.50. Single-storey house (Source: Xu, p80)