

CHINESE ARCHITECTURAL ART HISTORY

中国 建筑 艺术 史

中国艺术研究院《中国建筑艺术史》编写组 编

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中国艺术研究院《中国建筑艺术史》编写组 编著

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CHINESE ARCHITECTURAL ART HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

The following book is a result of a national-level research project and is listed on the 1990's national key-topic research program in the region of Philosophical and Social Science and Artistic Studies. It is actually a book of Chinese Architectural Art History. It opens a window on Chinese ancient culture and draws an explicit picture on the traditional Chinese architectural art with brilliant characteristics. The book consists of a foreword and five parts with totally 18 chapters. They are 1) Primary and Evolution, 2) Mature and Climax, 3) Complementary and Summarize, 4) Brilliant Stars, 5) Resplendent Nous. It begins since the architecture of prehistory period via the dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, Three Kingdoms, Two Jins, Sui, Tang, Five Dynasties, Song, Liao, Jin, West-Xia, Yuan and Ming till the end of Qing dynasties. The actual contents include Cities and Towns, Imperial Palaces, Confucius and Taoist Temples, Buddhist Monasteries, Pagodas, Grottos, Tombs, Gardens, Yams and the Communal Buildings for ordinary people such as Ancestor Memorial Halls, Conference Houses, Confucius Schools and the buildings of Landmark and so on.

The art of Chinese traditional architecture widely separated in time and place invariably opens new possibilities of interpretation. The principles and examples of architectures in either the far or middle ancient as well as the architectures of Ming and Qing dynasties illuminate between each other constantly revealing hidden facet of their respective arts. The research of traditional Chinese architectural art is so complicated a topic, it cannot be within the scope of a single book to cover the whole range of the task, but still we have concerned a very large amount of this subject, limitation should only be taken in a few vague points to make the work possible.

The present book is intended to bring out the cultural and artistic aspects that exist through the history of traditional Chinese architecture. It focuses on the theory of the architecture arrangement, with reference to either the analysis of architectural concept or artistic characteristic as well as spacial organization. As for the reason that the design concept and spacial idea are the cultural kernel of almost all architectural element, including the architectures of both East and West or both traditional and modern.

The book is the one concerned with the headspring, the evolution, as well as the historical distinction of the

ancient Chinese architectural art. It is indeed a book covering the artistic characteristics, epoch style, domestic style, and ethical style of traditional Chinese architecture. Some traditional Chinese cultural aspects such as the artistic idea of Confucius, Taoist and Buddhist, the theory of Feng-Shui, the design idea of Chinese architectural space and form, the decoration style, the history of architecture color, the history of architecture culture exchange between China and foreign countries are also concerned.

China is a great country with 56 nationalities and a literal recordation history of more than 3000 years. It has created a featured superexcellent civilization. Chinese traditional architecture is a most beautiful flower on the tree of the whole civilization. It is one of the three major architectural systems in the history of the ancient world. The other two are the European architecture and the Islamic architecture. All the three important ancient and conventional architecture had achieved a great deal in their artistic level.

The highest achievement the Chinese ancient architecture had reached is, as it was, the imperial palace complexes. The human heart will be unbelievably shocked in facing an architectural environment of such kind building complexes. It is an architectural representation of the power, the feudalistic order and the political or social ethic and morality. Both the capital city and the imperial palace were built in the same time. The city always encloses the palace in a way to make the palace in the highest rank of the whole country. The imperial tombs, the memorial halls of the ancient oracles, and the sanctuaries for worshipping the natural gods were always with the same feature.

Chinese Buddhist architecture includes Buddhist temple, pagoda and grotto. An atmosphere of tranquil, gentle and inward looking fills all these buildings. Chinese classical garden is the kind of naturalness. It expresses the Chinese cultural spirit of respect for the nature. The various types of popular communal architecture and residential building have directly displayed the cultural intention and the regional artistic characteristic.

