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Shuishan Yu

To Achieve the Unachievable
Beijing's Chang'an Avenue and Chinese Architectural Modernization
during the PRC Era

Shuishan Yu

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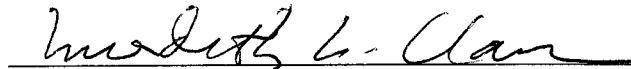
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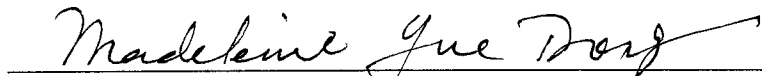
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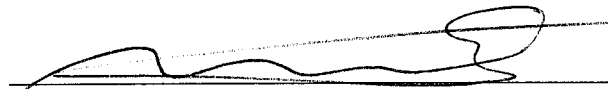
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Abstract

To Achieve the Unachievable
Beijing's Chang'an Avenue and Chinese Architectural Modernization during the PRC
Era

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This dissertation explores the modernization project in Chinese architecture during the PRC Era (1949-present) through the changes of Chang'an Avenue in Beijing. I will first trace the development of Chang'an Avenue in the changing urban context from the late Qing dynasty to the end of twentieth century. Then, by analyzing changes in architectural styles, shifts of art ideology, approaches in organized artistic creation, interaction between theoretical discussion and design practice, mechanism of political interference, and impact of globalization, I explore the modernization process of Chinese architecture during the second half the twentieth century. My argument is that the modernization project in Chinese architecture was framed in a way that it could never be fully achieved. In the discourse of modern Chinese architecture, the very definition of "modernity" was constantly changing, following the most updated version in contemporary world architecture. Each period claimed to "roughly complete" Chang'an Avenue according to its own modernization ideal. Each "completion" from a specific period had been creating new "gaps," physically as well as symbolically, for future "completions" to fill. Chang'an Avenue, as the most significant urban thoroughfare of 20th-century China and the new east-west axis of the Chinese capital, became a symbol of this unachievable modernization project.

Though mainly focusing on the second half of the twentieth century, this dissertation also provides detailed analysis of Chang'an Avenue during the Imperial Time (before 1912) and the ROC Era (1912-1949), emphasizes the interaction between past and present, and highlights the critical role history and tradition played in the discourse of modern Chinese architecture.

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Notes on Abbreviations

Materials that have been cited frequently in the notes have been identified by the following abbreviations:

- BMA:** Beijing Municipal Archive 北京市档案馆
- BMAUC:** Beijing Municipal Archive of Urban Construction 北京市城市建设档案馆
- SAATU:** School of Architecture Archive, Tsinghua University 清华大学建筑学院资料室
- JZXB:** *Jianzhu Xuebao* 建築學報 (Architectural Journal)

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Introduction

Prelude

On January 8, 1976, premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Zhou Enlai died in the Beijing Hospital near the Eastern Chang'an Avenue in Beijing. In the morning of January 11, Zhou's body, coffined in a white hearse and followed by a parade of a hundred black-color "Red Flag" grand sedans – a proud domestic industrial product of PRC, was shipped from the Beijing Hospital to the Babaoshan Crematorium near the western end of the Western Chang'an Avenue to be cremated. A million Beijing citizens were standing along Chang'an Avenue when Zhou's hearse passed by, paying their final farewell to the premier.¹ In the evening of the same day, Zhou's cinerary casket was escorted back from Babaoshan through the same avenue and placed in the Palace of the Working People – the former Imperial Ancestral Temple of the Ming and Qing dynasties and one of the most important imperial monuments on the north side of East Chang'an Avenue. In addition to the accompanying procession from the Beijing Hospital, numerous Beijing citizens observed with respect the return of Zhou's ash in a line of more than twenty kilometers long on either side of Chang'an Avenue between Babaoshan

¹ *Wenhuibao*, January 11 and 12, 1976, Hong Kong.

and the Palace of Working People, and thousands of people were standing in the chilly fog for hours along the section of Chang'an Avenue near Tiananmen Square. The main gates leading to the Forbidden City was opened to receive the cinerary casket.² From Monday January 12th to Wednesday the 14th, it was kept in the main hall of the previous imperial ancestral temple to receive mourning from hundreds of thousands of people. Toward the evening of the 14th, escorted by a procession of about one hundred vehicles, Zhou's cinerary casket was again moved along and then across the Chang'an Avenue to be housed in the Great Hall of the People – the largest and most important one among the “Ten Great Buildings” constructed for the tenth anniversary of PRC in 1959, where it continued receiving public mourning. An official memorial service was held there on Friday January 16th. After that, the cinerary casket was again shipped back through Chang'an Avenue to Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery.³ Following to his final will, however, Zhou's ashes were later scattered across the mountains and rivers of his beloved country.

Three months later, on the eve of the Qingming festival – a traditional Chinese memorial day for paying homage to deceased ancestors – on April 4th, thousands of people gathered around the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square to the south of the Chang'an Avenue to pay homage to the dead premier. They brought wreaths, banners, poems, placards, and flowers with them and turned the monument into a memorial for Zhou and a position for criticizing those currently in power. On the next morning, when people found that all the tributes they had brought last evening had been

² *Wenhuibao*, January 13, 1976.

³ *Wenhuibao*, January 15, 1976.

moved by the police, they started protesting in the square and along the avenue. Confrontation between hundreds of thousands of people and the police lasted for a day and people who refused to leave the square after the official warning were arrested by security forces.⁴ This event was almost exactly restaged thirteen years later on June 4, 1989 following the death of the deposed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) general secretary Hu Yaobang, except that the latter was in a larger scale and more traumatic. The protest in the spring of 1976 had been labeled “counter-revolutionary political incident” until after the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP held in late December 1978, when Deng Xiaoping came to power.

Mao Zedong died in the same year on September 9th. Mao’s wife Jiang Qing and other three radical leaders of the Cultural Revolution, who were later collectively referred to as the “Gang of Four” in official publications, were arrested shortly after Mao’s death. Hua Guofeng became the top leader of China. On October 24th, Chang’an Avenue and Tiananmen Square became a sea of red flags. A million people gathered in the square and paraded along the avenue, celebrating the downfall of the “Gang of Four” and the victory of Hua, who became at the same time chairman of the CCP Central Committee, premier of the State Council, and chairman of the Central Military Commission.⁵ On the rostrum of the Tiananmen Gate-tower, Hua and other leaders of the nation and party gazed down, waving and smiling when the parading mass passed by. In the vast Tiananmen Square, hundreds of thousands of people with flags, banners, and large portraits of Mao and

⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, London: W W Norton & Company, 1990), 649-650.

⁵ *Remin huabao*, 1976/12, 1-23.

Hua formed a stable background for the celebration. The real dynamic stage for the ceremony was Chang'an Avenue. While both the leaders on the Tiananmen Gate-tower and the mass in the Tiananmen Square were just standing and watching, quare formations of different themes were marching and performing along Chang'an Avenue, representing the diversity and unity of the country, its glorious past, and its bright future.

What happened in the year 1976 along Chang'an Avenue was just one section in the long chain of celebration, confrontation,⁶ and mourning activities⁷ along this 20th-century thoroughfare in Beijing. The carefully orchestrated state rituals punctuated by spontaneous emotional eruptions characterized the cultural political history of Chang'an Avenue. The urban and architectural spaces along Chang'an Avenue not only offered stages for these cultural political events, but also became one of the defining factors of history. The meanings of Chang'an Avenue and Chang'an Avenue architecture can be deciphered only in specific historical contexts.

Chang'an Avenue as a Symbol of Chinese Modernization Process

This dissertation deals with Chang'an Avenue, the urban thoroughfare in Beijing sandwiched between the imperial Forbidden City and the communist Tiananmen Square. I will first trace the development of Chang'an Avenue in the changing urban context from late Qing dynasty to the end of 20th century. Then, by analyzing changes in architectural

⁶ See the section on "Chang'an Avenue as an Independent Unit for Academic Inquiry" for more celebration and confrontation events along Chang'an Avenue.

⁷ Other examples include Sun Yat-sen's memorial service in 1925, Deng Xiaoping's memorial service in 1997, etc.

styles, shifts in art ideology, approaches in organized artistic creation, mechanism of political interference, and impact of globalization, I explore the modernization process of Chinese architecture in the 20th century. My argument is that the modernization project in Chinese architecture was framed in a way that it could never be fully achieved. In the discourse of modern Chinese architecture, the very definition of “modernity” was constantly changing, following the most updated version in contemporary world architecture. Each period claimed to “roughly complete” Chang’an Avenue according to its own modernization ideal. Each “completion” from a specific period had been creating new “gaps,” physically as well as symbolically, for future “completions” to fill. Chang’an Avenue, as the most significant urban thoroughfare of twentieth-century China and the new east-west axis of the Chinese capital, became a symbol of this unachievable modernization project.

As other scholars, for instance, Joseph Esherick and Clifford Geertz, have pointed out, for Asian and African nations the imperial powers of the West have been both the definer of “modernity” – the mark of progress – and the target to struggle against for their place in the world.⁸ This by no means suggests that there is a one-way traffic of modernity from the West to China. On the contrary, what was perceived by the Chinese as “modern” was highly selective, and modernity in the West was far from uniform. I suggest that the Chinese version of architectural modernity is a way to form a historical continuity, in spite of the seemingly abrupt changes in architectural ideology and technology. Different from “discourses” on Western architecture, in which “modern”

⁸ Joseph W. Esherick, ed. *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 1.

could be past tense as in the context of post-modernism, in the discourse of 20th century Chinese architecture modern was almost always in future tense. In fact, the Chinese almost exclusively use “modernization” instead of “modern” when discussing the issue of how to deal with “tradition.”

Chang’an Avenue can serve as the symbol of Chinese modernization process for at least two superficial reasons: first, it was born right after the fall of the millennia-long imperial order; secondly, its growth and expansion into the east-west axis of the Chinese capital was not a deliberate effort promoted by the authorities, but a product fueled by functional desire.

The symbol for political power in 20th-century Beijing is Tiananmen Square. Chang’an Avenue is the avenue, symbolically and literally, to serve Tiananmen Square. In order to bring more people into Tiananmen Square for public celebration, the width of Chang’an Avenue was expanded; in order to make a better link between the heart and the rest of the city, the length of Chang’an Avenue was extended; and in order to organize the mass parade in front of the Tiananmen Gate-tower for the view of political leaders, the intersections on Chang’an Avenue were carefully planned. In this sense, Tiananmen Square is the master, the highlight, the positive, the yang; Chang’an Avenue is the servant, the background, the negative, the yin.

In daily life and during the public celebrations, however, Chang’an Avenue is the space for movement and Tiananmen Square is static. Armies and mass march in formations along Chang’an Avenue on the National Day, while more people stand in Tiananmen Square to form background patterns with colorful banners. In this sense,

Chang'an Avenue is the main stage, the active, the positive, the yang; Tiananmen Square becomes the background, the static, the negative, the yin.

Such mutual transformation of yin and yang can also be observed in the relationship between Chang'an Avenue, the de facto east-west axis of today's Beijing, and the north-south axis of the capital, on which the Tiananmen Square is located. For traditional Chinese architecture in general, in order to make the main façades of buildings facing south, the main axis of a building complex is usually the north-south axis, and east-west axes are only secondary. For the city of Beijing, the north-south axis along the Forbidden City served as the dominating imperial axis of the whole city for more than half a millennium, while the separate East Chang'an Avenue and West Chang'an Avenue⁹ only made a minor east-west axis in the chain of east-west axes along the dominating north-south axis, and their unification and growth into the east-west axis of the whole city happened only half a century ago. As mentioned above, the birth and the expansion of Chang'an Avenue into the east-west axis of the city were to serve Tiananmen Square on the north-south axis, thus chronologically and functionally the north-south axis is the forebear and the east-west axis is the descendant. For physical character, the imperial north-south axis has monuments and gates located right on it and is thus called "shizhou" 实轴, which means the "solid axis;" while Chang'an Avenue is an open urban boulevard famed by monuments on both sides but with none directly on it and is thus often called "xuzhou" 虚轴, which means the "void axis." In this sense, the

⁹ There was no unified Chang'an Avenue during the imperial time. For details about the changes of and relationships among East Chang'an Avenue, West Chang'an Avenue, Chang'an Avenue, T-shaped Tiananmen Square, and Communist Tiananmen Square, please read the first three sections in Chapter One.

north-south axis is the father, the dominant, the solid, and the yang; Chang'an Avenue is the son, the dominated, the void, and the yin.

The de facto east-west axis Chang'an Avenue, however, has one advantage compared with the north-south axis of Beijing. For Chinese architecture and urban space, east and west are equivalent counterparts while north and south are not. In the Chinese tradition, east and west are comparable to the left and right hands of the human body, and the south and north are like the face and back. The north-south axis has a front and a back while the east-west axis has not. In other words, the north-south axis is one-directional, starting from one point and extending to the other, while the east-west axis is two-directional, extending into both sides from the center. In the city of Beijing, the imperial north-south axis starts from the Bell Tower in the north and extends southward, while the Chang'an Avenue extends from the Tiananmen Square¹⁰ in both directions. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chang'an Avenue soon overpowered the north-south axis in both length and significance and became the dominating axis of the entire city. In this sense, the yin and yang relationship between the east-west and north-south axes is reversed.

The metaphor of yin and yang relationship between Chang'an Avenue and the north-south axis of Beijing can also be used to analyze the modernization process in 20th-century Chinese architecture. In the discourse of 20th-century Chinese architecture,

¹⁰ Tiananmen Square as an open public space is a modern creation. There was, however, a walled and gated space between Qianbulan and Tiananmen Gate-tower during the imperial periods in the central area of today's Tiananmen Square, like a courtyard but elongated and much larger in size. I refer to it in this dissertation as the "imperial Tiananmen Square" for consistency. It was used for various public announcements. For more detail about the "Imperial Tiananmen Square," see the section "Chang'an Avenue during the Imperial Periods" in Chapter One.

“modern”¹¹ 现代的 was usually discussed as an opposite to “national” 民族的. Both “modern” and “national” were desirable. A satisfying architectural product should be both “national” and “modern.” “Modern” without “national” character was criticized as formalism 形式主义 or structurism 结构主义¹²; and “national” without “modern” character was condemned as revivalism 复古主义. Tradition here was a neutral term. As Mao stated, there were both essence and dross in both Chinese and foreign traditions.¹³ Here, the relationship between “modern” and “national” in the architectural discourse of 20th-century China is a typical yin and yang relationship. They should be balanced. In theory neither one should predominate. However, in specific periods and discussions, one or the other was usually emphasized and the roles of yin and yang were constantly shifting between “modern” and “national.”

What makes modernity a specific historical phenomenon is the awareness of one’s historicity.¹⁴ Modernity made a boundary between past and “now.” Being modern was not a chronological natural extension of the past but a self-conscious breaking away from it. The past was comprehensively defined as tradition. Both modern and tradition were products of modernity. And in the non-Western world of the 20th century, such as in

¹¹ Here, when the term “modern,” “modernism,” “modernity,” or “modernization” were used in the sense as defined by specific historical contexts, that is, when they were “modern,” “modernism,” “modernity,” or “modernization” from other people’s mouths, I put quotation marks on them; the same terms used in the sense as I defined them are without quotation marks.

¹² The English “structurism” is a word I made up. I did not use the “right” English word “structuralism” because the Chinese term jie-gou-zhu-yi for it was a historical mistake in 1950s’ China. The same four characters were used to translate “constructionism” in the 1980s. And what the Chinese term really referred to in the 1950s might be the Russian constructivism, whose standard Chinese translation is gou-cheng-zhu-yi 构成主义. For details on this issue, please see Chapter Two.

¹³ Mao Zedong, “Xin minzhu zhuyi lun (On New Democraticism),” in *Mao Zedong xuanji, yi juan ben* (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, comprehensive volume) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1969), 666-668.

¹⁴ Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), ix-xii.

China, the difference between “national” and “traditional” was never really defined except for that one was positive and the other was neutral. Thus, both yin and yang (“modern” vs. “national”) in the discourse of 20th-century Chinese architecture are products of modernity.

Modernity cut a boundary between past and “now.” This is exactly what Chang’an Avenue did for the city of Beijing. During the imperial time, the north-south axis separated the future “Chang’an Avenue” into two disconnected parts; after the revolution, Chang’an Avenue cut the imperial north-south axis at its heart. On the north side was the traditional Imperial City and Forbidden City; on the south side was constructed the communist Tiananmen Square. Modernism, especially its avant-garde form, was hostile to tradition.¹⁵ Because of the historical awareness, modernism legitimized its own historicity on the base of its uniqueness in history. On one hand, “now” should be different from the past; on the other hand, the future should be different from “now” too. This is the cult for the “new.”¹⁶ Modern is the center, extending on both directions into past and future. This characterization for chronology of modernity also made Chang’an Avenue a perfect metaphor for it, which extended from the intersection with tradition into infinity in both directions.

The socialist organization in architectural practice is very close to the avant-garde ideal in its emphasis on the abandonment of historical burden, collective creation and mass participation. During the PRC era, the planning of Chang’an Avenue and design of

¹⁵ Wood, Paul, ed, *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, Open University, 1999).

¹⁶ Kuspit, Donald, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Chang'an Avenue architecture were all carried out under what the Chinese authorities called collectivist spirit.¹⁷ In the early fifteen years of the People's Republic, the enthusiasm for communist future eventually ended up with the total abandonment of institutional architectural design and urban planning in late 1964. Even after 1979 when China initiated the "Open Door" policy, such emphasis on collective creation in national monuments still continued to play an important role in the field of architectural practice in China. One of the most comprehensive and influential projects carried out in such socialist approach in urban development was the planning of Chang'an Avenue in early 1964, right before the collectivist spirit was pushed to its extreme. Leading architects, urban planners, scholars, and artists from all over the country were called on to gather in Beijing to discuss schemes prepared by top institutions in architectural design and urban planning in Beijing. Design for every building along the Chang'an Avenue Proper¹⁸ was prepared in both plan and elevation, huge models were made, and a comprehensive planning was put together based on the comments and suggestions on each proposal. The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning summarized the controversies in previous developments of the avenue and had a long-lasting influence for the future planning on Beijing.

¹⁷ For detailed discussion on the collective approach in architectural design in PRC, see Chapter Three.

¹⁸ Chang'an Avenue Proper refers to the section from Fuxingmen in the west to Jianguomen in the east. For detailed definitions for Historical Chang'an Avenue, Chang'an Avenue Proper, and Chang'an Avenue, please see the section on "terms" in the "Introduction."

Chang'an Avenue as an Independent Unit for Academic Inquiry

Much has been said about the political transformation of the Tiananmen Square and the buildings surrounding it.¹⁹ Chang'an Avenue as a unity for academic inquiry, however, received little attention. As the arguably most famous boulevard in China, referred to as the "Number One Avenue in the Divine Land 神州第一街,"²⁰ Chang'an Avenue deserves academic inquiry on its own right.

Chang'an Avenue as a whole has become an urban geographical reference for cultural, political, and economic life of Beijing. Running east to west between the Imperial City and the Communist Tiananmen Square in the historical heart of Beijing, Chang'an Avenue serves today as both a dividing line between and the juncture of past and present. Since the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911, it has developed from an ordinary street into the most preeminent avenue in the modern Chinese capital, expanding in both length and width, especially after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, until the traditional north-south imperial axis of Beijing along the Forbidden City was totally overshadowed by this new east-west axis. In the economic sphere, locations closer to Chang'an Avenue – including its west and east extensions – were more privileged than other spots on the same longitude. Many real estate companies include a map in their advertisements, using Chang'an Avenue as a reference to the locations of their own

¹⁹ For instance, Jeffrey F Meyer's *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City* (Columbia, 1991) and Wu Hung's *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Apce* (Chicago, 2005).

²⁰ *Chang'an Boulevard: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Beijing: Mechanical Industrial Press, 2004.1), 009.

properties. Being in the vicinity of Chang'an Avenue is a major advantage in the real estate market.

Chang'an Avenue is the most important political ceremonial public space in China. The significance of the modern day Chang'an Avenue resides not only in its expanding scale but also the historical events and political dramas staged on it. During the entire life span of Beijing as an imperial capital, there were two separate Chang'an Avenues, East Chang'an Avenue and West Chang'an Avenue, severed by the T-shaped Imperial Tiananmen Square. After the founding of the republican China in 1912, the two Chang'an Avenues were united into one, cutting off Tiananmen Square to its south from the rest of the Imperial City. Since then, Chang'an Avenue, together with Tiananmen Square, its most renowned portion, became the political space for pronouncements of the most important historical events in 20th century China (1912-present). During the Republic of China era (hereafter the ROC era, 1912-1949),²¹ Chang'an Avenue was the main theater for political protests against those who were in power: the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the anti-imperialism movements in 1924, May Thirtieth Movement in 1925, December Ninth Movement in 1935, the anti-American demonstration in 1946, and the anti-autocratic movement in 1947. During the People's Republic of China era (hereafter the PRC era, 1949-present),²² however, Chang'an Avenue became the stage for the communist authorities to display power and propagate new national mythologies, especially during the PRC anniversary celebrations on October 1st: the founding

²¹ In this dissertation, the designation "ROC era" will be used to refer to the period after the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911 and before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, also known as "the ROC era."

²² In this dissertation, the designation "PRC era" will be used to refer to the period after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

ceremony in 1949, the first anniversary in 1950, the tenth anniversary in 1959, the 35th anniversary in 1984 celebrating the new communist regime under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the 40th anniversary in 1989 shortly after the June Fourth bloodshed, and the 50th anniversary in 1999 following the reunification of Hong Kong and anticipating the returning of Macao to China.

Chang'an Avenue as a whole also became a national showcase after 1949. The continuous addition of government buildings and national cultural projects with first class political significance made Chang'an Avenue the national showcase of socialist achievements. Since most of the national ceremonies during the PRC era proceeded along Chang'an Avenue, the facades of the buildings lining it became the architectural images most closely associated with the way China was perceived abroad and the way the "motherland" was conceived by different ethnic groups in China. Sometimes, this image was the one that the communist authorities wanted to present to their people and the entire world; sometimes, it was not so favorable to the current regime, but rather represented the voice of the rising power of some other social groups. However, both the government-sponsored architectural manipulation of national identity and its unexpected effects testify to the role Chang'an Avenue has played in modern Chinese history as a national showcase.

Chang'an Avenue was a prototype in urban planning for major Chinese cities of the PRC era. The development of Chang'an Avenue also became a catalyst for the transformation of other Chinese cities after 1949. The city of Beijing during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties was dominated by a 7500-meter-long

north-south axis, which was the center for imperial ceremonies. In 1959, when the last monuments connecting the Tiananmen Gate-tower and Tiananmen Square on the north-south axis, namely the Eastern and Western Chang'an Gates, were destroyed to make room for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the PRC along Chang'an Avenue, and in 1987, when the traffic connection between the Tiananmen Gate-tower and Tiananmen Square was driven underground through the tunnels, the traditional imperial ceremonial axis was irretrievably severed. The significance of the Communist Tiananmen Square resides precisely in its new relationship with Chang'an Avenue, marking the spot where Chang'an Avenue cut the traditional imperial axis. The development of Chang'an Avenue into a new east-west axis of the Chinese capital provided a model of revolutionary gesture in urban planning to break away from the identity of the imperial periods. Other Chinese cities followed Beijing, developing a main avenue for public ceremonies that cut through the historical urban center and lined up the central square and major monuments of the city.

This is not to say that the study of Chang'an Avenue can substitute for studies of Chinese cities other than Beijing, nor does it mean that the understanding of Chang'an Avenue can offer a framework for the understanding of other local cities in China. Every city has its unique architectural framework and historical experience. The selection of Chang'an Avenue and Beijing as the topic for this dissertation, however, is justified by: first, it has more social political exposure and thus has more materials available for research; second, its development is connected with the cultural political events of national level and thus has wider national and international influence; Beijing is also the

city that I lived in for more than ten years and Chang'an Avenue has fascinated me since my first visit to Beijing.

Chang'an Avenue has become the site for the construction and destruction of national identity of 20th century China. As the nation's most important public space, both practically and symbolically, Chang'an Avenue, together with the squares and buildings lining it, was endowed with political significance, received paramount attentions in Chinese architectural profession, and had influenced architecture and urban pattern in cities throughout China because of its prestigious status as the national showcase and the prototype for urban planning.

Chang'an Avenue as a Link for Cultural History and Architectural History

Previous studies on the city of Beijing can be divided into two categories according to different academic approaches. One focuses on the cultural and political significance of the urban space and the development of architectural symbolism; the other focuses on specific professional strategies or methods in the urban development of the capital city. The former treats architecture and urbanism of Beijing as part of cultural and political history; the latter treats the city and its built environment mainly as a design problem and the history of various solutions that had been offered.

David Strand's *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (1989) belongs to the first category, which delineates the city's responses to various social political changes in the first half of the 20th century through the documentation of

Beijing's ordinary life in the 1920s. Using rickshaw as a metaphor, Strand argues that the Republican Beijing was a mixture of old and new, Chinese and foreign, and tradition and modern. His insightful characterization of the Republican Beijing as "everything added and little taken away"²³ is crucial to understand the revolutionary changes the city experienced after the communist take-over. A remarkable study tremendously furthering our understanding about "Old Beijing," Madeleine Yue Dong's *Republican Beijing: the City and Its History* (2003) uses "recycling" as a metaphor for material as well as cultural practices in old Beijing to characterize the Chinese modernity between 1911 and 1937. Different layers of meanings of public space in Beijing were revealed through examination of the city's spatial transformations (the City of Planners), the city's material life (the City of Experience), and the representations of the city (the Lettered City). Dong's study not only reveals that what was frequently and comprehensively referred to as "old" and "traditional" might not be as old as it seemed, but also urges one to reconsider the conventional pattern of understanding history. Jeffrey F Meyer's *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City* (Columbia, 1991) and Susan Naquin's *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000) offer social political framework of the city during the imperial period. Other studies on Beijing in the field of urban history, for instance, Hou Renzhi and Deng Hui's *Beijingcheng de qi yuan yu bianqian (The Origin and Changes of Beijing City)* (1991) and Shi Mingzheng's *Zouxiang jindaihua de Beijing: chengshi jianshe yu shehui biange (Toward Modern Beijing City: Urban Construction and Social Transformation)* (1995), provide

²³ David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), 7.

some indispensable historical details on the changes of city life and the way urban spaces have been perceived.

Of the books focusing more on the PRC era, Wu Hung's study of the political history of Tiananmen Square monuments explores how architecture and urban space acquired meanings and how the meanings changed due to the changing cultural political contexts.²⁴ His recent book *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago, 2005), partially based on his separate articles published in various journals, explores Tiananmen Square as a chosen symbol for political transformation. *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China: The potential for autonomy and community in post-Mao China* (Woodrow Wilson Center Series) (1995), edited by Deborah S Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, and Elizabeth J. Perry, focuses on the impact of increased commercialization and reduced state power on associations, economics, government, and creativity in urban areas, and offers various personal insights to different dimensions of Chinese urban life in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While the term "urban space" in most articles in this collection actually means abstract public sphere, some articles deal with physical urban spaces. For instance, Piper Rae Gaubatz's article "Urban transformation in post-Mao China: impacts of the reform era on China's urban form" argued that Chinese urban landscape has changed from the Mao-era generalized urban pattern made up of homogeneous work-unit to more differentiated urban pattern due to more spatial and functional specialization. Anne-Marie Broudehoux's *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing* (2004) explores the recent

²⁴ See, for example, "Tian'anmen Square: A Political History of Monuments," in *Representations* 35, Summer 1991.

changes in urban life of Beijing and argues that Beijing has finished its stage of political spectacle after Mao died, and started a new age of commercial tourism.

Rich in historical details about Beijing's changes in urban life and material culture, architecture and urban development in these studies, however, are mainly treated as annotations for cultural political history. The built environment of Beijing served mostly as a neutral backdrop for historical dramas, both grand events and ordinary lives, rather than an active participant in them. Different architectural styles and urban forms were treated more as indicators of the modernization process rather than its temporary products. As a result, the deep structure of architectural and urban history of Beijing has been barely touched.

Remarkably advancing our understanding about symbolic meaning of urban space in modern Chinese political and cultural life, most scholarships on communist Tiananmen Square, however, frequently equate the creation of a political space to the representation of Mao's will. On the other hand, scholarships on pre-communist Beijing helped to romanticize the city life of "Old Beijing" regardless of the original intentions of the authors.²⁵ The combination of the two led to the oblivion of architects and city planners' voices in the scholarship on PRC Beijing. The communist urban strategy was often quickly condemned as the failure of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders' personal

²⁵ For example, Susan Naquin wrote at the very end of her book *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*: "My research was not begun, nor is it now intended to be, an exercise in nostalgia, either for vanished temples or for a lost Peking. Indeed, it is intended precisely to historicize the city's timeless past. Nevertheless, if viewed – just for one moment – against the current destruction of the city, this book reminds even me of a 'record of a dream of a vanished capital.'" Naquin (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 708.

taste or blind enthusiasm for the Soviet model,²⁶ and the urban planning schemes produce during the PRC Era have never been seriously studied.

Scholarships directly dealing with 20th-century Chinese architecture provided basic documents on the changes of the built environment in Beijing and development strategies for specific areas of the city. Up to now, the most comprehensive collection of officially recognized important architectural projects completed between 1949 and 2000 is Zou Denong's *Zhongguo xiandai jianzhushi (History of Contemporary Chinese Architecture)* (2001). This book offered basic facts and brief introductions for some 400 projects during the first 50 years of the PRC era. Outlines for political backgrounds and architectural policies for different periods were introduced but not integrated in the discussions of specific projects. Zhang Jinggan's *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian (Fifty Years of the City Planning of Beijing)* (2001) recorded some key moments in the history of the city planning of Beijing and contains the major drawings for each successive design from the same five decades covered by Zou's book. As a leading figure in both the designing practice and academic study in the field of urban planning in China, Wu Liangyong's major works focus on specific development strategies of Beijing. His *Rehabilitating the Old City of Beijing* (1999) summarizes his urban planning philosophies in dealing with the historical city of Beijing based on his practice in the 1980s and 1990s. With some overviews of the historical development of Beijing and its major planning proposals since 1949, the main points of the book are his theory of "organic renewal" and

²⁶ For instance, Wang Jun suggested that Mao personally supported Soviet advisors' opinion to locate the new administrative center in the heart of Beijing. See: Wang Jun, *Cheng Ji (Records of the City)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003), p. 86. Wu Liangyong also put the blame on the strong Soviet influence. See: Wu Liangyong, *Rehabilitating the Old City of Beijing* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 18-23.

the practices in the Ju'er Hutong project. Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan's *Architecture Encounters with Essence and Form in Modern China* (2002) was one of the few works recently published that focuses on the architectural profession and tries to offer a comprehensive understanding of 20th-century Chinese architecture under a broader intellectual background. It was a brief and invaluable contribution to a newly emerging field; the conceptual framework of antithesis between tradition and modern or national essence and universal form it depicted, however, oversimplified the situation, as Professor Meredith Clausen has pointed out in her book review. Moreover, the application of these antitheses is often misleading, since the concept of the essence of traditional Chinese architecture discussed in the book is just as modern as modern Chinese architecture.

Mostly written by practicing architects and urban planners and designers, these studies are important for their richness in professional details or broadness in referential coverage. Too much focus on the physical structure, however, prevents them from being more critical. The framework in which these studies are operating, namely, to treat the built environment mainly as a design problem, also leaves little space for real historical exploration. As a result, cultural political analysis has never been an integral part of these discussions.

Is it possible to integrate these two approaches in one study? Does an in-depth cultural political history of architectural and urban space have to sacrifice detailed discussion on specific designing strategies? Or vice versa? This dissertation aims to offer a cultural political history of Chang'an Avenue through detailed analysis of specific

design problems in planning and individual buildings. Chang'an Avenue is architects' as well as politicians', city planners' as well as profit seekers'. Politics did play a central role for the development of Chang'an Avenue and the urban transformation of Beijing. However, instead of treating architects' debate as a footnote to Mao's casual comments, I will integrate CCP's political agenda as part of the architectural discourse. As the only avenue running through the entire city of Beijing, Chang'an Avenue is the most important element as well as the most significant change in the urban fabric of the Chinese capital in the 20th century; framed by monumental facades on both sides, Chang'an Avenue offers the largest collection of socialist China's first-class architectural projects. By focusing on Chang'an Avenue, the research can not only make a link between macroscopic urban history and specific case studies on individual monuments, but also balance the in-depth exploration in cultural political history and detailed analysis of physical environment.

Thus, there is a two-fold mission for this dissertation. On one hand, this dissertation situates Chang'an Avenue within the cultural and political context of 20th century China, and to reveal the significant role it has played in the radical transformation of modern Chinese national identity. The history of Chang'an Avenue reveals much about the way architecture responds to major cultural and political changes. What is the nature of the architectural correspondence to history? What was the role architects played in it? And how did the public respond to the historical information intended by the regime? Thus, my aim here is to explore the mechanism of the "correspondence" between architecture and history. As a national showcase, architecture on Chang'an Avenue was

the most sensitive to official ideological change and the political signal it sent would be received by local authorities and responded to by the architectural constructions in the whole country. However, highly controlled by the central authority, architecture on Chang'an Avenue was the least sensitive to the change of popular culture and public opinion. Once even Chang'an Avenue yield to public opinion, it often means the ultimate of popular tolerance to the dominating governmental voice and the final change of national identity. The special political-geographical position and cultural-historical status of the Chang'an Avenue makes it a perfect case for the exploration of these questions.

On the other hand, each subsequent layer of architectural imageries and symbolism along Chang'an Avenue reflects changes in social milieu prompted by specific political events: the "Great Leap Forward" movement that led to the "Ten Great Buildings" – six of them are now directly facing the Chang'an Avenue – in late 1950s; the normalization of the political relationship between China and the United States reflected in the architectural development on Eastern Chang'an Avenue in the 1970s; the "Reform and Opening" policy which gave rise to the commercialization of national monuments and monumentalization of commercial buildings along the entire Chang'an Avenue in the 1980s and 1990s; the rise of nationalism at the turn of the millennium that resulted in the strengthening of the traditional imperial north-south axis to counter-balance the east-west Chang'an Avenue, etc. These changes in architecture and urban development corresponded with the shifts of the national identity. In this process, architecture on Chang'an Avenue played an active role and became part of nation building itself.

Chang'an Avenue as a Link for Urban Study and Architectural History

The study of architectural and urban history of Beijing also suffers the struggle of two extremes in research objects. The research objects for urban history are entire cities; the objects of study for architectural history are individual buildings. The former mainly focuses on the evolution of the macroscopic structure of a city, and as a result, the picture of the particular ways the urban fabric changes remain blurred. The latter mainly focuses on separate structures and the ways they contributed to the change of urban space remain fragmentary. Is it possible to overcome this research dilemma too?

Street as a link between the macroscopic history of a city and the microscopic history of buildings deserves more scholarly attention. Most articles in *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (1994), edited by Zeynep Celik, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll, treated street as a space for ritual and ideological engagement. In the introduction, Celik pointed out that “if ritual helps to represent the mythological reasons for a community’s existence, ideology conversely gives reason to the myth of order that is promulgated by power in the city.”²⁷ Some issues raised in this collection have direct connection with 20th-century China. The Haussmannic or Mussolinic “aesthetics of demolition” that bothered Spiro Kostof was certainly true for the development of Chang’an Avenue and Beijing, and the association of “urban conservation” with nationalism he made still works for the analysis of Beijing in the late 20th-century and

²⁷ Zeynep Celik, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll, Eds, *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994), 4.

early 21st-century.²⁸ Although all the articles in the collection share the common focus on urban street, they are confined to the level of large scale urban fabric changes and deficient in specific discussion on individual structures. As a result, the picture being depicted remains general and vague, although not without valuable insights. For instance, Heng Chye Kiang's article "Kaifeng and Yangzhou: the Birth of the Commercial Street" offers an account of changes in medieval Chinese streetscape, spanning five centuries from early Sui dynasty (589-617) to late Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) and covering the two major ancient capitals of Chang'an and Kaifeng. And Greg Castillo's article "Gorki Street and the Design of the Stalin Revolution" only briefly mentioned a couple specific buildings, though its discussion on Socialist Realist ideology and aesthetics of the 1930s Soviet Union as reflected in the reconstruction of the Gorki Street in Moscow has direct relevance with Chang'an Avenue in Beijing during the 1950s.

While Allan Jacobs' *The Boulevard Book: History, Evolution, Design of Multiway Boulevards* (2002) offers an overview of the history and techniques in the design and building of modern boulevards, James Trager's *Park Avenue: Street of Dreams* (1990) focused more on the cultural influence and social political environments in the development of Park Avenue in New York.

The exploration of Chang'an Avenue's cultural and political significance in this dissertation, however, will proceed through detailed analysis of individual buildings, with some monuments selected as highlights for more in-depth discussion. While the study on urban history mainly focuses on the change of large scale general urban fabric but leaves

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 9-22.

the detailed analysis of each individual structure to architectural historians, this study will make a much closer scrutiny at the change of urban fabric. While architectural history's main attention is drawn to each individual building or building complex but rarely recognize the contribution they made to the entire urban space, this study will piece together the constructions of individual buildings to make a whole picture of the urban fabric change. The target of examination in this dissertation is something in between the traditional disciplines of urban history and architectural history. By focusing the study on Chang'an Avenue – a thoroughfare connecting different parts of the city – the construction of a “tectonic joint” for these two disciplines can be achieved for a better and more insightful understanding of both fields.

Modernism as an Architectural Style and Other Practical Issues

This dissertation will also address the issue of modernism as a style in 20th-century Chinese architecture. Architectural critics and historians have employed such dichotomies as national character vs. international style, or tradition vs. modern when analyzing 20th-century Chinese architecture, as if there are two opposite ways to generate form with clear-cut boundaries. By tracing the development of the Chang'an Avenue, in particular with an eye on its major public monuments, I argue that the architectural program determined by the communist regime reflects a new phase of the ongoing search for national identity, which cannot be taken as a set of national characters ready to be modernized, but an integral dimension of modernization. It was the onslaught of Western

inspired modernization and the ideological dilemma it introduced that forced communist China to come to grips with its national identity, first in the Socialist Bloc, then the Third World, and finally and most recently within a global market. The 20th-century Chinese architectural tradition, just like national identity, is not fixed, but always in flux. This means two things: first, all the past practices, events, debates, construction, destruction, etc., continued to add layers to the developing collective identity known as architectural tradition; second, the definition, genealogy, denotation, connotation, etc. of traditional architecture, that is, the construction of the past, is always changing. If being modern means constant awareness of history and a belief in the progressive nature of future development, then socialism is certainly a form of modernism and socialist public space is a form of architectural modernity in China.

Modernism as a mainstream architectural style, together with its life cycle between late 19th century and late 20th century, has recently been criticized. Some argue that architectural modernism was a more or less artificial construction by some architects, architectural historians, and architectural critics by eliminating all other traditions and with the help of misleading manipulation of photography.²⁹ Some scholars propose replacing the concept of “modernism as a paradigm of style” with “discourse of modernism in architecture.” In her article “Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style,” Sarah William Goldhagen argues that to use discourse as a methodological model in the discipline can resolve much of the analytical problems and incoherencies emerged in current discussion of 20th-century architecture. Modernism as

²⁹ For example, St. John Wilson, Blundell-Jones, Kenneth Frampton, Giorgio Ciucci, and Anderson.

a discourse, she maintained, can offer a common ground in which different positions and practices can operate. They belong to the same discourse because they share the same premise that “architecture must instantiate an ethically grounded material practice that grapples with (rather than categorically rejects or ignores) the phenomenon of modernity itself.”³⁰ In other words, they share the same “something to talk about” that she suggests in the title of the article. Goldhagen’s position is inspiring because it highlights the question “what is architectural modernity,” although the article is still mainly targeted on the western experience. If the concepts of modernism vs. traditionalism or modernism vs. regionalism were false polarizations in the west, what about the transplantation of these concepts to a different cultural context like China? How can we simply apply such dichotomies as national character vs. international style, or tradition vs. modern in the analysis of 20th-century Chinese architecture? Shall we not take a closer look at what did different people mean by using these terms and how did they conceptualize them in their practice, and excavate the deeper structure of modernity in Chinese architecture?

In order to explore the issue of modernity in specific architectural practice in 20th-century China, I propose to use five different categories of meaning in the analysis of the strata of meanings one site or the same building embodied over time: designers’ intended meanings; patrons’ desired meanings; users’ experienced meanings; outsiders’ associated meanings; history’s acquired meanings. Previous scholarship mostly focused on the first two layers of meanings – designers’ intended meanings and patrons’ desired meanings. These are also the most style-driven aspects of 20th-century Chinese

³⁰ Sarah William Goldhagen, “Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style,” in *JSAH*, Vol. 64, No. 2, June 2006, 144-167.

architecture. This dissertation will explore all the five layers and interpret the way they interact with one another.

This dissertation also aims at stimulating changes in design philosophy in contemporary China from single focus on stylistic form to a more comprehensive cultural and historical awareness. Environment and sustainable design is currently gaining ground in China, as in architectural schools in the United States. Through the discussion in my dissertation, I wish to draw architectural practitioners' attention not just to natural environment, but also to cultural environment and the way they interact with each other.

By revealing specific historical contexts in which the current situation of Chang'an Avenue came into being, I wish to discourage the currently superficial desire for a fictional past before the communist victory. I consider it as more triggered by tourism than most people are aware. If the destructions of the old buildings to make way for modern streets, squares, and monuments in the 1950s through 1980s are erasure of past memories according to socialist ideologies, the destructions of structures constructed during the past 50 years in order to restore the authentic style and features of "old Beijing" currently gaining the upper hand in Beijing are erasure of the memories of the immediate past for profit. The well circulated late 19th-century and early 20th-century photographs by westerners, for instance, those by Hedda Morrison, helped to promote the preferred image of old Beijing.³¹ Every issue of the popular magazine *Laozhaopian* (Old Photos) in the 1990s has plenty of imagery of old Beijing. When the westerners'

³¹ These old photos on old Beijing were widely reprinted in recently published books, for examples: Fu Gongyue, *The Old City Gates of Beijing* (Beijing: Beijing Arts and Photography Publishing House, 2001.10); *Beijing's Hutong*; Wang Bin and Xu Xiushan, *Pictorial History of the Streets and Alleys of Beijing* (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Press, 2004.1); etc.

construction of Orient represented the authority of authenticity and became the consensus of the insiders, the process of self-colonialization began. Films, popular literature, and TV series on Qing dynasty and the ROC era have reduced the images of old Beijing to some easily readable signs – walls, narrow hutong, gate towers, and pailou. Designing streets or planning the entire city of Beijing according to a preferred historical authenticity as represented by these signs should not be the direction of the future.

Methodology

Since the main aim of this dissertation is to bridge the two opposites in the study of Beijing city, namely the social political approach and the professional technical approach, the methodology I will use to approach Chang'an Avenue and its architecture will be a combination of cultural study and stylistic analysis.

The cultural study aspect in this dissertation is to treat the history of Chang'an Avenue architecture as an inseparable part of the cultural and political history of 20th-century China. This is the only way to recover the meaning of architecture and urban space. In the West, the tradition of cultural history in the discipline of art history can be traced back to Johann Joachim Winckelmann via Ernst Gombrich, Aby Warburg, and Jacob Burckhardt. In China, such a tradition has an even longer history. Different from other art forms such as painting and calligraphy, which were usually treated in pure aesthetic terms and have a long connoisseurship tradition, architecture had typically been discussed in moral or political terms since at least the Zhou Dynasty (11th century BCE –

221 BCE),³² except for some special architectural types associated with literati culture, such as garden design. This tradition, although transformed, is still alive, as we can see in the debates surrounding every significant national monument on Chang'an Avenue. This makes Chang'an Avenue a perfect candidate for a cultural study of architecture.

Historical contextualization in the study of specific objects will be a useful tool/method in the excavation of different layers of meaning in Chang'an Avenue architecture, which entails not only different buildings from different periods but also different interpretations of the same structure at different times or by different people. I also plan to draw on semiotics, particularly the concept of the sign's multiple modalities of signification, that is, its dependence for its meanings on its connections with other signs.

Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) offers inspiring insight on the relationship between social product and artistic work. I agree with Lefebvre that there is no clear boundary between product and work. I also agree with him that a work does not have to be connected with the uniqueness of individual creation. This is certainly true for the general architectural practice³³ in the PRC. Not only was the new development of Chang'an Avenue a collective effort lasting for decades, but also very few monuments framing it bare individual creators' names, especially for those constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the architectural works were created collectively – a very different attitude from modern western practice. Christine M. Boyer's *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (1994) offers a critical

³² For instance, the legends about King Wen of Zhou and his Spiritual Terrace 灵台, Spiritual Park 灵囿, and Spiritual Pond 灵沼, and numerous associations between extravagant buildings and bad rulers.

³³ By "general architectural practice" I mean the construction of the entire built environment, including architecture, urban design, urban planning, and other engineering works.

response to both Modernism and post-Modernism's attitudes toward history and memory in the practice of architecture, city planning, and historic preservation. Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Genius Loci: Toward A Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979) and the book edited by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Toward a Phenomenology of Person and World* (1985) are very helpful for a deeper understanding of the city and architectural space as specific cultural experiences and the way they generate meanings. In the field of political history and science, Lowell Dittmer's *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990* (1992) analyzes the shifts of communist China's national identity in terms of the international political relationship, which is helpful for the understanding of the ideological aspects of Chang'an Avenue.

For the relationship between architecture and identity, *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics* (1978) edited by Henry A. Millon and Linda Nochlin and Lawrence J. Vale's *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (1992) offer case studies in diverse cultural geographical situations. Among the individual studies of other world metropolitans, those on Berlin yielded the richest and most comparable research, since Berlin, like Beijing, is also a capital city that went through many political and ideological shifts during its evolution in the 20th century, shifts that were expressed architecturally. These studies include Brian Ladd's *The Ghosts of Berlin* (1997) and Michael Z. Wise's *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (1998). Vikramaditya Prakash's *Chandigarh's Le Corbusier* (2002) and Sibel Bozdogan's *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*

(2001) offer two valuable case studies whose central issues are similar concerns of this dissertation, one on a city in a developing country that has an ancient history as long as China's, the other on the national identity of a newly revolutionized country. Both concern the modernization process in the Third World.

Stylistic analysis as an architectural historical methodology has many limits. However, since architectural forms and styles were among the central concerns and occupied a very prominent position in the discourse of 20th-century Chinese architecture, an in-depth discussion of the topic cannot bypass stylistic analysis. On the other hand, a cultural historical approach in architectural history does not mean to treat architecture simply as architectural sociology. To some extent, I agree with Arnold Hauser (1892-1978) that art, as well as architecture, has its own specific problems to solve other than social commitments. Woelfflin's tradition of stylistic analysis is important in this case, not because it can reveal the life of style as a cycle of three phases (early, classic, and baroque), but because it offers a useful tool to grasp the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of a time, Hegel) of a society, another still useful term as long as we do not treat it in a teleological sense. Alois Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* (the Will of Art) is not necessarily to claim the universality of aesthetic values. As we know, there is no gender-neutral or universal art historical knowledge. However, there are standards for art and architecture in a given time and society, which are the targets of artists and architects as both ideals to reach and conventions to break. It is precisely because of the relative independency of art and architecture to politics and ideology that makes it possible and necessary to look into their relationships for a better understanding of a culture.

The way I approach Chang'an Avenue in this dissertation is also characterized by a combination of direct on-site observation and deconstructionist readings of primary historical documents. Buildings of different periods are standing side by side on Chang'an Avenue today, which I have been visiting and photographing every time when I was doing my research in Beijing. The historical documents, however, need to be approached selectively and critically. My reading of these documents is deconstructionist in the sense that this is one way of reading these materials. There are many other ways to read these texts, which might be equally legitimate. What I am trying to do is to uncover the hidden messages and preconceptions of the authors, intentional or not, in order to reveal the contradictions and inconsistencies in the discourse of Chinese architectural modernity.

I will also draw on some traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, for instance, the time-honored dichotomy *xu* 虚 and *shi* 实, in the analysis of 20th-century Chinese architecture. According to this *xu-shi* theory, *xu* and *shi* depend on each other for existence and work together to make a unified whole, just like the *yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳 in the *taiji* 太极 diagram. *Xu* depends on, depicts, includes, and gives birth to *shi*, and vice versa. In Chinese, *xu* means both “void” and “false”; and *shi* means both “solid” and “real.” To some extent, there is a type of Chinese socialist public space characterized by its monumental hierarchical built surroundings (*shi*) and open egalitarian empty space (*xu*). In the Chinese socialist public space, it is the monumental, hierarchical, and often neo-classical architectural facades that are “solid and real”; the open, egalitarian, and transparent avenue and square are “void and false.” The north-south axis of Beijing was

characterized by layer after layer of ceremonial halls and gates and was thus often referred to as *shixhou* 实轴, which means the “solid or real axis.” The new east-west axis of the Chang’an Avenue is characterized by the wide empty space of the avenue and is thus often referred to as *xuzhou* 虚轴, which means the “void or false axis.” The incorporation of such time-honored Chinese philosophical concepts in the discussion should shed still more light on the nature of modernization process in China and its relationship with tradition.

There are both advantages and disadvantages for doing architectural history of the recent past, which is still part of our shared experience and live memory. The greatest challenge is the lack of historical distance, which is necessary for a relatively objective and disinterested view point. Many documents are still withheld from public view due to the politically sensitive nature of the site. And as a witness and participant of part of the history being delineated, it is hard for me to be totally detached from the professional and cultural debates that are analyzed in the dissertation. Yet the closeness in time can be a great advantage too, because it allows me to obtain documents that may be lost in time, to record the public reception, and to offer some timely responses and in situ observations, that is, more directly if not always with the requisite distance. For me, to be objective is not the same as to be neutral. As Keith Jenkins has pointed out in his book *Re-thinking History* (1991), there is no neutral arena in history. There are only contemporary interpretations of the irretrievable pasts, no matter how long ago the past was. History is more about the present understanding than the truth of the past. And history always has

an impact on the future. A key question for me is how self-conscious we are about the positions we are taking and the futures to which we are pointing.

Terms

Since Chang'an Avenue has been growing both eastward and westward from Tiananmen Square since 1912, the term Chang'an Avenue has been used to refer to different sections of this thoroughfare running through the metropolitan of modern Beijing depending on different contexts. In order to avoid confusion, terms are specifically defined in this dissertation.

Historical East Chang'an Avenue: Between Dongdan and Nanheyuan. This was the eastern-most section of Chang'an Avenue before 1949.

Historical West Chang'an Avenue: Between Xidan and Fuyou-jie, the western boundary of Zhongnanhai. This was the western-most section of Chang'an Avenue before 1949.

Historical Chang'an Avenue: from Xidan to Dongdan (about 3765 meters long), including Xi Chang'an-jie and Dong Chang'an-jie during the Ming and Qing dynasties. These are also the oldest sections of Chang'an Avenue. During the ROC era (1912-1949), Historical Chang'an Avenue included (from west to east) Xi Chang'an-jie, Fuqian-jie, Dong Sanzuomen-dajie, and Dong Chang'an-jie. During the PRC era (after 1949), Fuqian-jie merged into Xi Chang'an-jie; and Dong Sanzuomen-dajie merged into Dong

Chang'an-jie. In a contemporary Beijing map, only Historical Chang'an Avenue is specifically indicated as "Chang'an Avenue."

East Chang'an Avenue: Chang'an Avenue between Tiananmen Square and Dongdan, as indicated in a contemporary map of Beijing. This is same as Dong Chang'an-jie after 1949 (pre-1949 Dong Chang'an-jie and Fuqian-jie combined).

West Chang'an Avenue: Chang'an Avenue between Xidan and Tiananmen Square, as indicated in a contemporary map of Beijing. This is same as Xi Chang'an-jie after 1949 (pre-1949 Dong Chang'an-jie and Dong Sanzuomen-dajie combined).

Chang'an Avenue Proper: from Fuxingmen to Jianguomen (about 6672 meters long). This is the Chang'an Avenue inside the former Inner City walls of Beijing city, including Fixingmennei-dajie (from Fuxingmen to Xidan), Xi Chang'an-jie (from Xidan to Tiananmen Square), Dong Chang'an-jie (from Tiananmen Square to Dongdan), and Jianguomennei-dajie (from Dongdan to Jianguomen). These sections were comprehensively referred to before the 1980s as the "Ten-li Long Avenue" 十里长街.

East Chang'an Avenue Proper: Chang'an Avenue Proper east of Tiananmen Square.

West Chang'an Avenue Proper: Chang'an Avenue Proper west of Tiananmen Square.

Chang'an Avenue: In this dissertation, Chang'an Avenue refers to the entire east-west thoroughfare of Beijing including both the Chang'an Avenue Proper and their east and west extensions. These extensions, however, do not include those streets west of the Shougangdongmen and east of the Eastern Fourth Ring of Beijing city. Thus,

Chang'an Avenue as defined in this dissertation starts with Shougangdongmen in the west, where it turns into interior roads inside the huge campus of the Capital Iron and Steel Company, and ends with Sihui Bridge in the east, where the avenue merges into highways. This long thoroughfare is referred to today as the "Hundred-li Long Avenue" 百里长街, which includes: Xi Chang'anjie, Fuxingmennei-dajie, Fuxingmenwai-dajie, Fuxing-lu, and Shijingshan-lu from east to west on the west side of Tiananmen Square; and Dong Chang'anjie, Jianguomennei-dajie, Jianguomenwai-dajie, and Jianguo-lu from west to east on the east side of Tiananmen Square. Chang'an Avenue as defined in this dissertation, without further explanation, includes all these sections.

Chang'an Avenue Extensions: This refers to the sections of Chang'an Avenue exclusive of the Chang'an Avenue Proper, that is, west of Fuxingmen or east of Jianguomen.

East Chang'an Avenue Extension: Chang'an Avenue east of Jianguomen.

West Chang'an Avenue Extension: Chang'an Avenue west of Fuxingmen.

The complicated naming system used in this dissertation is the result of the complicated nature of the historical development of Chang'an Avenue, which will be traced and explained in Chapter One. Chang'an Avenue was not a static avenue created once and for all. It has been growing and has experienced many changes, and the general name "Chang'an-jie" is used to refer to different avenues in different historical periods. These specific definitions of terms about Chang'an Avenue will help to avoid confusion in future discussions.

Resources

Because of my background as a practicing architect in China, I have access to materials which are unavailable to some other researchers. As a former architect working in the Architectural Design Institute, Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China, I have had the personal experience of direct participation in some of the projects analyzed in this dissertation, most importantly the National Grand Theatre. This experience has also provided me the opportunity to know and establish personal connection with some the key figures in the professional field of architecture and urban planning in China. I have also gone through the entire process of architectural education in one of China's most prestigious architecture schools. As a former student in the School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, I have direct contacts with the leading figures in the research field of architecture and urban planning in China. Many of the first-hand materials in this dissertation were collected directly from architects, scholars, and administrators from these two institutions. The interviews with them constitute another important source of primary material.

Some newly released materials on the PRC era are crucial to this research. These primary materials are mainly from two archives in China: the Beijing Municipal Archive (北京市档案馆) and the Beijing Municipal Archive of Urban Construction (北京市城市建设档案馆). Materials up through the 1970s are mainly from the Beijing Municipal Archive; materials from the 1980s, 1990s, and the last few years are mainly from the Beijing Municipal Archive of Urban Construction. Two other archives in Beijing are also

very helpful, although few materials from their collection pertain directly to Chang'an Avenue. They are the Archive of the School of Architecture at the Tsinghua University (清华大学建筑学院资料室) and the Ministry of Construction Archive (建设部档案馆).

Organization

The organization of this dissertation, that is, the arrangement of chapters, is both thematic and chronological. While the first and last chapters deal with urban planning issues, that is, the role Chang'an Avenue played in the transformation of Beijing's urban texture, the chapters in between each focus on specific buildings or projects during a specific period of the PRC era. For each period, specific themes and buildings that best represented the controversies in the architectural modernization project of the time have been chosen for detailed discussion.

Chapter One offers an overview of the historical development of Chang'an Avenue before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC, founded 1949), focusing on its physical expansion during the 20th century. The opening of the imperial spaces and monuments around Chang'an Avenue during the ROC era (1912-1949) will be introduced, and an outline of the planning and re-planning of the center of Beijing with Chang'an Avenue as the focus after the founding of the PRC will be provided, and the gradual transformation of the Chang'an Avenue façades will be pictured.

The theme of Chapter Two is the architectural controversies of “national” vs. “modern,” focusing on Chang’an Avenue architecture during the 1950s. The “Ten Great Buildings” and the rise and fall of the “big roof” motif will be discussed within the social context of the “Great Leap Forward” movement and the changes of architectural policies. The way history was represented in Chang’an Avenue architecture and the function and form of the museum as a public space to construct national mythologies will be analyzed.

The theme of Chapter Three is the collective approach in socialist architectural creation, focusing on the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning. This is the most comprehensive planning on Chang’an Avenue in the 20th century and the only large-scale national project carried out with socialist collective method on one urban street. Based on the drawings and models for different schemes produced in the successive stages of the planning in 1964, the detailed meeting notes from the same year, and my interviews with some of the participants, I will analyze the working procedure and professional ideologies of the socialist collective approach in architectural projects, as well as its historical connection with and political difference from the avant-garde movements in the 20th-century arts.

The theme of Chapter Four is the Chinese architectural modernization in a world of post-modernism, focusing on Chang’an Avenue architecture during the 1970s and 1980s. The unachievable nature of the modernization project in 20th-century Chinese architecture is most dramatically displayed in the controversies on “modern” vs. “post-modern” in early 1980s. I will discuss the constant shifts of the modernization targets in architecture during these two decades and the way these ideological shifts were reflected

in buildings on Chang'an Avenue. I will also argue that the architectural discourse on "modern" vs. "national" from the 1950s continued under new theoretical frameworks.

The theme of Chapter Five is the impact of globalization on Chang'an Avenue architecture, focusing on the 1990s and new developments in the last few years. While the first two decades of the PRC era envisioned a totalitarian (as in its literal sense) image of Chang'an Avenue with comprehensive and once-and-for-all planning, the characteristic of Chang'an Avenue architecture in the 1990s and new millennium is fragmentation. Chang'an Avenue was torn apart by different social forces and ideologies: commercial, political, intellectual, popular, Chinese, foreign, etc. I will analyze the way different voices can be heard on Chang'an Avenue. I will use the National Grand Theatre as a supreme example to summarize the struggle of different voices in monument construction on Chang'an Avenue during this period. The tremendous influence of this project on Chinese architecture at the turn of the century will also be discussed.

Chapter Six concentrates on the controversies about and the development of Chang'an Avenue as the east-west axis of Beijing. Historical associations of the north-south axis and urban planning details about the two axes of Beijing will be discussed. The growth of Chang'an Avenue from a functional urban thoroughfare into a symbolic axis of the Chinese capital will be analyzed. The recent strengthening of the imperial north-south axis for the 2008 Olympics signals that the east-west axis Chang'an Avenue as a symbol of modernization is terminating and the neo-nationalism represented by the imperial axis is just under way.

Comparisons between Chang'an Avenue and other famous urban thoroughfares in the world will be made in the Conclusion and the uniqueness of Chang'an Avenue for its close engagement with Chinese history, modernity, and national identity will be highlighted.

Chapter One

History of Chang'an Avenue in Urban Context

Chang'an Avenue during the Imperial Periods

“Chang’an” literally means “long peace,” but for the Chinese, the word will immediately remind them two of the most powerful dynasties: the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), from which the Chinese majority acquired their ethnic name (*Hanren* 汉人), and the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 CE), from which the overseas Chinese communities obtained their collective identity (*Tangrenjie* 唐人街).¹ Both the Western Han Empire (206 BCE – 9 CE) and the Tang Empire had the city of Chang’an (modern day Xi’an) as their capital and both dynasties represent the past golden age of Chinese political power. Thus, the historical dimension of the name Chang’an Avenue goes way back into China’s imperial past.

Chang’an as the name for the major avenue in front of the Imperial City can be traced back to the early Ming Dynasty. During the first 53 years of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1420), Nanjing was the national capital of Ming China. Nanjing had been serving

¹ Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Harvard Yenching Institute, 2000), pp. 751-752.

as the imperial capital for many southern regimes before the Ming Dynasty: Wu (229-280), Eastern Jin (317-420), Song (420-479), Qi (479-502), Liang (502-557), Chen (557-589), and Southern Tang (937-975). None of these regimes unified China. Compared to the powerful and prosperous Han and Tang with Chang'an as their capital, these dynasties were politically weaker, territorially smaller, and short-lived. When the first Ming Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang (Hongwu Emperor, r. 1368-1398), finally chose Nanjing as the main capital of his unified Chinese empire, he was concerned about the inauspicious associations of Nanjing with these previous dynasties. New Imperial City and Palace City in Nanjing were therefore constructed at the southeast corner of the city to avoid overlapping with the palace sites of former regimes.² This might be the reason why the major street in front of the Imperial City of Ming capital Nanjing was named Chang'an Avenue, hoping for "long peace" and making auspicious associations with the long-lasting Han and Tang dynasties.

In 1416, the third Ming Emperor, Zhu Di (Yongle Emperor), decided to move the capital to Beijing, the site of the previous Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) capital Dadu (Great Capital). Construction of this new capital started in 1417 and was completed in 1420. Although the new Ming capital mostly overlapped with the Yuan Dynasty Dadu and followed its north-south axis, the layouts of Ming Beijing copied former capital Nanjing, including the Chang'an Avenue in front of the Imperial City. The Beijing city as

² Long Wenbin (1821-1893), "Ming taizu shilu 明太祖实录," in *Ming hui yao* 明会要, 80 juan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002).

completed in 1420 had three layers of city walls: the Inner City with nine city gates,³ the Imperial City inside the Inner City with four city gates,⁴ and the Palace City (Forbidden City) inside the Imperial City with four city gates.⁵ In 1553, walls were constructed to the south of the Inner City to define an Outer City,⁶ adding a fourth layer of walls with seven gates⁷ to the City of Beijing. The entire city was dominated by a 7,500-meter-long north-south axis, running from Yongding-men (the Gate of Permanent Stability 永定门) at the south end of the city to the bell tower in the far north, lining up the main gates of the Outer City 外城, Inner City 内城, Imperial City 皇城 and Palace City 宫城, and other major imperial monuments.⁸ The following Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) also founded their imperial capital in Beijing. In terms of the general plan, they did not make any major physical change to the former Ming capital, including Chang'an Avenue. (Figure 1.1)

Except for its critical location, Chang'an Avenue during the Ming and Qing Dynasties was a common road just like any other major passageway in Beijing. Actually, there were two separate Chang'an Avenues cut off by the Imperial Tiananmen Square

³ These nine gates were: Xuanwu-men, Zhengyang-men, and Chongwen-men in the southern wall; Chaoyang-men and Dongzhi-men in the eastern wall; Anding-men and Desheng-men in the northern wall; and Xizhi-men and Fucheng-men in the western wall.

⁴ These four gates were: Tian'an-men in the south, Di'an-men in the north, Dong'an-men in the east, and Xi'an-men in the west.

⁵ These four gates were: the southern gate Wu-men, the northern gate Shenwu-men, the eastern gate Donghua-men, and the western gate Xihua-men.

⁶ The Outer City walls were originally planned to encircle the entire Inner City. However, since it took too long a time and too much expense, only the southern parts were completed. See: Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo gudai jianzhushi di 4 jian: yuan ming jianzhu* (History of Ancient Chinese Architecture, vol. 4: Yuan and Ming Dynasties) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1999), 31.

⁷ These seven gates were: You'an-men, Yongding-men, and Zuo'an-men in the southern wall; Guangqu-men in the eastern wall; Dongbian-men and Xibian-men in the northern walls; and Guang'an-men in the western wall.

⁸ For instance, the Temple of Heaven, the Altar of Agriculture, the Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altar of Earth and Grain, the Scenery Hill, etc.

group: on the western side of the square from the West Three-arch Gate (Xisanzuomen 西三座门) to Xidan (named after Xidan pailou⁹ – the West Single Memorial Archway) was the Historical West Chang’an Avenue; on the eastern side of the square from the East Three-arch Gate (Dongsanzuomen 东三座门) to Dongdan (named after Dongdan pailou – the East Single Memorial Archway) was the Historical East Chang’an Avenue.¹⁰

The Tiananmen Square group consisted of three squares: in the center was the T-shaped Tiananmen Square, defined by the Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tiananmen 天安门) in the north, Gate of the Great Qing (Daqingmen 大清门, Ming Dynasty Damingmen 大明门) in the south, Left Chang’an Gate (Chang’an zuomen 长安左门) in the east, and Right Chang’an Gate (Chang’an youmen 长安右门) in the west. Between the Tiananmen Square and the two Chang’an Avenues there were two smaller wing squares: the east wing square was defined by the Left Chang’an Gate and the East Three-arch Gate; the west wing square was defined by the Right Chang’an Gate and the West Three-arch Gate. All three squares were walled. The Tiananmen Square group, together with the Imperial City behind it, blocked more than two thirds of the east-west communications in the Inner City (Neicheng) of Beijing. (Figure 1.2)

⁹ Pailou 牌楼: memorial archways in traditional Chinese architecture, also called paifang 牌坊.

¹⁰ This is clearly shown in a historical map of the late Qing Dynasty Beijing originally published in 1908 and reproduced in 2002 by the Zhongguo huabao chubanshe (China Pictorial Press). Some old Beijing people also called the Left and Right Chang’an Gates “the East and West Three-arch Gates,” which has caused much confusion. See also: Wang Jun, *Cheng Ji (Records of the City)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003), 163; Hou Renzhi and Deng Hui, *Beijingcheng de qi yuan yu bianqian* (The Origin and Changes of Beijing City), (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe, 1997), 111; “Beijing History” Editorial Team from the Department of History of Beijing University, *Beijingshi* (History of Beijing), (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 225-226.

Historical East and West Chang'an Avenues had very different functions and symbolic meanings during the imperial time. Historical West Chang'an Avenue was mainly associated with punishment, military power, and authority, while Historical East Chang'an Avenue was more associated with business, civil power, and celebration. On the west side of the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square, that is, on the south side of Historical West Chang'an Avenue, the Ming Dynasty built the headquarters of the Five Armies and the secret police force Jinyiwei, and the Qing Dynasty built the Ministry of Punishment (Xingbu), Imperial Procuratorate (Duchayuan), and the Imperial Prison (Qintianjian); on the east side of the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square, that is, on the south side of Historical East Chang'an Avenue, there were Ministry of Rites (Libu), Ministry of Revenue (Hubu), Ministry of Civil Office (Libu), Ministry of Public Works, and the Hanlin Academy during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.¹¹ Every three years, a yellow announcement (huangbang) with the list of names of those who had passed the imperial exam was carried out through the Left Chang'an Gate on the east end of the Tiananmen Square and posted in today's East Chang'an Avenue; every autumn, convicts awaiting execution were led through the Right Chang'an Avenue on the west end of the Tiananmen Square and knelt along the west side of the square awaiting their final trial and sentence. Thus the Left Chang'an Gate was called "Dragon Gate (longmen)," which means the gate of success, while the Right Chang'an Gate was called "Tiger Gate (humen)," which means the gate of death.¹²

¹¹ Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen* (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 2001), 6-7.

¹² Wang Yushi, 27-29.

The civil character of the East Chang'an Avenue and the authoritative character of the West Chang'an Avenue were further confirmed by different opinions held by Beijing's people about the areas east and west of the north-south axis in general. The saying in Beijing "the east is rich and the west is aristocratic (*dongfu xigui*); the south is humble and the north is poor (*nanjian beipin*)," means that most of the merchants lived in the east city while most of the princes, dukes, and other Manchu aristocrats lived in the west city, and many people who lived in the south city were from lower classes while those in the north were poor Manchus.¹³ In 1860, part of the area south of East Chang'an Avenue became foreign concessions of Western powers after the Opium War II. And in 1901 after the Boxer Movement, the entire area between today's East Chang'an Avenue Proper and the southern wall of the Inner City became foreign concessions.¹⁴ Thus, East Chang'an Avenue became also associated with diplomacy, Western influence, and the larger world, and for some modern patriotic Chinese, with Western imperialism and China's past humiliations.

Chang'an Avenue during the ROC Era (1912-1949)

After the Qing Empire collapsed in 1911, the two Chang'an Avenues were gradually unified. The unification and the spatial reconfiguration of Chang'an Avenue during the ROC era, however, were less about change in physical environment than the way urban space being used. In other words, the changes were more symbolic than

¹³ Gao Wei, *Manhua Beijing* (Casual Words about Beijing) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2003), 149-151.

¹⁴ Wang Yushi, 32-35.

physical, more about “software” rather than “hardware.” Throughout the ROC era, Chang’an Avenue remained its original length from Xidan to Dongdan as in the imperial time.

In 1912, the former imperial garden Zhongnanhai 中南海 on Chang’an Avenue at the west side of the Forbidden City became the presidential palace. A new main south gate to Zhongnanhai called Xinhuamen 新华门, the Gate of New China, was opened on Chang’an Avenue. During the Ming-Qing dynasties, the structure of Xinhuamen was a two-story free-standing pavilion just inside of the garden’s south wall called Baoyuelou 宝月楼, the Tower of Precious Moon. The republican regime changed this free-standing structure into a gate to the garden by opening the ground floor and modifying the garden walls, which are now connecting to the sides of the structure rather than screening in front of it.¹⁵ (Figure 1.3)

On January 1, 1913, the first anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China, the doors in the East and West Three-arch Gates as well as the Right and Left Chang’an Gates were removed, and the walls connecting these gates demolished, by the republican government under Yuan Shikai’s presidency.¹⁶ For the first time, a passageway was created connecting the two Chang’an Avenues and common Beijing citizens were able to walk from one directly to the other.¹⁷ However, they were still two separate passageways

¹⁵ Zhang Fuhe, *Beijing jindai jianzhushi* (Modern Architectural History of Beijing) (Beijing: Tsinghua daxue chubanshe, 2004), 217.

¹⁶ Wang Shiren and Zhang Fuhe, “Beijing jindai jianzhu gaishuo (Introduction to early modern architecture in Beijing),” in *Zhongguo jindai jianzhu zonglan: Beijingpian* (Overview of Early Modern Architecture in China: Beijing volume), (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chebanshe, 1993), 7-8.

¹⁷ Wang Yushi, 36.. See also: Hou Renzhi and Deng Hui, *Beijingcheng de qiuyuan yu bianqian* (The Origin and Changes of Beijing City), (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe, 1997), 162.

and the four gate-towers which marked out the Imperial Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenues were still there.

In October 1914, the former Altar of Soil and Grain Shejitan was open to public as the “Central Park” of Beijing. During the imperial time, the Altar of Soil and Grain was used by emperors to perform the annual duty of sacrificing to the god of soil (she) and the god of grains (ji). As the symbol of the nation and one of the main architectural spaces to legitimize the mandate of “Son of Heaven,” the convention to construct Shejitan in the imperial capital can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE – 256 BCE). In the chapter on “Record of Craftsmanship” in the Confucius classic *Rituals of Zhou*, it was stated,

When the master craftsman constructs the state capital, he makes a square nine *li* on each side. Each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine north-south and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. The court is located in the front (south) and the markets in the back (north). On the left (east) is the Ancestral Temple, and to the right (west) are Altars of Soil and Grain.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Altar of Soil and Grain, together with the Imperial Ancestral Temple on the other side of the north-south axis, was beyond the reach of common Beijing citizens. After 1911 they were both open to public. The latter became the “Peace Park” in 1924.

Zhu Qiqian was the main figure in charge of these urban changes in Beijing before 1927, when the national capital of the Republican China was moved to Nanjing. Born to a family that had close connections with many powerful Qing officials, Zhu first became the Minister of Communication 交通总长, then the Minister of Interior 内务总

长 in 1912 under Yuan Shikai's presidency.¹⁸ In addition to the unification of Chang'an Avenue and the transformation of the Altar of Soil and Grain into a park, Zhu also supervised the Zhengyangmen transformation project and numerous projects of road and railway construction in Beijing.¹⁹

The transformation of Chang'an Avenue and the imperial structures around it during the early ROC era, however, was characterized by the adoption of the former imperial urban spaces for civic functions and careful protection of the original urban texture of the old city. Imperial structures inside the former Altar of Soil and Grain were carefully preserved and rebuilt for the enjoyment of citizens, as well as the old cypress trees planted as early as the beginning of Ming Dynasty when the altar was first built. Zhu lamented ten years after the Central Park project,

The nice trees in the former forbidden area were lush and green after all these changes and revolutions without damage, under which we can still rest after hundreds of years. Seeing these trees again, the vicissitude of the old nation and the rises and falls of regimes were vivid, which make me sad and full of emotional feelings. Today, the task of reconstruction and protection does not only belong to the government, but also to the people. The garden with old trees has much to do with the spirit of self-discipline indeed. I sincerely hope that our countrymen will love and protect them and will not let our descendants sigh and lament on us.²⁰

In 1925, Sun Yat-sen died in Beijing. His body was temporarily placed in the main sacrifice hall of the former Altar of Soil and Grain. In 1928, after the fall of the

¹⁸ Liu Zonghan, "Huiyi zhu guixin xiansheng (Recollections of Mister Zhu Guixin)," in *Huogong jishi* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1991), 63-74.

¹⁹ Zhang Fuhe, 216-227.

²⁰ Zhu Qiqian, "Zhongyang gongyuan ji (Record of the Central Park)," in *Huoyuan wencun* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1991), 113-115.

Beiyang regime and Chiang Kai-shek's capture of Beijing and relocation of the capital to Nanjing, the Central Park was renamed "Zhongshan Park" in honor of Sun.²¹

After abdicating in 1911, the last Qing Emperor, Puyi 溥仪, was allowed to live in style in the Forbidden City. As the place where the miniature Qing court sacrificed to its imperial ancestors, the Ancestral Temple was also part of the palace holdings. In 1924, General Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥 evicted Puyi from the palace. After that, the Forbidden City became the Palace Museum 故宫博物院 and the former Imperial Ancestral Temple was opened as the "Peace Park."²² In 1928, the park was closed and the halls in the former Ancestral Temple became part of the Palace Museum.²³

While major structures on Chang'an Avenue did not experience much physical change after the fall of the Qing Empire, the monuments that symbolized China's former humiliation by Western powers during the imperial time did. In 1900, Western countries that had concession areas on Eastern Chang'an Avenue moved more troops to Beijing in name of protecting foreign populations against the "Boxer Uprising." Military pressure was high for the Qing court. On June 20, 1900, German envoy Klinder was killed by Qing military officer Enhai at Dongdan near the eastern end of Historical Chang'an Avenue. This accident was followed by the invasion of China by the allied forces of eight powers composed mainly of soldiers from Japan, Russia, Britain, the United States, and France. After the war, as part of compensation to the Western winners, a three-bay

²¹ Sun Yat-sen is best known for the Chinese in his other name Sun Zhongshan.

²² Gugong bowuyuan zijincheng bianjibu, ed., *Zijingcheng zhuanhao: gugong bowuyuan 80 nian* (Special issue of *Forbidden City: 80 years of the Palace Museum*), 2005/5 (132), 2-61.

²³ Beijingshi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Beijing zhi, shizheng juan, yuanlin luhua zhi* (Annals of Beijing, Volumes of Municipal Administration, Annals of Gardens and Parks) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000), 103-104.

marble memorial archway pailou called “Klinder Memorial Stele” was constructed on the site where Klinder was assassinated. Emperor Guangxu’s apology was inscribed in the central horizontal board of the Klinder Memorial Stele in English, French, Latin, and Chinese. This was considered by many Chinese as galling shame and humiliation. After the World War I ended in 1918, the Klinder Memorial Stele was demolished by the Chinese. In 1919, it was reconstructed in the Central Park on the other side of Chang’an Avenue and renamed “gongli zhansheng fang (Victory of Justice paifang).”²⁴ The defeat of Germany in World War I offered China an ephemeral hope for national revival and end of foreign humiliation.

In 1924, tram rails were laid along Chang’an Avenues. During the period from 1924 to 1948, three tramlines – Lines 1, 3 and 5 – ran in parallel between the Tiananmen Gate-tower and the Tiananmen Square.²⁵ The 7500-meter-long imperial north-south axis was cut across by this modern technology.²⁶

²⁴ The paifang was again renamed in 1952 as “baowei heping fang (Guarding Peace paifang).”

²⁵ Shi Mingzheng, *Zouxiang jindaihua de Beijing: chengshi jianshe yu shehui biange (Toward Modern Beijing City: Urban Construction and Social Transformation)* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1995), 273-276.

²⁶ The distance between the north end of the traditional N-S axis bell tower and Chang’an Avenue was about 3800 meters; the distance between the south end of the traditional N-S axis Yongdingmen and Chang’an Avenue was about 3700 meters. So, Chang’an Avenue crosscut the traditional N-S axis at its very central point.

In the 1941 “Beiping²⁷ Urban Planning” prepared during the period of Japanese occupation (1937-1945), new urban districts in western suburbs and new industrial districts in eastern suburbs were envisioned on either side of the old city of Beijing, and Chang’an Avenue was planned as the major connection between them.²⁸ (Figure 1.4) Although Chang’an Avenue was not really extended, in 1937-1939 new openings were made in the west and east city walls at the places where future extension of Chang’an Avenue would meet the Inner City walls: the one on the west was named Chang’an Gate (nowadays Fuxingmen, Gate of Revitalization) and the one on the east Qingming Gate (nowadays Jianguomen, Gate of National Construction).²⁹ After the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the ROC government hired the Japanese technical personnel to prepare the new general plan of Beijing in 1946. The result was not very different from the 1941 Japanese plan and no major physical change was made to Chang’an Avenue.³⁰ (Figure 1.5)

²⁷ Although Beijing served as the national capital of China for most of the last ten centuries, it did lose the capital status for a couple times and its names changed back and forth accordingly. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), it was called Dadu (Great Capital). In 1368, the Ming Dynasty founded its capital in Nanjing (South Capital) and renamed the former Yuan capital Beiping (North Capital). In 1403, Yongle Emperor of Ming moved the capital to Beiping and renamed it Beijing (North Capital). The following Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) kept both the name and the capital status of Beijing throughout its 268-year rule. After the fall of the Qing Empire in 1912, Beijing continued to serve as the capital of the Republic of China (ROC) till 1928, when Chiang Kai-Shek moved the capital to Nanjing. Between 1928 and 1937, Beijing was a special administrative city under the former early-Ming Dynasty (1368-1403) name “Beiping.” In 1937, the puppet government under the Japanese occupying forces renamed it Beijing again and made it the capital of the “Provisional Government of the Republic of China.” In 1945, after the Japanese surrendered, Nanjing was restored as the national capital of ROC and Beijing was again renamed Beijing until 1949. See: *Beijingshi*, 75-454. To avoid confusion, I will use “Beijing” consistently throughout this dissertation except for document titles.

²⁸ Dong Guangqi, *Beijing guihua zhanlue sikao* (Strategic Thinking of Beijing Planning) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1998), 298-305.

²⁹ Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian* (Fifty Years of the City Planning of Beijing), (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 2001), 160. See also: Madeleine Yue Dong, *Republican Beijing: the City and Its History*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 41.

³⁰ Beijingshi gongwu ju, ed, *Beijingshi dushi jihua sheji ziliao diyiji* (Materials of the Urban Planning of the Beijing City, vol. 1), 1947, in BMA, ii.

In general, Chang'an Avenue remained short and fragmented during the ROC era. The avenue turned several times from Xidan to Dongdan. Though no longer impassable by the Imperial Tiananmen Square, the eastern and western parts of Chang'an Avenue were spatially separated by the four gate-towers in between. In fact, there were four sections with different names. The section in front of Zhongnanhai was called "Fuqian-jie" (avenue in front of the seat of government) and the section between Tiananmen Square and Nanheyuan was called Dongsanzuo-men dajie (East Three-arch Gate Avenue). West Chang'an Avenue referred only to the section between Xidan and Fuyou-jie of about 800 meter long, and East Chang'an Avenue was about a kilometer long between Nanheyuan and Dongdan. They were more than 2 kilometers apart.³¹ (Figure 1.6)

The Physical Expansion of Chang'an Avenue after 1949

The physical unification and expansion of Chang'an Avenue did not happen until after the founding of the PRC. On October 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong was standing on the rostrum of the Tiananmen Gate-tower proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic, the physical space he saw below was not very different from that of the imperial time except that it was filled with people and flags. The parade of military formations along Chang'an Avenue had to pass through the arches in the gate-towers and temporarily disappear from his sight. Flags had to be lowered in order to pass. As Tiananmen Square became the main political public space of new China and national and

³¹ Map of Beijing, 1950.

revolutionary ceremonies would proceed along Chang'an Avenue frequently in the future, reconstruction of Chang'an Avenue was inevitable.

As previously mentioned, the four sections of Chang'an Avenue – Historical West Chang'an Avenue, Fuqian jie, Dongsanzuo-men dajie, and Historical East Chang'an Avenue – did not form a straight line. Not even two of them were perfectly in line. While the other three sections only had slight turns, Historical East Chang'an Avenue was about 100 meters to the south of other sections. In 1950, in order to make Chang'an Avenue a relatively straight passageway for mass parade celebrating the first anniversary of the PRC, a parallel avenue of 15 meters wide was added to the north of Historical East Chang'an Avenue, in line with the Dongsanzuo-men dajie. At the same time, an avenue of the same width was created to the south of the Dongsanzuo-men dajie, in line with Historical East Chang'an Avenue. Thus, on the east side of Tiananmen Square, Historical Chang'an Avenue had two parallel lanes, separated by tramlines and large areas of greenbelts, which was called "Green Boulevard" 林荫大道 at the time. During the reconstruction of Chang'an Avenue in 1950, the East Three-arch Gate-tower and West Three-arch Gate-tower were demolished, as well as two memorial archways paifang (Luzhong 履中 and Daohe 蹈和).³²

In August 1952, the Left (east) Chang'an Gate-tower and Right (west) Chang Gate-tower were demolished to further make Chang'an Avenue an unblocked parade ground for public communication and anniversary celebrations of the PRC.³³ In 1954, the last two imperial monuments marking the separation of Chang'an Avenue, the Western

³² Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 161-162.

³³ Wang Jun, 163-169.

Chang'an Pailou and Eastern Chang'an Pailou, were removed to be reconstructed in the Taoranting Park.³⁴ For first time, the East Chang'an Avenue and the West Chang'an Avenue were truly joined with each other.³⁵

In 1955, West Chang'an Avenue was expanded to 32-50 meters wide. Before that, the widest section of Chang'an Avenue – 2.4 kilometers long between Dongdan and Zhongnanhai – measured 15 meters wide. The asphalt and crushed stone road pavements were replaced with asphalt concrete. It was also decided that before the tenth anniversary celebration of the PRC in 1959, two lanes of the East Chang'an Avenue would be merged to form a road width of 44-50 meters.³⁶ (Figure 1.7)

West Chang'an Avenue was extended to Fuxingmen in July 1956 and East Chang'an Avenue was extended to Jianguomen in July 1958. Before that, between Xidan and Fuxingmen were two alleys 5 meters wide and between Dongdan and Jianguomen were many small alleys of similar width. The extension of Chang'an Avenue demolished houses of about 2,500 bays³⁷ in 1956 and 3,000 bays in 1958.³⁸ The width of the new extensions of East and West Chang'an Avenue was 35 meters.³⁹

³⁴ They were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76).

³⁵ Jin Shoushen, "Eastern and Western Chang'an Avenues of Beijing," in *Beijing de huiyi (Beijing Memory)*, (Hong Kong: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1975), 109; see also: Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 161-162.

³⁶ Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 161.

³⁷ Traditionally, buildings in China were measured by the number of bays. For details about the Chinese system of construction and measurement, see Liang Si-cheng, *Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture* (Cambridge Press, 1984).

³⁸ Eastern and Western suburbs of Beijing were already heavily constructed by the mid-1950s, which made the east-west traffic load of the city very heavy. See: Editorial Committee of "Contemporary China" Series, eds. *Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing (Beijing of Contemporary China)*, (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), p. 301.

³⁹ Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 162.

In 1958, as part of the preparation for the PRC's tenth anniversary celebration in 1959, tram rails in the middle of the East Chang'an Avenue were removed and the greenbelts paved. The two lanes were merged to make a wide and open passageway. The central section of Chang'an Avenue between Nanchizi and Nanchangjie (about 1 kilometer long) was expanded to 80 meters, which was called the "Grand Road for Parade" 游行大道.⁴⁰ It was originally planned in 1958 to be expanded to 120-140 meters wide.⁴¹ The 391.9-meter-long section in front of Tiananmen Gate-tower was paved with granite blocks. White poplars, elms, pine trees, and willows were planted on the roadsides, as well as two rows of elaborate lamp columns. At nightfall, "the lamplights formed two long dragons of endless golden lights" along Chang'an Avenue.⁴²

The speed of the Chang'an Avenue expansion after the mid-1950s was fast. A 1950 map of Beijing shows the two Chang'an Avenues in similar condition as they were in a 1926 map. In a 1957 map, however, the western extension of Chang'an Avenue already reached as far as Shijingshan, which is the contemporary west end of the E-W axis of Beijing; the eastern section remained almost the same length as the pre-1949 condition, leaving a very unbalanced image of Chang'an Avenue on different sides of the N-S axis. But a balanced image of Chang'an Avenue would soon be achieved. In a 1972 map, the eastern extension of Chang'an Avenue reached far enough to match its western counterpart, making Chang'an Avenue a true axis for the entire city. (Figure 1.8) As early

⁴⁰ Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 161-162.

⁴¹ Wang Jun, 292.

⁴² Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushinian*, 162.

as 1966, Chang'an Avenue reached its total length of 40,000 meters from Tongxian Country in the east to the Shijingshan District in the west.⁴³

With Chang'an Avenue cutting through the entire urban area of Beijing and expanding in both length and width, crossing Chang'an Avenue became a problem. Before the late 1970s, the crossing of Chang'an Avenue was on the same level as the street ground without special design. After that, the crossing was carefully planned and controlled. Bridges and tunnels (including subway station tunnels) were built to make Chang'an Avenue an unblocked thoroughfare.⁴⁴ For Chang'an Avenue Proper, however, no bridge was built to obstruct the grand view of the parading passageway. No ground passing is allowed along the "Grand Road for Parade" between Nanchizi and Nanchangjie. Pedestrians have to walk through the tunnels and vehicles have to run on detours in order to pass Chang'an Avenue at its central section. Along Chang'an Avenue Proper, no stopping or left turns are allowed for vehicles. There are only a few crossing pedestrian lanes. People often need to walk a long distance in order to pass Chang'an Avenue.⁴⁵

From 1998 to 1999, comprehensive renovation was made to Chang'an Avenue for the 50th anniversary of the PRC. The section between Dongdan and Jianguomen was

⁴³ Editorial Committee of "Contemporary China" Series, eds. *Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing (Beijing of Contemporary China)*, (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), 301.

⁴⁴ Bridges at Fuxingmen and Jianguomen were built in 1979; Dabeyao Bridge was built in 1986; tunnels to the north of Tian'anmen Square were built in 1987; Gongzhufen Bridge was built in 1994; Muxidi Bridge was built in 1995; and pedestrian bridges and tunnels were built along Chang'an Avenue since the 1990s. See: Beijingshi guihua weiyuanhui, Beijing chengshi guihua xuehui, and Beijingshi jianzhu sheji yanjiuyuan jianzhu chuanguo zazhishe, eds., *Chang'anjie: guoqu, xianzai, weilai (Chang'an Boulevard: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow)* (Beijing: Jixie gongye chubanshe, 2004), 134.

⁴⁵ The knowledge about rules to pass Chang'an Avenue was mainly from my personal experience in Beijing and conversations with taxi drivers during late 1990s to present. I have not found the official code about traffic control in Beijing yet.

widened from 35 meters to 50 meters, 30 meters for motor vehicles and 7 meters on both sides for non-motor vehicles, with 3 meter interval belts. Along Chang'an Avenue Proper, pedestrian lanes on both sides were expanded to 6 meters wide, and along Chang'an Avenue Extensions all the pedestrian lanes were expanded to 5 meters wide. The footpaths of the Historical Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square were paved with granite; and the footpaths from Xidan to Gongzhufen and from Dongdan to Dabeyao were paved with colorful concrete tiles. The entire Tiananmen Square was paved with granite tiles, and two green areas of 30 meters by 160 meters were built on the east and west sides of the square. Pipes and wires were laid underground. Traffic signs, advertisement boards, shops, and dustbins were reorganized, rectified, and renovated, green areas were increased, and benches were added along Chang'an Avenue. After the completion of the renovation project at the time of the 50th anniversary on October 1 1999, it was claimed that "Chang'an Avenue became unprecedentedly more beautiful and tidy."⁴⁶

The Planning of Chang'an Avenue

Although the two Chang'an Avenues were united almost immediately after the fall of the Qing Empire, the formal planning aimed to reshape Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square was carried out only after the founding of the PRC. The planning of Chang'an Avenue can be divided into four major stages: 1950s, 1960s-1970s, 1980s-

⁴⁶ *Chang'an jie*, 134-35.