In aesthetic aspect, Chinese people has always pursued an artistic situation of placid and gentle, simple and plain, connotation and consideration in their traditional architecture. Moreover, as the Western buildings turn their backs on nature whilst the Chinese have always kept closer to the earth-whether by the use of courtyards and careful choice of view, or, in the invisible realms, by using the techniques of Feng-Shui to control the flow of Chi. Actually, the Chinese traditional architecture was formed as an orientationally distributed place to symbolize the harmony between Yin Chi and Yang Chi, or between Earth and Heaven, based on the spatial concept of Chi.

In a short, the strictly arranged cities, palaces and dwelling houses of the traditional Chinese reflect the ideal social order of Confucianism. And the nature-like Chinese traditional gardens express the thirst of Taoist towards the natural environment. Both are in pursuit of the harmony between Heaven and Earth, Yang Chi and Yin Chi, active and passive. Theoretically, the search for harmony between Heaven and Earth in the Chinese tradition is epitomized by the highest ranked ritual building of the Chinese emperors, the Hall of Brightness, which according to legend was first built in the Xia dynasty, about 2,000 B.C. To pursue the harmony between Heaven and Earth, or Yang Chi and Yin Chi, an architectural idea of moderation had been developed to keep the traditional Chinese architecture, both interior space and exterior form, in a moderate size.

Chinese architecture is the only building system with the wooden-framed structure for several thousand years. The beauty of its form comes from the structure and the decoration. The characteristic system is one of the most important elements on forming the artistic style of Chinese architecture. Otherwise, Chinese traditional furniture has also played a great role in creating the interior environment of the traditional building.

The architecture of Chinese Minorities is also multiform splendidly. The religion building of Zang nationality rooted in Zang style Buddhist cultural ground with its characteristic of rough and grand fairness. The Islamic ar-

chitecture of Uygur nationality has a feature of quiet and solemn, plain and connotation. The temples and pagodas of Tai nationality Mahayana Buddhist group are exquisite and charming. The village building of Dong nationality looks rustic and age-old. All the other minority architectures, such as the Islamic building of Hui nationality, the building of Naxi, Bai and Tujia nationalities, are splendid with their features as well.

The influence of Chinese architecture had reached the Korea Peninsula, Japan, Vietnam, Mongolia and the other parts of the East Asia since the very early period of the history. And, at the same time the influence of southern Asia or western Asia had also been received by China, and been gradually turned into an organic part of ancient Chinese culture.

It is proved by the highly maturity and the great achievement of ancient Chinese architecture that there had already been an architecture artistic theory and an architecture philosophy in ancient China. The arrangement of building space and other human-made environment as well as the methods of architecture design and composition are also reached a very high level.

It is not surprising that the turn-of-the-century air has filled the whole world in an identical wind in the tendency of culture development on one hand, and the wake of cultural individuality has also become an urgent need on the other. The world is in a developing situation with the multifold and symbiosis culture. The milk of human kindness in architecture, the spirital requirement for building environment, the civilization, the architectural artistic feature and the national and rustic building style have recured to visualize their value of existence. In short, the tradition will now, in an era like this, bear an important meaning in creating a new life for the human beings.

The research presented below illustrated the development of the concept, the idea, the form, the feature, as well as the organization of traditional Chinese architecture in both the spacial or formal arts and the constructive technique. It has stemmed from the cultural backgrounds or from the special circumstance, religious, social, and technical, in the process of its development.

Some more than 1,200,000 words and about 2,000 photographs and drawings are included in the book. By observing the main characteristics of the Chinese architecture art, and by relating each back to the symbolism of its guiding vision or archetypal origin, we hope to shed some light on the essential nature of Chinese architecture. At the same time, we are interested in learning what can be gained from this kind of research, and what, if anything, it does produce that could not be extracted from a study of one or other separately.

Translator: Dr. Wang Guixiang

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羅哲文



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