1990s, and the early 21st century. In general, from the earliest to the latest stage, the political elements in the planning became weaker and weaker, while more and more attention was given to the cultural dimension. Function of the avenue was always a focus in planning of every stage; however, the way function was defined differed in each period – political, cultural, humanitarian, environmentalist, etc. On the other hand, economy was never mentioned in planning of any stage, although commercial drive became more and more crucial for the development of Chang'an Avenue since the 1980s.

The planning of Chang'an Avenue started in late 1949, the year when the People's Republic was founded, and early 1950, the same year when the issue of Beijing's dominating axis was being discussed. It was first raised by the Soviet specialists, who argued that development of the new government center should be lined along Chang'an Avenue with Tiananmen Square as its focal spot. Liang and Chen were among the Chinese architects and scholars who were against such a plan. New buildings for the different branches of the new communist government, for instance, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Textile Industry, Ministry of Fuel, and Ministry of Foreign Trade, were constructed on Chang'an Avenue in 1951. One of the major arguments for such a decision was that the former training ground for the foreign troops in the concession area on East Chang'an Avenue was the only unoccupied space in the Old City.⁴⁷ This explanation, however, did not answer why the new government center had to be located in the heart of the Old City, which was exactly the same question Liang and Chen asked

⁴⁷ *Chang'an jie*, 48.

and argued otherwise. The other question is: was there really no other unoccupied space in the Old City?

As shown in the previous section of this chapter, the main motivation for the development of Chang'an Avenue instead of construction of a new center outside of the Old City must be ideological rather than practical. Drawings from the 1950 Soviet plan shows that all the new buildings they proposed were located on the south side of the avenue near Tiananmen Square. (Figure 1.9) Most of the new buildings for the tenth anniversary in late 1950s were located on the north side of the avenue, which gave Chang'an Avenue high potential to be developed into a major city showcase with monumental buildings on both sides. The width of the road redline was planned to be 100-110 meters wide, which would allow airplanes to be able to take off or land on Chang'an Avenue during time of emergency. The preparation for war was still a major task for architects and urban planners in China in 1950s. Other than the construction of the government office buildings in the early 1950s and monuments for the tenth anniversary later in the 1950s along Chang'an Avenue, the length of the avenue was also extended.⁴⁸ (Figure 1.10)

The second Chang'an Avenue planning was carried out in 1964. This is the first time that Chang'an Avenue proper – from Fuxingmen in the west to Jianguomen in the east – was planned comprehensively as one urban unit. The entire avenue was lined with structures on both sides. Most of them were official and cultural complexes with some commercial and service buildings located predominantly on the east side. (Figure 1.11)

⁴⁸ See previous sections in this chapter for details.

The original motivation for this round of Chang'an Avenue planning, however, was to fill the vacant spaces left by the two unrealized anniversary projects in 1959. As planned in 1958, most monuments for the tenth anniversary of PRC would be constructed on Chang'an Avenue and its extensions: the Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, the Hotel of Nationalities,⁴⁹ the Military Museum, the National Theatre, the Science and Technology Hall, and Xidan Department Store.⁵⁰ The latter two were among those not completed as planned. The old buildings on these sites, one on the east side of the Fangjin Alley (方巾巷) at the eastern end of East Chang'an Avenue, the other at the northeast corner of Xidan on West Chang'an Avenue, however, were cleared away. In order to fill the empty space on the avenue, six major architectural and urban planning units in Beijing – Beijing City Planning Bureau, Beijing Institute of Architectural Design, Institute of Industrial Building Design, Tsinghua University, Research Institute of Architectural Science, and Beijing Industrial University – were invited by the municipal government to prepare the planning, chaired by vice mayor Wan Li. Experts from all over the country were called on to review the plans. Finally, a comprehensive planning design by Zhao Shen, Yang Tingbao, Lin Keming, Chen Zhi, Wang Yuanpei, and all the six units mentioned above was submitted to the municipal government.⁵¹

The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. It is sufficient for now just to point out that the issue of architectural consistency along

⁴⁹ The Hotel of Nationalities was added later.

⁵⁰ "Guanyu guoqing gongcheng de huibao tigang (Draft report on the anniversary projects)," BMA: 47-1-70.

⁵¹ *Chang'anjie*, 78.

Chang'an Avenue was first raised in this planning. Not only was the entire Chang'an Avenue proper now considered as one single unit for urban development – the redline for the planning area covered both sides of the avenue from Fuxingmen to Jianguomen – but also the guiding principles for the planning emphasized the necessity for a unified urban space along Chang'an Avenue. It was required that arrangement of buildings along Chang'an Avenue should be “continuous, rhythmic, and complete (连续性, 节奏性和完整性),” and the skyline of the avenue's elevation should be “simple and clear (简单, 整齐).” The heights of buildings along Chang'an Avenue should be above 30 meters but below 40 meters. Sharp height changes should be avoided with the exception of four points: Dongdan, Xidan, Fuxingmen, and Jianguomen. All of these are major intersections on the avenue and the latter two are the start and end points of Chang'an Avenue proper. Other guiding principles in the 1964 planning state that Chang'an Avenue as a whole should show “grandeur, beauty, and modernization,” and that “nationalization should be made on the basis of modernization and absorb the valuable experiences no matter foreign or Chinese, ancient or modern to get the buildings simple, decent and bright.”⁵² The relationship between Chang'an Avenue and the main north-south axis was also specified. One of the guiding principles stated that there should not be too many other north-south axes intersecting with Chang'an Avenue in order to keep the status of the main axis through Tiananmen Square.

The third Chang'an Avenue planning in the 1980s and 1990s was part of the general planning of the entire Beijing city. In 1982, a new “Master Plan for the Municipal

⁵² *Chang'an jie*, 78-79.

Construction of Beijing 北京城市建设总体规划方案” was made, which was approved by the CCP central committee and State Council in July 1983. In the spring of 1984, the Capital Planning and Construction Committee convoked the leading units in the field, including the Architectural Design Institute of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, Urban Planning Institute of China, Architecture Department of Tsinghua University, Architecture Department of Beijing Industrial University, Architecture Department of Beijing Architectural Engineering College, Beijing Urban Planning Institute, and Beijing Institute of Architectural Design and Research, to compile a new master plan in order to meet the requirements of the 1982 scheme under the new situation. Experts and professors from various fields, such as city planning, architectural design, historical preservation, and sculptural art, were invited for the revision and combination of the schemes. The comprehensive plan was released in December 1985. In August 1985, the “Height Limitation Scheme for Buildings in Beijing 北京市建筑高度控制方案” was enacted by Capital Planning and Construction Committee 首都规划建设委员会 and Beijing City Planning Bureau 北京市规划管理局. The future of Chang’an Avenue as described in these schemes was not very different from the 1964 plan. However, some general ideas in the previous plan were specified. Three secondary north-south axes was planned to intersect Chang’an Avenue and parallel the main axis. They were located at the Xinhuaamen and Cultural Palace of Nationalities on West Chang’an Avenue and the Beijing Railway Station on East Chang’an Avenue respectively. These schemes also offered more details on the control of building height along Chang’an Avenue. The height of buildings between Xidan and Dongdan should not exceed 30

meters and buildings west of Xidan and east from Dongdan should not be higher than 45 meters. Four transportation squares were envisioned to be constructed at Dongdan, Xidan, Jianguomen and Fuxingmen, and the subway from Jianguomen to Fuxingmen was required to be completed as soon as possible.⁵³ (Figure 1.12)

Also in August 1985, a report on the planning scheme of Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue was submitted to the CCP Central Committee and the State Council. A major change from previous Chang'an Avenue planning in the schemes of the 1980s was the emphasis on civic life and commercial service on Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue. Large-area green fields were envisioned to cover the grounds near or around Ziwei Palace, Dongdan Park, Beijing Hotel, Xinhuaamen, Xidan, Cultural Palace of Nationalities, the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History. There should be greenery space between every two buildings and green areas should be located evenly along Chang'an Avenue. These schemes also required that the future Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue should be both grand and solemn, and convenient for the living, sight-seeing, and resting of the people. Commercial and service facilities would be arranged at the points on Chang'an Avenue crossing with Qianmen, Wangfujing, and Xidan. The ground floor of the buildings along Chang'an Avenue would be open to the public. The underground area to the north of the Tiananmen Square would be used as parking lots, small shops and service facilities. More service facilities would be provided on the pedestrian lanes of Chang'an Avenue.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Chang'an jie*, 88-90.

⁵⁴ Dong Guangqi, 400-404 ; *Chang'an jie*, 90.

Another new direction in the 1980s' schemes was the preservation of the "style of old capital 古都风貌." Beijing was defined as the political and cultural center for all China. The reply to the 1982 scheme by the CCP central committee and the State Council says, "Beijing is the capital of our country and a renowned city of historical cultures. Urban construction in Beijing should reflect the historical cultures of the Chinese Nationality, the revolutionary tradition, and the unique style of a socialist capital. Historical cultures should be continued and developed, and new creations should be encouraged."⁵⁵

Stylistically, the 1985 Chang'an Avenue planning made a dramatic change from both the 1949-1950 Soviet plan and the 1964 comprehensive plan. While Chang'an Avenue in the two previous plans was framed mainly by long straight blocks, in the 1985 plan, they were mostly replaced by square building complexes with central courtyards. (Figure 1.13) The latter was advocated strongly by Liang Sicheng and the Tsinghua University teams in every round but somehow suppressed before. Such a stylistic change signals the recognition of Liang's approach for the reconstruction of Beijing. It might also have something to do with the rise of historical preservation in the 1980s, for which Liang would have been an enthusiastic supporter if he were still alive.

In 1991, due to the approach of the new century and the opening of the second 50-year planning of the Chinese capital, a new revision to the 1983 master plan was made. As Deng Xiaoping's policy of "socialist market economy" replaced the previous planned economy and further took root in the 1990s, new directions in city planning were

⁵⁵ *Chang'an jie*, 88.

reflected in the 1991 revision. Foreign investment and financial organizations were allowed to appear on Chang'an Avenue. In addition to the previous definition of Beijing as the "political and cultural center," "world-wide famous historical capital and modern international metropolis" became the official language to describe the character of the city.⁵⁶

The fourth Chang'an Avenue planning in 2002 was the most comprehensive study of the avenue so far, and covered the delineation of its historical development, the analysis of its present condition, and the preparation of planning concepts for its future development. Like the third Chang'an Avenue planning in the 1980s and 1990s, the task was initiated by the Capital Planning and Construction Committee and divided among several leading institutes in the field. Six architectural and urban planning institutes in Beijing took part in the project: Architecture Department of Tsinghua University, Architecture Department of Beijing Industrial University, Architecture Department of Beijing Architectural Engineering College, Beijing Institute of Architectural Design and Research, Beijing Urban Planning Institute, and Beijing Municipal Design Institute. Major participants were almost exactly the same as in the 1980s' planning.

Like the planning of Chang'an Avenue in the 1950s and 1960s, the motivation for the project in the 21st century was to fill the blanks on Chang'an Avenue. According to the "Preface" by the Beijing Urban Planning Committee in the book *Chang'an Boulevard: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* – a major product of the 2002 project – the municipal leaders of Beijing had raised the question of how to complete the ten unoccupied sites

⁵⁶ *Chang'an jie*, 108.

along Chang'an Avenue with strategic vision. "This is to say," the Committee interpreted, "the leaders were requesting us to complete Chang'an Avenue with buildings on both sides before 2009." The preface also said that 90% of the sites had their project decided. That is to say, the open spaces along Chang'an Avenue were ready for filling even when people do not know what was to be built. The true task here was to complete Chang'an Avenue. This information was confirmed in the "Editor's Words" in the same book, which said, "To prepare the city for the 29th Olympic Game in 2008 and the 60th anniversary of the founding of PRC, Beijing municipal government endorsed Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square as the major construction projects in the capital. The municipal government proposed that strategies on how to fill the ten unoccupied sites along Chang'an Avenue need to be studied."⁵⁷ This was the starting point of the 2002 project of the Chang'an Avenue planning. The editor also said, "We hope to represent perfectly and exactly the Beijing municipal leaders' intentions on the future of Chang'an Avenue and nearly a hundred project participants' long-time hard work in this book."⁵⁸ (Figure 1.14)

The significant status of Chang'an Avenue for Beijing and China was fully acknowledged in the report of the 2002 project. Chang'an Avenue was named the "No. 1 Avenue in China."⁵⁹ The "Editor's Words" stated, "Chang'an Avenue is the east-west axis of the Beijing city. It has played an important and special role in the political and cultural activities in China and represented the image of the Chinese capital and the

⁵⁷ *Chang'an jie*, 8-10.

⁵⁸ The text of the book is in both Chinese and English. This information, however, was not translated into English.

⁵⁹ *Chang'an jie*, 6.

whole country.”⁶⁰ Although Chang’an Avenue was constructed de facto as an east-west axis since the 1950s and its status mentioned in materials from previous documents, the 2002 appraisalment was the clearest statement about the symbolic power this avenue possessed for Beijing and China.

The main body of the report, however, did not discuss the symbolic role of Chang’an Avenue. Most of the present condition analysis and future development planning in the book was about how to offer a more artistic and functional urban space, more efficient traffic communication, and better service along Chang’an Avenue.

The symbolic significance of Chang’an Avenue, however, was hinted at in the report authors’ assessment of its present conditions and suggestions about its ideal future. In the section “Analysis of architectural functions,” the authors complained that Chang’an Avenue was losing its character as a political and cultural center. There were too many commercial and banking buildings along Chang’an Avenue, and too little cultural and service architecture.⁶¹ The report also suggested reducing commercial advertisement boards on Chang’an Avenue and replacing them with those for public benefit and cultural affairs.⁶² Individual buildings were also supposed to have symbolic prominent images. The authors of the report frequently used the word “landscape marker” 景观标志点 in the description or analysis of Chang’an Avenue architecture or space. For a building to have a “strong nature of landscape marker” 景观标志性强 was a positive assessment in the report.

⁶⁰ *Chang’anjie*, 10.

⁶¹ *Chang’anjie*, 150.

⁶² *Chang’anjie*, 218.

Compared to previous Chang'an Avenue planning, the guidelines for future development in the 2002 project added two principles that reflect the new orientation/fashion in Chinese architecture in the 21st century. They are the environment principle 环境原则 and the humanism principle 人本原则.⁶³ On a theoretical level, the environment principle aimed to improve the natural environment through sustainable design and ecological balance in urban development; the humanism principle required more consideration of the lives of common people instead of state ideology. On the operational level, for the environment principle the 2002 plan suggested expanding green fields and adding more water surface along Chang'an Avenue; for the humanism principle, it suggested opening the ground floors of all buildings along Chang'an Avenue to the public so that common folk could use the service facilities, for instance, toilets and lobbies, of these buildings. The 2002 plan also suggested adding more public toilets, seats and benches, and souvenir pavilions along the pedestrian lanes of the avenue in order to provide more service and comfort for the people.

The other four principles, which had been fully or partly emphasized in previous planning, include the principles of existing condition, preservation, function, and art. The principle of existing condition admitted that there were both great achievements and problems in the previous 50 years of Chang'an Avenue construction, on which the future development should be based. The principle of function emphasized the significant role of Chang'an Avenue – together with Tiananmen Square – as the political and cultural center of the capital and evoked improvement of service for both the people and the

⁶³ *Chang'an jie*, 247.

central government. The principle of preservation reiterated the obligation for the protection and reutilization of historical buildings and neighborhoods, and the principle of art claimed that as the “No. 1 Boulevard of China,” Chang’an Avenue should be in no way inferior to any other great avenues in the capitals in the world. It should be constructed to be functionally sound and to have convenient communication, modern facilities, a beautiful and splendid image, pleasurable space and human scale, rich cultural content, deep traditional flavor, and unique Chinese character.⁶⁴

The most detailed design in the 2002 Chang’an Avenue planning was the “central office district 中央办公区” at the south side of West Chang’an Avenue. This plan, however, reflects the controversy about the status of Chang’an Avenue as the east-west axis of Beijing and the compromise made in the final report of the 2002 project. In the 1990s, there were two different views about the east-west axis of the Chinese capital. One view, represented by Chen Gan, maintained that Chang’an Avenue already was and still should be constructed as the east-west axis of the city;⁶⁵ the other view, represented by architect Zhao Dongri, claimed that a “real” east-west axis of Beijing should be constructed to the south side of the Chang’an Avenue, which needed to have monuments directly on the axis, like the ancient north-south axis with monuments Tiananmen Gate-tower and Forbidden City, instead of an empty avenue with monuments lined on its sides. What Zhao proposed in the 1990s for the east-west axis of Beijing was the entire

⁶⁴ *Chang’anjie*, 247.

⁶⁵ Gao Han, “Yun dan bi tian ru xi – huiyi zhangxiong chen gan de ruogan pianduan (Fragment memories about my elder brother Chen Gan),” in *Jinghua daisi lu-Chen Gan wenji* (A Collection of Chen Gan’s Writings) (Beijing: Beijingshi chengshi guihua sheji yanjiuyuan, 1996), 222. The controversy on Beijing’s axes will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

southern area of the Chang'an Avenue, with the Tiananmen Square as the intersection of the east-west and north-south axes. The east-west axis of monuments in Zhao's proposal extended to the west from the Great Hall of the People on the west side of Tiananmen Square and to the east from the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History on the east of the square.⁶⁶ In the 2002 plan, the central office district has its own axis with monuments and water surfaces directly on it. It also started from the Great Hall of the People with the nearly completed National Grand Theatre in the second position on the axis. This axis, however, covered only the west part of Zhao's original proposal in the 1990s.

Zhao was an old generation architect from the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design and Research, one of the major participating institutes of the 2002 project. His voice is still important in the architectural field of China. However, as the status of Chang'an Avenue became more and more significant in the urban fabric of Beijing, his voice only weakly reverberated in the 2002 final report. In the general plan, Chang'an Avenue appeared as the unchallenged east-west axis of the entire city.

In spite of the changes in ideology and guiding principle in the Chang'an Avenue planning from 1949 to early 2000s, the motivation for the development of Chang'an Avenue remained the same – to fill the “gaps.” The 1949 Soviet plan was to fill the gaps around the former concession area, the 1964 planning was to fill the two gaps left by the anniversary projects in 1959, and the 2002 project was to fill the “last” ten gaps on Chang'an Avenue. It seems that new gaps were produced as soon as old gaps were filled.

⁶⁶ Zho Dongri, “Beijing tian'anmen guangchang dongxi diqu guihua yu jianshe (Planning and construction in the Tiananmen Square area in Beijing),” In *JZXB*, 1993/1. The controversy on Beijing's axes will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

The “gaps,” I argue, were more conceptual than physical. They were produced precisely by the changing ideologies and guiding principles – the discrepancies in the ideal “completions” of different periods. The gaps were also about public façade – a concept imported from the West when the Chinese came up with the issue of architectural modernity.

The Changes of Chang’an Avenue Façades

Façade as the main public image for a building was foreign to traditional Chinese architecture, whose central space was open courtyards instead of built structures. Enclosed by walls from all sides, the only structure on a street indicating the grade of a building complex or status of the dwellers inside was the main gate, usually located in the south walls of a building compound. The individual buildings that defined the courtyards all had a “face”⁶⁷ and a “back.” The “face” had large windows and doors and was often elaborately decorated, while the “back” was usually just a plain solid wall, sometimes with small high windows in the upper part. The “face” was almost always facing inward to the courtyard, leaving the “back” to the public urban space. (Figure 1.15)

In traditional Chinese architectural drawings, buildings were represented by either sections or axonometric drawings but rarely elevations.⁶⁸ The earliest extant drawings of

⁶⁷ For a detailed discussion on “face” and façade in traditional Chinese architecture, see: Wu Hung, “Face of Authority: Tian’anmen and Mao’s Tian’anmen Portrait,” in *Remaking Beijing: Tian’anmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 51-68.

⁶⁸ An exception would be the pailou or paifang, which was a freestanding memorial archway indicating a significant passage or boundary. It was also used in commercial architecture during the imperial time with title of the business inscribed in its horizontal board.

architectural façade in China were those of the Western Buildings (Xiyanglou 西洋楼) in the Yuanmingyuan Garden, one of the major imperial summer palaces for Qing emperors. Thus for China, the concept of using façades in public space to indicate architectural significance was mostly a modern product.

Chang'an Avenue façades before 1949

Historical Chang'an Avenue before 1949 was a street mainly framed by walls. During the Ming-Qing dynasties before 1860, the central section was framed by the walls of the Imperial City to the north and the walls of the various government ministries to the south. For Historical East Chang'an Avenue and Historical West Chang'an Avenue, on both sides were walled residential compounds, punctuated by business shop-fronts and temples. The avenue façades were low and predominantly one-story.

After the Second Opium War in 1860, foreign embassies started to be constructed around the area of Dong Jiaomin-xiang to the south of Historical East Chang'an Avenue. They were mostly one or two-story masonry buildings within walled quarters. Although designed and built mainly by Westerners, the main façades of these buildings all faced inward, turning their backs to public urban spaces following the Chinese convention. In 1901, after the "Boxers Uprising," the entire area between the Historical East Chang'an Avenue and the south Inner City walls became foreign concessions, as well as part of the modern day Tiananmen Square. This 120 hectares "legation quarter" was walled and guarded like a medieval castle.⁶⁹ (Figure 1.16) It was a city inside of a city, physically

⁶⁹ The Map of Old Peiking Folklore 老北京风俗地图, 1936.

and administratively. Inside of the legation quarter, there were embassies, residences, clubs, post offices, and military camps. The peripheries were cleared as military drill grounds for foreign troops and polo fields for Westerners. Surrounded by large areas of open space, Historical East Chang'an Avenue totally lost its façades.⁷⁰ (Figure 1.17)

During the ROC era (1912-1949), some multi-story buildings were constructed on Historical Chang'an Avenue, for instance, the Capital Municipal Government Office 京都市政公所 on the other side of the avenue in front of Zhongnanhai and the Beijing Hotel of 1917 on the north side of Historical East Chang'an Avenue. The entire Historical Chang'an Avenue, however, was still dominated by walls and one-story buildings. The few tall colonial-style facades rose above the continuity of horizontal traditional Chinese red and grey walls like “crane standing among chickens.” As Zhongnanhai became the presidential seat in 1912, the former pavilion Baoyuelou inside of the former imperial garden became an entrance façade on Chang'an Avenue. At the same time, a long unbroken wall with Western baroque brick patterns was constructed along the south side of the avenue to block the shabby courtyard dwellings from the view of the Republican leaders. Historical West Chang'an Avenue lost a large section of its former façade too. (Figure 1.18)

Other major changes of the Chang'an Avenue facades after 1911 had something to do with the opening of the previous forbidden areas around the T-shaped Imperial Tiananmen Square. As the walls defining the Tiananmen Square Groups were demolished, Tiananmen Gate-tower, the former gate-tower to the Imperial City and just

⁷⁰ Zhang Fuhe, 62-87.

one of the many gates along the north-south axis of Beijing, became a façade. Chang'an Avenue façades as a whole, however, remained low and fragmented throughout the ROC era. (Figure 1.19)

Chang'an Avenue façades after 1949 and the national identity of New China

It was during the People's Republic era that Chang'an Avenue started to be conceived as an urban thoroughfare filled by monumental façades. As discussed in the previous section on the "planning of Chang'an Avenue," for almost every major PRC anniversaries – tenth anniversary in 1959, 20th anniversary in 1969, fortieth anniversary in 1989, fiftieth anniversary in 1999, and now sixtieth anniversary in 2009, major planning on Chang'an Avenue was carried out with the very same aim to "relatively complete Chang'an Avenue." By "completing," it means to fill the gaps among previously finished monumental façades and to replace low walls of traditional courtyards with monumental buildings. In about half a century, Chang'an Avenue was changed from a fragmented avenue mainly lined with traditional courtyard residences into a long straight thoroughfare framed by monumental symmetrical façades.

The changes of Chang'an Avenue façades during the PRC era reflect the shifts of China's national identity as defined by the communist regime, from a member of the Socialist Bloc in the 1950s and 1960s, to a Third World developing country in the 1970s and 1980s, and finally as a rising regional power guided with nationalist ideologies and fueled by capitalist zeal since the 1990s. Each period left its own façades along Chang'an Avenue. When the multi-floor buildings were filled into the gaps among the one-story

residential courtyards, these one-story areas became new gaps. As height of buildings along Chang'an Avenue kept rising, each period filled old gaps and produced new gaps, until one day laws were passed to set a height control. In the end, the façades of Chang'an Avenue were like two long screens, simultaneously displaying China's changing national identity as represented in different architectural styles. (Figure 1.20, 1.21, 1.22)

1950s – 1960s

The first large gap along Chang'an Avenue to be filled after 1949 was the former empty drill grounds and polo field around the concession area. In 1951, office buildings of three to four stories for the Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Textile Industry, Ministry of Fuel, Ministry of Light Industry, and Ministry of Foreign Trade were constructed on the open grounds along the south side of East Chang'an Avenue Proper. In 1953-54, the eight-story West Building of the Beijing Hotel was added to the 1917 Middle Building on the north side of East Chang'an Avenue Proper. In 1958-59, Beijing Railway Station was built to the south of the East Chang'an Avenue Proper. However, located in a back street, its façade was not open to Chang'an Avenue until the 1990s. On the north side of West Chang'an Avenue Proper, in 1956-58 was built the Telegraph Service Center⁷¹ and in 1958-59 the Cultural Palace of Nationalities⁷² and the Nationality Hotel. Around the Tiananmen Square area, in 1952-58 was built the Monument to People's Heroes in the center of the square, and in 1958-59 the Great Hall of the People⁷³

⁷¹ Designed by Lin Leyi (1917-1989).

⁷² Designed by Zhang Bo and Sun Peiyao.

⁷³ Designed by Zhang Bo (1911-1999) and Zhu Zhaoxue (scheme design: Zhao Dongri, Shen Qi).

on the west side and the Museum of Chinese History and Revolution⁷⁴ on the east side of the square. On West Chang'an Avenue Extension, the Central Broadcast Building⁷⁵ was built in 1957 on the south side and the Military Museum⁷⁶ was built in 1958-59 on the north side. No large-scale building was constructed on Chang'an Avenue during the 1960s.

Thus, during this period, façade building on Chang'an Avenue concentrated on the south side of East Chang'an Avenue Proper and the north side of the West Chang'an Avenue Proper. The entire Chang'an Avenue façades, however, were only sporadically punctuated by multi-layer buildings. The majority of areas on both sides were covered by traditional courtyards (Figure 1.20).

Chinese architecture in the 1950s generally followed the Soviet policy known as “socialist content, national form.” In architectural theory, the exact meaning of this policy, especially the first part on content, was never clear. Some understood “content” as function; others interpreted it as ideology in art.⁷⁷ In practice, however, the style associated with “socialist content” was not ambiguous. It was the Neo-Classical style sponsored by the Soviet government during the Stalinist Era, which combined modern concrete main structure with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muscovite architectural elements and revolutionary motifs,⁷⁸ characterized by a symmetrical plan, three or five

⁷⁴ Designed by Zhang Kaiji (1912-).

⁷⁵ Designed by Yan Xinghua (1921-).

⁷⁶ Designed by Ouyang Can and Wu Guozhen.

⁷⁷ More detailed discussion on the architectural policies in the 1950s will be provided in Chapter Two. See also: Zou Denong, *Zhongguo xiandai jianzhushi* (Modern Chinese Architecture) (Tianjin: Tianjin Science and Technology Press, 2001), 144-145.

⁷⁸ William Craft Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 487-491.

horizontal sections in elevation, and the soaring central bell tower.⁷⁹ The second part of the policy was much more concrete, but different interpretations of “national form” resulted in diverse architectural forms from full-size traditional big roofs to decorative motifs only noticeable close up. According to Lowell Dittmer, national identity was an amalgam of “fitting in” and “standing out.” In order to acquire a fully realized identity, one had to first identify oneself with the selected reference group of significant others, then develop some characteristics that will impart a sense of distinctiveness and integrity.⁸⁰ Architecture in the early years of the People’s Republic “fit into” the reference group of the Socialist Bloc by adopting the Communist Neo-classicism,⁸¹ and “stood out” with its distinctive Chinese character by applying its traditional forms or motifs.

Starting from Tiananmen Square, the first façade to be seen on Chang’an Avenue in the 1950s was the Telegraph Service Center. (Figure 1.23) Although both the plan and the main façade on Chang’an Avenue were highly symmetrical, and there was a clock tower in the central part of the three horizontal sections, the straight horizontal and vertical elements and the rhythmic arrangement of large windows on the elevation made this building much lighter than the mainstream Soviet style of the Stalinist Era. It was considered a successful step in the exploration of a “Chinese Modern Style.”⁸²

Contrasting sharply with the Telegraph Service Center was the Soviet style Central

⁷⁹ Chinese architects gave such Soviet style buildings a bantering name “toad style (hamashi)” because their plans resemble a toad looked from above.

⁸⁰ Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 94.

⁸¹ Luo Xiaowei, ed., *Waiguo jinxiandai jianzhushi* (History of Non-Chinese Modern Architecture) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1982), 138.

⁸² Zou Denong, 191.

Broadcast Building. (Figure 1.24) As one of the 156 Soviet-aided projects, influence from the “socialist elder brother” on this building was more than technological design and equipment support, although documents from the time stated that Chinese architects were responsible for design and the Soviet engineers were only responsible for technological issues. This building had basic characteristics of the Soviet monumental style. The top of the tower was a simplified Western lantern although here instead of crowning a dome, it was on top of the flat roof. The sculptural decoration on the walls, however, was considerably reduced in contrast to examples from Russia.

If such diversities in architectural style – modernism, Soviet, and traditional Chinese revivalism⁸³ – indicated the ambiguity or dilemma of national identity in the transitional years of the PRC, the “Ten Great Buildings” in 1958-59 for the tenth anniversary of the PRC assured people that, finally, an official style unmistakably representing the national identity of New China had been achieved. Six of these “Ten Great Buildings” had their monumental facades facing Chang’an Avenue. Some of them were predominantly Soviet; some had more traditional Chinese architectural motifs; but they all tried to make a compromise by taking elements from both.

The Military Museum was predominantly a Soviet style building. The main façade was divided into five sections horizontally. (Figure 1.25) The central section is the tallest part with a spire on top of it, raising a gigantic Chinese army emblem. The two sections next to the central tower were lower and the two end sections were still lower,

⁸³ Chinese revivalist buildings could not be found on Chang’an Avenue in early 1950s. However, there were many elsewhere in the capital, for example: the Official Living Quarters at Di’anmen, 1954, by Chen Deng’ao; the Office Buildings for Four Ministries and One Committee at Sanlihe, 1952-55, by Zhang Kaiji. See: *Zhongguo xiandai meishu quanji: jianzhu yishu 1-4 (Modern Chinese Art: Architecture vol. 1-4)*, (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1998), vol. 2, 4-5; vol. 4, 38-39.

giving the general outline a pyramidal shape. The central and end sections protruded and the two sections in between receded, making the sculptural effect of the elevation more dramatic with deep shadows playing on the walls. Thus, at first sight, the Military Museum looked very similar to the Central Broadcast Building some 2500 meters to the east. On close observation, however, many traditional Chinese motifs could be found in the Military Museum façade. The protruding eaves on top of each section were covered with yellow glazed tiles; and the three-doorway entrance was a simplified form of the traditional memorial archway (pailou), standing seemingly detached from the main structure.

The Cultural Palace of Nationalities employed more Chinese architectural motifs and materials. (Figure 1.26) The central tower was a 13-story high-rise topped by a pavilion with double-eave pointed roofs (chongyan cuanjian 重檐攒尖) covered by blue-green glazed tiles. Four smaller pavilions with roofs in the same style surrounded the central pavilion at four corners on lower level. The lower sections were also topped by sloping roofs with glazed tiles of the same color. The top floor of the sections flanking the central tower was treated like the traditional veranda (lang 廊) with members imitating the columns, beams, and qieti (longitudinal bracket 雀替) in an ancient wooden structure. In 1954, Liang Sicheng, the most famous 20th-century Chinese architectural historian, proposed in a lecture that traditional Chinese architectural “forms” (motifs) and “grammars” (principles) could be employed to fulfill any contemporary needs, illustrated

by two drawings he made.⁸⁴ For some scholars, this building fulfilled Liang's vision of combining high-rise and national form.⁸⁵ The plan, however, resembled a typical Soviet five-section design, not to mention the five horizontal divisions on the main façade with the soaring central tower, replaced here by a raised Chinese pavilion. Indeed, the composition of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, in both plan and elevation, was not very different from that of the Military Museum.

Resting stylistically between the Military Museum and the Cultural Palace of Nationalities were the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, which were neither overtly Soviet nor explicitly Chinese in character. (Figure 1.27, 1.28) They were compromises. There were neither upturned big Chinese roofs nor a soaring Soviet towers. However, both the Great Hall and the Museum had yellow glazed tiles covering the eaves, and national motifs in decoration could be observed under the eaves on the exterior walls and in the interior designs. The overall proportion of the façades remained Western. The main façade of both the Great Hall and the Museum could be divided into five horizontal sections with the center and corner ones protruding and the two in between receding, just like the Military Museum. The distance between the gigantic columns of the porch in the main eastern façade of the Great Hall was not identical. It decreased from the center towards the sides, following the principle of traditional Chinese timber structure. However, unlike the bays in traditional Chinese timber structures, in which the height of a column could not be greater than the

⁸⁴ Liang Sicheng, "Zuguo de jianzhu (Architecture of Our Mother-land)", in *Liang Sicheng wenji (4)*, (Beijing: zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1986), 104-158.

⁸⁵ Zou Denong, 239.

distance between adjacent columns (“zhugao buyu jianguang” 柱高不逾间广), in the porch of the Great Hall, the height of the columns was two to three times greater than the intercolumniation – a proportion more akin to Western classical architecture. The Museum of Chinese Revolution and History had courtyards as spatial organizing elements, but they were not arranged in axial relationships as traditional courtyards were. Such a compromised scheme for the most significant two of the “Ten Great Buildings” was not accidental. The designs were carefully chosen. In 1958, a total of 84 plan schemes and 189 elevation schemes were proposed for the Great Hall of the People, among which were traditional big roofs, modern glass boxes, and Soviet style towers.⁸⁶ It was this compromised style that finally was appointed to represent the national identity of New China in the late 1950s for its ability to both “fit into” and “stand out of” the Socialist Bloc.

1970s – 1980s

Only three major façades were added to Chang’an Avenue Proper during the 1970s: the East Building of Beijing Hotel in 1973-74,⁸⁷ the Long-distance Telephone Building in 1976, and the Chairman Mao Memorial in 1976-77. For Chang’an Avenue Extensions, the “diplomatic projects” in 1971-74, including the International Club,⁸⁸ the Beijing Friendship Store, and the Diplomatic Apartments, filled large sections of façade gap on East Chang’an Avenue; and multi-story residential blocks were built on both East and West Chang’an Avenue Extensions. Chang’an Avenue façades during the 1970s as a

⁸⁶ Zou Denong, 231-232.

⁸⁷ Designed by Zhang Bo and Cheng Delan.

⁸⁸ Designed by Ma Guoxin (1942-).

whole, however, were not very different from those at the end of the 1950s except for the flourish of revolutionary red signs and slogans.

During the 1980s, nine more buildings were added to the façades of Chang'an Avenue Proper. Four of them were on West Chang'an Avenue Proper: the National Arts and Crafts Gallery of China in 1985, the Headquarter of People's Bank of China in 1987-90,⁸⁹ the Ticket Center of Air China in 1985-90 on the north side, and the Beijing Concert Hall in 1981-85 on the south side. Five were on East Chang'an Avenue Proper: the Chinese Academy of Social Science in 1980-83, the Dongdan Telephone Exchange Office in 1983-85, and the International Hotel in 1982-87⁹⁰ on the north side, and the Custom Headquarters in 1987-90 and the New Building for Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation in 1987-92 on the south side. On Chang'an Avenue Extensions, new constructions in the 1980s concentrated on the eastern part. Jianguo Hotel in 1980-82⁹¹ and the enormous International Trade Center of China in 1989 were built on the north side, and the Changfu-gong Center in 1989 was built on the south side of the East Chang'an Avenue Extension. On West Chang'an Avenue Extension, in 1988 was built the New CCTV (China Central Television) Center.⁹² Projects of smaller scale and lesser significance were constructed throughout Chang'an Avenue Extensions during 1980s.

During the 1970s-80s, façade-adding was more focused on East Chang'an Avenue. At the end of the 1980s, the northern façade of West Chang'an Avenue Proper

⁸⁹ Designed by Zhou Ru and Wang Yongchen.

⁹⁰ Designed by Lin Leyi and Jiang Zhongjun; Lin was also the architect of the Telegraph Service Center in 1955-57.

⁹¹ Designed by Chen Xuanyuan.

⁹² Designed by Yan Xinghua. Yan was also the architect of the Central Broadcast Building in 1957.

already had enough monumental façades to make the former lower-building areas look like “gaps,” while the southern façade was still dominated by old courtyards. For both northern and southern façades of East Chang’an Avenue Proper, the monumental façades and low buildings were about half and half (Figure 1.21).

The concentration on the construction of East Chang’an Avenue during the 1970s-80s had much to do with the shift of China’s national identity from a member of the Socialist Bloc to a member of the Third World. China’s relationship with Third World developing countries was not initiated in early 1970s. Chinese architects had been working in such Third World countries as Mongolia, Vietnam, North Korea, Nepal, Yemen, and Algeria since 1956 as part of Communist China’s aid, given gratis, to the “brother countries” in the Third World.⁹³ And during the 1960s, more Chinese-aided national projects were constructed in many Third World countries in Asia and Africa.⁹⁴ But before the 1970s, these activities were carried out under the Socialist Bloc’s principle of internationalist duty. China considered itself as a leader of the Third World from the Socialist Bloc whose duty was to export revolution to the Third World countries. Since the 1970s, such a stance had changed. China began to consider itself as a common member of the Third World instead of a leader bringing it to revolution.⁹⁵

As illustrated in the previous section on pre-1949 Chang’an Avenue, East Chang’an Avenue and West Chang’an Avenue had different characters. While West Chang’an Avenue was mainly associated with punishment, military power, and authority,

⁹³ Zou Denong, 285-287.

⁹⁴ Zou Denong, 581-584.

⁹⁵ Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1992), 130. More detailed discussion on the relationship between China and the Third World, see the whole chapter, 121-137.

the historical association of East Chang'an Avenue was more about business, civil power, and celebration. For the PRC authorities, the development of the East Chang'an Avenue was a friendly gesture to show their desire for more connection with the rest of the world, especially the Western World. Indeed, the new façades of the 1970s on East Chang'an Avenue were stylistically very different from their counterparts on West Chang'an Avenue built in the previous decades. All of the 1950s facades facing West Chang'an Avenue were highly symmetrical. Most of them had a monumental entrance, making the main façade grand, serious, and intimidating. The 1970s facades on the Eastern Chang'an Avenue, on the contrary, were mostly asymmetrical. The entrance and porch were about human scale and the overall image was more approachable and relaxed. (Figure 1.29)

All the major façade additions on Eastern Chang'an Avenue in the 1970s had something to do with new diplomatic development of the PRC. The International Club was a service center, which had a theatre, reading rooms, an outdoor swimming pool, other sport facilities, social rooms, and restaurants, for the diplomatic communities around the Jianguomen area; the Diplomatic Apartments were built originally as living quarters for the foreign visitors to rent; and the East Building of the Beijing Hotel was added to the old Beijing Hotel buildings in 1974 to accommodate the rising numbers of foreign visitors and tourists as a result of China's opening to the Western World after her admittance to the United Nations in 1971.⁹⁶

Stylistically, these new façades of diplomatic buildings were more akin to modernism as represented by the International Style prevailing in the world since WWII,

⁹⁶ Zou Denong, 326-328.

which required “regularity rather than axial symmetry, more volume than mass, and no ‘arbitrarily’ applied decoration.”⁹⁷ The ideology behind the concept of a Third World developing country and the ideology behind the concept of membership in the Socialist Bloc were very different. The final aim of a Third World country was to become a modern industrialized developed country while the lofty end of a socialist country is communism. For China in the 1970s, this was not a minor issue. Although in official Chinese propaganda communist revolutionary ideals still occupied the foreground of ideological discourse, in the façades on East Chang’an Avenue this significant shift in national identity could be observed in early 1970s.

In the early 1980s, Chang’an Avenue witnessed the construction of a building designed by an American architect for the first time since the founding of the People’s Republic. Like the Fragrant Hill Hotel completed in the same year by I. M. Pei, Jianguo Hotel was also designed by a Chinese-American architect.⁹⁸ Located on Chang’an Avenue’s eastern extension Jianguomenwai Avenue, Jianguo Hotel copied American Holiday Inn style in both architectural form and hotel management.⁹⁹ Its moderate standard of hospitality, plain design and practical usage of space made it an appropriate guesthouse for a Third World country, and its association with the most developed country in the world indicated the supposed goal of the developing country’s arduous development.

⁹⁷ Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), 20.

⁹⁸ Chen Xuanyuan.

⁹⁹ Zou Denong, 372-373.

After Jianguo Hotel, more and more International Style hotels and high-rise office buildings designed by Western architects appeared on Chang'an Avenue. The scale became more and more grandiose and the international cooperation required became more and more complex. Located on the north side of the East Chang'an Avenue extension Jianguomenwai Avenue, the International Trade Center of China in 1989 occupied a 12-acre site with a total floor area of 420,000 square meters. It had two glass towers of 38 stories and 156 meters high; both housed offices. Other buildings in the complex included a 21-story hotel, two 30-story apartments, an 8,000-square-meter exhibition hall, a 13,000-square-meter shopping center, and a parking garage for 1,200 vehicles. The first stage general scheme design was by Robert Sobel/Emery Roth & Sons Ltd. from the United States, but the successive designs of later stages were done by Nikken Sekkei from Japan and Wong & Ouyang Ltd. from Hong Kong, cooperating with the local Beijing Steel and Iron Design Institute.¹⁰⁰ Its geometric shapes and enormous area of glass curtain walls gave the complex a classic modern character and its twin towers reminded people the World Trade Center in New York. (Figure 1.30)

Buildings along Chang'an Avenue designed by Chinese architects followed this international style trend re-introduced by Western architects in the 1980s. The International Hotel on the north of the East Chang'an Avenue extension Jianguomennei Avenue was a 29-story 104.5-meter high-rise with a clean white exterior and dark grid-like windows;¹⁰¹ the New CCTV (China Central Television) Center on the north side of

¹⁰⁰ *Beijing Ten Prominent Buildings*, (Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 2002), p. 102. See also: Zou Denong, *Modern Chinese Architecture*, p. 592.

¹⁰¹ *Beijing Ten Prominent Buildings*, p. 142.

the Western Chang'an Avenue extension Fuxing Road was a 27-story 112.7-meter high-rise with Corbusian ribbon windows;¹⁰² the Changfu-gong Center on the south of the East Chang'an Avenue extension Jianguomenwai Avenue was a Miesian style 25-story 90-meter high-rise, cooperatively designed by Chinese and Japanese architects.¹⁰³ None of these high-rises was capped with big roof of any format whatever.

The Headquarter of People's Bank of China was located near the western end of Chang'an Avenue proper. The plan and general image of the building mimic *yuanbao* (a gold or silver ingot used as money in dynastic China) and *jubaopen* (treasure bowl that will generate jewels). Both would be considered as feudal and superstitious signs during Mao's time, but now they were both considered as traditional Chinese cultural symbols of prosperity. The People's Bank was the national central bank of China, which strongly justifies such traditional motifs as appropriate symbols for national identity.¹⁰⁴

Stylistically, the juxtaposition of solid walls of raw concrete and uninterrupted shiny glass surfaces was more in tone with the New Brutalism popular in the 1960s in Western countries than with Chinese national identity. (Figure 1.31)

The construction of Chang'an Avenue during the 1980s still focused on its eastern sections as in the 1970s. Most were commercial buildings, either hotel or rental office. Following the historical convention, all the commercial buildings were on the east side of the north-south axis and the ones built on the west side, like the New CCTV Center, were mainly government buildings.

¹⁰² *Beijing Ten Prominent Buildings*, pp. 138-139.

¹⁰³ Zou Denong, *Modern Chinese Architecture*, p. 440.

¹⁰⁴ These symbols were acclaimed as "expressing the character and the spirit of the time of a national bank." See: Zou Denong, *Modern Chinese Architecture*, p. 569.

A deviation from 1980s Chang'an Avenue architecture might be the National Gallery of Art and Craft in 1989. As an official national project, it was located on the north side of West Chang'an Avenue. However, its prominent big sloping roofs, though considerably simplified, made it an exception among the buildings along Chang'an Avenue in the 1980s. Its subsequent experiences signified new directions in the 1990s. Intended as a national museum in the original design, the National Gallery of Art and Craft was later developed into a commercial center with rooms mainly for shopping, entertainment, and rental office space, better known to the people of Beijing as the "Baisheng Shopping Center." A new important commercial center had finally taken root on West Chang'an Avenue although it was by accident. The new exploration in traditional architectural and cultural motifs of this building would be continued in the 1990s. (Figure 1.32)

1990s and the Early 21st Century

The Chang'an Avenue façades experienced total transformation in the last one and a half decades. Twelve more buildings were added to West Chang'an Avenue Proper: the Huanan Building in 1991, the Propaganda Department of CCPCC (CCP Central Committee) in 1993, the Chinese Industrial and Commercial Bank in 1994-98, the Beijing Book Building in 1994-98, and the Xidan Cultural Square in 1998-99 on the north side; and the China Education TV Station in 1990-96, Yuanyang Building in 1996-99, the International Finance Building in 1996-98,¹⁰⁵ the Commercial Building of the

¹⁰⁵ Designed by Hu Yue (graduated in 1986).

Armed Police Department in 1999-2003, the Capital Time Square in 1995-99, the National Electricity Distribution Center in 1998, and the National Grand Theatre in 1999-2006 on the south side. Eleven buildings were added to East Chang'an Avenue Proper: the Grand Hotel Beijing in 1990, the Oriental Plaza in 1997-99, the Ministry of Communication in 1992-94, the Xinyuan Building in 2002, the National Women's Association Building in 1995, the Guanghai Chang'an Building in 1994-96 in the north façade; and the Chang'an Club in 1990-93, the Guangcai Center in 2004, the Beijing Daily Building in 2001-02, the Hengji Center in 1993-97, and the Zhongliang Plaza in 1992-96. The Ministry of Fuel Industry and the Ministry of Textile Industry built in early 1950s were renovated, with the façades totally redesigned and new layers added on the tops.

After the intensive construction in 1990s and early 2000s, the northern side of Chang'an Avenue Proper was filled with monumental façades with only a few small "gaps," as well as the southern façade of East Chang'an Avenue Proper. The southern façade of West Chang'an Avenue Proper still had a large "gap" of traditional courtyard areas; however, specific projects were already planned in these sites (Figure 1.22).

Monumental façades were also constructed on both Chang'an Avenue Extensions during this period. On West Chang'an Avenue Extension was built the New Railway Station, the Chinese Century Altar, the Capital Museum, etc. While many state-sponsored government projects were carried out on West Chang'an Avenue Extension, large amounts of land on both side of East Chang'an Avenue Extension became Beijing's new CBD (Central Business District) areas.

A special section on Chang'an Avenue façades was the southern side in front of Zhongnanhai, the former imperial gardens and the "new Forbidden City" after 1949. Since Zhongnanhai became the residential area for top leaders of the communist regime, no tall buildings were to be constructed on the opposite side of Chang'an Avenue to keep the area out of public view. The only multi-layer building from the ROC era, the Capital Municipal Government Office, was demolished soon after the founding of the PRC. The recently completed National Grand Theatre made the first step to break such a taboo; however, the entire area today is still filled with old-fashioned courtyard housing, leaving a large "gap" in the southern façade of Chang'an Avenue Proper.

If the most characteristic building type in the 1970s and 1980s was the hotel, the building type that would symbolize the 1990s might be bank and commercial offices. Nine out of the thirty buildings nominated as candidates for "Beijing's Ten Prominent Buildings of the 1980s" were hotels, and ten out of the thirty candidates for "Beijing's Ten Prominent Buildings of the 1990s" were banks or commercial offices or a combination of the two.¹⁰⁶ Under Deng Xiaoping's call for "constructing socialism with distinctive Chinese character," China became more and more integrated with the international market. But during this process of globalization, a greater number of traditional Chinese cultural and artistic motifs were revived in architecture.

It seems a paradox that the country's architectural style was international while the national identity was a Third World country, and that the architectural style turned to nationalism when the national identity was mainly a competing member in the

¹⁰⁶ Beijingshi guihua weiyuanhui and Beijing chengshi guihua xuehui, ed., *Beijing shida jianzhu sheji* (Beijing's Ten Great Buildings) (Tianjin: Tianjin daxue chubanshe, 2002).

international market. National identity, as mentioned before, needs always to “fit into” and “stand out of” the reference group of significant others. The use of traditional motifs is a strategy to stand out. At the same time, the abstract and symbolic variations of these traditional motifs in the 1990s fit well into the context of contemporary world architectural practices.

Traditional architectural motifs, especially the time-honored big roof, were widely applied to represent national character. Some of these new big roofs were quite literal. In the 1996 West Railway Station, seen from the Western Chang’an Avenue extension Fuxing Road on the south, one gigantic traditional pavilion was added on top of a grand arch of 15-story modern structure, and four smaller ones were put on top of the four corners. A row of repeating traditional pailou (memorial archway) decorated the lower section of the main façade. According to the official explanation, the grand arch symbolized the gate to the capital of the People’s Republic. (Figure 1.33) But, after the former Beijing mayor Chen Xitong, who sponsored big roof as the strategy of “taking back the image of the old capital (duohui gudu fengmao),” was removed from the Central Committee of the Party, no designer was willing to claim the authorship of the West Station. Nevertheless, the application of traditional roof as a national architectural symbol continued. Similar buildings with traditional “big-hats” include the Guanghai Chang’an Building on Eastern Chang’an Avenue, which also has a pailou attached to the glass curtain wall to mark out the entrance on the main facade. The 1999 August 1st Building next to the 1959 Military Museum on Western Chang’an Avenue had traditional big roofs

whose style originated in Han or Tang Dynasty imageries as what might be seen on Han dynasty stone carvings or Tang dynasty Buddhist murals. (Figure 1.34)

Alongside these more or less literal applications of traditional architectural motifs, other buildings simplified, distorted, manipulated, or deconstructed the time-honored big roof. The Beijing Book Building on Western Chang'an Avenue had two sections of broken roofs on the top. The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China of the same year by American firm SOM, also on Western Chang'an Avenue, had a very simplified and abstract big-roof of aluminum curved panels, imitating the up-turned lofty eave. According to the designers, other traditional Chinese motifs were used. The circular and square motifs in plans represent the traditional Chinese concept of "round sky and square earth (tianyuan defang);" the main façade on Chang'an Avenue had a traditional Chinese architectural proportion; the base was designed with the Great Wall imagery in mind; and the steel frame structure with aluminum plates and glass panels on exterior walls was meant to resemble traditional timber structure.¹⁰⁷ (Figure 1.35)

Architectural styles on Chang'an Avenue after the 1990s were much more diverse than before, indicating the more frequent cultural exchanges in terms of joint designs, publications, education, etc., since China entered the international market. The Hengji Center on East Chang'an Avenue of 1996 was a post-modern building with classical Western architectural motifs. The chief architect of this building, Liu Li (1939-) said, "Style doesn't matter. No matter whether it is Chinese or Western, modern or classical,

¹⁰⁷ *Beijing shida jianzhu sheji*, 116.

architectural form is good as long as it is beautiful.”¹⁰⁸ The 1999 Beijing Broadcast and Television Bureau was post-modern in the same sense. A complex of gigantic glass and concrete boxes, the 1996 Oriental Plaza project in the most time-honored traditional commercial district Wangfujing on East Chang’an Avenue had neither big Chinese roof nor traditional architectural motifs. And the Beijing International Finance Building copied steel and glass buildings by such big international firms as KPF, HOK, and NBBJ in every detail. (Figure 1.36)

The fragmentation in Chang’an Avenue façades at the end of the 1990s could be summarized by two of the most important national projects at the turn of the century: the Chinese Century Altar of 2000 and the National Grand Theatre of 1999-2006. The Chinese Century Altar was dedicated to the unfolding new century. Located on the north side of the West Chang’an Avenue Extension, its axis intersected the east-west axis at a right angle. Its image resembled a giant sundial and recalls the forms of Neolithic altars of the distant past, for example, those found in modern day Liaoning Province. Like the Altar of Heaven or Altar of Soil and Grain, the spatial experience in the Chinese Century Altar is linear as people approach the altar proper through one long passage and a seemingly endless stairway. However, unlike the traditional altars of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there were no walls or gates, and the altar proper was an enormous sloping stair instead of a flat open ground. The National Grand Theatre was located on the west of the Great Hall of the People. After two years of architectural competitions, from 1997 to 1999, and actually after more than 40 years of planning and re-planning from 1958 to

¹⁰⁸ *Beijing shida jianzhu sheji*, 71.

1999, Chinese authorities finally selected the French architect Paul Andreu to design what was possibly the most important national project of the century, and possibly for centuries to come as well.¹⁰⁹ Paul Andreu was known primarily for his expertise in airport design, and his final scheme for the National Grand Theatre reflected his past experiences in designing what he called “Universal Space.”¹¹⁰ It is a colossal egg of glass and titanium floating on a huge reflecting pool. Everything was covered under this enormous shell and the passage to the main entrance is under the water. Pure and simple, its imagery could not be found in any traditional Chinese architectural motif. The appropriateness of constructing such a foreign structure in the most sacred area of Beijing, and maybe more seriously, the justification of allowing a Western architect to be in charge of this national project, were widely debated, not just among Chinese authorities, professionals, and intellectuals, but also among the general Chinese citizenry.

The new national identity of China, as represented by the changing Chang’an Avenue façades, is yet to be defined in the 21st century. (Figure 1.37)

¹⁰⁹ This project will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. For more information about Paul Andreu’s schemes and the entire competition in 1998-9, see: *A Collection of Design Schemes for the International Architectural Competition of the National Grand Theater of P. R. China*, (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Paul Andreu, *Paul Andreu: The Discovery of Universal Space*, (l’Arca Edizioni, 1997).

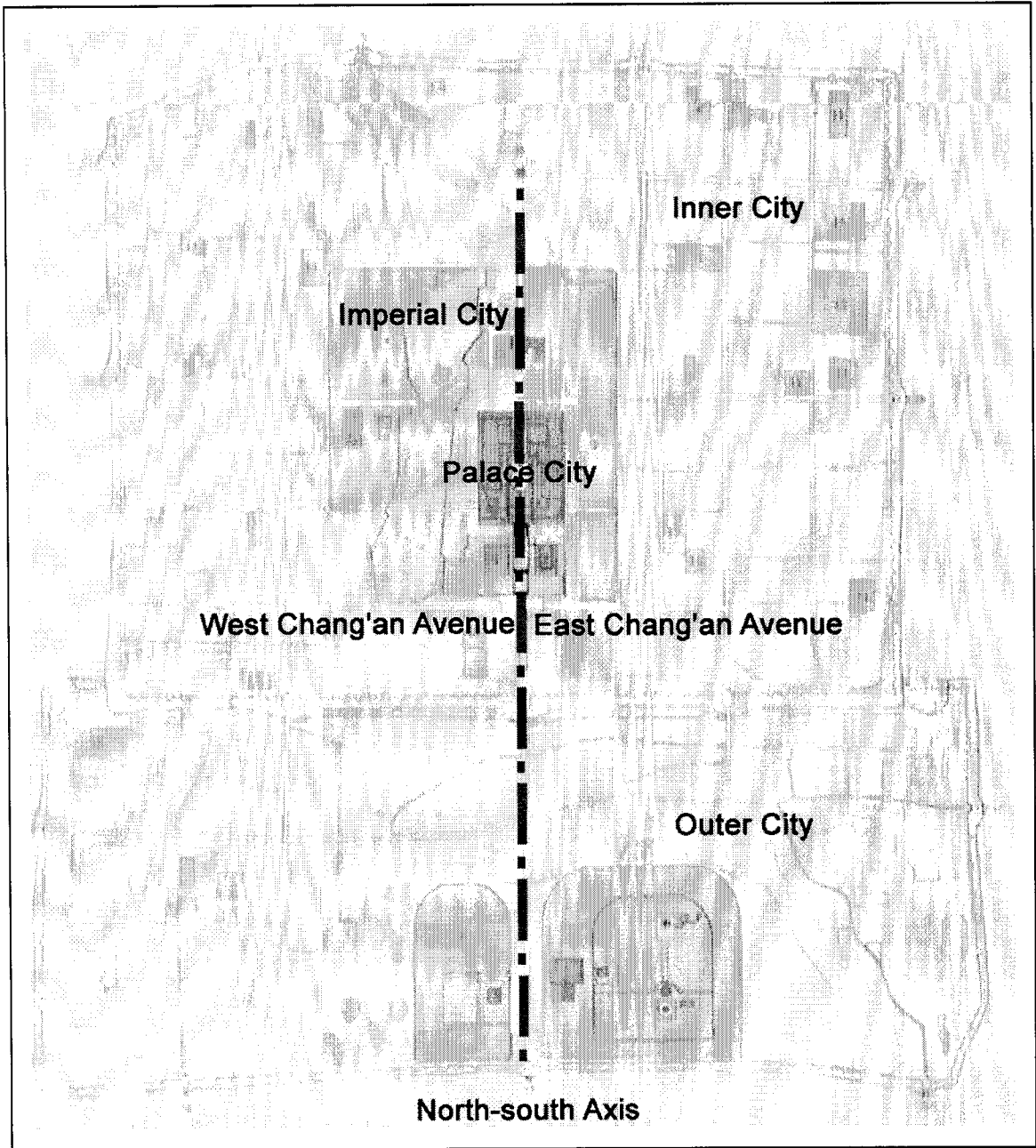


Figure 1.1: Ming-Qing Beijing

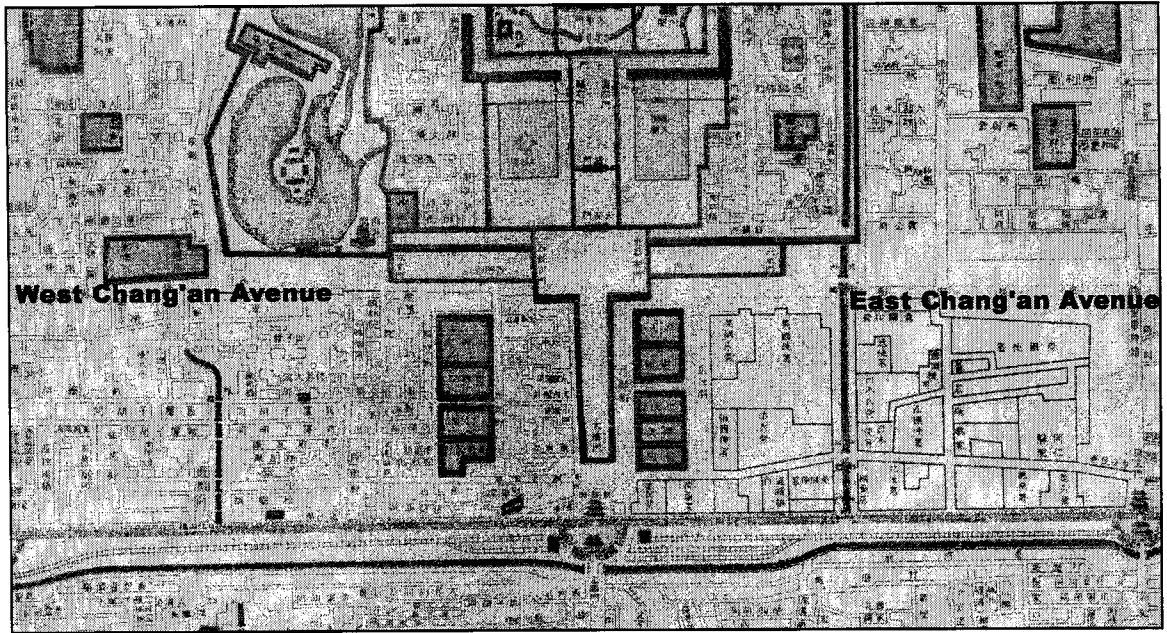


Figure 1.2: East and West Chang'an Avenue during Ming-Qing Dynasty



Figure 1.3: Xinhuaamen in 2005

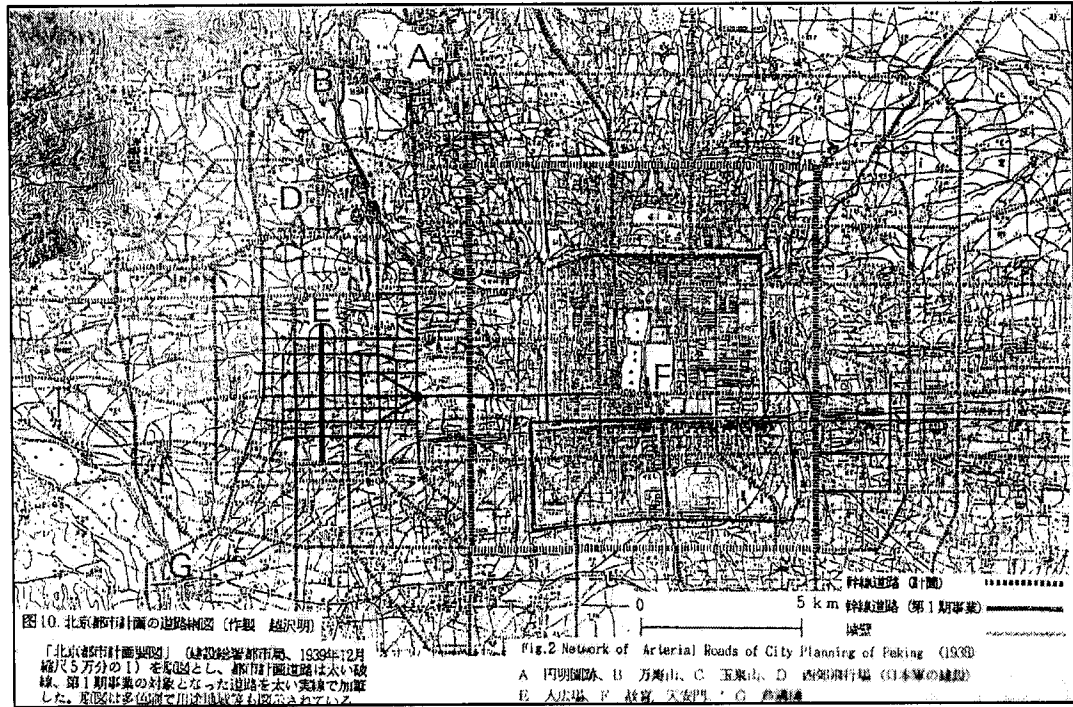


Figure 1.4: Mater plan of Beijing in 1941 by the Japanese

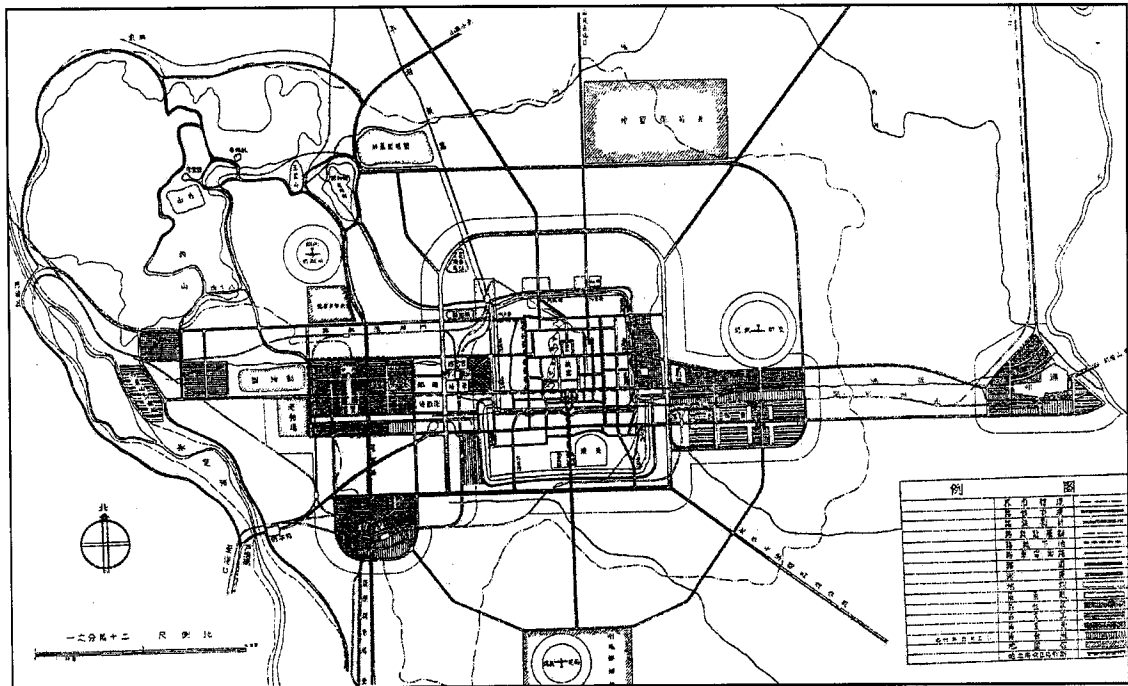


Figure 1.5: Mater plan of Beijing by the ROC government in 1946

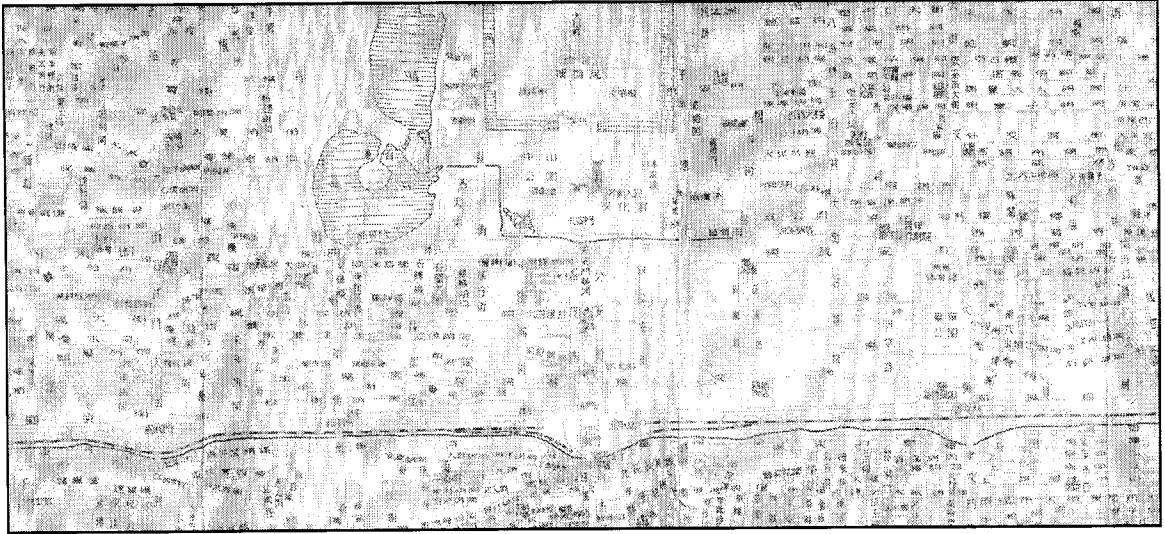


Figure 1.6: Chang'an Avenues at the end of the Republican Period

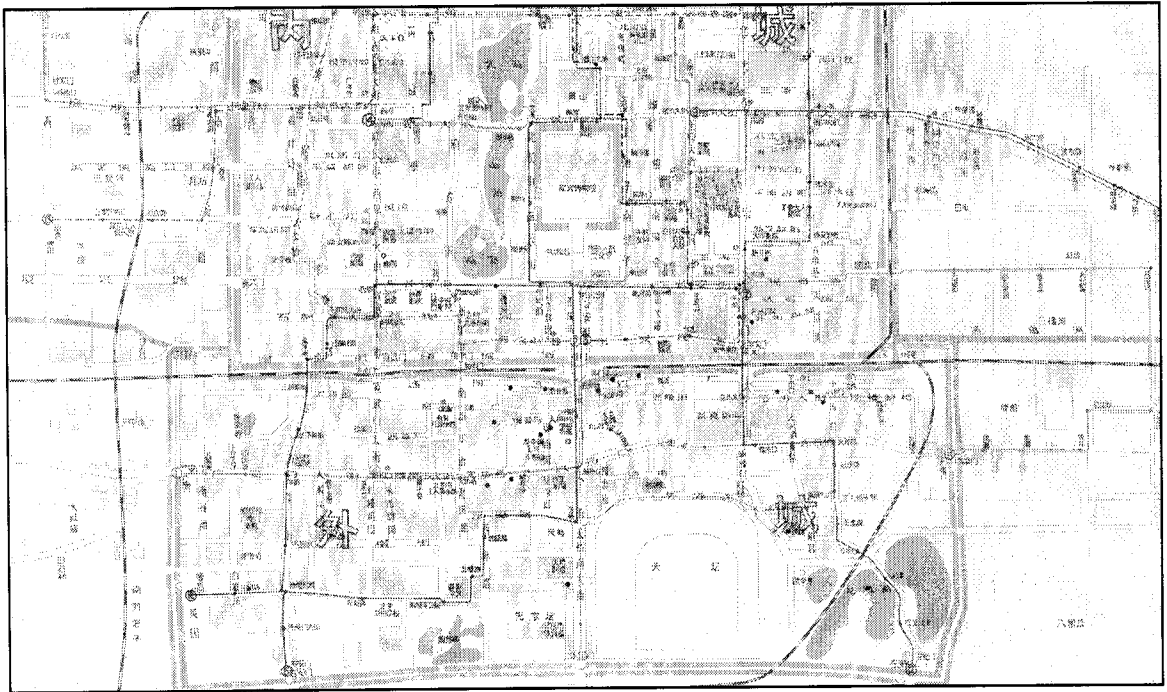


Figure 1.7: Beijing and Chang'an Avenue in 1956

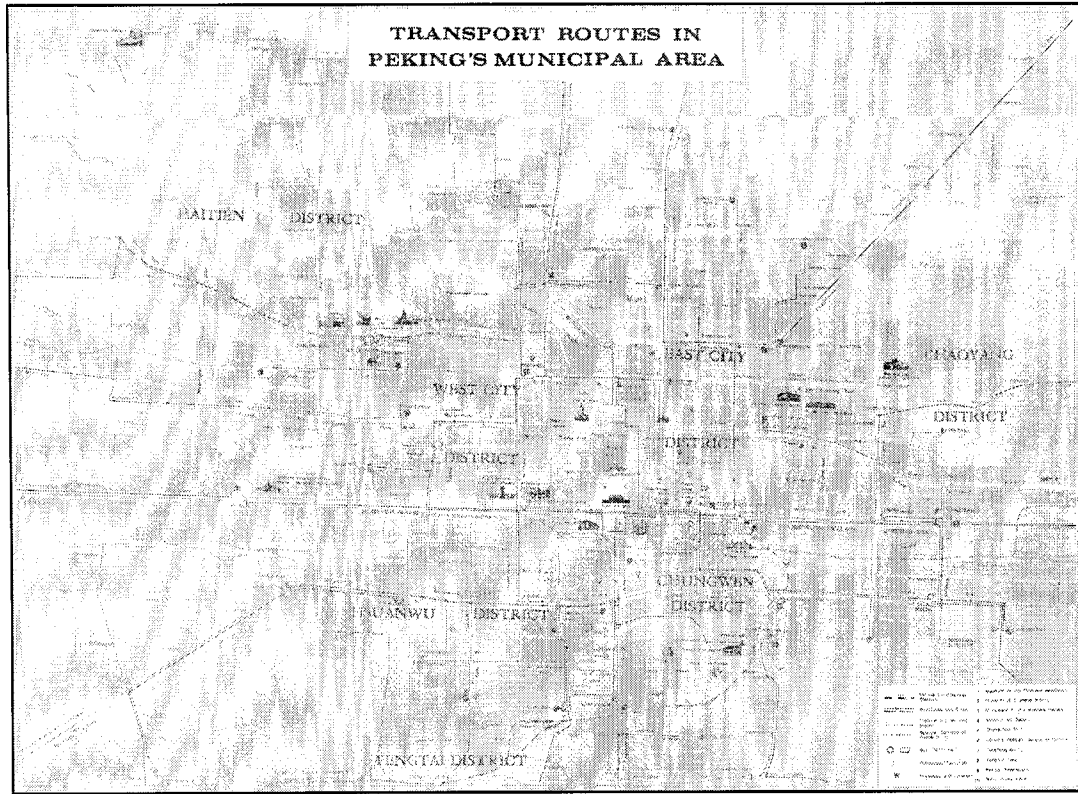


Figure 1.8: Beijing and Chang'an Avenue in 1972

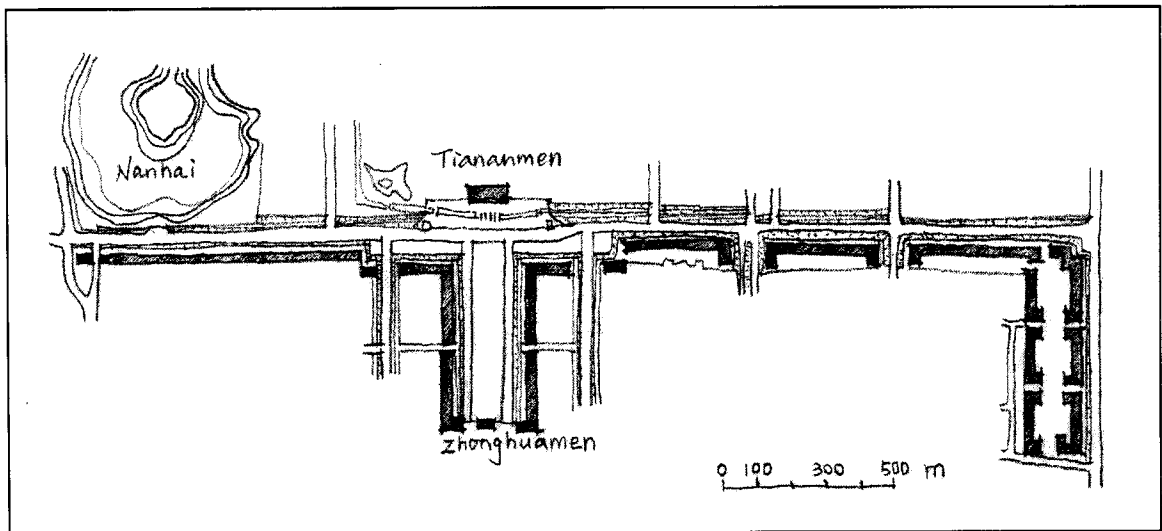


Figure 1.9: Soviet specialists' 1949-1950 proposal for the reconstruction of Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square

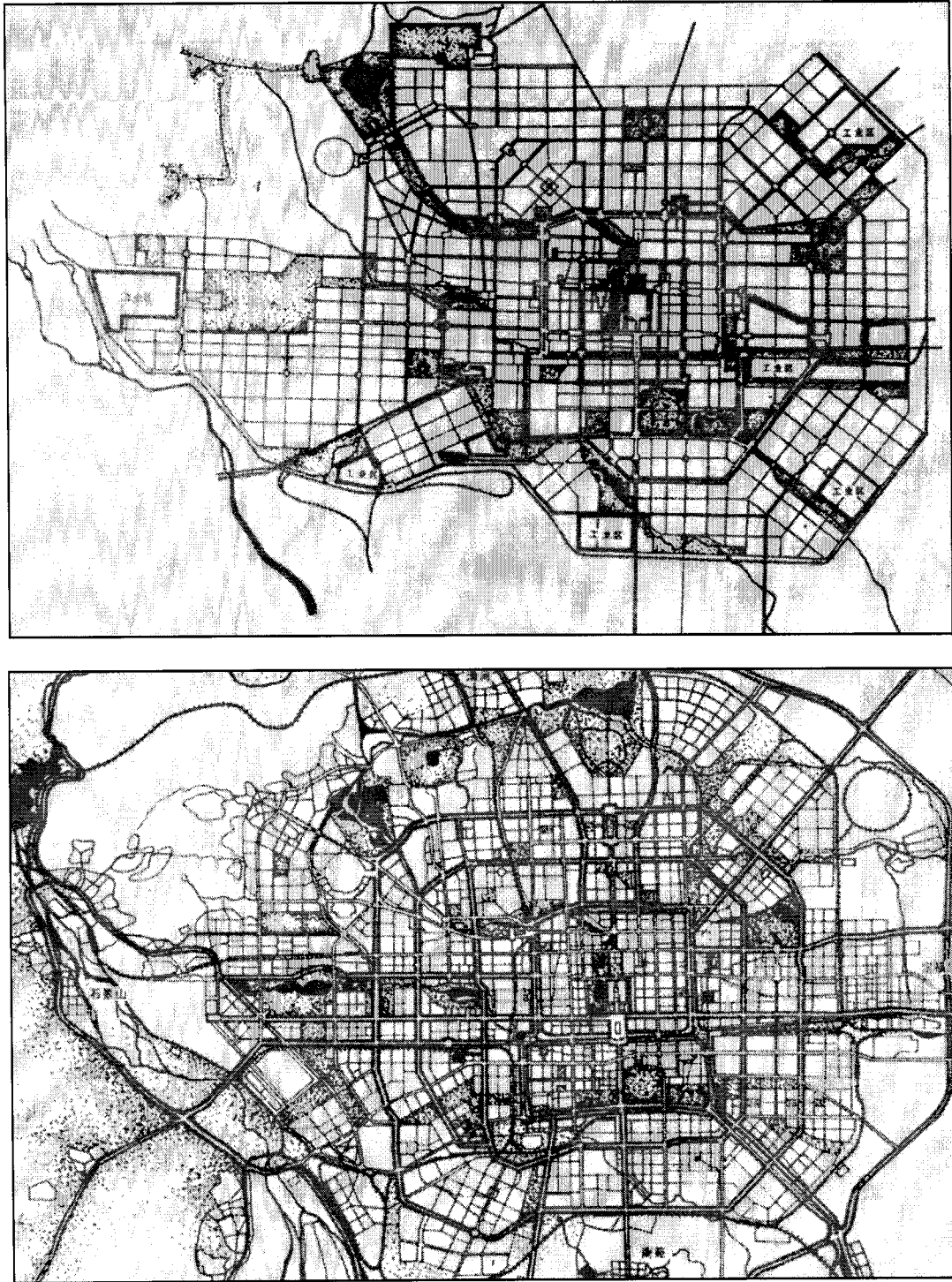


Figure 1.10: Beijing master plan 1953 (top) and 1957 (bottom)

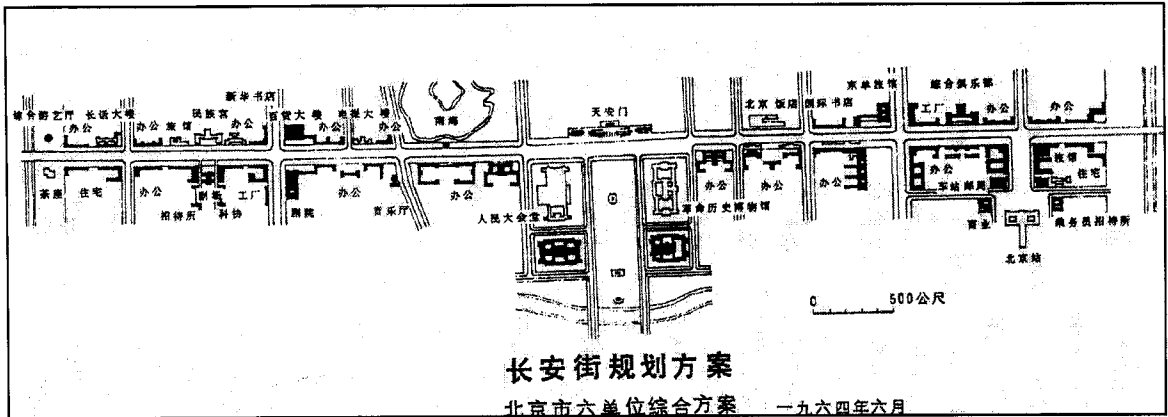


Figure 1.11: Chang'an Avenue planning 1964 (Comprehensive Scheme)

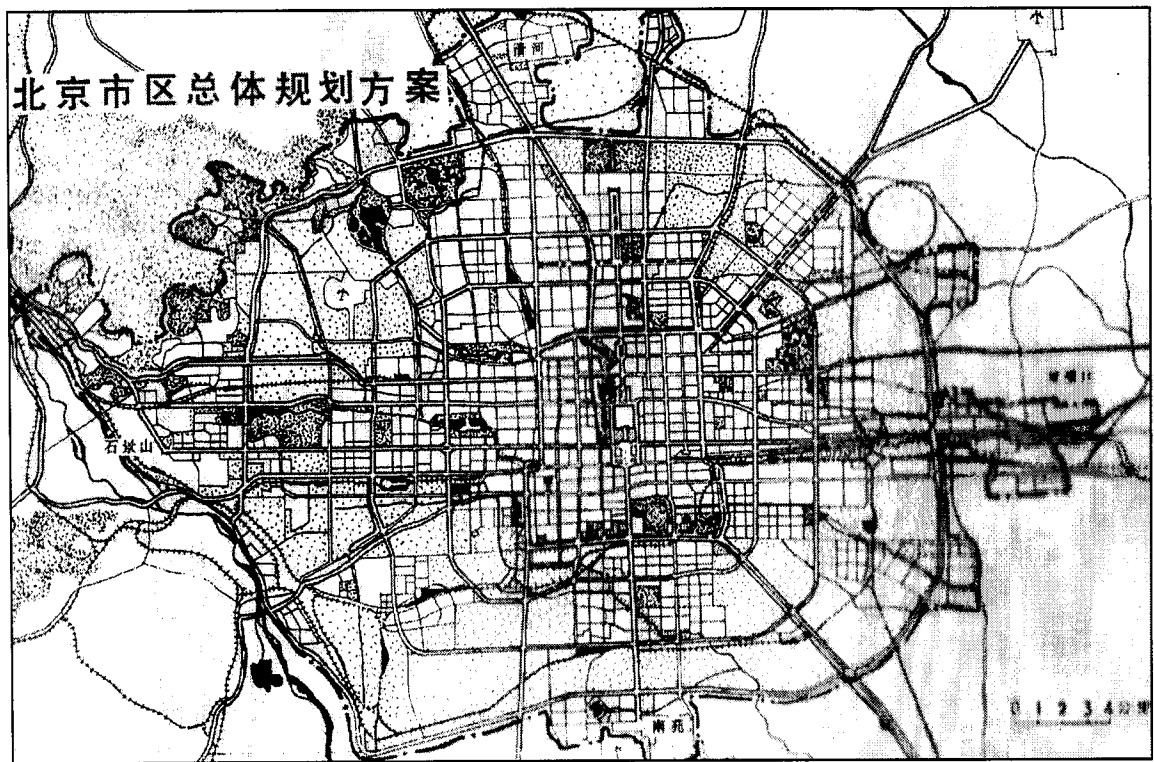


Figure 1.12: Beijing master plan 1982

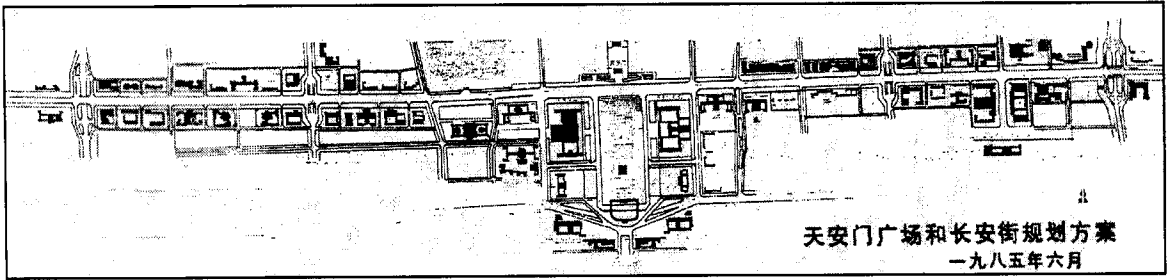


Figure 1.13: 1985 Chang'an Avenue plan

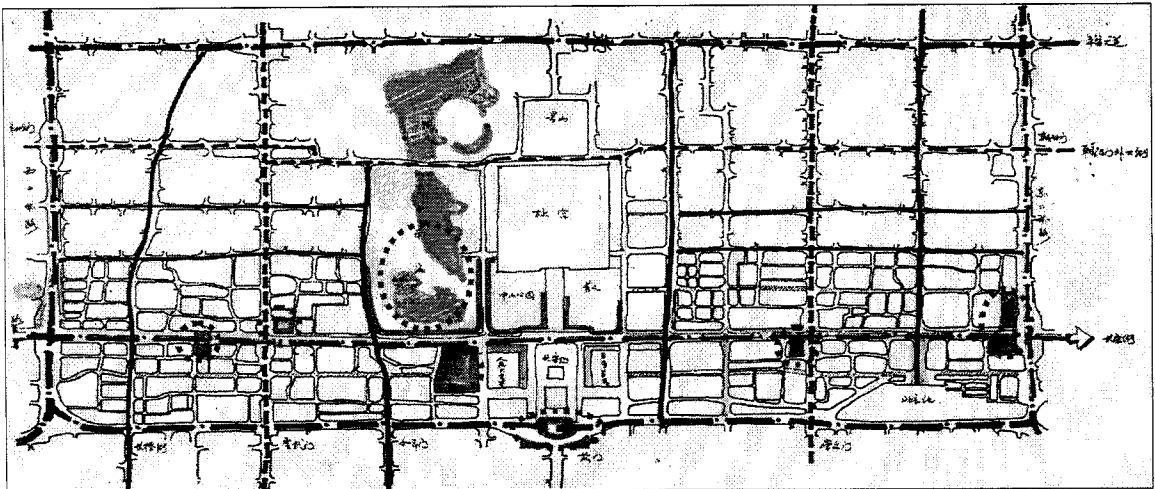
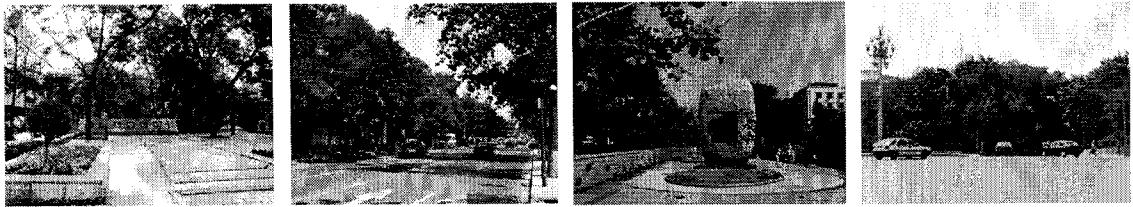


Figure 1.14: Chang'an Avenue project 2002

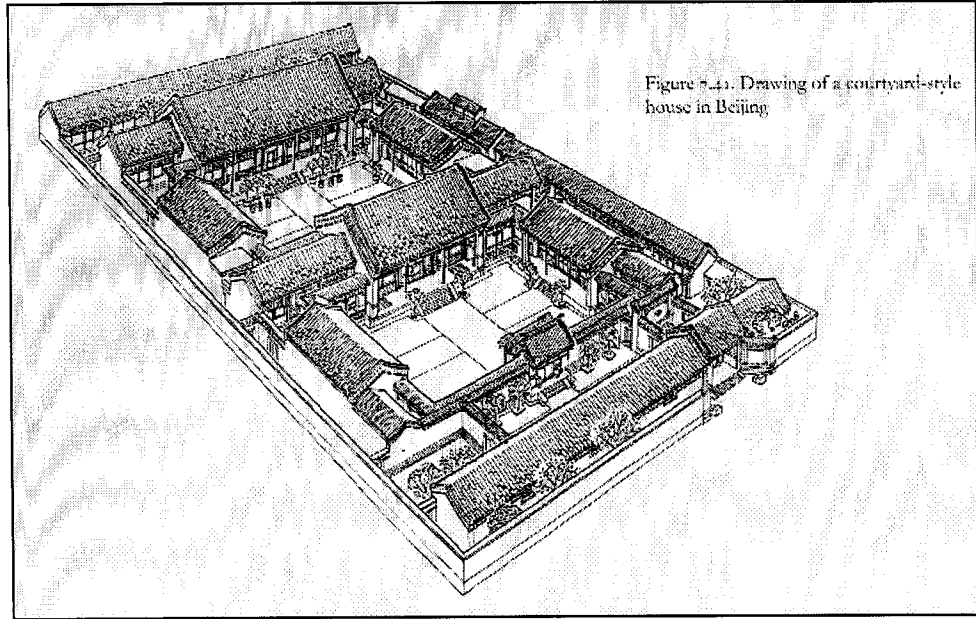


Figure 1.15: Drawing of a courtyard-style house in Beijing

Figure 1.15: A typical Beijing courtyard without exterior façade

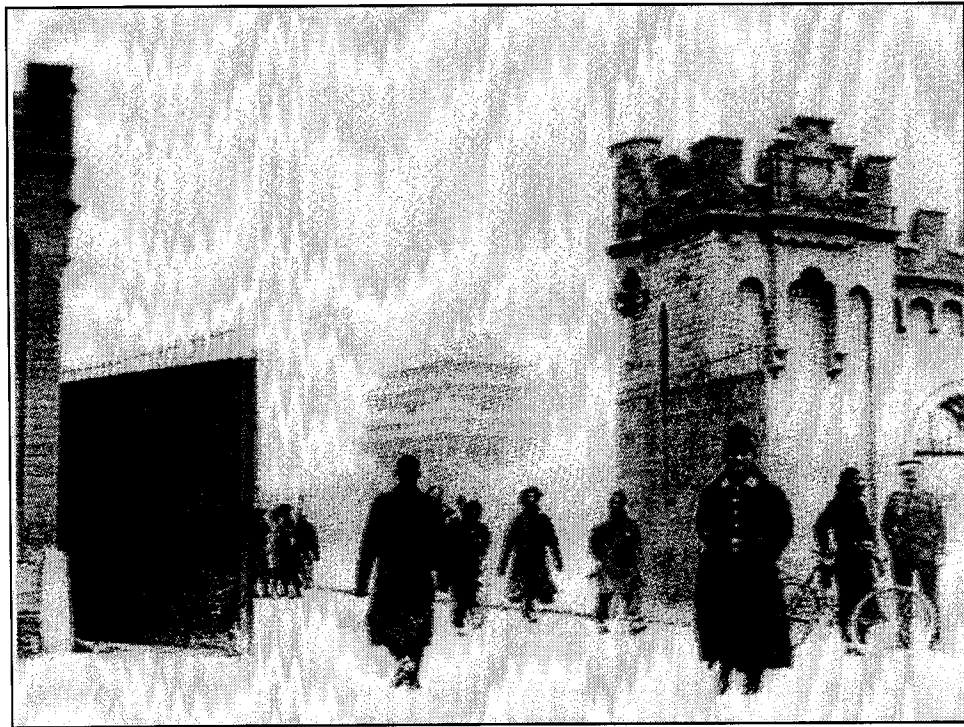


Figure 1.16: One of the gates of the legation quarter



Figure 1.17: The legation quarter with its military drill grounds to the south of Historical East Chang'an Avenue

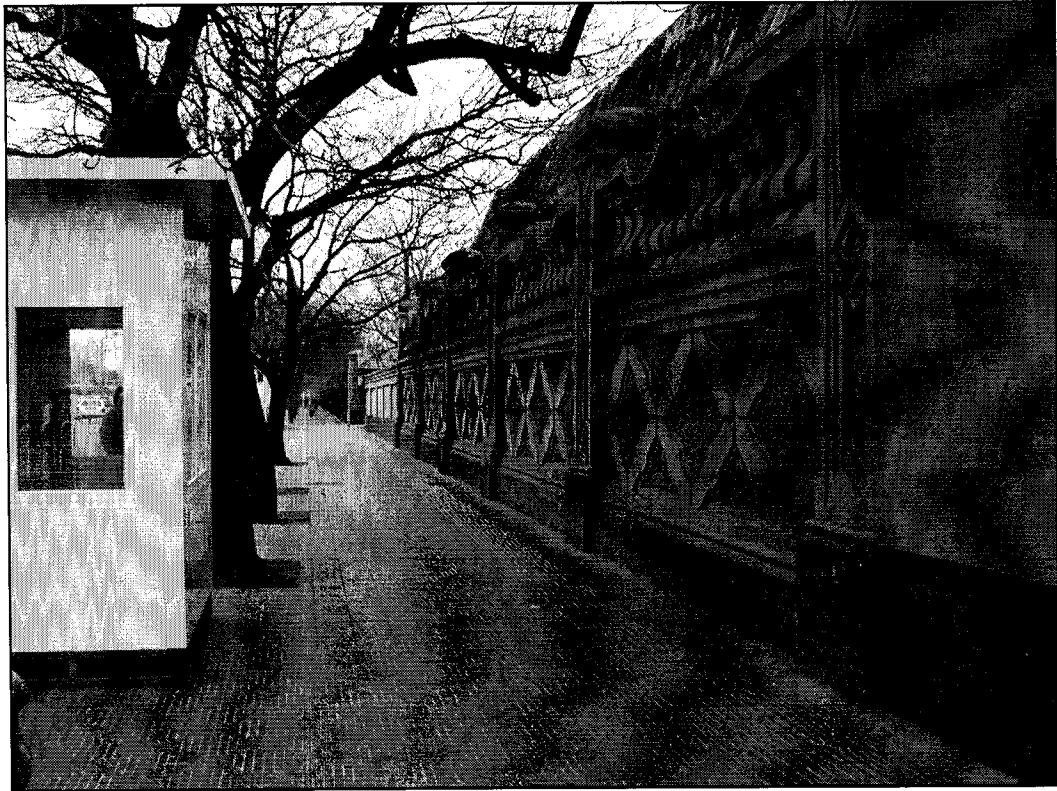


Figure 1.18: Walls constructed in 1910s to keep the residential courtyards on Historical West Chang'an Avenue from the view of Zhongnanhai

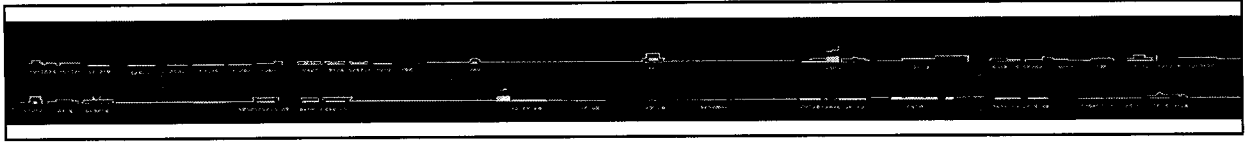


Figure 1.19: Chang'an Avenue façades in the 1940s (top: northern façade; bottom: southern façade)

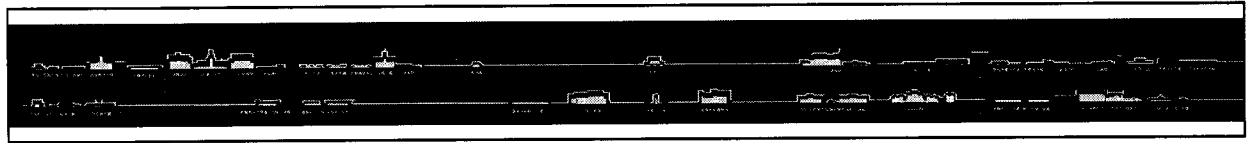


Figure 1.20: Chang'an Avenue façades in the 1950s-60s (top: northern façade; bottom: southern façade)

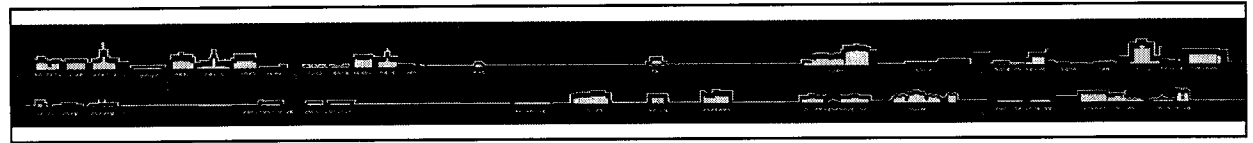


Figure 1.21: Chang'an Avenue façades in the 1970s-80s (top: northern façade; bottom: southern façade)

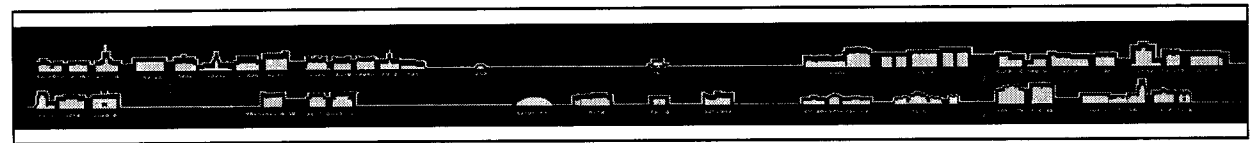


Figure 1.22: Chang'an Avenue façades in the 1990s-2000s (top: northern façade; bottom: southern façade)

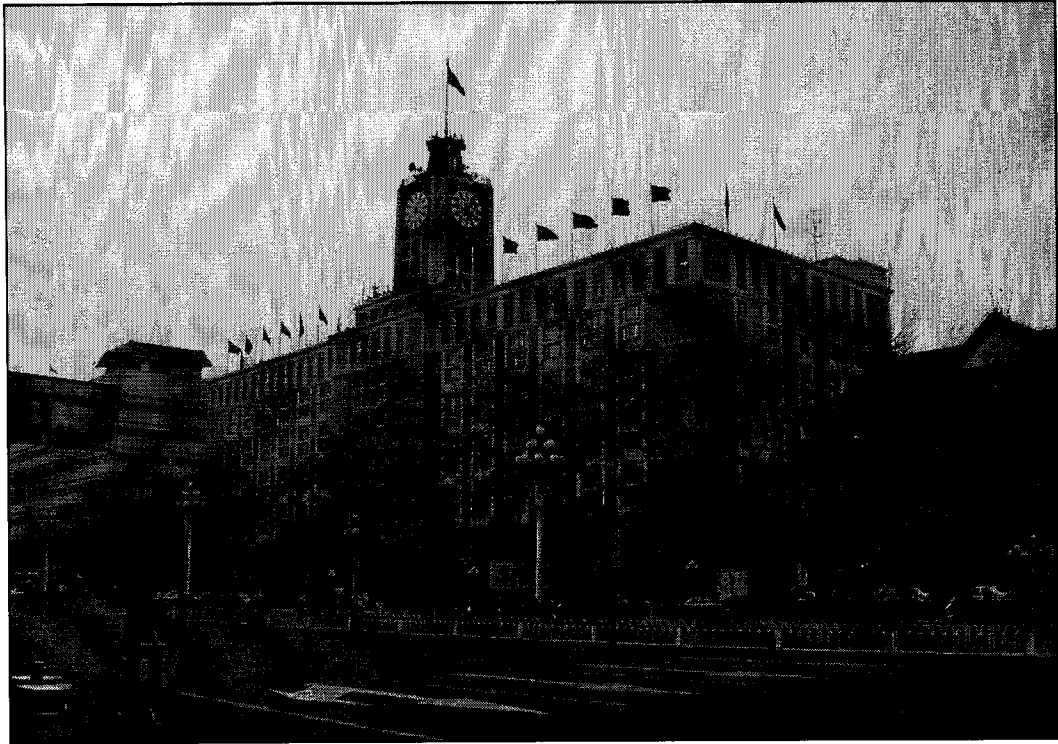


Figure 1.23: Telegraph Service Center, 1956-1958



Figure 1.24: Central Broadcast Building, 1957



Figure 1.25: Military Museum, 1958-1959



Figure 1.26: Cultural Palace of Nationalities, 1958-1959



Figure 1.27: Great Hall of the People, 1958-1959



Figure 1.28: Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, 1958-1959



Figure 1.29: International Club, 1971-74

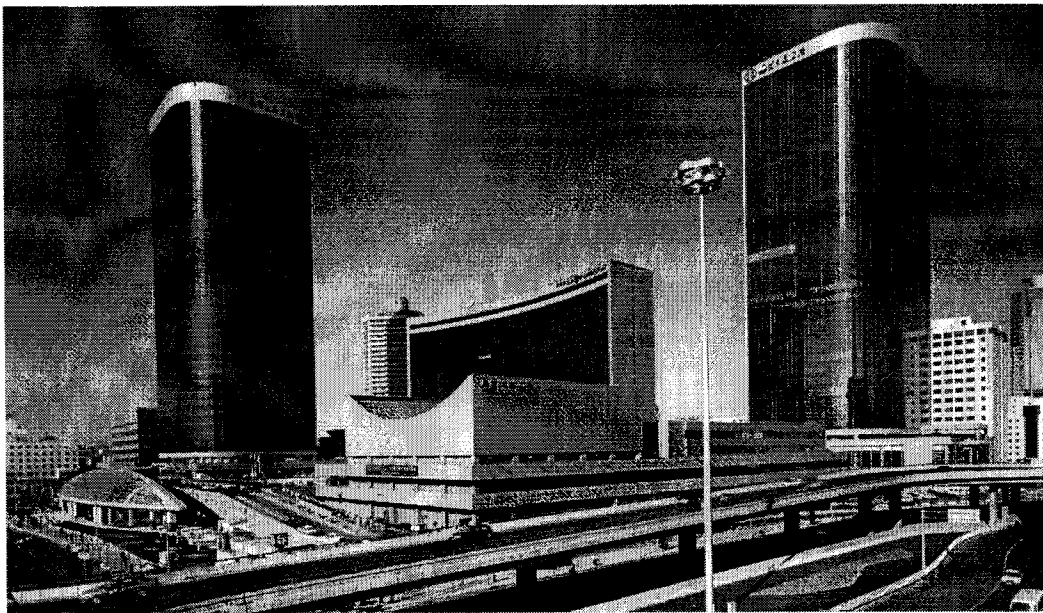


Figure 1.30: International Trade Center of China, 1989

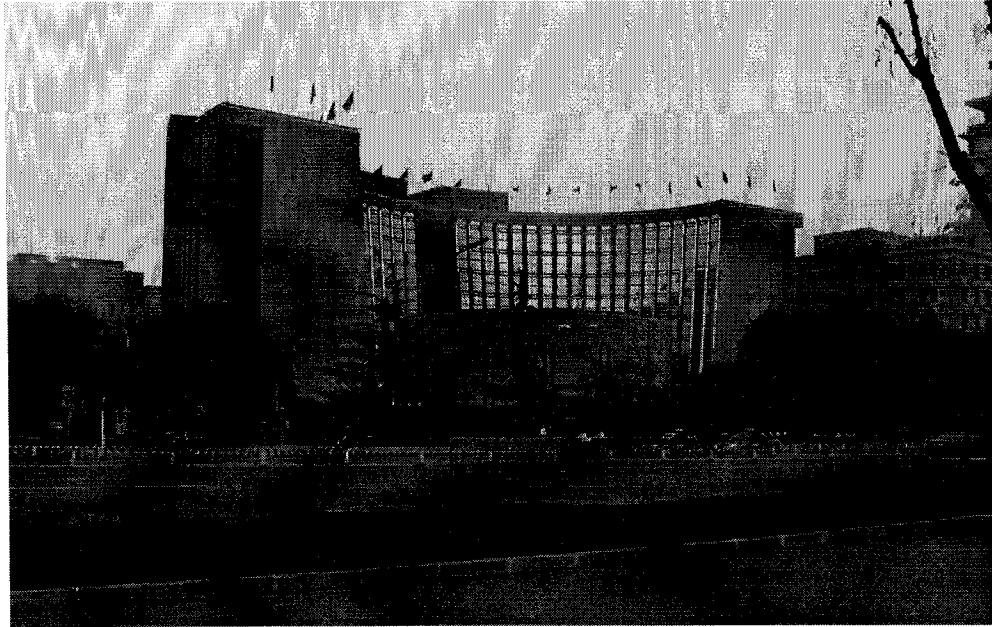


Figure 1.31: Headquarter of People's Bank of China, 1987-1990



Figure 1.32: National Arts and Crafts Gallery of China, 1985

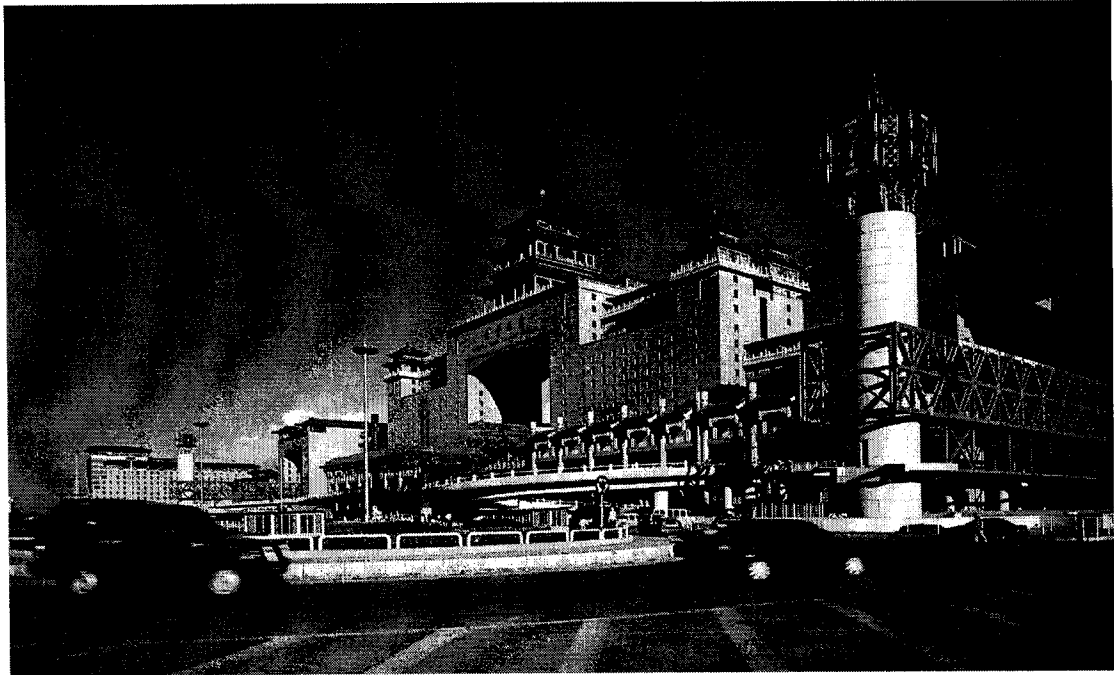


Figure 1.33: West Railway Station, 1996

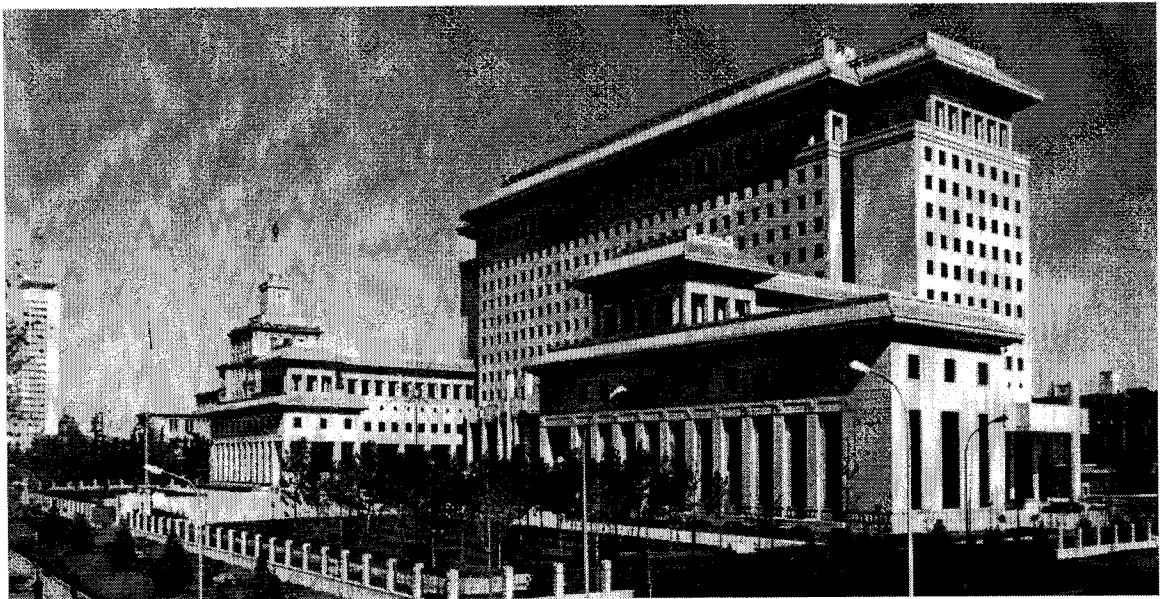


Figure 1.34: Military Commission headquarters (August 1st Building), 1999

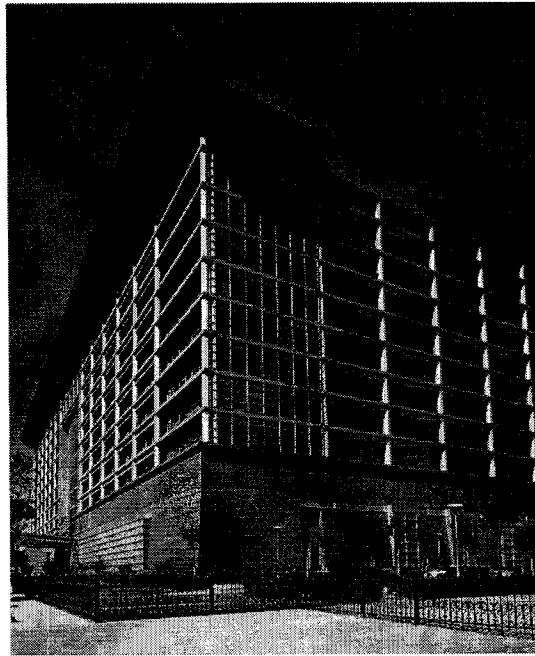


Figure 1.35: Chinese Industrial and Commercial Bank, 1994-98



Figure 1.36: Chang'an Avenue in the early 2000s



Figure 1.37: Chang'an Avenue for the 21st century

Chapter Two

National versus Modern – Chang’an Avenue in The 1950s

Nationalism and Modernism before 1949

For 20th-century Chinese architecture, nationalism and modernism were developed almost simultaneously.

Traditional Chinese architecture of the timber structure system had lasted for millennia. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-906), this system reached its maturity and produced huge halls and towers of pure wooden structure. During the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), what we consider to be classical Chinese architecture was standardized and recorded in the early 12th-century official construction manual Ying-Zao-Fa-Shi 营造法式 (formally published in 1103). The following Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties basically followed the Ying-Zao-Fa-Shi tradition in the construction of imperial monuments, with minor structural and stylistic adjustments and occasional

combination or juxtaposition with other architectural traditions from the peripherals of China Proper.¹

European architecture was introduced into China as early as the 14th-century by the early missionaries. Christian churches were constructed in some major Chinese cities and European style buildings were sometimes built to fulfill the curiosity of the emperors, among which the Western Buildings of the 18th-century in the Yuanmingyuan Garden were the most famous.² (Figure 2.1) These occasional foreign buildings, however, were not significant enough to trigger the need to develop a concept of national style in architecture. For the Chinese, especially those under the Qing Empire (1644-1911), who called their country “all under the sky” and consider their way of life the only civilized culture in the world, these foreign buildings were just curios from another barbarian culture. It was not until China was defeated again and again during the latter part of the 19th-century that the Chinese started to consider western cultures as counterparts of their own. Chinese culture became, for the first time for the Chinese, one of the many cultures in the world. The time for the need for nationalism was ready.

It was telling enough that the “Chinese Classical Revivalism” 中国传统复兴 in architecture was first invented by the Westerners, not by the Chinese. Around the year 1920, some European and American architects practicing in Beijing experimented on combining the preeminent big Chinese roofs they saw in the Forbidden City and other ancient monuments with multi-layered concrete structures, and start the exploration of the

¹ Liang Ssu-ch'eng, *Chinese Architecture: A Pictorial History*, 1984.

² Zhang Fuhe, 5-13.

“Chinese Classical Revival” style. Among them were Shattuck, Hussey, and Henry Murphy.³ (Figure 2.2)

At the same time, the first generation of Chinese architects who were trained abroad came back to China, opened the earliest architectural businesses run by Chinese, and started their practices. They brought back various architectural styles practiced in Europe, America, and Japan. The American version of the Beaux-Art tradition, Art Nouveau, and functionalist modernism were among these foreign styles and systems of design and architectural education that were brought back by these young Chinese architects.⁴ Some of them also tried to combine traditional Chinese architectural motifs with multi-story concrete structures and create a contemporary national style that was different from both ancient Chinese and modern Western architecture.

The value of nationalism in 20th-century Chinese architecture initiated by the foreign architects was soon recognized by the Chinese authority. In 1927, Nanjing was designated by the Republican government as the capital of Republican China. Between 1927 and 1937, the year Japan invaded China and the capital was forced to be abandoned and moved inland to the west, a national style of architecture was officially adopted under the new name “Original Chinese Forms” 中国固有之形式 to construct the new Republican capital. American engineer E. P. Goodrich and architect H. K. Murphy were employed by the Chinese government to serve as foreign consultants.⁵ Chinese architects

³ Jeffrey W. Cody, *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's "adaptive architecture," 1914-1935* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁴ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi* (History of Chinese Architecture) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2004), 361-365,

⁵ Jeffrey Cody.

also participated in the exploration of the national style in the capital construction and their practices in other cities.

It was not accidental that both the “Chinese Classical Revival” in the 1920s and the “Original Chinese Forms” in the 1930s used the large sloping tiled roofs as the major indicator for Chineseness in architecture. As the most prominent part in the façade of an individual structure, the roof in ancient China was not only functional but also symbolic. Its shape and color indicated the grade of the building and the status of the owner or sponsor. During the Qing Dynasty, the roof form of wudian 庑殿 (pure hip roof) was reserved for imperial palaces and other imperially sponsored projects like temples. Princes with the title qinwang 亲王 could at most use the roof form of xieshan 歇山 (hip-and-gable roof) in the main structures of their palaces. Common citizens were only allowed to top their houses with simple gable roofs. In terms of color, golden yellow glazed tiles were reserved for imperial structures, green tiles for princely residence, and grey tiles for roofs of general courtyard dwellings. While the designers of the “Chinese style” architecture in the early 20th century were mainly looking at imperial monuments, for instance, the Forbidden City, for inspiration, they treated the roofs formally and disregarded their former symbolic associations. Wudian and xieshan were most frequently used, combined with green, blue, or grey tiles instead of golden yellow.

(Figure 2.3)

As the main “modern forms” in early 20th-century Chinese architecture, Art Deco with ornamentation in Chinese motifs was widely adopted in the construction of buildings associated with modern culture, for instance, gymnasiums, cinemas, and

railway stations, while blocks with clean walls and square windows devoid of extra decoration were used mainly for factories. (Figure 2.4)

“National” versus “Modern” and Chang’an Avenue Architecture in early 1950s

While both the nationalism and modernism in pre-1949 China were mainly exploring new forms, discussion on “national” versus “modern” during the PRC era was more theoretical and ideology-oriented.

The discourse on national vs. modern in Chinese architecture of the 1950s ran mainly along a methodologically negative line. Philosophical methods, according to Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-Lan), can be categorized into two major groups: a positive line and a negative line. The positive method tries to define the subject or idea directly, that is, to explain what it IS. The negative method, on the contrary, tries to define what is being discussed indirectly, that is, to explain what it IS NOT.⁶ The positive method uses addition to achieve their goal like clay sculptors while the negative method uses subtraction like stone sculptors. Feng claimed that classical Chinese philosophy was mainly negative and the western philosophy was mainly positive, and the future of world philosophy relied on the interfusion of the two.

According to Feng’s categorization, the discourse on national and modern in Chinese architecture of the 1950s was negative. “National” and “modern” were defined not by explaining what they really were or should be, but by criticizing what they were

⁶ Fung, Yu-Lan, *A short history of Chinese philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Free Press, 1966).

not. “National” was defined by criticizing revivalism while “modern” was defined by criticizing formalism.

The relationship between “national” and “modern” is not a dichotomy of opposites, but rather one complementing the other. The final satisfying result, however, was the “modernization” of Chinese architecture. Here, we see the obvious logical flaw for the Chinese modernization process. One of the components of the final objective is the final objective itself. The final objective can be achieved only by extricating one of its major components. In this sense, the “modernization” of 20th-century Chinese architecture was unachievable.

The only way to get out of such logical difficulty in 1950s’ China was through the Marxist “dialectical development” theory.⁷ According to this theory, “movements” (including the development of architectural style) were all pushed by various “contradictions,” among which there was a pair called “principle contradiction.” There were two major characters, which were called “aspects,” in the “principle contradiction.” Each was constantly struggling for the role of “dominant aspect.” Both of them, however, would disappear at the end of a specific phase of the “dialectical development,” forming a new “aspect” for new and higher “contradictions.” Thus, a new cycle of development start and the “movements” got to a more advanced level.⁸ Following this Maoist-Marxist reasoning, when the higher “modernization” was achieved, both “aspects” in the “contradiction” – the national and modern – would have been vanished, and their ideal

⁷ Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), *Dialektik der Natur* (Chinese, *Zi ran bian zheng fa*), Trans., Yu Guangyuan etc. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984).

⁸ Mao Zedong, “Maodun lun (On Contradictions),” In *Mao Zedong xuanji, yi juan ben* (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, comprehensive volume) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1969), 274-312.

unification would give birth to the new modernized “modern,” which would be served as one of the “aspects” in more advanced new “contradiction.”

Applying such a Marxist model to resolve the logical difficulty, however, does not conform to the architectural discourse of the 1950s’ China. First, “national” and “modern” were not really contradicting aspects in the Marxist sense, opposing and unifying. As mentioned before, they were both desirable in the discourse from the very beginning of the controversy. Secondly, both “national” and “modern” in the 1950s discourse belong to the stylistic/formal level. The real “contradiction” in architecture for the participants of the controversy was the contradiction of “form” and “content.”

Thus, instead of using Marxist model, I propose to use the time-honored Chinese yin/yang model for the understanding of the controversy on “national” and “modern” in the discourse of 20th-century Chinese architecture. According to the yin/yang diagram, yin and yang are compensating aspects in a unified whole. Neither should overwhelmingly dominate the other. The ideal situation of the yin/yang relationship is balance. Neither too much yin nor too much yang is desirable.⁹ Yin and yang in the Taiji diagram are also mutually defining each other. One cannot exist without the other. If we adopt such a model in the understanding of the 1950s discourse, we can see that the ideal relationship between “national” and “modern” for the participants of the 1950s controversy is exactly comparable to the yin/yang relationship. Too much “national” is “revivalism” and too much “modern” is “formalism.” Both should be avoided. An ideal

⁹ Gao Heng, *Zhouyi dazhuan jinzhu* (Contemporary annotations of Zhou-yi-da-zhuan) (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1979).

socialist architecture could only be achieved by unifying and balancing “national” and “modern.”

“Form” and “content” was another pair of concepts being widely discussed in the 1950s. The source of the controversy on “form” and “content” were initiated by the introduction of the Soviet art policy, namely, “national form, socialist content.” Thus, compared to the controversy on “national” and “modern,” the discussion on “form” and “content” is more restricted to the early period of the PRC. The discourse on “national” and “modern” was initiated long before the founding of the PRC and continued even to this day. In the 1950s, however, the two controversies were intertwined with each other. For a comprehensive understanding of the period, it is impossible to totally separate the two discourses or just focusing on one and neglecting the other.

The controversies on “national” and “modern” and diatribes on “revivalism” and “formalism” in the 1950s were both initiated by and colored with heavy political pressures of the time. Chang’an Avenue architecture, as the buildings closest to the political heart of the country and at the same time open to the public view within and without China, became the most sensitive to these political and intellectual discourses.

1949 – 1952

During the early years of the PRC, because of the division of the world into two hostile bodies, a western world led by the United States and a socialist corps headed by the Soviet Union, to which China belonged, the only international connection China had was with the latter. As a newly born socialist country on a land devastated after decades

of foreign invasions and civil wars, and because the Chinese communists had been long operating in the countryside and had very little experience in urban and industrial development, China adopted the “leaning to one side” policy in the construction of all aspects of their country. In architecture, the Soviet policy of “national form, socialist content” during the Stalinist era was adopted. This policy, however, was not very influential in architecture during the first three years of the PRC (1949-1952), which was officially called “three years of economic recovery.” This was a transitional period. Many thoughts and ideologies of the ROC era were still lingering on and private ownership in industry and commerce coexisted with socialist collective ownership. In Chang’an Avenue architecture, we saw the continuation of both “national” and “modern” from the pre-1949 explorations.

Before 1949, the only tall building constructed after the fall of the Qing Empire on Historical East Chang’an Avenue was the Beijing Hotel of 1917, today’s middle building. This was a six-floor French-style Renaissance Revival building. (Figure 2.5) To the south of the avenue was the former walled foreign concession area with two- to four-floor colonial-style buildings inside and a vast empty space – the previous drilling fields for foreign soldiers – at its eastern end near Dongdan.¹⁰ The rest of the Chang’an Avenue Proper was lined by one or two floor Chinese commercial buildings, pretty much like any other commercial street in the Old City of Beijing. In 1951, after the 1950 Liang-Chen Scheme for the construction of new administrative center outside of the Old City was neglected and following the Soviet specialists’ suggestion to develop the new

¹⁰ Zhang Fuhe, 59-110.

administrative center along Chang'an Avenue, headquarters for four ministries – the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Textile Industry, the Ministry of Fuel, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade – were constructed along the south side of Historical East Chang'an Avenue, shielding the former foreign concession areas behind. Some buildings, for instance the buildings for Ministry of Foreign Trade, bore heavy Chinese roofs of the xieshan style (hip-gable roof) with over-reaching eaves on top and continuous balconies in the form of traditional goulan¹¹ for second floors and above. (Figure 2.6) Some buildings, for instance the buildings for Ministry of Fuel and Ministry of Textile Industry, were simple rectangular buildings with virtually no exterior decoration. All the walls were straight and clear-cut and all windows were simple squares of the same size arrayed evenly in the walls. (Figure 2.7) The structure for both were “mixed brick and reinforced concrete,” which was introduced into China in early 20th-century.¹² Compared to the “Chinese Classical Revivalism” and “Chinese Original Forms” prior to 1949, the roofs of the Ministry of Foreign Trade were considerably simplified. The edges of eaves and ridges were all straight lines instead of curving up as in ancient monuments, and there was no dougong under the eaves. The big roofs were directly upon the straight walls. The co-existence of such simplified “national” and “modern” forms was due both to the lack of money and to ideological restrictions in the early years of the PRC.

¹¹ Goulan: balustrade in ancient Chinese architecture.

¹² *Zhongguo jianzhu shi*, 348-351.

1952 – 1955 “National form”

During the first Five-Year Plan period (1952-57), the Soviet art policy “national form, socialist content” was formally applied to architecture. At the same time, the ideal socialist style promoted by the Soviet authorities for art and literature, namely, “socialist realism,” also became the official style for Chinese art.¹³ Since the categories and concepts in these policies – form, content, and socialist realism – were all first developed in art and literature and were relatively foreign to architecture, different interpretations of these policies appeared.

Liang Sicheng’s interpretation proved to be the most influential before 1955. Liang equated “socialist content” with the concern for working people’s wellbeing, which he referred to as “Stalin’s taking care of the Soviet people.” However, for Liang, such a Stalinist humanism quickly took a formalist turn. He claimed that “national form” and “socialist content” cannot separate from one another, and that “socialist content” also included paying attention to beautiful forms that were familiar to and loved by people. “Socialist content” was thus used by Liang to justify historical preservation.¹⁴ Moreover, “national form” meant the best principles of the millennia-long traditional Chinese architecture. Following Mao’s famous formula “the future proletarian culture is the national, scientific, and people’s culture 民族的，科学的，大众的，”¹⁵ Liang wrote,

The future Chinese architecture must be the “national, scientific, and people’s” architecture; and (to achieve) “national” (we) must explore and

¹³ Zou Denong, 132-149.

¹⁴ Liang Sicheng, “Minzu de xingshi, shehui zhuyi de neirong,” in *Liang Sicheng quanji 5* (Complete Works of Liang Sicheng, vol. 5) (Beijing: zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), 169-174.

¹⁵ Mao Zedong, “Xin minzhu zhuyi lun (On New Democraticism).”

develop 发扬 the advantages of our millennia-long tradition. ... For more than twenty years, I have been doing the comprehensive survey (on ancient buildings) in the country with some other architects since I participated in the research work in Yin-zao-xue-she. ... Our goal was to find a way to “national, scientific, and people’s” architecture.¹⁶

Liang emphasized two different points in his elaboration on the “advantages” or “best principles” of the Chinese tradition in architecture. One was its universality in serving different functions; the other was its formal features and principles, what Liang called “grammar 文法.” The former made it possible to adopt the millennia-long tradition in the construction of socialist architecture; the latter offered the “vocabularies” and “grammars” in the development of new forms. He wrote in 1950,

The character of Chinese architecture is, in the structural aspect, first to stand the frameworks, then to construct walls and install windows and doors. The curves in the roof are also produced by the structure of beams and purlins. This structural method offers the designer great freedom. For this reason, from the Songhuajiang (Sangari) River to the Hainan Island, from Xinjiang to the East China Sea, under extremely different climate situations, different walls, doors and windows can be filled (in the frameworks) according to practical need. (Such a structural system is able to) adjust itself for different environment and be always functional. This is the greatest advantage of the Chinese structural method. Europe and America have just started to apply the frame structure in the recently history only after the invention of re-enforced concrete and steel frame structure.¹⁷

¹⁶ Liang Sicheng, “Zhi zhu de xin,” *Liang Sicheng quanji* 5, 82-83.

¹⁷ Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhangxian, “Guanyu zhongyang renmin zhengfu xingzheng zhongxinqu weizhi de jianyi (Proposal for the location of the Central Administrative Area of the People’s Central Government),” 1950, SAATU, 21-22.

Again, Liang wrote in a 1951 article,

The best nature of Chinese architecture is its great degree of universality 高度适应性. Our architecture has two major characteristics, the bone-structure construction method 骨架结构法 and the courtyard arrangement 庭院部署 by combining several individual buildings, which are both adjustable for any interesting combination 巧妙的配合 and flexible for any design handling 灵活处理.¹⁸

It is worth noting that Liang seldom used the word “traditional Chinese architecture 中国传统建筑” or “traditional architecture 传统建筑,” which might suggest the separation between a “traditional” and a “modern.” He only spoke of “Chinese architecture” or “architectural tradition,” which implied that they were still alive and could be continued in the future. While emphasizing the universality and applicability of Chinese architectural tradition in the discussion of the structural method, Liang offered his view on the national style in more formal and practical terms by discussing the “grammar” of Chinese architecture. After showing two sketches of imaginary buildings of national architectural tradition – one vertical high-rise and the other horizontal multi-floored building, he continued,

[With these sketches, I] only want to illustrate two points: first, our traditional forms and “grammar” are able to handle buildings regardless of their sizes or heights; secondly, the number one issue to achieve national form is the general shape and outline 总轮廓 of buildings or building

¹⁸ Liang Sicheng, *Gu jianzhu luncong* (Essays on Ancient Chinese Architecture) (Macao: Shenzhou tushu gongsi), 82-83.

groups, then the proportion and rhythm of walls, doors, and windows, and the last thing is the decoration.¹⁹

If the structural method of Chinese architecture had more to do with the scientific issue of future socialist architecture, the form and “grammar” had more to do with the feeling of the people. Liang wrote in the same article,

“Fashi 法式,”²⁰ the handicraft method to handling architectural members created by the successive generations of laboring people on the bases of their experiences, that is, the “grammar” of architecture, has become the popular expression form loved by the people for thousands of years. The images of their combinations have become our proud art that is loved by, familiar to, and understandable for the Chinese nationalities. We must use and develop them to express our national thoughts and feelings.²¹

To avoid the misunderstanding that he was blindly admiring the old, Liang added immediately following the previous paragraph, “The same thing could be ‘cream 精华’ here but becomes ‘dross 糟粕’ when applied somewhere else.” However, the use of “fashi” in Liang’s writing to characterize Chinese architecture would have led people to believe that what Liang referred to as the “grammar” of Chinese architecture was the two official construction manuals published during the imperial time, namely, the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) *Ying-zao-fa-shi* 营造法式 and the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) *Ying-zao-ze-li* 营造则例. Liang had done ground-breaking research and published books

¹⁹ Liang Sicheng, “Zuoguo de jianzhu,” in *Liang Sicheng quanji* 5, 197-234.

²⁰ Fashi: model; Ying-zao-fa-shi: Song Dynasty construction manual by Li Jie (Li Mingzhong).

²¹ Liang Sicheng, “Zuoguo de jianzhu.”

on both manuals and called them “two ‘grammar textbooks’ of Chinese architecture” in one of his pre-1949 articles.²²

In Liang’s writings of the 1950s, the opposites for “national form” in architecture was “western.” He wrote, “Architecture of previous periods was for the enjoyment of a very small group of people, while today it is for the people; in the past, it is colonial, while in the future it should be national. We only adopt the advantage of western technology and do not follow their forms.”²³ He also called for “selective abandonment 扬弃 of the bare glass boxes of the international style.”²⁴ Although Liang was careful in his writing to avoid simplified understanding of his promotion of “national form” and unselective copying of historical architectural motifs, his prestige and influence in the architectural field still brought significant result in practice. National style flourished in early 1950s. The most important examples from this period in Beijing are the 1951 Di’anmen Official Dormitory Buildings 地安门机关宿舍, the 1954 Sanlihe Office Buildings for Four Ministries and One Committee 三里河四部一会楼, and the Friendship Hotel 友谊宾馆 of 1953. Like the “Chinese Classical Revivalism” of the 1920s and the “original Chinese forms” of the Nanjing period (1927-37), these buildings of national form used time-honored Chinese roof and decorative motifs under the curved eaves. Timber-structure frame was suggested by the elimination of walls and enlargement of windows in the floor directly under the big roofs. These “national form” building of the 1950s, however, were different from those of the previous periods in that the

²² Liang Sicheng, “Zhongguo jianzhu zhi liangbu wenfa keben,” in *Liang Sicheng quanji* 4.

²³ Liang Sicheng, “Zhi zhu de xin.”

²⁴ Liang Sicheng, “Zuguo de jianzhu.”

sculptural motifs on the roofs were significantly simplified and instead of covering the entire structure with tiled roofs, which the “Chinese Classical Revivalism” and architecture of “original Chinese forms” often did, the Chinese roofs of the 1950s were more like decorative motifs, only highlighting the significant sections of the buildings. (Figure 2.8)

Liang’s promotion of the “national form” was reflected in many aspects of architectural design along Chang’an Avenue. The West Building of Beijing Hotel in 1953 closely followed the old French Renaissance-revivalist Middle Building to which it was attached in proportion and façade division. In detail, however, “national forms” was adopted all over the façade. Two pairs of ancient *cuanjian*²⁵ style roofs decorated the two pavilions on the east and west ends of the top floor. The corners of glazed-tiled three-layer eaves turned slightly upward, which made the two pavilions look like ancient *Jingangbaozuota* pagodas. The corridor of the top floor also used ancient *queti*²⁶ under the beams, although the windows behind it were still all arched just like the 1917 building next to it. The three-arch entrance in the Middle Building was replaced here with the time-honored Chinese *pailou*.²⁷ However, both the Middle Building of 1917 and the West Building of 1953 had symmetrical façade to Chang’an Avenue, two pavilions on the ends of the top floor, and a protruding entrance. They are like a father and a son standing side by side. (Figure 2.9)

²⁵ *Cuanjian*: pointed roof without horizontal ridge in ancient Chinese architecture.

²⁶ *Queti*: bracket under beam.

²⁷ *Pailou*: see Chapter One.

Various proposals for the reconstruction of Tiananmen Square were made in 1954 and 1955. Most of the designs for the government buildings in the square proposed courtyards as the major solution to organize building complexes, which were considered by Liang as the most indigenously Chinese way in spatial organization. (Figure 2.10)

The Monument to People's Heroes of 1949-58 in Tiananmen Square was the project Liang directly participated. The final form of the Monument to People's Heroes, which was basically the design proposed by Liang and his wife Lin Huiyin and their Tsinghua designing group, was a gigantic stele with a base in the form of ancient two layer xumizuo²⁸ on the bottom and a roof in the traditional wudian²⁹ style on its top. "National forms" were used extensively here. But the designing process was not without controversy.

Strictly speaking, the Monument to People's Heroes was the first formal construction on Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue after the founding of the PRC. The idea of constructing a memorial monument for people who died for the Chinese revolution was conceived before the founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949. At first, there were different opinions even about the site for the monument. Some proposed the former drilling ground near Dongdan at the eastern end of the Historical East Chang'an Avenue; others proposed the top of the Babaoshan Hill in the western suburb, on the Tiananmen Gate-tower, the site of the Zhonghuamen Gate (the Damingmen Gate in Ming dynasty and Daqingmen Gate in Qing dynasty), etc. It was not until September 30, 1949 during the CCPCC 政协 meeting that the site was decided in the middle of Tiananmen

²⁸ Xumizuo 须弥座: high base with decorated mouldings.

²⁹ Wudian: pure hip roof in ancient Chinese architecture.

Square.³⁰ Mao and all the CCPCC members participated in the foundation-setting ceremony at the site in Tiananmen Square in the afternoon of the same day of the meeting.

Soon after, the Capital Planning Committee 都委会 called on proposals from all over the country for the design of the monument. About 170-180 designs³¹ were received. They can be classified into three general groups: horizontal plans spread on the ground to symbolize that all heroes were from the people; gigantic group statues to show the heroic images; and the vertical monuments in the form of ancient memorial stele or pagoda to symbolize the revolutionary spirit and great character 崇高品质 of people's heroes.³² The Chinese name of the "monument" in the Monument to People's Heroes is ji-nian-bei 纪念碑. "Ji-nian" means memorial and "bei" means stele. The ancient stele was the obvious choice for the monument. However, there is other memorial architecture that was translated into Chinese as "bei." For instance, obelisk was translated as "fang-jian-bei," which means square and pointed stele. Thus, monuments in the form of obelisk and even Roman memorial column were also among the proposals for vertical monuments.

For the designs collected in 1949, the style of the major monument was very diverse: horizontal terrace like the ancient altars enclosed by layer after layer of walls, a series of roofed gates with arches inside, a group of simple clean columns rising from a square base, vertical monuments with geometric shapes and Art-Deco details, and Soviet style column with a gigantic statue raising a red star on the top, etc.³³ (Figure 2.11) On

³⁰ For a more detailed analysis of the Monument, see: Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Apace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 24-50.

³¹ According to *Chang'anjie*, about 140 designs, p. 57.

³² Liang Sicheng, "Renmin yingxiong jinianbei sheji jingguo," in *Liang Sicheng quanji* 5, 462-464.

³³ *Chang'anjie*, 57.

the National Day of 1951, however, only designs and models in the form of Chinese stele were exhibited on the site for public opinions. In May 1952, the Monument to People's Heroes Construction Committee was founded and Liang was one of the two vice chairs.³⁴ By the time of October 1953, the lower part of the monument was relatively set, which was the ancient stele with a plinth standing on a terrace in the form of ancient two-layered xumizuo. The top of the monument was still in debate. Except for the wudian style Chinese roof by Liang and Lin, there were proposals for cuanjian style roof, group statue, wudian roof with a spire raising sickle and hammer 镰刀斧头, etc.³⁵ It was not until after another month's discussion that the final decision was made to use the wudian roof with no spire.

The final completed monument was full of "national forms," but none of the ancient Chinese monuments look much like the Monument to People's Heroes. After the monument was completed in Tiananmen Square, numerous monuments for communist martyrs were constructed in cities all over China, following its form almost exactly but in smaller scale. In this sense, Liang was right in claiming that China needed something that was both "Chinese" and "New" 中而新. The Monument to People's Heroes had achieved that. The previous small structure – the stele – was enlarged and the previous large member – the wudian roof, which is the highest rank among the ancient style Chinese roofs – was minimized. They were combined and put on a platform that reminds people of ancient altars for sacrifice. The joining part between the stele and the altar, however, reminds people of the plinth in western classical architecture and the general proportion

³⁴ Liang Sicheng, "Renmin yingxiong jinianbei sheji jingguo."

³⁵ *Chang'anjie*, 59.

was very similar to the lower part of a classical order. What was “new” about the monument, after all, was mostly western. (Figure 2.12)

1955 “Revivalism”

In March 28’s *People’s Daily* of the year 1955, an editorial was published entitled “Against the Squandering Phenomenon in Architecture.” The article called for more attention to the economic aspect in architecture and specifically pointed out,

The source for squandering in architecture is the formalism and revivalism in the architectural thoughts among some of the architects. ... They often developed “revivalism” and “aestheticism 唯美主义” in name of working against “structurism” and “continuing classical (Chinese) architectural tradition.”

Although the article did not name any specific architect, everyone in the field knew that the editorial was pointing to Liang. And following the *People’s Daily’s* initiation, articles criticizing Liang’s “revivalism” in architectural practice and education appeared one after another in *Architectural Journal* 建筑学报, the leading publication of the field in China. Condemnation of buildings with “big roofs” and their architects followed in journals and newspapers.³⁶

The background for such a policy change in Chinese architecture was partly economic and partly political. Official documents complained that constructing ancient style big roofs consumed more money than flat roofs. A more crucial trigger of such a

³⁶ Yang Yongsheng ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao* (1955-1957 Historical Documents of A Hundred Schools Contending in Architecture) (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe, zhongguo shuili shuidian chubanshe, 2003), 3-5.

policy change, however, might have been the political change in Soviet Russia. Stalin died in 1954. During the Twentieth CPSU (Communist Party Soviet Union) Congress, Khrushchev made formal criticism of Stalin and revised most of his policies, including the architectural policy. After 1955, “socialist content, national form” lost its status as the guiding architectural principle in the Soviet Union. Under the policy of “leaning to one side,” Chinese architecture could not have been uninfluenced by such a dramatic political change in Russia.

Most of these articles of 1955 China focus on criticizing the squandering caused by the promotion of “national form” and call attention to the economic aspect of architecture. They quoted the 1952 architectural policy “function, economy, and if the situation allows, pay attention to beauty 适用，经济，在可能的条件下注意美观” to claim that Liang and other architects following him were perusing formal beauty one-sidedly regardless of the economic condition of the newly born People’s Republic. The PRC architectural policy reminds people of the famous trinity of “function, stability, and beauty” of the Roman architect Marius Vitruvii Vitruvius (84-14 BCE).³⁷ However, by adding “if the situation allows,” the PRC policy implied that “economy” and “beauty” are mutual-exclusive. They were framed in a way that to achieve both simultaneously was impossible. Actually the earliest version of the PRC policy was even closer to the Vitruvius trinity. It was: first, function; second, stability, security; third, economic principle as main content; fourth, as one of the representations of culture, the beauty of the architectural forms will be considered in appropriate degree only when it is not

³⁷ Vitruvius Pollio, *De architectura* (Vitruvius: the ten books on architecture), Trans., Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover Publications, 1960).

against the previous three principles.³⁸ The only difference between this early PRC architectural policy and the Vitruvius trinity is the addition of economic consideration. The PRC policy partly reflects the economic situation during the early years of the new regime, partly reflects the Marxist ideology of “economic base” as the foundation of a society while culture and art are “superstructures.” The opposition between “economy” and “beauty” was rooted in the Marxist belief in the relationship between “economic base” and “superstructure.” In a society, “economic base” first, then “superstructure;” in architecture, “economy” had number one priority, and “beauty” was given secondary consideration.

In architectural practice, such connotations of the policy led architects to equate “beauty” with “decoration.” While for the western functionalist modernist architects, beauty was the result of functional soundness and economic appropriateness, for the Chinese architects of the 1950s “beauty” became the opposite of “function” and “economy.” To some extent, the equation of “beauty” with “decoration” by critics of Liang was reasonable juxtaposed with the buildings of “national form” produced before 1955. Ancient Chinese architectural features were basically used as decorative motifs in them regardless of Liang’s pleading for applying principles rather than copying details. The source for Liang’s “principles of Chinese architectural tradition,” after all, was the structural rationalism plus national patriotism. They were both of western source and products of China’s modernization process.

³⁸ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 393.

Some other scholars and architects wrote more theoretical articles, analyzing in some detail Liang's "mistakes" in abusing the principle of "national form, socialist content." In his 1955 article "Several criticisms on the architectural theory of formalist revivalism," Lu Sheng (1918-1977)³⁹ wrote,

Architecture has a two-fold nature: on one hand it is people's living material 物质资料; at the same time, it is the art to express the ideologies of social classes and have the (social) function 效能 to fulfill the spiritual needs of human being. For this reason, architecture serves human being with both its function 功能 and its beauty. This is the principle character of architecture. According to Professor Nicholayev 尼克拉也夫, Doctor of Architecture from Soviet Union, "the number one aspect for buildings is to serve the material benefit and economic benefit of a society, which is the principle and dominating aspect; its second aspect – aesthetic aspect – is only derivative."⁴⁰

This is the official definition for architecture and the base for most of the criticism in 1955. From this standing point, Lu continued to criticize Liang's "language analogy" of architecture. While Liang compared architecture with language and proposed that new Chinese national architecture could be developed by using time-honored Chinese motifs as "vocabularies" and structural methods as "grammar," Lu maintained that language, which does not belong to living material and has no class nature, is not an appropriate analogy for architecture. Instead, he proposed a "clothes analogy." He claimed clothes,

³⁹ Lu Sheng (1918-1977), a native of Nanjing, was an assistant researcher in Yinzaoxueshe between 1942 and 1944 after graduation from the Architecture Department at the Central University in Nanjing. From 1944 to 1952, Lu taught in the Architectural Departments at the Central University and Beijing University. In 1952, he became associate professor in architecture at the Tianjin University. In 1957, he was classified as "rightist." See: Yang Yongsheng ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 6.

⁴⁰ Lu Sheng, "Duiyu xingshi zhuyi fugu zhuyi jianzhu lilun de jidian pipan," (*JZXB*, 1955/3), in Yang Yongsheng ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 6-13.

which served human being in both life and aesthetics, was a better analogy for architecture. It was ridiculous to ask people to wear Han or Tang costume for “national form” in dressing simply because “they were proud clothes loved by, familiar to, and understandable for our Chinese nationalities,” Lu said. To compare architecture with language neglected the material nature of architecture and opened the door for “formalism.” To equate “national form” with ancient architectural form, especially to equate Chinese “grammar” in architecture with *fashi* in the Song dynasty manual, led to “revivalism.” This is Lu’s conclusion for Liang’s mistakes.

In this article, Lu defined architectural “form” as the outside image of a building, including its general layout, plan, elevation, and structural method, and architectural “content” as the building’s function, technology, and ideological thought 思想性. He claimed that the ideological thought in ancient Chinese architecture was not in individual structures but in the way they were combined to form a complex. He said Liang’s mistake was in simply focusing on the details of individual building but neglecting the feudal meanings of architectural groups in ancient Chinese architecture.⁴¹ Lu criticized that Liang’s embracement of “national form, socialist content” was just lip-service and the only result of Liang’s promotion of “national form” was nothing but revivalism. However, like anyone else in China at the time, Lu had very little to offer for “socialist content” except for saying “socialist content demands something new and creative and different from feudal national form.” Liang, of course, could not agree more with that.

⁴¹ Ibid., 11-12.

Although Lu's criticism to Liang and his "formalist revivalism" reflected more the political and policy change in 1955 than intellectual shift among architects, he correctly pointed out the hidden program of Liang's scholarly life, that is, what Liang claimed to be the authentic Chinese tradition in architecture was actually just a very small part of Chinese traditions, namely, the official style, or in Marxist term, the ruling class's tradition. Lu also pointed out that Liang had a revivalist historical view on architectural development, namely, "Qing was worse compared to Ming, Ming was worse compared to Yuan, Yuan was worse compared to Song, and Song was worse compared to Tang." After studying social developmental history, however, Liang reversed his view and declared that structurally speaking, Chinese architecture had been becoming better and better. Although Lu's point in his article was to show that Liang did not have an ideologically accurate historical view on architecture, he correctly grasped that for Liang, Tang Dynasty was the zenith of Chinese architecture. Rather than simply discovering as Liang claimed, he had been constructing, possibly unintentionally, the best of Chinese architectural tradition based on the ideal of the Tang (618-906) and Song (960-1279) official style architecture.

1956-57 "Modernism"

In April and May 1956, Mao initiated the "Two Hundreds Principle" movement – "Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools contend" – during the CCP Central Committee meeting and the seventh supreme State Council meeting 最高国务会议第七次会议. In order to carry out the "Two Hundreds Principle" in the field of

architecture, *architectural journal* opened a special column for blossoming and contending. Many leading architects and scholars voiced their views on current problems in the field.

Most of the articles expressed the author's discontent about the official dictate and political judgment on architectural style. They called such pejorative terms as "formalism," "worldism" 世界主义⁴² "revivalism," and "structurism" maozi 帽子, which were sometimes unfairly used to criticize people. "The Chinese word "maozi," literally meaning the hat, can be roughly translated as "label," like the label of post-modernism, high-tech, machine aesthetic, etc. However, compared with these labels in the west, maozi has a more political connotation. It is a two-fold pejorative term: first, the term of maozi means something bad or wrong; secondly, once the term is called a "maozi," it means the labeling of the term was an unjustified denunciation due to some specific political situation. For example, formalism is wrong; but "formalism" as a maozi means this term has been unjustly applied in the condemnation of someone. Thus, maozi is a pejorative description about the incorrect application of a pejorative term. Kou-maozi 扣帽子 literally means "to put a hat on." It describes the action of labeling a maozi. For me, maozi is the symbol for all the controversies on Chinese architecture from 1949 to the 1980s. It captures the chaos in theoretical discussion due to the uncritical use and abuse of concepts. Once the word "kou-maozi" became a maozi, arguments were completely lost in the hopeless cycle of crediting wrongly defined wrong words.

⁴² I made up the word "worldism" to translate the Chinese pejorative term "shi-jie-zhu-yi," which literary means internationalism. In architecture, it more or less refers to the international style. However, since in Chinese there is another term for "internationalism," guo-ji-zhu-yi 国际主义, which is a very positive word in Marxist ideology, I decided to not use it in this context.

One architect blamed,

Our view on architecture is too narrow and simple, with very little analytical research. Some critics, when they saw buildings with big roofs and thought they were palace and temple, they gave them a “revivalism” maozi; when they saw buildings with flat roofs without decoration, they called them square box and gave them a “structurism” maozi; when they saw Chinese decorative motifs but without big roofs, they thought they were non-Chinese non-western and gave them a “eclecticism” maozi. This narrow-minded, narrow-sighted 少见多怪 critical method made designers lost. They do not know where they should go. Although there are many roads, none of them is available. ... Now we are in the process of exploration for creation and need encouragements not limitations for the development of different schools and styles.⁴³

Although all the articles criticized all possible maozi, no one challenged the pejorative nature of these terms. No critical analysis of the source and exact meanings of terms like “revivalism,” “formalism,” and “eclecticism” was made. There were only blames on the “formalism” maozi by supporters for “national form” and criticism of “revivalism” maozi by supporters of “modern.” New maozi were invented. For instance, in supporting “national forms,” some architects condemned the previous unfair criticism on Liang in name of economic condition of the new China “one-sided emphasis on economy 片面经济观点.” The “Two Hundreds” movement, however, did bring more voices into the discourse of Chinese architecture in mid-1950s. One term that came to the fore-stage was the long-missed word “modern.”

⁴³ Dong Dayu, “Zai yici chuanguozuo taolunhui shang de fayan,” in Yang Yongsheng ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 37-38.

For many years after the founding of the People's Republic, in order to draw a separation line against the capitalist world, discourse on architecture in China had been using "socialist" instead of "modern" for something new that was to be created. A 1956 article by Jiang Weihong and Jin Zhiqiang⁴⁴ put "modernism" in the center for discussion, and the title of the article was "We want modern architecture." In this article, Jiang and Jin enthusiastically praised simple and clean shaped created by large glass windows, clean walls, and concrete frames. They mainly cited buildings from the socialist corps, for instance, Soviet Union and Hungary, to support their argument. However, they also added the example of Harrow New City's streets in England. They claimed that national differences in architecture became less and less discernable simply because of progress of society, and argued that in the communist society in the future, national identity in architecture would totally disappear. In this article, the opposite for "modern," however, was not "national" but "classical," and the equation for "modern" was "new." They argued that many classical buildings were beautiful but they belonged to the past. What we needed was modern beauty. The job for architects was to create new things. The article had Ruskinian tone in claiming that cement was ugly when it was used to make "xumizuo and chuihuamen"⁴⁵ but beautiful when it was used for shell and frame, and ended with a Corbusian expectation for new cars and new buildings for everyone in the communist society.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Jiang and Jin were both young students in the architecture department at Qinghua University at the time.

⁴⁵ Chuihuamen 垂花门: a type of gate in traditional Chinese architecture, mostly inside of a residential courtyard.

⁴⁶ Jiang Weihong and Jin Zhiqiang, "Women yao xiandai jianzhu 我们要现代建筑," in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 57-58.

There were different voices published in the same journal following Jiang and Jin's article. Some articles continued using the "formalism," "worldism" 世界主义, and "functionalism"⁴⁷ maozi criticizing Jiang and Jin's equation of "socialist" with new, and guarded "national form" by disparaging the boredom of modernist uniformity.⁴⁸ More voices supported Jiang and Jin. An article by Zhu Yulin supported "modern architecture" by equating it with "realism." Zhu maintained,

"Modern architecture" refers to such buildings: it is rooted in modern life, that is, its design is based on modern people's functional needs, modern materials, structural features, scientific principles, and modern construction technologies. The interior needs more light, thus we have big windows; the re-enforced concrete beam is stronger (than wooden beam), thus it replaces queti; we need to build faster, thus use mass-produced standardized members; with frame structure, exterior walls give way to glass curtain walls. All these are faithful to life, faithful to science, and thus belong to realism. If "functionalism" is to be faithful to function, and "structurism" is to be faithful to structure, they should be resisted.⁴⁹

Zhu also argued that architecture as a living and producing material 生活和生产资料 should not be equated with superstructure, thus the opposition of socialist and capitalist social systems should not be developed into the architectural field. He criticized

⁴⁷ Functionalism was translated into Chinese as "gong-neng-zhu-yi." Its linguistic similarity in Chinese with "gong-li-zhu-yi," which is a philosophical term for "utilitarianism" and suggests selfishness, made it a natural pejorative word at the time.

⁴⁸ Wang Deqian, Zhang Shizheng, and Ba Shijie, "Dui 'women yao xiandai jianzhu' yiwen de yijian 对《我们要现代建筑》一文的意见," Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 58-60.

⁴⁹ Zhu Yulin, "Dui 'dui 'women yao xiandai zhuyi' yiwen de yijian' de yijian 对《对《我们要现代建筑》一文的意见》的意见," in Yang Yongsheng ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 60-62.

bureaucratic interference in architecture, especially in Beijing, but used “revivalism” and “eclecticism” maozi to condemn “national form.”

Although the several years after Liang’s encouragement for “national form” started to be condemned in 1955 cannot be simplified as the rise of “modern architecture,” the relatively relaxed environment did leave its mark on Chang’an Avenue. This mark was the Telegraph Service Center in 1955-57.

The Telegraph Service Center⁵⁰ is the first tall building to the west of the N-S Axis on Chang’an Avenue. Although both the plan and the main façade on Chang’an Avenue are highly symmetrical, there are no “national forms” of ancient architectural motifs like the Chinese sloping roof or goulan and queti decorated in the exterior walls. The straight horizontal and vertical elements with bright colors of white, yellow and blue on the elevation make the facades look like abstract compositions in Mondrian paintings. The rhythmic arrangement of large windows and the exposed re-enforced concrete frame in the central section of the main façade would have satisfied the supporters of “modern architecture” as mentioned in previous paragraphs, although because of its location on Chang’an Avenue, it cannot be as free and asymmetrical as some of the examples they cited in their articles.⁵¹ There is a clock tower in the central part of the three horizontal sections, following the popular façade composition during the Stalinist Era in Soviet Russia; however, it is much more sprightly than the mainstream Soviet style of the time and the re-enforced concrete frame for the tower was also exposed. This building was

⁵⁰ The Telegraph Service Center was designed by Lin Leyi (1917-1989).

⁵¹ For architecture in Beijing after 1949, supporters for modern architecture cited Hua Lanhong’s Children’s Hospital in 1954, Yang Tingbao’s Peace Hotel in 1953, and some other buildings as examples. These buildings have asymmetrical plans and clean facades. Since they are not located on Chang’an Avenue, I am not going to analyze them in this dissertation.

considered by some contemporary scholars a successful step in the exploration of a “Chinese Modern Style.”⁵² (Figure 1.23)

Another major construction on Chang’an Avenue in 1957 was the Central Broadcast Building⁵³ at the western end of the Chang’an Avenue Proper.⁵⁴ Contrasting sharply with the Telegraph Service Center, the Central Broadcast Building was a simplified Soviet style architecture. As one of the 156 Soviet-aided projects, influence from the “socialist elder brother” on this building was obvious. This building bears many characteristics of the Soviet monumental style although the sculptural decoration on the wall is considerably reduced in contrast to examples from Russia. The top of the tower is a simplified Western lantern although here instead of crowning a dome, it is on top of the flat roof. (Figure 1.24, 2.13)

The common feature for these two buildings of 1957 is that they are both devoid of “national forms” of ancient Chinese architectural motifs.

Political Movements and Chang’an Avenue Architecture in 1955-59

For many scholars, politics played the most significant role in Chinese architecture of the PRC era before 1980s. Mao’s casual comments on architecture were considered to have decisive influence on urban changes during this period.⁵⁵ There is much truth in the assessment. Such an opinion, however, implies that architectural

⁵² Zou Denong, 191.

⁵³ The Central Broadcast Building was designed by Yan Xinghua (1921-).

⁵⁴ For definition of “Chang’an Avenue Proper,” see: Introduction.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing*, 8, 28.

practice during this period was passively driven by political pressure and uncontrollable forces from outside of the architectural discipline. This is far from the truth. On the contrary, politics was an integral part of architecture, and architects and scholars of the period were quite consciously discussing the political influence in architecture with no derogatory overtones. They had been trying to define the political dimension in architecture and to find some answer for the guide of architectural practice. Self-conscious inclusion of political dimension in architectural discourse provided a way to go beyond the formal debate on “national” and “modern.”

For the five years before the tenth anniversary of the People’s Republic in 1959, both the architectural theory and building practice on Chang’an Avenue shed much light on the architectural discourse of the period.

The class nature of architecture

Scholars and architects in late-1950s self-consciously incorporated political aspects in their discussion of theoretical issues in architecture.

According to Marxism, architecture, as a form of art and superstructure of society, bore class brand in class society. Since no architecture was devoid of class nature, socialist architecture was not to avoid class stand but to express the class view of the most advanced class in history, namely, the proletariat. But what was proletarian view on architecture? How did architecture become proletarian?

Some scholars argued that in terms of function and technology, architecture had no class nature. Class nature could only be reflected in its beauty. In other words, architecture had class nature in its spiritual aspect, not its material aspects.

Political line in architecture in the 1950s was mostly reflected in the class analysis of beauty. According to Marxist theory, beauty had class nature. In class society, different classes had different views on beauty. What considered as beautiful by the ruling class was not necessarily perceived in the same way by the ruled. For instance, the Forbidden City was beautiful and magnificent in emperors' view; for the laboring people or officials to be beheaded outside of the Meridian Gate, it could be intimidating and terrible. Thus, in the concept of beauty, personal feelings in observation of life and expression of love and hatred based on certain class standpoint were already included. This was called the "party nature" of beauty 美的党性.⁵⁶ In terms of function and technology, since building could serve any people regardless of their class status, architecture has no class nature.⁵⁷

Other scholars' opinion on class nature of architecture was just opposite. They argued that architectural function had class nature while the standard of beauty was more or less universal. Different classes had totally different requirements for architectural functions. Ruling class needed something for enjoyment and making profit, while the laboring classes would be satisfied if their bottom line for life was covered. The reaction

⁵⁶ Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao* 95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

to beauty, on the contrary, was mostly intuitive. Every one could enjoy the beauty of the former imperial garden Yiheyuan today, they argued.⁵⁸

No official version of the class nature in architecture was available. Political line in architecture, both in practice and theory, however, needed to be considered in dealing with historical structures during reconstruction of Beijing, including those on Chang'an Avenue. The ambiguity in class nature of architecture also provided flexibility to the reconstruction of the ancient capital, making the decision to keep or demolish certain structures more or less arbitrary.

Tiananmen Gate-tower, as the former central gate to the Imperial City, was feudal in class nature. However, since Mao announced the founding of PRC on it, it became a symbol of the People's Republic and acquired new class identity. Tiananmen Square was also feudal in class nature. However, since mass celebrations during the PRC era happened there every year since 1949, it also acquired new meaning and class status. The imperial T-shaped Tiananmen Square was too small for the new functional requirement of mass assembly in socialist society, thus it need to be expanded to be able to hold more people and become a socialist public square. Traditional neighborhoods along Chang'an Avenue needed to be cleared away and replaced with socialist monuments. Although they were inhabited by laboring people during imperial times, they bore the prints of the black side of the feudal society. The Forbidden City, on the contrary, though inhabited by the imperial families, was constructed by laboring people and thus a symbol of people's wisdom and power.

⁵⁸ Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao* 109.

Another political issue in late-1950s was architecture for whom. Since 1942, after Mao's famous Yan'an talk, "Art to serve the people," became the guideline for all art workers and "art for art's sake" was condemned as bourgeoisie. For architecture, to serve the people was also the general guideline. This principle, however, was too general to be a practical guideline for architects. During the "Symposium on residential architecture standards and architectural art" in June 1959, when the anniversary projects were being constructed, Liang said,

Beijing's anniversary projects offered us unprecedented opportunity to display our talent and apply our knowledge in architectural practice. Such a good result is due to that the Party clearly pointed out that these buildings were to serve politics in the very beginning when the task was first assigned. And the Party asked that all the 600 million Chinese people should participate in the design. At the same time, the Party also asked us to express national form in architecture. In the last, some architects dare not even mention the four characters of "min-zu-xing-shi" (national form). Now they feel a little bolder. But what is national form. Among architects, you are asking me and I am asking you. Of course, some people will immediately think of dougong, qieti, and big roofs. More people do not agree with such an approach. It is only because that the Party called on our 600 million people to design together that this issue was soon clarified. Designing workers took the mass line, especially those young architects and students in universities. They were deep into the people in exploration of both architectural function and form, to know what they need in function and to understand what they like in image. Now we can say that we just found the way and entered the door. From people's requirements, we understand that people always want architecture to have national form. However, we can also understand that the national style they want is not a

copy of old buildings. They have different requirements on different architecture. For instance, they do not want big roofs in front of the Tiananmen Gate-tower [referring to the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History], but want them on the National Gallery. This tells us that people want different forms according to different architectural contents.⁵⁹

Liang's talk expressed the disoriented situation Chinese architects faced in the second half of 1950s when architectural discourse shifted from formal discussion to class analysis. The new theoretical dichotomy of form and function/content served such a shift in two ways: on one hand, it contextualized the previous controversies about "national" and "modern" within larger social political backgrounds; on the other hand, it carried on the general principle of "art serving the people" in more specific terms. The formal discussion on "national" and "modern" gave way to new theoretical framework. While "national" and "modern" were like the yin/yang relationship confined in the unity of formal modernization, the dichotomy of form and function/content expanded the modernization project to include the entire architectural practice. The shift of theoretical orientation from formal to social dimensions prepared ground for involvement of large-scale political movements in architectural practice.

⁵⁹ Liang Sicheng, "On tradition and creation as raised by the policy 'utility, economy and beauty if situation allows'," in *Complete Collection of Liang Sicheng (volume 5)*, 307-8.

Dichotomies

Dichotomy is an important useful tool for people to grasp the features of subjects being analyzed by dividing materials into to mutually exclusive categories. Once dichotomy becomes an established way of thinking, however, it will forces people to see the world in dichotomies. Dichotomy simplifies the world but at the same time neglects the connection and interchangeability of categories. To make the situation worse, once one side of a dichotomy is considered primary and the other secondary, dichotomy thinking will quickly shift totally to one side and neglect the other in practice.

The dichotomy of form and function had different expressions in the discourse, namely, the dichotomies of art and science, form and content, function and beauty, etc. These dichotomies were interrelated and mutually strengthened one another. Architecture was considered as both science and art. There were architectural science, which dealt with material, structure, construction, acoustics, light, temperature, etc, and architectural art, which dealt with form. The former was more related to the function of a building and the latter had more to do with its beauty. As the very definition of architectural art implied a natural connection with form and beauty, architectural content, which was a highly debated term, more or less acquired a closer affiliation with function and the engineering side. Thus, we got a general relationship of these dichotomies:

Beauty	Function
Architectural Art	Architectural Science
Architectural Form	Architectural Content
Emphasized in theory	Emphasized in practice

The general view about architecture in the PRC of the late 1950s was best summarized by an article with the title “On architectural art, beauty and national form” written by Zhai Lilin in October 1954 and published in the leading publication of the field, *Architectural Journal*. In this article, Zhai first defined the essential nature 本质的特征 of architecture as a unity of function and beauty. In his words, architecture had a double character of function and beauty. It had a functional nature because it provided living material and produced tools for people; and it had an aesthetic nature because as a social ideology it fulfilled human beings' spiritual need for beauty. (Marx: Human beings created the world according to the rule of beauty.) The two parts in the dichotomy in the nature of architecture were not equal: the functional nature was primary; the beautiful nature was secondary.⁶⁰

The double character of architecture determined that there were two different categories of architectural knowledge: architectural science, which was about the functional architecture as living material and producing tools; and architectural art, which was about beautiful architecture as social ideology. In the dichotomy of architectural knowledge, just as in the dichotomy of architectural nature, the two parts were also not equal. The author emphasized six points that made architecture very different from other forms of art like literature, music and fine arts. First, architecture is not pure art but an art combined with practical function; second, to build consumed huge amount of social wealth, thus architecture was directly related with economic issues; third, architecture was first an engineering issue and the artistic issue was only secondary; fourth,

⁶⁰ Zhai Lilin, “Lun jianzhu yishu yu mei ji minzu xingshi (On architectural art, beauty and national form),” *JZXB*, 1955/1; in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 93-96.

architecture enjoyed less freedom compared to other arts due to its functional requirements, economic and technological situations; fifth, since architecture was expensive, the best architectural works of a society often belonged to the ruling classes, and there was no proletarian architectural art before the proletariat took the political power; sixth, since architecture was a material tool in economic activity, the development of producing force would directly and immediately result in the change of architectural art, while other arts' responds to producing force were much slower and indirect.⁶¹

Such a method of dichotomy was from the Marxist theory of contradiction. In his famous philosophical works *On Contradictions* 矛盾论, Mao succinctly delineated the relationship among such key Marxist philosophical terms as material, movement, contradiction, and aspect. The world is material; material is in movement; movement contains contradictions. There are many contradictions but in a specific movement, there is a pair of primary contradiction. The two counterparts in the contradiction are not equal: one is dominating and thus the primary aspect of the contradiction; the other is dominated and thus the secondary aspect of the contradiction.⁶² Such a theoretical framework was also the base for the discussion on architectural content and form.

In his 1955 article "On architectural art, beauty and national form," Zhai Lilin defined architectural content as practical function, scientific technology, and ideological thoughts. He wrote,

As I see it, first of all, architecture is the material tool to fulfill the living and producing needs of human being, and the function (功能) appropriate

⁶¹ Ibid., 96-97.

⁶² Mao Zedong, "Maodun lun (On Contradictions)," in *Mao Zedong xuanji, yi juan ben*, 274-312.

to its utilitarian purpose should be its content. Secondly, appropriate material and structure must be applied to architecture, thus technological requirements of material and structure should also belong to architecture content. Finally, as an art in nature and effect (作用), architecture must reflect specific social ideology. For this reason, architectural content should also include ideologies (思想性) that reflect some kind of real life. Function, technology, and ideology are three types or three different components of architectural content, united in one single architectural form.⁶³

Thus for Zhai, architectural content included almost everything except for form. The Marxist dichotomy of form and content was efficient in analysis of some art forms like literature and painting (non-abstract painting). When applied to other arts, for instance, architecture and music, the dichotomy of form and content met difficulties, since architecture and music were not narrative and could not convey specific ideas. In order to keep the consistency in art theory, a counterpart for form must be named and as a result everything that might have influence on architectural form was grouped under architectural content.

Some scholars caught the pitfall of indiscriminate application of the dichotomy of form and content in every art. In their collective article “On Zhai Lilin’s ‘On architectural art, beauty and national form’,” Chen Zhihua and Ying Ruocong argued that saying “function, technology, and ideology are three types or three different components of architectural content, united in one single architectural form” was equal to saying “pigments, canvas, wooden frame, technique, and ideological thoughts are different types

⁶³ Zhai Lilin, “Lun jianzhu yishu yu mei ji minzu xingshi,” 93-107.

or components of content united in the form of an oil painting.” They also hinted that architecture cannot be treated simply as art like painting. Chen and Ying did not offer their definition of content and form. However, they pointed out that Zhai’s mistake was the result of over-simplified application of the basic Marxist principle of the dialectic unification of form and content. Dialectic materialism was applied too rigidly and generally in architecture with no specific analysis of the relationship between architecture and society. They also pointed out that form and content were interchangeable in specific situations. They called for specific analysis of architectural development in socialist society instead of oversimplified application of Marxist principles, although, they added, the categorical pair of form and content would be helpful for our understanding of architecture.⁶⁴

Other scholars maintained that architectural content should include only ideological thought. They argued that, according to Marxist theory, form was the expression of content; if architectural content include function, technology and ideology, then architectural form was to express function, technology and ideology. But this was obviously wrong, since:

The basic task for architecture is not to express function, but to serve practical requirements like what we need for machinery equipments, food, clothes, etc.; technology is not the objective of expression but the necessary tool for the realization of architecture; form is beautiful only when architectural form perfectly expressed lofty ideological content. ...

⁶⁴ Chen Zhihua and Ying Ruocong, “Ping zhai lilin ‘lun jianzhu yishu yu mei ji minzu xingshi’ (On Zhai Lilin’s ‘On architectural art, beauty and national form)’,” *JZXB*, 1955/3; in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 107-114.

Thus, it is not appropriate to confuse the basic task of architecture and tools to realize architecture (with architectural content).⁶⁵

Although there were different views on how to define architectural content and some other details about the nature of architecture, every participator in the controversy agreed that in general, the dichotomies of function and beauty, science and beauty, content and form were the main approach in thinking and discussing architecture. In fact, the dichotomy itself was not something to be discussed. They acquired the status of prerequisite for thinking. Because of its dominating status was invisible in the discourse, to challenge it was impossible.

Compared to architectural content, there was little controversy on the definition of architectural form. Every participant agreed that the definition of architectural form was relatively simple and obvious. It referred to the appearance of a building, which included the group arrangement, plan, and elevation. Such a consensus, however, immediately became problematic as soon as a formal style was adopted in practice.

As the official style for all arts imported from the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the formal characteristics of “socialist realism” were unambiguous in painting and sculpture. To designate it as a style in architecture, however, was misleading. As the title of the style suggests, “socialist realism” includes both content, which is socialist, and form, which is realistic. Thus, the controversies on the style of “socialist realism” immediately turned back to the debate about content and form. There were two different understandings about what “socialist realism” was in architecture. One view equated “socialist realism”

⁶⁵ Zhou Xiangyuan, “Lun jianzhu yishu de neirong – yu zhai lilin tongzhi shangque (On architectural content – to negotiate with comrade Zhai Lilin),” *JZXB*, 1955/3; in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 133-135.

with “national form, socialist content.”⁶⁶ Another view maintained that “socialist realism” was a creation methodology in literature and art based on the reality of socialist life, while “national form, socialist content” was the directional principle for proletarian cultural construction.⁶⁷ It seemed that there was no way out of the cycle of the dichotomies.

The source for the dichotomy of form and content was the Marxist philosophy of dialectic materialism. Marxism inherited from German philosophical tradition dichotomies as the key concept for understanding social and natural phenomena. Such dichotomies were called categories 范畴 in Marxist philosophy, including material and spirit, productive forces and productive relationships, economic base and superstructure, etc. The two parts in a dichotomy are mutually dependent on each other for existence and interchangeable according to changing situations. For instance, when dealing with social production, productive force was content while productive relationship was form; when dealing with social structure, productive relationship was content while such superstructure as political system, legal system, and ideology were forms.⁶⁸

In this sense, content and form in architecture should be a way of understanding instead of the base for a policy to guide practice. In his 1955 article, after his definition of architectural content as unification of “function, technology, and ideology,” Zhai continued:

⁶⁶ Zhai Lilin, “lun jianzhu yishu yu mei ji minzu xingshi,” in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 102.

⁶⁷ Chen and Ying, “Ping zhai lilin ‘lun jianzhu yishu yu mei ji minzu xingshi’,” in Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 112-113.

⁶⁸ Yang Yongsheng, ed., *1955-1957 jianzhu baijia zhengming shiliao*, 124.

These three types of content do not weigh equally of cause. Function and technology belong to the material soundness of architecture and thus architecture's material content; while ideology belongs to spiritual aspect and thus architecture's spiritual content. Since the primary task for architecture is to serve people's life and producing activities and artistic product to enrich people's spiritual life is only secondary, it is obvious that, generally speaking, functional and technological contents are primary and basic, while ideological content is secondary and derivative.⁶⁹

According to such a Marxist approach in the analysis of architectural content and form, form was secondary compared to content; among different aspects of content, ideological content was secondary compared to functional and technological contents. Such a theoretical framework put more emphasis on the engineering side of architecture while considering architectural art simply as extra decoration.

Theory and practice, thus, formed a pair of hidden dichotomy, which was not visible in the documents from the 1950s. They suffered a serious separation. What was being heatedly debated in theory was not really cared about in practice. As a result, theoretical issues about style and form were not really explored in practice. In theoretical discussion, scholars and architects treated architecture mainly as an art, though a special form of art. In practice and the official propaganda, however, architecture was mainly considered as an engineering work and science, and the architectural art was mostly considered as attaching decoration onto the surface of an engineering work, like to beautify the wall with painting. For the anniversary projects in 1958-59, almost all the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 98.

official documents and propaganda on the monuments were about the engineering achievements and construction speed and quality.

“Anniversary projects” and Chang’an Avenue

For the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the PRC in 1959, about a dozen important national projects were planned in 1958 to be constructed in Beijing. Some of them were planned as meeting and hosting places during the National Day periods and after, but most of them were planned simply as exhibiting places to display the ten years of socialist achievements in different aspects of the society. And, most importantly, these projects themselves would be part of the most significant achievements on display. They were originally called “anniversary projects” 国庆工程. Most of the anniversary projects were on Chang’an Avenue. According to Zheng Guangzhong, professor of Urban Planning in the School of Architecture at the Tsinghua University, who has participated in all the major Chang’an Avenue planning after 1949, all the anniversary projects were originally to be located on Chang’an Avenue in 1958. It was only after the originally planned projects could not be finished in time that buildings located somewhere else in the capital were added.⁷⁰ Thus, if most of these projects were exhibition halls for the achievements of the past ten years of socialist construction, Chang’an Avenue was the exhibition space for these exhibition halls.

When the winning communist regime moved into Zhongnanhai in early 1949, Historical Chang’an Avenue was a street full of commercial activities. It was not a very

⁷⁰ Interview with Zheng Guangzhong, October 24, 2005, Beijing.

prestigious street and people living and working there were mostly from the lower levels of society. There were many vendors and temporary shops 摊贩 between West Three-Arch Gate and the intersection of Nanchangjie, the most central section of Chang'an Avenue.⁷¹ Because Tiananmen Square was designated as the place to announce the birth of new China and Zhongnanhai the seat for central government, the communist regime was determined to change the scene along Chang'an Avenue into a window to display the new appearance of a socialist capital. In order to get the vendors out of Chang'an Avenue and make it a more elegant urban boulevard, the newly arrived communist Beijing Municipal Government raised the tax for businesses in this area. A petition letter 呈状 of August 5, 1949 – before the official founding of the PRC on October 1st – signed by some fifty vendors, including people selling millet gruel, fried dough sticks, etc., was submitted to the Beijing Government asking to keep the tax on these vendors along Chang'an Avenue the same as taxes in other areas of the city. The communist government made a harsh response. official comments written in red ink in the original petition letter stated that if the vendors felt the tax was too high, they should move somewhere else. The actual writer of the petition, and possibly the initiator of the protest, Xu Jiwu made formal confession, repenting that “we should not have used the same method as dealing with the former Guomindang regime to deal with the people's government” and promising that “something like this will never happen again.” He was released on bail.⁷²

⁷¹ “Di qi qu chang'anjie shulin nei tanfan xu jiwu lianhe ge tanfan juming qingqiu jian zhengdijuan de yuancheng he tanbaishu 第七区西长安街树林内摊贩徐辑五联合各摊贩具名请求减征地捐的原呈和坦白书 (Original petition letter for lowering tax by Xu Jiwu and other vendors and shop keepers in the woods at Chang'an Avenue in District Seven and their formal confession),” August 1948, BMA: 45-4-29.

⁷² Ibid.

Chang'an Avenue was designated as scenery area in 1949.⁷³ This was the first step in the development of Chang'an Avenue into a national showcase. After the founding of the PRC, whenever significant national celebration dates came, the Chinese authorities would claim to “roughly complete” Chang'an Avenue.⁷⁴ The construction of the “anniversary projects” for the tenth anniversary in 1959 was the first major endeavor for such a completion.

“Ten Great Buildings” was a later designation. Number “ten” was possibly adopted to show the grandeur of the project and suggest completeness of the endeavor, although some of the originally planned anniversary projects were never completed. In a report of February 23, 1959, about seven months before the national day when the anniversary projects were supposed to be completed, there were altogether 16 projects in plan. They were classified into three categories: 11 must-build projects 必成项目 (two previously not anniversary projects), two hopefully-build projects 期成项目 and three postponed projects 推迟项目. The must-build projects included the Conference Hall for People's Congress 人大大会堂 (later renamed the Great Hall of the People by Mao after completion; the popular English translation the Great Hall will be used referring to this building before and after its renaming), the Revolution and History Museums, Agricultural Exhibition Hall, PLA (People's Liberation Army) Museum, Palace of Nationalities, National Guest House, Stadium, Chang'an Hotel, Oversea Chinese Union

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Guanyu chang'anjie gajian guihua he gajian jihua buzhou de qingshi baogao 关于长安街改建规划和改建计划步骤的请示报告 (Report to ask for instructions about the reconstruction plan and strategies of Chang'an Avenue),” January 1964, BMA: 131-党 9-16-139.

Building, and Beijing Railway Station. Two of them, the Stadium and the Oversea Chinese Union Building, which were not on Chang'an Avenue, were originally planned to be finished in 1958 and were not among the original anniversary projects. Since they had not been completed in time, they were added as anniversary projects to be completed for the tenth anniversary in 1959. The two hopefully-build projects were the Science Hall and the National Gallery, which were started but later stopped due to the insufficient supply of construction materials. The three postponed projects were the National Theatre, the Movie Palace, and the Xidan Department Store, which had not been started yet.⁷⁵

The “Great Leap Forward” movement and the “anniversary projects”

To some extent, the “anniversary projects” in 1959 were products of the “Great Leap Forward” movement. As a term formally appeared in late 1957, the “Great Leap Forward” movement emphasized fast speed in social transformation and economic development. Moreover, contrary to the Marxist belief of “economic base determining superstructure,” social transformation was believed to be able to liberate huge productive forces and lead to fast industrialization. Within a year, from 1957 to 1958, the entire social structure of China was reorganized. At the end of 1958, 99 percent of the peasant population was organized into 26,000 people’s communes, the basic units for communist society. During the Second Meeting of the Eighth National Congress in May 1958, the

⁷⁵ “Guanyu guoqing gongcheng de huibao tigang 关于国庆工程的汇报提纲 (Draft report about the Anniversary Projects),” February 23, 1959, BMA: 47-1-70.

general line of “constructing socialism more, faster, better, cheaper” was passed, as well as the ambitious aim to surpass UK in major industrial products within 15 years.⁷⁶

The “Great Leap Forward” movement succeeded in the constructing several monuments to display the great achievements of the new socialist regime within an astonishingly short period of time, even if all the other aims in social and industrial developments failed. Like the “Great Leap Forward” movement, the construction of the “anniversary projects” emphasized the power of people’s will and spirit in architectural achievement. Design and construction speed was the key. All of the “Ten Great Buildings” were completed within ten months, including both design and construction, although this was achieved only by cutting some originally planned projects. The reason for the cancellations, according to official report, was mainly due to the rise of costs and lack of materials. More architectural areas were added and more money was spent than expected. In fact, the timely completion of some of the projects was a miracle. As late as February 23, 1959, the Conference Hall for People’s Congress was considered the project least likely to be finished in time, especially the central great auditorium part.⁷⁷ After that, from February to August 1959, detailed tasks for every single day were planned and daily newsletters were printed detailing the targeted task, the condition of its accomplishment, issues to be addressed, problems to be solved and slogans calling for more revolutionary spirit in work.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ For details about the social political aspects of the “Great Leap-forward” movement, see: Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 574-582.

⁷⁷ “Guanyu guoqing gongcheng de huibao tigang.”

⁷⁸ “Remin dahuitang gongcheng shengchan ribao 人民大会堂工程生产日报 (Production daily reports on the Conference Hall for People’s Congress),” February to August, 1959, BMA: 125-1-1277-1.

In the building procedure, construction instead of design was highlighted. In the design procedure, engineering achievements instead of architectural design were emphasized. For the general people and political leaders, if architectural form and aesthetic issues were relatively foreign, the height, size and construction speed were much more tangible standards in architectural achievement. The Great Hall of the People, for instance, spanned a north-south dimension of 336 meters and an east-west dimension of 174 meters. It occupied a site of 15 hectares, with a total architectural area of 171,800 square meters and total volume of 1,600,000 cubic meters.⁷⁹ In total, 433,150 cubic meters of earth were removed for the construction of the Great Hall. And it consumed 127,700 cubic meters of re-enforced concrete, 400,000 square meters of surface plasters, 71,600 square meters of all sorts of floor woods, marble 24,000 square meters, granite 27,000 square meters, etc.⁸⁰ Organized mass visits to such a gigantic monument immediately followed its completion. Most people were impressed by its huge size, especially the interior. The building was acclaimed as the victory of the “general road-line” of the party and Mao’s “Great Leap Forward” movement.⁸¹

During this period, design was mainly considered as a minor part of building production. To serve the fast speed of construction, architectural design had to be fast as well. To catch up with the “Great Leap Forward” spirit, “fast design and fast

⁷⁹ “Renmin dahuitang sheji gaikuang 人民大会堂设计概况 (Design outline of the Great Hall),” September 1963, BMA: 47-1-301-1.

⁸⁰ “Quanguo renmin daibiao dahuitang gongcheng de jiben qingkuang 全国人民代表大会工程的基本情况 (Basic facts about the Great Conference Hall of the National People’s Congress),” August 27, 1959, BMA: 47-1-92-1.

⁸¹ The voices were not unanimous. There were people not very interested in the exterior appearance of the building. Some complained about the contrast between such a grand building and the poor living condition of the common folks. See, BMA: 2-20-101.

construction” became a fashionable slogan in the architectural field. In architectural design, mass production methods were invented. Standardized building units were drawn on separate transparencies so that they could be used repeatedly for different projects, organized into different compositions, and at the same time produced blue-prints directly. Design had to catch up with the construction speed. Almost all the major “anniversary projects” were constructed while the designing and preparation of materials were going on 边设计，边备料，边施工。⁸²

The masses were mobilized in a military way in order to complete some of the key “anniversary projects.” For the Great Hall of the People, construction workers were provided by many different provinces. Altogether, eighteen provinces and autonomous regions sent 7,785 excellent workers participating in the construction campaigns.⁸³ Construction materials were also collected from all over the country. Aside from Beijing, other 23 provinces and zhixiashi⁸⁴ provided architectural materials. The construction work was considered as military campaigns and the construction teams were organized in military terms.⁸⁵ The strategies for faster completion of tasks include such military terms as “be clear on the target, focusing predominantly superior forces, and charge to the critical spot 明确重点，集中优势兵力，重点突击。”⁸⁶

⁸² Beijingshi guihua guanliju shejiyuan renmin dahuitang shejizu, “Remin dahuitang (The Great Hall),” in *JZXB*, 1959/9-10, 23.

⁸³ “Remin dahuitang zhengzhi sixiang gongzuo zongjie, chugao 人民大会堂政治思想工作总结（初稿）(Summary of the political thought works in the Great Hall),” October 10, 1959, BMA: 125-1-1226-1.

⁸⁴ Zhixiashi 直辖市: Municipality directly under the Central Government.

⁸⁵ “Guanyu nongzhanguan, gemin lishi bowuguan gongcheng jiben zongjie he gongren tiyuguan gongcheng yanshou baogao 关于农展馆，革命历史博物馆工程基本总结和工人体育馆工程验收报告 (Basic summary of the Agriculture Exhibition Hall and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History projects and the acceptance report on the Works’ Gymnasium project),” January to March, 1959, BMA: 47-1-90-1.

⁸⁶ “Remin dahuitang zhengzhi sixiang gongzuo zongjie, chugao.”

The Design of the Great Hall

The design of the Great Hall of the People, just like its construction, also took a “mass line.”⁸⁷ The scheme collection was nation wide. In September 1958, design schemes for the Great Hall were summoned from all over the country. Eighty-four plan schemes and 189 elevation schemes were collected from 34 architectural designing units, among which were Miesian style glass boxes, Soviet style central towers, and ancient Chinese big roofs. In September 1958, leading architects from 17 provinces gathered in Beijing to discuss the schemes, chaired by Premier of the State Council Zhou Enlai. The scheme by Zhao Dongri and Shen Qi was chosen. After the scheme was decided, Zhang Bo was assigned as the chief architect for the Great Hall project.⁸⁸ Such a process of collective creation in architecture and urban planning, in which the winner of the scheme competition was not necessarily to serve as the chief architect and the final production often compromised many different views and could be a eclectic new scheme combining advantages from different schemes, was very common in the first three decades of the PRC. Chapter Two will explore such a collective creation process by looking closely into the 1964 planning of Chang’an Avenue.

The final product of the Great Hall was a stylistic compromise according to the correct architectural form of the time. When the policy of “national form, socialist content” was upheld by Liang, asymmetrical buildings without extra decorations were

⁸⁷ For analysis of the term “mass line” 群众路线 and the ideologies underlying it, see Chapter Three on collective approach in architectural practice.

⁸⁸ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 431.

criticized as “structurism” and “formalism;” when Liang was criticized as squandering in his architectural thoughts, buildings with Chinese roofs were condemned as “revivalism” and another form of “formalism.” But finally the simplified functionalist boxes without big roofs were also criticized as “one-sided emphasis on economy.” Chinese architects of late 1950s had to avoid all the above mentioned formal associations.

The form of the Great Hall as completed in September 1959 was a Soviet style neoclassical building but without a central tower, a building full of “national forms” but without traditional Chinese roofs, and a complex of flat-roof boxes enclosed by colonnades and with rich decorations on façades. Like the neoclassical monuments built in the Soviet Union, the exterior of the Great Hall of the People featured solid walls and monumental colonnades. All four façades were symmetrical. The main façade facing Tiananmen Square was horizontally divided into five sections, with the central and end sections being emphasized. The solid masonry façades, however, were carefully designed to display Chinese national character. (Figure 1.27) The description for the Great Hall by the Beijing Municipal Architectural Design Institute explains,

Like that of the conventions for Chinese architecture, the elevation (of the Great Hall) has a tripartite composition: eave section, walls plus colonnade, and base. We did not use big roofs in the eave section, but flat straight eaves were slightly raised (at corners). The distance between columns of the mingjian⁸⁹ is larger than that of the cijian.⁹⁰ The proportion

⁸⁹ Mingjian 明间: central bay in traditional Chinese architecture.

⁹⁰ Cijian 次间: side bays in traditional Chinese architecture.

of the order⁹¹ was developed on the basis of both western orders and Chinese orders. The base is inspired by the form of traditional Chinese xumizuo.⁹²

The wording of the report was carefully chosen to avoid unfavorable associations with styles previously being criticized. Although Chinese character was emphasized in the report, the author(s) especially reminded the readers that Chinese architecture could not be equaled to big roofs. Instead of the big Chinese roof seen so frequently in the mid-1950s, here, the Chineseness of the Great Hall was carried on by the structural features (at least in appearance), proportion and details. In response to Mao's call for taking essences from "ancient time, contemporary world, China, and abroad," the word western was used. Modern, on the other hand, was avoided since it was still a sensitive word in late 1950s.

When both "national form" and "modern" had some undesirable associations in previous architectural discourse, a new system of terminology had to be invented, and was. This was Liang's categorization of architectural style in terms of Chinese, Western, new, and old. During the conference on the "anniversary projects" in 1959, he proposed that there were four different ways to create buildings in terms of architectural forms: Chinese and old, Chinese and new, Western and old, and Western and new. The best combination, Liang maintained, would be Chinese and new. Indeed, this was the safest way to express a stylistic preference.

⁹¹ Zhushi 柱式: literally "column model," which include the column, its base, and the beams and bracket set on top of it. Liang Sicheng translated zhushi as "Chinese orders." See, Liang Sicheng, *Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture*.

⁹²"Renmin dahuitang sheji gaikuang," BMA: 47-1-301-1.

As a new symbol of political power for “people’s China,” the Great Hall was designed to represent the national unity and ethnic equality of the country. Each province had a specific hall named after it inside of the Great Hall of the People, including Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Taiwan. The ceiling of the “ten thousand people grand conference hall” with numerous star-like spotlights centered with a giant red star represented six hundred millions of Chinese people united around the party. The slightly arched ceiling smoothly merged into walls on the four sides, highlighting the metaphor of starry night sky. It was said that Premier Zhou Enlai personally recommended that the ceiling and walls should be united like “sky and water merged along the distant horizon” 水天一色.⁹³ The Great Hall of the People, however, was not accessible to most Chinese people before the 1990s and was barely used. For the general public, it served mostly as façades for Tiananmen Square and Chang’an Avenue. (Figure 2.14)

Museums and the Representation of History on Chang’an Avenue

Two museums were constructed on Chang’an Avenue for the tenth anniversary of the PRC: the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History (now renamed National Museum of China) and the Military Museum. They both played a central role in the reconstruction of Chinese history according to socialist ideology. Although the physical structures of the two museums remained unchanged for half a century, the changes in

⁹³ For more detailed information about the function and design of the Great Hall of the People, see: Jayde Lin, *The Great Hall of the People, Defining the Socialist Chinese national identity through re-defining the center*, Master thesis, University of Washington, 2004, 34-57; and Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing*, 108-126.

exhibition programs inside reflected China's social political changes during the second half of the 20th century.

Attitude to history

The Chinese civilization has the longest history of unbroken history writing in the world. The historical record *Chunqiu* was a document from the Spring and Autumn Period (8th century BCE – 5th century BCE), a period named after the title of this book. The late 2nd-century to early 1st-century BCE work *Shiji* by Sima Qian delineated the history of China from the time of Huangdi (about 3000 BCE) to his own time. After that, every major dynasty in China's last two millennia left at least one official dynastic history of its own. Altogether, there are twenty-five such official histories today, covering the entire five thousand years of Chinese history from the legendary Huangdi to the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty.

These volumes are the official version of Chinese history. In most cases, the history of a certain dynasty was completed during the succeeding dynasty, compiled by special government agents whose job was to write history of the previous dynasty. At the same time, each dynasty also had officials whose job was to document their current dynasty, providing materials for later generations to write a formal history. The official title of Sima Qian, the author of the first history of the official twenty-four histories 二十四史, was Taishiling 太史令, who was the history official of the Han Dynasty. Every dynasty had its history officials.

Although the five millennia of Chinese history have left us quite some number of upright history officials who refused to flatter people in power and insisted on writing what really happened at the risk of their lives, the twenty-five dynastic histories 二十五史,⁹⁴ as Liang Qichao⁹⁵ said, were primarily the genealogies of emperors, dukes, generals, and prime ministers.

For the Chinese tradition, dynasties were Heaven's mandate on earth. Heaven justified the emperor, Son of Heaven, to be His agent to rule the people. However, if the emperor was incompetent or illegal, He would replace him with a new emperor or new dynasty. Every dynasty claimed to be the authentic dynasty of the Chinese tradition. For the writing of previous dynasty's history, in order to strengthen the tradition of Heaven's mandate on earth, each of the early emperors, especially the founder, was usually depicted as a justified Son of Heaven; in order to justify its own legal status as the successor of an authentic Chinese dynasty, the later period of the previous dynasty had to be depicted as a deteriorating time, waiting for new regime to replace it. Materials for the writing of previous history fulfill just such a need. Most of the documents about the emperors from the previous dynasty were offered by their history officials and were full of compliments, except for the last emperor, who usually did not last long enough for such records.

⁹⁴ The history for the last dynasty Qing Dynasty, which was compiled during the ROC era, was never officially completed in standard traditional format, leaving us two different terms "24 histories" and "25 histories," depending on whether the *Qing History Draft* was counted or not.

⁹⁵ Liang Qichao (1873-1929): Liang Sicheng's father, one of the major philosophers and reformers of late 19th- early 20th-century China.

The practice of writing a continuous history focusing on the successions of dynasties cultivated the Chinese view of history as timeless cycles. All the twenty-four histories have similar formats, following the model founded by Sima Qian, with only minor adjustments. Moreover, the history of every dynasty highlighted the rise, the flourishing, and the fall of the dynasty, in which the dynasty was usually founded by a heroic wise emperor but eventually collapsed due to the extravagance or cruelty of an incompetent or evil emperor.

History writing under the communist regime broke away from the dynastic model. Previous Chinese history was no longer depicted as timeless cycles of dynasties' rises and falls, but as a teleological development toward communist revolution. The later in history, the more selective historical events were to justify the current regime and a specific political line. Repeated peasant uprisings that brought down an old dynasty and started a new one were rendered as if they were rehearsals and premature communist revolutions. While in previous histories peasant uprisings were intermissions in the cycle of dynasties, in the new history writing dynasties became intermissions in the cycle of revolution. Like in the façade of Chang'an Avenue, the former "gaps" in history were highlighted and filled.

Museums and the re-writing of Chinese history in the 1950s

Museums in China started immediately after the end of the long imperial history. In 1912, the first year of the ROC era, the History Museum was founded in Guozijian, the former imperial education center in the capital. In 1918, the displays of the History

Museum were moved to Wumen (the Meridian Gate), the south gate of the Forbidden City, and Duanmen, the gate in front of Wumen, was used as the storage for the History Museum.⁹⁶ Following the collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911, the last emperor Puyi and his court occupied the Forbidden City for another 13 years. In October 1924, he was expelled from the former imperial palace by Feng Yuxiang's army. Shortly after, a committee was formed to catalogue the historical and cultural relics in the Forbidden City. A year later, on October 10, 1925, the Forbidden City became the Palace Museum and was open to the public, displaying ancient objects from the imperial collection.⁹⁷ The ancient objects on display were not all that ancient in the 1920s. Some of them were from the Qing Dynasty, which was still part of the live experience for many Chinese at the time. However, they were considered as ancient and belong to history since they were from the imperial time. The museum drew a boundary line between history and contemporary.

Museums before the communist revolution were mainly for displaying historical relics. Even the exhibitions in the History Museum organized the displays in terms of the categories of objects, metal, stone, jade, bronze, etc. There was no historical agenda or political ideology to guide the exhibitions. The museum after the communist revolution in 1949, however, was very different. It became an active participator in the rewriting of Chinese history. The communist version of the Chinese history was a teleological

⁹⁶ Ma Zhixiang, *Beiping luyou zhinan* (Tourist Guide to Beiping) (Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 1997), 18-20; See also: Zhongguo lishi bowuguan, ed., *Zhongguo tongshi chenlie* (Chinese History Display) (Beijing: Zhaohua chubanshe, 1998), back cover introduction.

⁹⁷ Gugong bowuyuan zijincheng bianjibu, ed., *Zijingcheng zhuanhao: gugong bowuyuan 80 nian*, 30-35.

development toward the communist revolution and founding of the People's Republic. With a party-centered agenda, the entire Chinese history was rewritten.

After the founding of the PRC, while various rooms of Wumen and Duanmen inside of the Tiananmen Gate-tower continued to serve as the History Museum, now renamed Beijing Museum of Chinese History,⁹⁸ a new museum, the Central Museum of Chinese Revolution was founded in 1951 in Wuyingdian, the former imperial publishing house in the courtyard just west to the Qing Dynasty Outer Three Halls in the Forbidden City.⁹⁹ The exhibition in the Central Museum of Chinese Revolution was based on the “July First Exhibition” 七一展览 in 1951. July First is the official birthday of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, the original motivation for the Central Museum of Chinese Revolution was to propagate knowledge about the party to Beijing citizens, who had been liberated first from the Japanese in 1945, then from the Guomindang regime in 1949. In 1955, the “July First Exhibition” became a permanent “Party History Display” 党史陈列. In 1958, the “Party History Display” was expanded as the “New Democratic Revolutionary History” exhibition.¹⁰⁰

In September 1958, the central government decided that a new Museum of Chinese Revolution and a new Museum of Chinese History would be constructed on the east side of the Tiananmen Square. The two museums were finally housed in one

⁹⁸ “Lishi bowuguan: guanyu duanmen weixiu 历史博物馆：关于端门维修 (Museum of History: About repairing Dumen),” BMA: 47-1-673-1.

⁹⁹ Zhongguo renmin geming junshi bowuguan, ed., *Zoujin zhongguo renmin geming junshi bowuguan* (Into the Military Museum) (Beijing: Bingqi gongye chubanshe, 2003), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 10.

building to make a balance on the two sides of the Tiananmen Square since the Great Hall of the People on the west side was too big.

The new Museum of Chinese Revolution after 1959 displayed historical materials from 1840, the year of the Opium War, to 1949, the year the PRC was founded. This was period of decline and recovery, leading to the victory of communist revolution, which gave China a new birth. The Qing Empire before the Opium War was the zenith of imperial China. The Opium War started the decline, which eventually led to the capitalist revolution led by Sun Yat-sen. Sun was a progressive capitalist revolutionary leader not only because of his advanced social view compared to the backward feudal Qing regime, but also because he was inspired by the Russian Revolution in 1918 and sympathetic to the Chinese communists. His successor, Chiang Kai-shek, however, was totally reactionary, which led to the decline of the Guomindang regime and the rise of the communist China.

The Museum of Chinese Revolution covered materials regarding three different societies according to the Marxist view on social development: the feudal society, the capitalist society, and the socialist society. For the arrangement of specific material in exhibitions, however, the hundred-year-long history was simplified into two general periods: the Old Democratic Revolution Period and the New Democratic Revolution Period. The century-long recent history, *jindai*,¹⁰¹ was depicted as a period of constant revolution. The Old Democratic Revolution referred to the capitalist revolution, which led to the fall of Qing Empire and the founding of the Republic of China (ROC); the New

¹⁰¹ For detailed discussion on *Jindai*, *xiandai*, *jinxiandai*, *dangdai* 近代, 现代, 近现代, 当代, see the last section in Chapter Three.

Democratic Revolution referred to the socialist revolution, which led to the fall of the Guomintang regime and the founding of the PRC. The periodization of the recent history, thus, left virtually no room for the capitalist construction of China. The Old Democratic Revolution Period ended in 1912, while the New Democratic Revolution Period start in 1919, the year of the May Fourth Movement. There were only seven years in between.

The thirty years between 1919 and 1949 were exhibited as the growing and prospering of communism in China. The ten years of social and economic construction during 1927 to 1937 under Chiang's Guomintang regime were totally neglected. Moreover, the New Democratic Revolution was further simplified as the victory of Mao's line, and contributions of other early communist leaders, such as Li Lisan and Qu Qiubai, were also totally neglected. The display for the New Revolutionary Period highlighted such places like Mt. Jinggang, Yan'an, Xibaipo, which were all critical sites for the rise of Mao and became communist pilgrimage sites after the founding of the PRC.

The Chinese history as displayed in the Museum of Chinese History was an expansion of such a teleological agenda toward the communist revolution. The National Museum of Chinese History was intended to display historical material before 1840. Instead of following a dynastic order, the chronological display of objects and pictures was reorganized to follow the periodical categories in the Marxist social developmental order: primitive society, slavery society, and feudal society.¹⁰² The exhibitions

¹⁰² According to Marxism, typical social development normally experienced successively the primitive society, slavery society, feudal society, capitalist society, socialist society, and finally communist society. In the non-Western countries, however, the feudal society was abruptly stopped by the European capitalist expansion and became colonial society. Since China was never fully colonized by Western powers and the central imperial power continued until the capitalist revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, the term semi-colonial semi-feudal society was adopted to characterize the Chinese society between 1840 and 1911. The capitalist

highlighted the struggles between progressive materialist 唯物主义 and idealist 唯心主义 views and between dialecticism 辩证法 and metaphysics 形而上学, and the contributions and revolutionary spirit of the laboring people. For the new displays in the new building of 1959, special adjustment was made to the content of the exhibitions to add more peasant uprisings in history.¹⁰³ Mao's power base was the Chinese peasants and his strategy for the communist revolution in China was "to enclose the bourgeoisie cities with communist countryside" 农村包围城市. The exhibitions somewhat rendered the communist revolution Mao led as the continuation of those peasant revolutions in history. The difference was that he had the correct guiding thoughts of Marxism, which the previous peasant leaders did not have.

In January 1959, when the new building for the two museums was still in construction, a decision was made to rename them to acknowledge their national status. The Central Museum of Chinese Revolution 中央革命博物馆 was renamed as the National Museum of Chinese Revolution 中国革命博物馆 and the Beijing Museum of Chinese History 北京历史博物馆 was renamed as the National Museum of Chinese History 中国历史博物馆.¹⁰⁴ The two museums used to belong to the administrative

society in China was extremely short according to such a theory, only 38 years from 1912 to 1949, the year China entered socialist society after the communists drove the Guomindang regime to Taiwan.

¹⁰³ "Beijingshi wenhuaju, benju dangzu guanyu beijing lishi bowuguan, ziran bowuguan biangeng mingcheng ji zhongguo geming lishi liang bowuguan choujian qingkuang de baogao 北京市文化局, 本局党组关于北京历史博物馆、自然博物馆变更名称及中国革命、历史两博物馆筹建情况的报告 (Report on the changes of names of museums in Beijing)," July to September 1959, BMA: 164-1-31-1, 041.

¹⁰⁴ "Guanyu Beijing lishi bowuguan ziran bowuguan liangguan biangeng mingcheng wenti de qingshi 关于北京历史博物馆, 自然博物馆两馆变更名称问题的请示 (Report to ask for instructions about the changes of names of Beijing Museum of History and Museum of Nature), January 7, 1959, BMA: 164-1-31-1.

system of the Beijing Municipal Cultural Bureau. In 1962, the two museums, together with the Palace Museum, were both elevated to be under the direct control of the Ministry of Culture under the State Council.¹⁰⁵

Another museum constructed on Chang'an Avenue for the anniversary projects in 1959 was the National Military Museum of Chinese People's Revolutions 中国人民革命军事博物馆 (the Military Museum). If the Museum of Chinese History was an expansion of the communist agenda in historical view, the Military Museum was an encapsulated display of the communist victory, focusing on the military growth of the party. The historical period covered by the Military Museum was more recent and much shorter than both previous two museums. It covered the period from 1927, the year of the Nanchang Uprising and the birth of the Chinese Red Army, to the Korean War in early 1950s.

The museum architecture and exhibition space

There was no architectural type similar to the museum in traditional Chinese architecture. As a product of the modernization process, no previous architectural model or motif could be adopted directly for the image of museum architecture. The first museums were converted from the former imperial monuments. During the Nanjing Period (1927-1937) of the ROC era (1912-1949), the GMD regime initiated an ambitious project to construct the new capital, which produced a large number of government

¹⁰⁵ “Beijingshi wenhuaju, benju guanyu geming lishi bowuguan, gugong bowuyuan san danwei shangjiao wenhuabu lingdao de baogao ji shi renwei bangongting de pifu 北京市文化局， 本局关于革命， 历史博物馆， 故宫博物院三单位上交文化部领导的报告及市人委办公厅的批复 (Report about reorganization of three museums under direct guidance of the Ministry of Culture and the official reply), May 8, 1962, BMA: 164-1-358-1.

sponsored buildings. The GMD regime encouraged restoration of original Chinese traditions in cultural construction. In the 1929 “capital planning,”¹⁰⁶ it was required that architectural design should have Chinese-oriented 中国本位 thoughts and “Chinese original forms” in architecture were highly recommended, especially for government and public architecture.¹⁰⁷ Two museums were built in Nanjing during the ten years of intensive construction by the GMD regime under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek: the Central Museum 中央博物院 and the GMD Party History Exhibition Hall 国民党党史陈列馆. The latter had a Qing style xieshan¹⁰⁸ roof and the former had a Tang style wudian¹⁰⁹ roof. They were both multi-floor buildings. From the distance, however, the GMD Party History Exhibition Hall looked very similar to a double-eave city gate tower, for instance, the Tiananmen Gate-tower. The Central Museum was like a central hall from a Tang dynasty imperial palace or a main hall of a Tang dynasty Buddhist temple, for instance, the main hall of Foguangsi. Liang participated in the design of the Central Museum. The proportion and details of the building reflected Liang’s vision for ideal classical Chinese architecture.¹¹⁰ (Figure 2.15)

The first issue for the new museum buildings in Beijing during the PRC era was scale. The design and construction of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History

¹⁰⁶ In 1927, Nanjing became the capital of ROC. In February 1928, the technological specialists’ office for the national capital design 国都设计技术专员办事处 was founded. American engineer E. P. Goodrich and American architect H. K. Murphy were hired as engineering consultant and architecture consultant respectively. The “capital plan” was decreed in December 1929. See: Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 321.

¹⁰⁷ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 322.

¹⁰⁸ Xieshan: usually translated in English as hipped-and-gable roof.

¹⁰⁹ Wudian: usually translated in English as hipped roof.

¹¹⁰ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 373-383,

was part of the Tiananmen Square reconstruction project for the tenth anniversary in 1959. In 1958, schemes for the future Tiananmen Square were prepared. There were two prerequisites for the design: first, Tiananmen Square was to be big with a east-west dimension of 500 meters; second, the structures around Tiananmen Square were to be the Ten-thousand People Conference Hall and the Office Building for the Standing Committee of the People's Congress on one side, and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and Museum of Chinese History on the other.

As part of the anniversary projects for 1959, the Museum of Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History were originally considered as two separate buildings in 1958, just like the Great Hall for the People's Congress and the Office Building for the Standing Committee of the People's Congress on the opposite side of the square. Since these building were to frame Tiananmen Square, schemes for the organization of these buildings in relation to the square were prepared in 1958. Seven schemes were chosen to be presented to central leaders. Three of them proposed four separate buildings, two on either side of the Tiananmen Square; and four combined the two buildings on the same side into one structure.¹¹¹ From the scheme drawings of 1958, only two schemes – the one by Zhang Bo and the one by Beijing City Planning Bureau – among the seven carefully studied the function and area arrangement of the projects. The remaining five put almost mirroring structures on the two sides, making a perfect symmetrical planning for the Tiananmen Square.

¹¹¹ *Chang'anjie*, 66-67.

The Museum of Chinese Revolution, the Museum of Chinese History, and the Office Building for the Standing Committee of the People's Congress were of similar scale and relatively small. The Great Hall for the People's Congress, however, was gigantic. The central leaders requested that the congress hall be able to house ten thousand representatives meeting simultaneously in one room, which was called "Ten-Thousand People Conference Hall" 万人大会堂 at the time. There was no way to achieve a balanced image on the two sides of Tiananmen Square by constructing four separate buildings. The combination schemes satisfied the requirements better, although the combined structure for the Museum of Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History was still much smaller than the "Ten-thousand People Conference Hall." With the addition of the office building, the combined structure on the west side of the square would have dwarfed its counterpart on the east side. In order to balance the scale on the two sides of Tiananmen Square, a decision was made to use the plan that enlarged the museum complex with courtyards while keeping the congress complex a solid block. This was the scheme provided by the Beijing City Planning Bureau.¹¹² (Figure 2.16)

The plan of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History was artificially stretched to spread over a site comparable to that of the Great Hall in scale. The building was 313 meters long in the north-south dimension and 149 meters in the east-west width. With three large courtyards and two smaller ones, the largest ones of which measured 76 by 100 meters, only two floors of architectural area were needed to fulfill the required display area. If the floor height 层高 was like normal exhibition rooms, the west façade

¹¹² *Chang'anjie*, 67.

facing Tiananmen Square would be less than 15 meters in height but more than 300 meters long, which was not heavy enough for a 500-meter wide square. From the center of Tiananmen Square, such a building would be hardly noticeable. And compared to the Great Hall on the opposite side, such a height was too low. Finally, to solve this problem, the height of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History was artificially stretched too. The interior height 净高 of the two exhibition floors was 7 meters, in addition to the 2.5-meter high space above the ceiling for structure and utility 管线电缆, the final floor height for the exhibition floors was 9.5 meters. In addition to a base floor for storage, treasure collections, workshops, dining rooms, kitchens and parking lots, the final general height of the building reached 26.5 meters.¹¹³ Such a height was still more than 10 meters lower than the 40-meter façade height of the Great Hall. In order to make the appearance of the museum façade more grandeur and continuous, an eleven-bay colonnade of 32.7 meters high was constructed, connecting the west façade of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and that of the Museum of Chinese History. The protruding pillars framing the colonnade were 39.88 meters high, which was just slightly lower than the average height of the Great Hall.¹¹⁴ (Figure 1.28)

Not only the scale but also the architectural style of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History was mainly the result of its role as the counterpart of the Great Hall on the opposite side of Tiananmen Square. As discussed in previous sections, a

¹¹³ “Beijingshi jianzhu shejiyuan, zhongguo geming lishi bowuguan sheji gaikuang 北京市建筑设计院, 中国革命, 历史博物馆设计概况 (Summary of the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History Design),” September 1963, BMA: 47-1-301-1, 7-8.

¹¹⁴ “Zhongguo geming he zhongguo lishi bowuguan gongcheng de jiben qingkuang 中国革命和中国历史博物馆工程的基本情况 (Basic facts about the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History Museum project),” August 27, 1959, BMA: 47-1-92-1, 4-5.

nationwide scheme collection¹¹⁵ was held to select a design for the Great Hall, and various schemes from international style glass boxes to concrete structure topped by ancient Chinese big roofs were proposed. Once the form for the Great Hall was decided, however, the architectural form issue for the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History became simple. Like the Great Hall, the museum used neither large area exterior glass nor ancient Chinese roofs, but followed a Western neoclassical composition in the facades. All elevations were symmetrical. The main façade also had a horizontal five-section division and vertically divided into eave, main body and base, just like the Great Hall facing it in distance. Both the Great Hall and the museum complex had re-enforced concrete frame as the main structure. The same materials as the main façade of the Great Hall were used for the museum main façade of the museum complex: light-red granite base, light-yellow stone-like mixed concrete 剁斧假石 for the walls of the main body, and yellow and green glazed tiles decorating the eaves.

In spite of these similarities, the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History also has a yin/yang relationship with the Great Hall of the People. While the center of the Great Hall complex is the solid “Ten-thousand People Conference Hall,” the center of the museum complex is a void central courtyard; while the colonnade at the center of the main east façade of the Great Hall complex is a “shilang” 实廊,¹¹⁶ which means a solid or actual corridor attached to the main structure, the colonnade at the center of the main west façade of the museum complex is a “xulang” 虚廊, which means a void or

¹¹⁵ The practice of scheme collection, which is different from scheme competition, during the PRC era will be discussed in Chapter Three.

¹¹⁶ *Chang'anjie*, 72.

insubstantial corridor open on both sides; while the columns in the Great Hall “shilang” has circular sections, the sections for columns in the museum complex “xulang” are square. According to ancient Chinese beliefs, heaven is circular and earth is square; heaven is yang and earth is yin. The yin/yang relationship is confirmed by the column section in the facing façades of the two complexes. The national red and yellow emblem decorating the top center of the Great Hall colonnade is also circular; to make a pair, the museum complex also bears a flag-star decoration of same colors in the top center of the colonnade, rectangle in shape. The national emblem of the Great Hall is 4.5 meters in diameter, while the insignia of the museum complex is 5.5 meters high and 26.5 meters long. The Great Hall of the People is yang and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History is yin. While yin follows and subordinates to yang, it also makes significant complements and accompaniment to yang.

The yin/yang relationship between the Great Hall complex and the museum complex is also symbolic. The writing of history follows and subordinates itself to political power, as symbolized by the Great Hall of the People.

The interior exhibition space in the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History before 1980s reflected such a subordination of history to politics. The museum complex was virtually two buildings connected by the colonnade and central entrance hall. The entire building could be considered as a three-courtyard complex successively aligned in a south-north direction, which was similar to the time-honored Beijing siheyuan. However, different from siheyuan, which was usually entered from the south side, the main entrance to the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History opened in the central

courtyard on its west side facing Tiananmen Square. The central courtyard was the communication part of the entire complex. The northern courtyard was the Museum of Chinese Revolution and the southern courtyard was the Museum of Chinese History. According to the Chinese tradition, the northern main courtyard in siheyuan was more important than the southern one. This was because, traditionally, all buildings of Beijing siheyuan only open windows to the inside courtyards and all the outside walls for important rooms were windowless. For this reason, main rooms in the northern courtyard had more sunshine because their inside direction was south, while those of the southern courtyard virtually had no sunshine because their inside direction was north. Such an originally functional consideration became a convention in the symbolic significance of courtyard arrangement in siheyuan throughout history. Thus in the museum complex on the east side of Tiananmen Square, the Museum of Chinese Revolution occupied a more significant position than the Museum of Chinese History.

The building in the central courtyard had a portico, an entrance hall, a central hall, and an auditorium below. The entrance hall preceded the central hall, measured 28 by 17 meters. It was the transitional communication space, from which visitors could turn left to enter the Museum of Chinese Revolution or turn right to the Museum of Chinese History. The central hall was 42 by 32 meters with an interior height of 14.6 meters. On the wall facing the entrance were marble relief portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, in front of which standing the bust of Mao. The information was clear. The four Marxist saints provided the background and theoretical base for Chinese revolution, while it was Mao who had applied it in and developed it into the revolutionary practice in

China. Two 10-by-10 meters wall-paintings decorated the side walls of the central hall. On the north side wall was the “Great union of people throughout the world;” on the south side wall was the “Great union of people throughout China.”¹¹⁷ The wall-paintings were originally planned to be relief group sculptures of wood.¹¹⁸ Diagrams of white doves of peace and Chinese characters for “peace” and “union” decorated the upper part of the entrance wall. Below the central entrance hall in the basement was a 700-seat auditorium for lectures and films of revolution and history topics. No specific function was assigned for the central hall in original design. It was a hall to set the political tone for the entire museum complex. One can imagine, even if temporary exhibitions of pure historical topic were displayed in such a hall, the political messages in decorative motifs of the interior would have imbued the space with strong revolutionary atmosphere.

The color scheme for both the entrance hall and the central hall was mainly red figures against light color background. Red marble was used for the floor and columns in the entrance hall. For the central hall, the walls were covered with light yellow man-made marble, while the floor was made of red and light gray marbles. Two rows of octagonal columns covered by light gray marbles divided the interior space of the central hall, making the central space look like a nave and the two sides like aisles. The two rows of columns directed the focus in the central hall to its back wall, where the figures of the four Marxist great men and Mao were located. (Figure 2.17, 2.18)

¹¹⁷ “Beijingshi jianzhu shejiyuan, zhongguo geming lishi bowuguan sheji gaikuang,” BMA: 47-1-301-1, 7-8.

¹¹⁸ “Zhongguo geming he zhongguo lishi bowuguan gongcheng de jiben qingkuang,” BMA: 47-1-92-1, 4-5.

The Military Museum of Chinese People's Revolutions was almost as big as the Museum of Chinese Revolution and Museum of Chinese History combined. Its architectural area is 60,557 square meters, only slightly smaller than the 65,152.05 square meters of the museum complex. While the museum complex only had three above-ground floors, the Military Museum had seven floors plus a tower in the center –four floors for the side sections, and three floors for the end sections. The main southern façade was also symmetrical. However, rather than a flat roofline in the museum complex, the skyline for the Military Museum was like a mountain peak, rising from the two side toward the center. The 94.7-meter-high center tower raised the army emblem of the PLA: a red star with the two yellow Chinese characters for “August First” – the birthday of the Chinese red army – within and wheat decoration without, the same color scheme with insignias on both the Great Hall and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History. The exterior materials for the Military Museum were also same as the museum complex.

Although the Military Museum was only for one type of exhibition, its plan was almost the same as the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History. An entrance hall connected two symmetrical side parts with a central hall in the back and two courtyards separating the central hall from the two exhibition sections. The central hall was 14.3 meters high from floor to ceiling, with a Mao statue standing at its center. It was true that all the museum exhibitions before 1980 during the PRC era were to legitimize Mao's political line as the only way to save China. (Figure 1.25)

The re-organization of museum exhibitions on Chang'an Avenue

The museums on Chang'an Avenue experienced significant changes in the 1990s. On July 1, 1990, the "Chinese Revolutionary History Display" 中国革命史陈列 in the Museum of Chinese Revolution, including the "Old Democratic Revolution Period" and "New Democratic Revolution Period," was renamed "Recent History of China Display" 近代中国陈列, and the "People's Republic of China Display" 中华人民共和国陈列 was renamed "Contemporary China Display" 当代中国陈列.¹¹⁹ The arrangements of materials according to revolutionary periods were changed to a chronological organization of objects and pictures in successive historical events: the First Opium War, the Second Opium War, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Divide-up of China by Western Powers, the Xinhai Revolution, the Birth of CCP, Nanchang Up-rising, etc. After the "Cultural Revolution" and the death of Mao in 1976, the revolutionary spirit was played down in public propaganda. Before 1976, history was seen as series of revolutions; after 1976, revolutions were dramatic moments at the verges of social political changes in history.

Nothing could be more telling in capturing such a change in museum politics than the comparison of two exhibitions on Sun Yat-sen from before and after 1976. Sun was born in 1866. He was considered to be the founding father of modern China by both the communists and the Guomindang. In 1966, at the dawn of Cultural Revolution, a temporary theme exhibition "Memorial Exhibition of Sun Yat-sen at his One Hundredth

¹¹⁹ Zhongguo geming bowuguan. *Zhongguo geming bowuguan 50 nian* (50 Years of the Museum of Chinese Revolution) (Beijing: Haitian chubanshe, 2001), 13.

Anniversary” 孙中山先生诞辰百年周年纪念展览 was scheduled in the Museum of Chinese Revolution. The Preparation Committee requested that through the exhibition, the historical experience of China from Old Democratic Revolution evolving to New Democratic Revolution should be expressed. The exhibition focused Sun’s connection with and support to the communist party. Only leaders of the Left Wing GMD, Song Qingling, Liao Zhongkai, He Xiangning, etc., were chosen to be on display. The CCP was represented as playing a critical role in the changing of Sun’s revolutionary cause from nationalist to socialist. Sun’s revolutionary activities before 1924 were considered as having various political mistakes from which historical lessons should be learned. Sun died in 1925. The exhibition program suggested that the critical moment in Sun’s political life happened only at the end of Sun’s life, with the help of the CCP. The theme of the whole exhibition was to show that “it was the Chinese people led by CCP and Mao who carried on Sun’s unfinished cause of the democratic revolution and marched further on to socialist revolution and construction.”¹²⁰ Such a teleological program to justify the CCP’s role in Sun’s life was played down thirty years later. In “Exhibition in Memory of Sun Yat-san’s One Hundred and Thirtieth Anniversary” 纪念孙中山先生诞辰 130 周年展览 staged in the same museum in 1996, Sun was mainly displayed as a nationalist who overthrew the Manchu empire and fought for national unification.

The way materials were displayed in the Museum of Chinese History experienced similar changes in the 1990s. According to the 1997 version of the permanent exhibition,

¹²⁰ “Zhongguo geming bowuguan, sun zhongshan xiansheng danchen bainian zhounian jinian zhanlan gongzuo gaikuang 中国革命博物馆，孙中山先生诞辰百年周年纪念展览工作概况 (Summary of the Exhibition in Memory of Sun Yat-san’s One Hundred and Thirtieth Anniversary),” March to April, 1966, BMA: 2-20-456-1.

the “General History of China Display” 中国通史陈列 no longer followed the Marxist social development order but went back to a dynastic order. The long period before Xia Dynasty was no longer called “primitive society” but was categorized as Paleolithic Period and Neolithic Period, and a section on “Late Qing Dynasty” was added, which covered materials between 1840 and 1911.¹²¹ The display of ancient Chinese history was no longer the extension of the revolutionary history after 1840. The display also no longer focused on the revolutionary spirit of ancient laboring people, but emphasized the cultural, political, economic development and technological improvement in history.

The most dramatic change in the museum display of Chinese history on Chang’an Avenue happened in the dawn of the 21st century. In 2002, a decision was made to combine the Museum of Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History to make a National Museum of China. After this combination, however, the permanent exhibitions virtually disappeared, and the displays on “History of Chinese Revolution” were totally gone. Almost all the exhibition halls in the 1959 building were used for temporary thematic exhibitions. Today,¹²² in a quick survey of the National Museum, visitors will note that the “General History of China Display” shrank into the “Display of the Distinguished Items from the Museum Collection” 馆藏精品展, where people can find world-wide famous items from prehistory ceramics to Ming-Qing Dynasties furniture. Instead of a narrative of Chinese history through material culture, the exhibition is more like a gallery display of art. Items were organized according to their material, ceramic, porcelain, bronze, metal, wood, sculpture, etc. The scale of the display was

¹²¹ Zhongguo lishi bowuguan, ed. *Zhongguo tongshi chenlie*.

¹²² Meaning 2005 when the author was in Beijing.

much smaller than the previous general history display. Almost all the items had been frequently cited in general books about Chinese art.

Other halls in the National Museum were all used for temporary thematic exhibitions. In my recent visit in November 2005, the first floor of the former Museum of Chinese Revolution held the exhibition on “Zhenghe’s Seven Voyages to West Oceans” 郑和下西洋 and the first floor of the former Museum of Chinese History held the exhibition “The Dawn of a Civilization: Treasures from Liangzhu Culture” 文明的曙光：良渚文化精品展.

While all the previously mentioned exhibitions in the National Museum were temporary, the only relatively permanent display here was, to the surprise of visitors in a national museum, the “China Waxen Images Display” 中国蜡像馆, which was on the second floor of the former Museum of Chinese Revolution. In the display, visitors will find Sun Yat-sen standing opposite to the first emperor Qin Shihuangdi, Mao smiling and gazing to emperors from the Han Dynasty, Lenin standing next to Marx and Engels with Qing emperor Kangxi standing near by, a sexy Marilyn Monroe exposing her shoulders in front of Chinese communist heroes and heroines, and Bill Gates staring into Lei Feng with an ambiguous smile on his face. You can find all famous people known to the 21st-century Chinese here, from third-century BCE Chinese poet Qu Yuan to the Second World War leader Churchill, from film star Jackie Chen to volleyball player Yao Ming. All the waxen figures are real size and super-realistic, and are standing or sitting on virtually unelevated floors. People can become lost here, unable to distinguish which figures are waxen and which are live visitors. The boundary between history and present

as laid by the first Chinese museum – the Palace Museum – in 1912 disappears. And the only permanent display in the National Museum of China is embodied in the most impermanent material, wax. (Figure 2.19)

The change of displays in the museums on Chang'an Avenue was only partly due to the political relaxation in ideological control of the party. Economic consideration played a central role. In order to attract more people to the museum, the lengthy display of general history in one comprehensive exhibition was cut. Tourists tire quickly in the odyssey exploring five thousand years of Chinese history. Millions of tourists pour into Tiananmen Square every year. After visiting the Palace Museum, the Great Hall of the People, the Monument to People's Heroes, and Mao's Mausoleum, they usually spend a couple hours at most in the museum. What they want is something like cultural fast food, getting some taste of the glory of China's long past. And there are plenty of McDonalds and KFCs around Tiananmen Square and along Chang'an Avenue. New adjustments reflect a change in public consumption of culture. And the waxen figures in the National Museum fulfill such a need well. Today, the waxen figure hall always has more visitors than other halls.

While the center of Chang'an Avenue became more and more tourist-oriented in the 1990s, the former role played by the Museums of Chinese Revolution and Chinese History was relocated to its western extension. The Military Museum was originally built in 1959 to display the development of the People's Liberation Army. Except for the Weapon Hall 兵器馆, the earliest permanent displays are in today's "Hall of the Land Reform Revolution Wars" 土地革命战争馆, the "Hall of the Anti-Japanese War" 抗日

战争馆, and the “Hall of the War to Liberate the Whole Country” 全国解放战争馆.

These three exhibitions represent the birth, growth, and glorious triumph of the army led by the Chinese Communist Party. The “Land Reform Revolution Wars” exhibition covered the period from 1927, the year of the Nanchang Uprising and the birth of the Chinese Workers and Peasants’ Red Army, to 1937, the year Japan invaded China.¹²³ The “Anti-Japanese War” exhibition covered the eight years of the Sino-Japanese War of the World War II period from 1937 to 1945.¹²⁴ The “War to Liberate the Whole Country” exhibition covered the Civil War period from the end of World War II to the founding of the People’s Republic.¹²⁵ All the three original exhibitions focused on the leadership of the party and the central role it had played in the victory of wars and advancement of modern Chinese history. The first exhibition displayed the glorious process of the development of the Chinese Workers and Peasants’ Red Army into a heroic and invincible people’s army under the leadership of the party, highlighting the early achievements of the Chinese communists represented by Mao: combining Marx-Leninism with China’s reality, leading people’s armies to explore the road for Chinese revolutions, founding the principles for the armies, and developing a series of strategies best for China. Its aim was to show that military struggle led by the party was a historical necessity to save the country and the people.¹²⁶ The second exhibition was to display the history of the national salvation war summoned by the CCP, based on the cooperation between the CCP and GMD, and under the banner of united front. It highlighted the

¹²³ Zhongguo renmin geming junshi bowuguan, ed. *Zoujin zhongguo renmin geming junshi bowuguan*, 90.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

central role party and the communist armies played in the war against the Japanese.¹²⁷

The third exhibition displayed the people and People's Liberation Army's glorious history of overthrowing the GMD regime and founding the PRC under the leadership of the CCP.¹²⁸ (Figure 2.20)

In 1988, two new exhibitions were added to the Military Museum after four years of preparation: the Ancient Wars Display and Wars of the Recent History Display. The former covers period from prehistory to 1840 and the latter covers the period from the Opium War to 1919. After the general history display was closed in the Museum of Chinese History, these two exhibitions in the Military Museum offered the most comprehensive education material on ancient Chinese political and military history in Beijing.

After Tiananmen Square was taken over by tourist fervor, its extension and former servant Chang'an Avenue became the location for displaying state power and executing pedagogical propaganda.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 172.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 231.

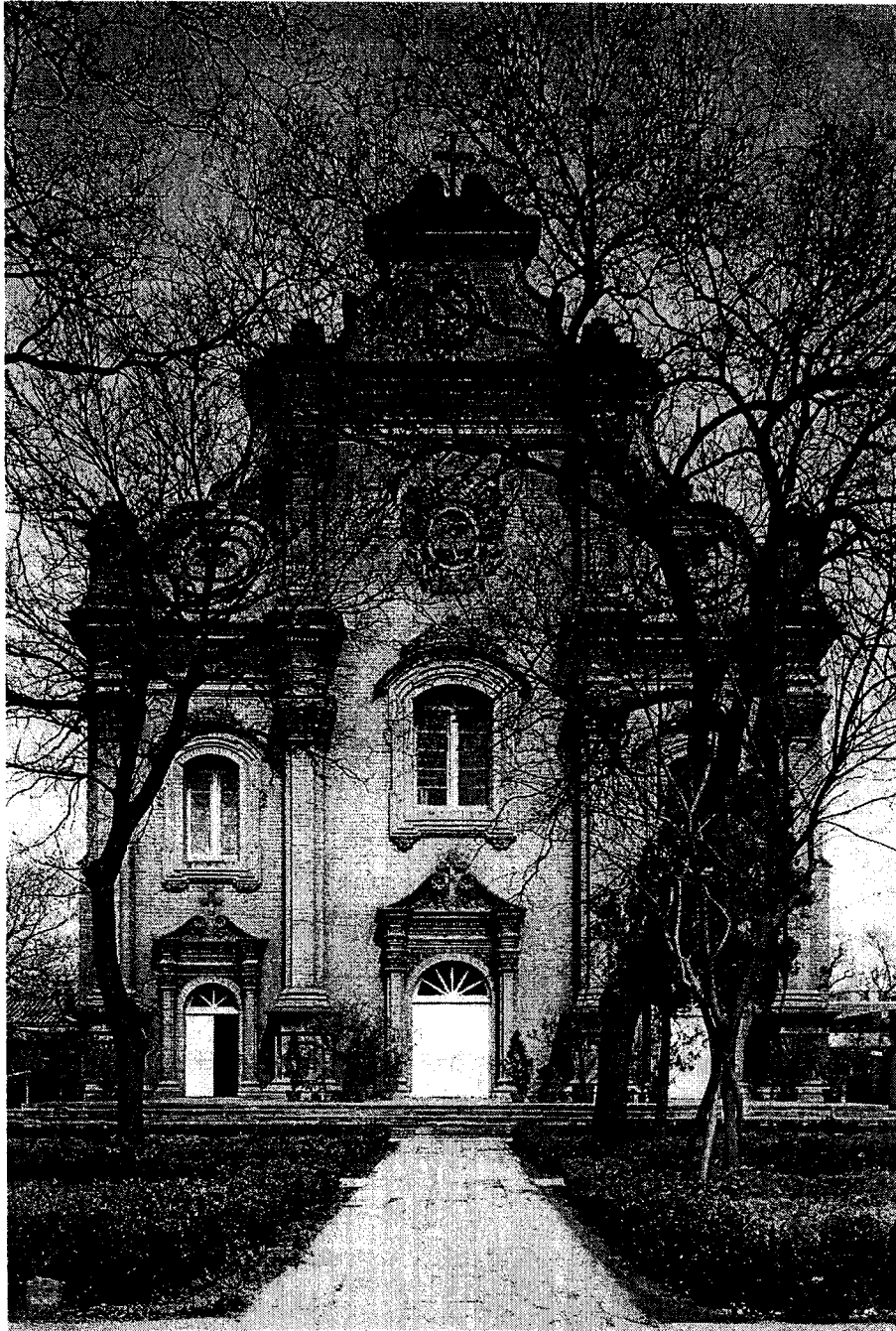


Figure 2.1: Southern Church, Beijing, 1776, rebuilt in 1902-04

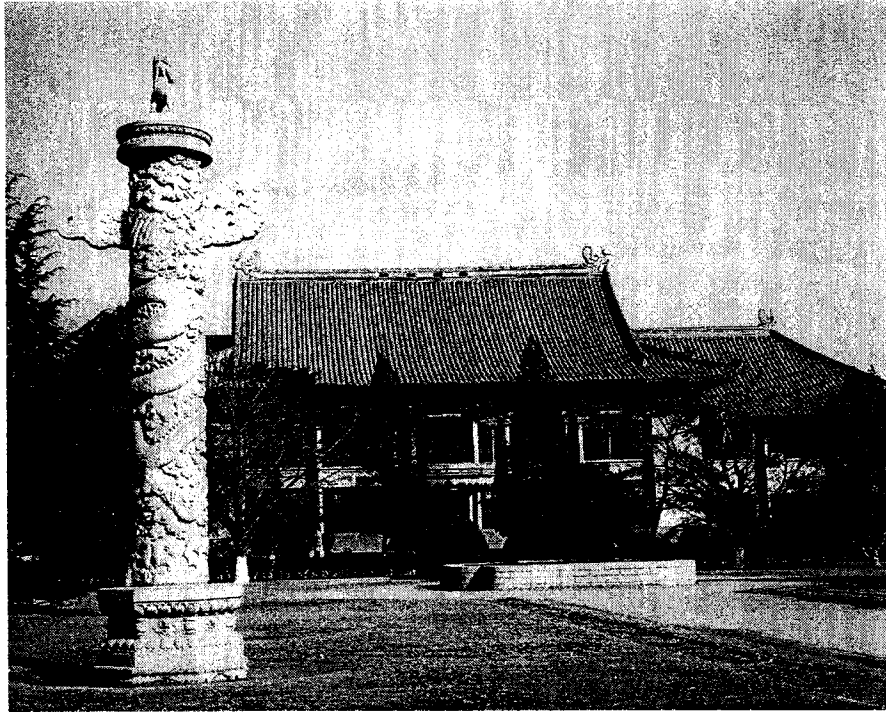


Figure 2.2: Yanching University Office Building, Henry Murphy, 1927

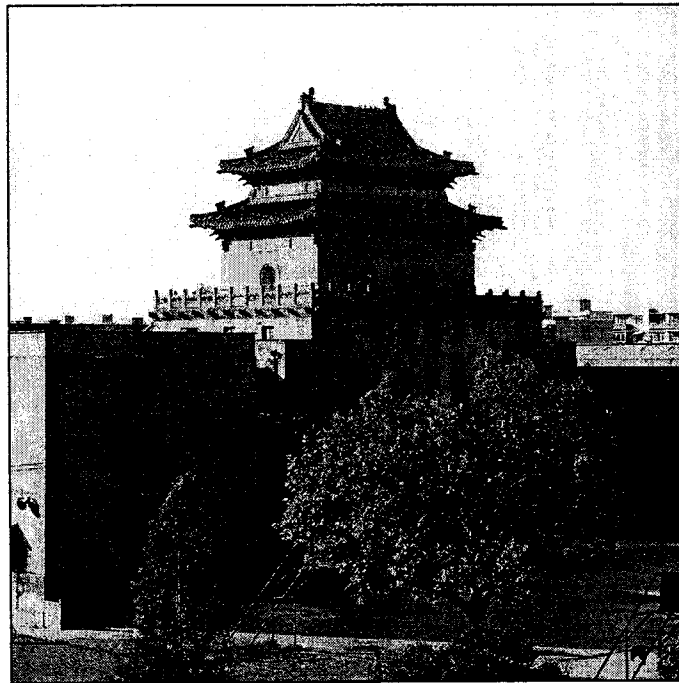


Figure 2.3: Shanghai Municipal Museum, Dong Dayou, 1934



Figure 2.4: Shanghai Jiangwan Gymnasium, Dong Dayou, 1935



Figure 2.5: Beijing Hotel, Middle Building, 1917

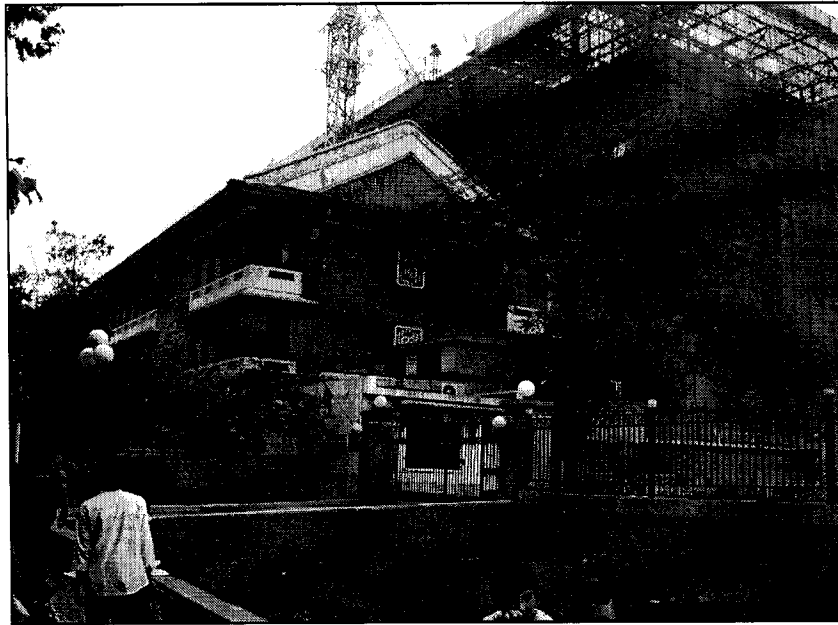


Figure 2.6: Ministry of Foreign Trade building, built in 1951

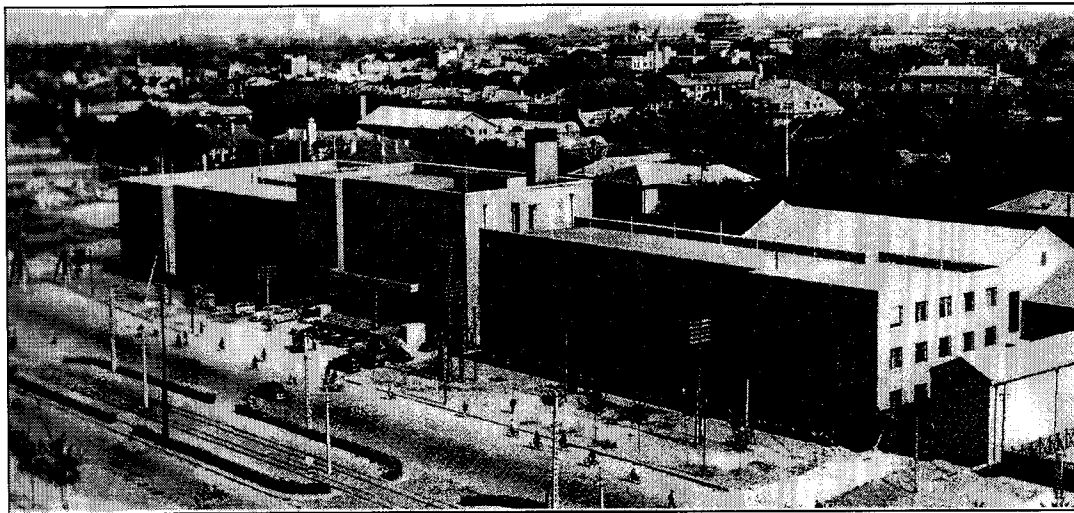


Figure 2.7: Ministry of Fuel, 1951



Figure 2.8: Sanlihe Office Buildings for Four Ministries and One Committee, 1954



Figure 2.9: West Building of Beijing Hotel, 1953 (the lower red building)

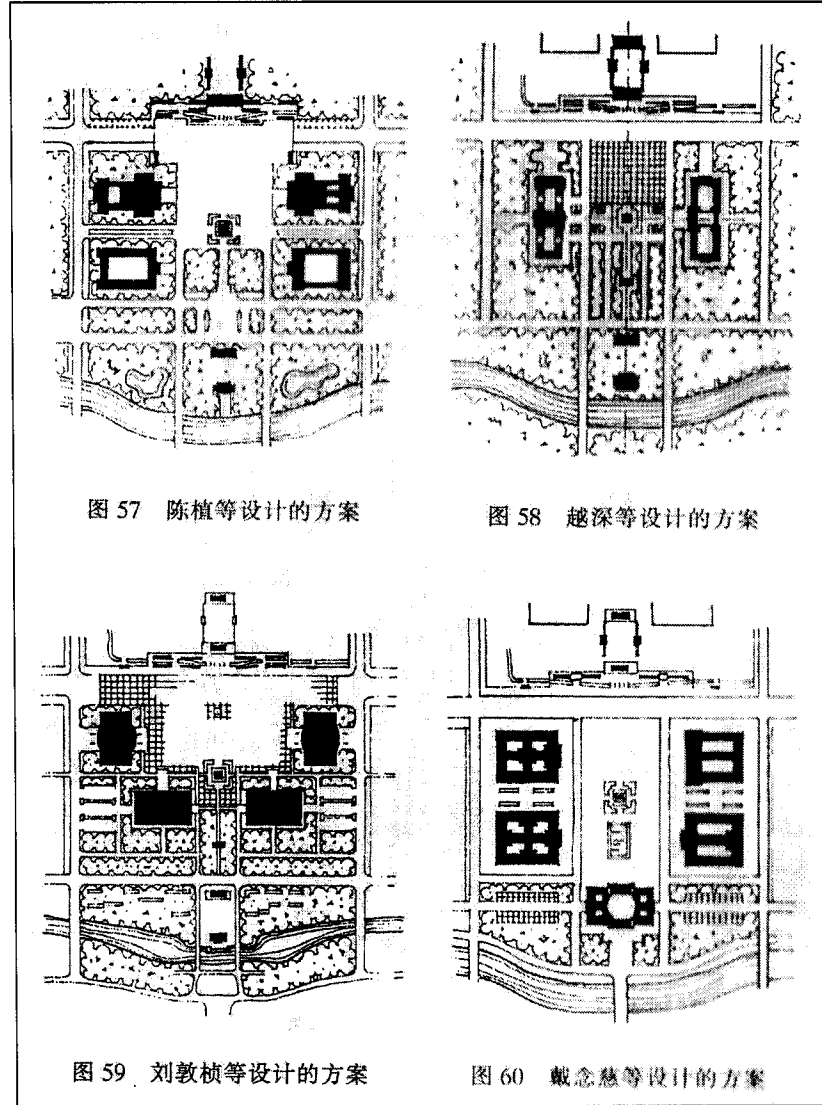


Figure 2.10: Tiananmen Square reconstruction plans, 1954-1955

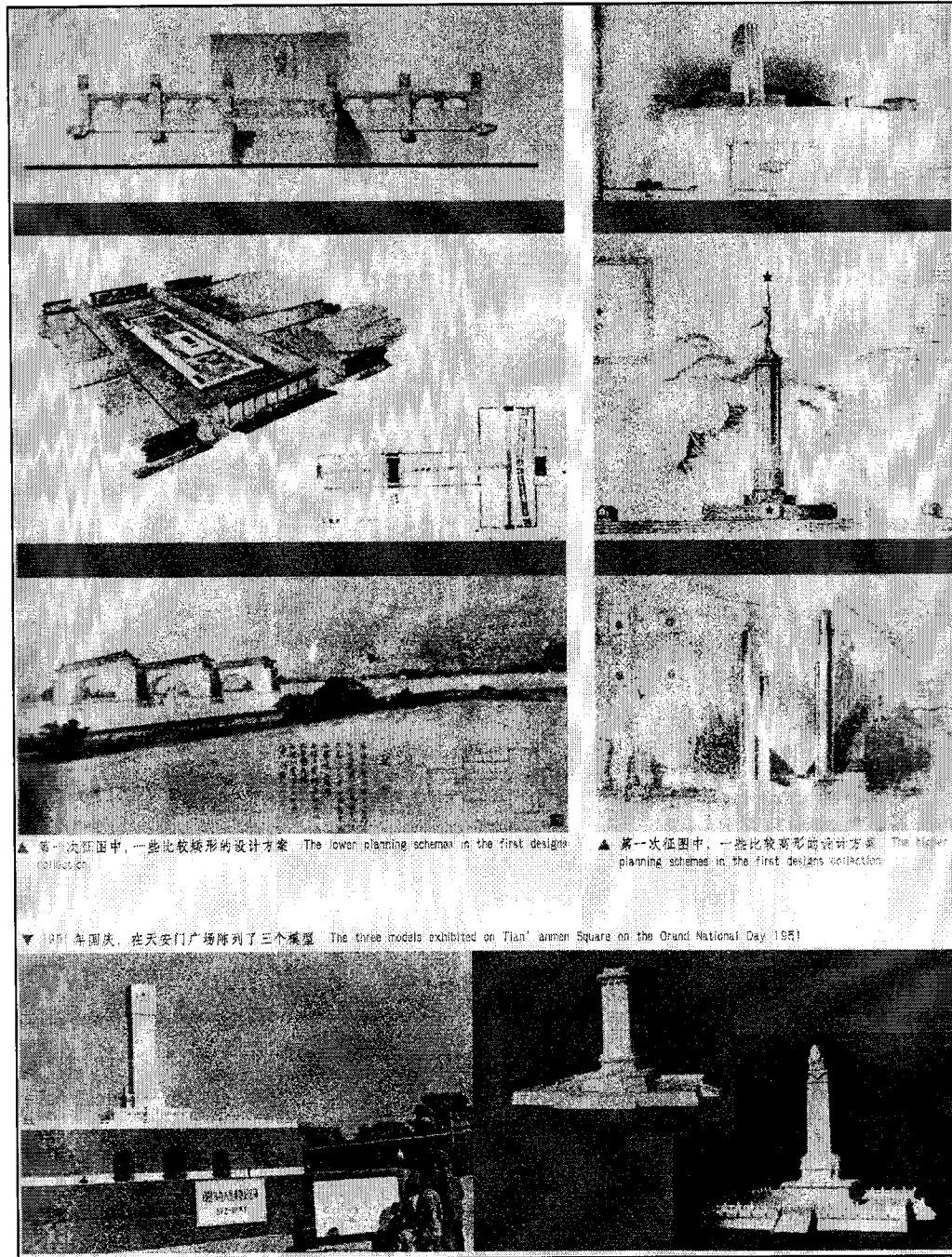


Figure 2.11: Various designs proposed for the Monument to People's Heroes in 1951

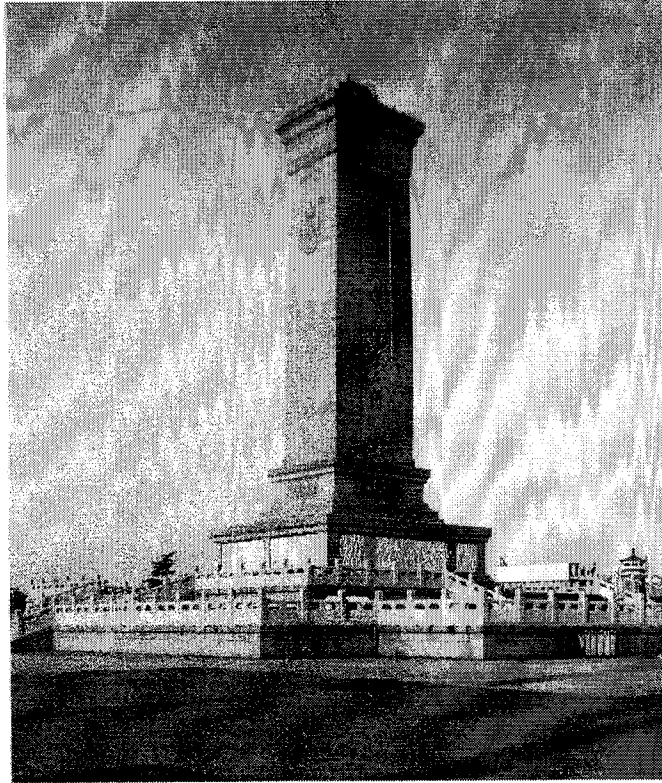


Figure 2.12: Monument to People's Heroes, 1952-58

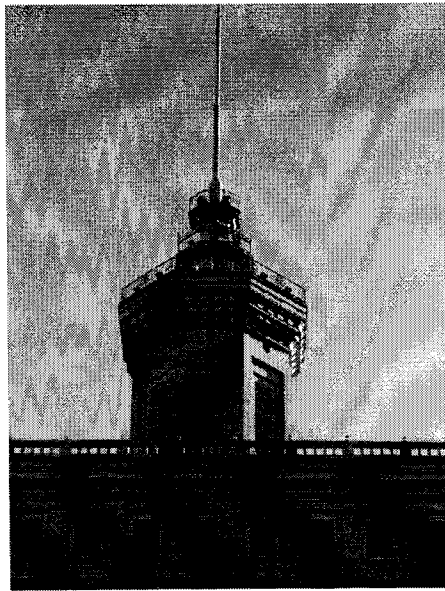


Figure 2.13: Detail of the lantern on top of the Central Broadcast Building, 1957

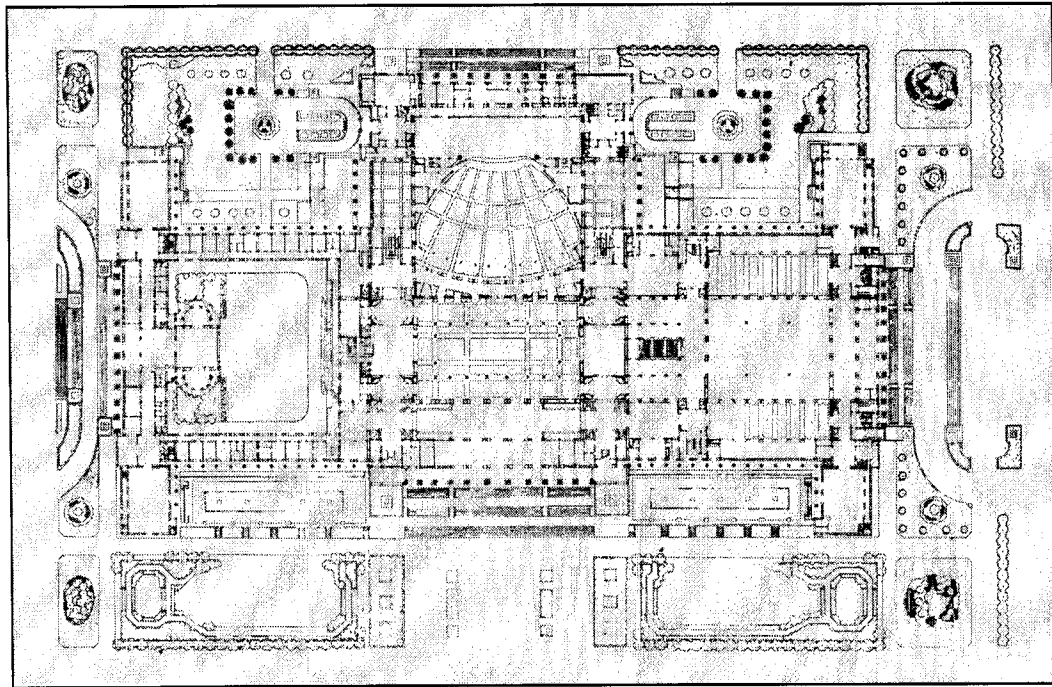


Figure 2.14: The Great Hall of the People, plan, 1958-59

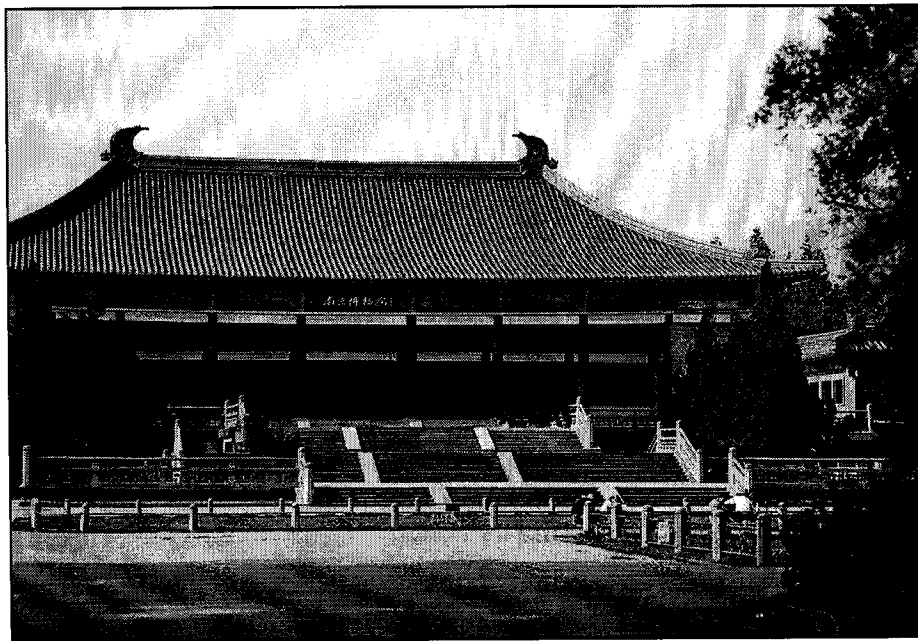


Figure 2.15: ROC Central Museum, Nanjing, 1936

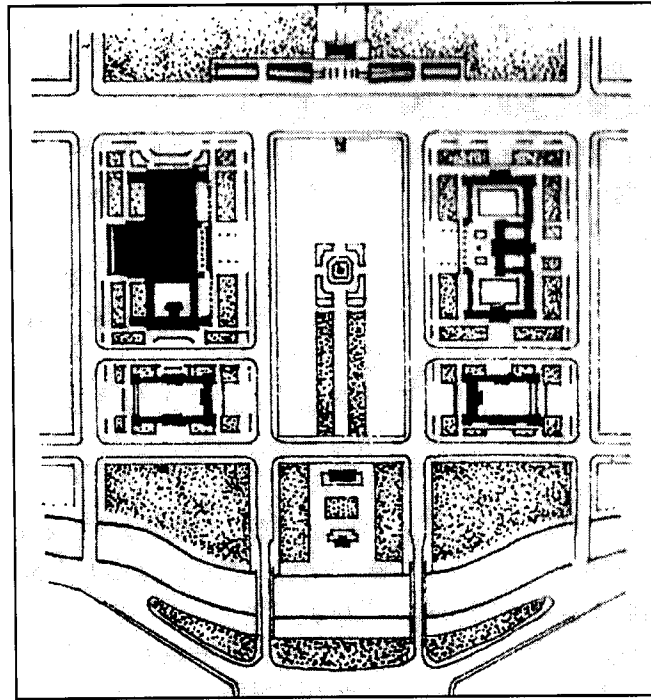


Figure 2.16: Relationship between the Great Hall and the Museum



Figure 2.17: Entrance Hall, National Museum, 1958-59

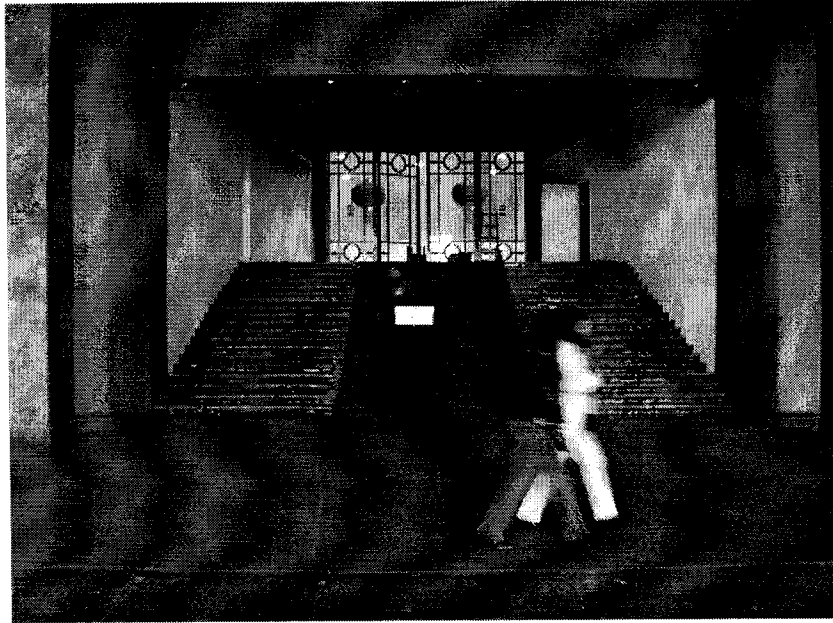


Figure 2.18: Entrance to the Central Hall, National Museum



Figure 2.19: The Wax Figure Hall, National Museum, Beijing, 2005

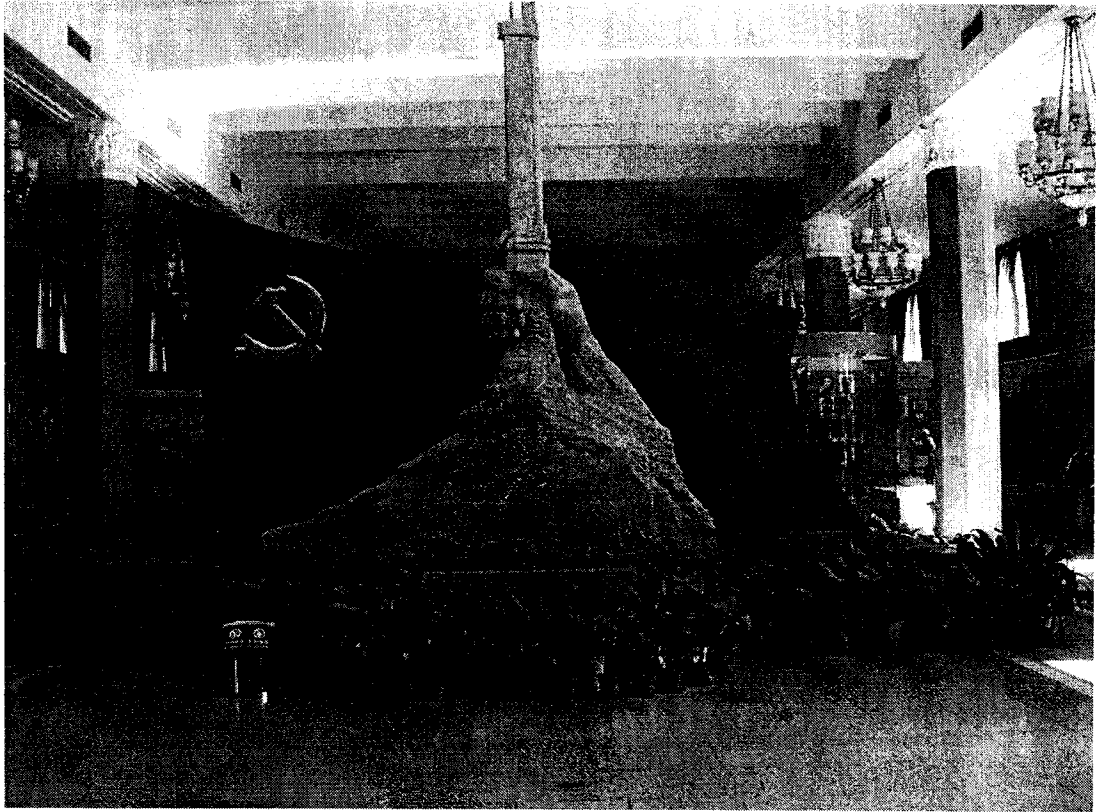


Figure 2.20: Hall of the Land Reform Revolution Wars, Military Museum, 2005

Chapter Three

Collective Creation and the 1964 Chang'an Avenue Planning

The Socialist Way to Build

Chinese communists considered artistic creation a special form of social production – spiritual production, as differentiated from the production of materials and tools. While acts of individual creation were deemed as bourgeoisie, a socialist approach to production emphasized collective creation. Architecture, as defined as comprising both material and spiritual production, followed such a socialist way to build.

Mao's "Yan'an talks" and its influence

The promotion of collectivism in artistic creation started long before the People's Republic was founded. The first step to collective creation was the founding of the "mass-oriented principle"¹ in art. Mao's "Yan'an Talks" of 1942 were the Party's first formally articulated request to all artists to serve the people. In his talks, Mao asks artists

¹ "Mass" refers to people in the Marxist sense. "Mass-oriented principle" is translated from the Chinese "qunzhong yuanze" 群众原则 and "mass line" is translated from "qunzhong luxian" 群众路线. Both are standard terms in Chinese Marxist ideologies.

to make efforts to serve the “majority of Chinese people” – the majority meaning workers, peasants and soldiers. Since the Party represented the “majority of Chinese people” and professed the correct political direction, art was asked to serve politics.

In communist China, the relationship between art and politics must be understood in terms of the relationship between the Party and intellectuals.² Sometimes their attitudes towards tradition, the West, and modernization differed a greatly. Such differences, however, did not mean that the Party and the intellectuals represented two antagonistic classes; many of the Party cadres were themselves intellectuals and most of the intellectuals involved in political struggles about culture were Party members. But as separate groups, they do sometimes emphasize different things and examine problems from different standpoints when dealing with specific cultural issues.

The Chinese Communist Party was very conscious of using artistic works to promote political goals. . As early as 1930, an Art Bureau, under the leadership of the Political Department in the CCP; was created to advance the communist revolutionary cause, counteracting artistic individualism emerging from a concentrated group of artists in the Yan’an area. . During the late 1930s and early 1940s, many left-wing writers and artists gathered at Yan’an, removing themselves from the Japanese occupied coast areas like Shanghai and Nanjing to an area where their creativity could be nurtured and appreciated. In 1940-41, because of the relatively peaceful environment, a tendency toward creating “art for art’s sake” arose in this “Soviet Area” 苏区. Artistic quality was

² Intellectuals were defined as a distinct group of people in Chinese society, which refer to the educated population including artists, writers, scientists, etc. They were more or less comparable to the bourgeoisie in the West. According to Maoist ideologies, they were meant to be educated by the “mass” to become “cultural workers” 文化工作者.

emphasized at the Lu Xun Academy of Art 魯藝, sometimes at the expense of the understanding of the “masses.” Poets extolled love, albeit classless, and theater workers put on full-length foreign plays. For the communist leaders, these were signs that the art in Yan’an was abandoning the masses and escaping into an ivory tower. Artistic quality and popularization, they felt, were incompatible. It was under such a situation that Mao Zedong delivered his famous “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art”.

In his “Yan’an Talks”, Mao calls on the artists to take a “mass line”³ in their artistic activity.⁴ In the “Yan’an Talks,” Mao claims that all arts had their class natures and the new Chinese art must serve the majority, that is, the workers, the peasants, the soldiers, and the petty bourgeoisie. He asks the artist to go deep into the countryside, to learn from the working people, and to feel what they feel in their life and struggle. Mao doesn’t simply discard art as art; he says, “There are two criteria in art criticism: one is political criterion; the other is artistic criterion.” However, he emphasizes that any ruling class in history has always put political criterion in the first position and artistic criterion in the second. Yet, he follows that immediately with the claim that content and form must achieve unity. Here, content was understood as politically correct and form as artistically competent. He says, “We are against both art with wrong political information and the political slogan without artistic power.” That Mao acknowledged the need for the artistic

³ The mass line referred to the interests of the most general parts of the Chinese population, and is summoned again and again throughout the history of the CCP as a standard for critiquing individualism.

⁴ Mao Zedong, “Zai yan’an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua (Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Arts and Literature,” In *Mao Zedong xuanji, yi juan ben* (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, comprehensive volume) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1969), 804-835.

side of art should not be neglected when discussing the significance of his “Yan’an Talks.”

After Mao’s “Yan’an Talks”, many artists of the 1940s shifted their attention from self-expression to guiding artistic activities for the masses. Mass theater xiqu and mass drama huaju were two of the most active artistic forms in the army units and local districts. Some performance groups propagated the Party’s policies, encouraged the spirit to fight, and promoted land reform, drawing the Party closer to the peasants in isolated villages. Other groups went down to remote countryside to get firsthand experience of working people’s lives, collect folk songs, and at the same time help in the fields.

Many artistic works of this period reflect artists’ response to Mao’s appeal.⁵ None of them are of a large or complex scale; they were relatively unsophisticated and easy to perform or cheap to reproduce and thus met the requirement for the popularization among the mass. The characters of figures in the images or roles in these works would have been unmistakable to the uneducated populace, allowing the political information to be clearly understood.

Such a mass-oriented art movement was echoed by the artistic campaigns during the Great Leap Forward period.⁶ Mass-orientation in artistic creation in the later 1950s, however, was much more evident than in the 1940s. While during the Yan’an period, the masses were virtually only an audience for presentations directed by professional artists,

⁵ Among the most famous are the New Year’s poster *The Union of the Army and the People* by Hu Yichuan, the singing and dancing drama *Brother and Sister Reclaim Wasteland*, the opera *White-haired Girl*, and the woodcut *Street Exhibition of Woodcuts in the Liberated Area*.

⁶ The anti-Hu Feng Campaign in 1955, the Hundred Flower Campaign during 1956-1957, and the Anti-Rightist Campaign during 1957-1958 can be viewed as interludes before a greater political storm, in which the intellectuals tested the limit of the Party’s toleration and the Party tested the intellectuals’ loyalty to the new socialist society. For detail, see Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 514-573.

in the Great Leap Forward years, the workers, peasants, and soldiers took the brush and painted their own paintings. In many regions, most of the peasants participated in creating paintings to eulogize the new socialist society, the people's commune, and the unbelievable good harvest. The "peasant painter villages", "peasant painter counties", and even "peasant painter provinces" emerged like bamboo shoots after a timely rain. Another tendency in mass-oriented artistic creation from the 1940s to late 1950s was the narrowing down of the number of art themes. During the Yan'an period, artistic themes were far-ranging: army-people relationships, party-masses relationships, land reform, personal resourcefulness (or using one's own hands to create an abundant life 自己動手豐衣足食,) wasteland reclamation, fighting the Japanese, fighting the Nationalist reactionaries, equality between men and women, leading a frugal and simple life, working hard, etc. The art of the Great Leap Forward period, however, focused primarily on extolling great industrial and agricultural production. This shift was determined by the political atmosphere of the time. In 1958, Chairman Mao called on the Chinese people to catch up with England and America overnight and run into the Communist Society, in which the material abundance was believed to be so great that no one need ever work for salary but only for pleasure.

Such utopian political zealotry also influenced the quantity of artists' work. They rewrote plans for the following year's artistic production again and again, and for each rewrite the quantity was higher than the former. The Shanghai artists planned to create 10,000 works in 1958 and this record was soon revised after several days to a much higher level. Some artists planned to finish as many as 350 works a year. As one might

imagine, the quality of such a fast creation of art would be questionable. And it is true that little artistic trace of this period remains in people's memory today. However, the art movement of the Great Leap Forward period involved unprecedented numbers of people in artistic creation. Many peasants who could not have imagined touching a paint brush before were allowed to produce their own work, some of which was quite creative and humorous. Trained artists went out from the academies down to the countryside to help create wall paintings and educate the peasant painters. And, soon after, there were "wall painting villages" and "wall painting counties" throughout the country. Mao's ideals in the "Yan'an Talks" were enacted during the Great Leap Forward period.⁷

Collective creation in architecture during the "Great Leap Forward"

The spirit of the Great Leap Forward movement also influenced architectural design. The "ten great buildings" for the Republic's tenth anniversary in 1959 were completed within a single year. Design schemes for important buildings were collected from all over the country. The collection of schemes did not appear first during the Great Leap Forward period. Design schemes for the Monument to People's Heroes and the proposals for the national flag had been gathered from across China since right after the founding of the PRC. Nevertheless, the occasion of the tenth anniversary was the first time that leading architects from all over the country were called on to gather in Beijing to discuss schemes for a national monument. And it is the group designing method matured in the "anniversary projects," especially the Great Hall, that prepared the future

⁷ For more information about the Chinese art in the 1940s to 1970s, see Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artist of 20th century China* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 91-155.

1964 Chang'an Avenue planning for a new approach in design, namely, the collective creation approach.

The collective creation approach in architectural design created an authorship problem for future architectural discourse in China. The original design of the Great Hall was provided by Zhao Dongri and Shen Qi. Both Zhao and Shen were from the Beijing Municipal Planning Bureau. The chief architect for the final design and construction, however, was Zhang Bo, an architect from the Beijing Municipal Architectural Design Institute. According to Chen Zhihua, an architectural historian in the School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, elevations of the final scheme by Zhang Bo were very similar to a design scheme provided by the Great Hall design group from Tsinghua University. The only difference was that Zhang erased the big Chinese roofs from the top of the façades.⁸

It is not this dissertation's intention to attribute the authorship of the Great Hall of the People to this or that architect. The ambiguity of authorship for buildings constructed during the early years of the PRC era was only natural. The "collection of schemes" practiced in PRC was different from architectural design competition. In most cases, participants knew one another well. Leading architects often visited one another's studios and exchanged ideas during the design process. They also met to share ideas and criticize one another's draft schemes from time to time before the final evaluation and voting for an executive scheme. Since everything in a socialist society has to be planned

⁸ Interview of Chen Zhihua, October 27, 2005, Beijing.

and approved according to party principles, the project would not necessarily be assigned to the winning designers' institute.

Authorship for architecture was not a problem during the early years of the PRC. Individualism was condemned; everyone was just one little bolt in the socialist machine. Even painters and sculptors collaborated in creating works. For national monuments, however, such a practice of a collective approach to architectural design buried the seeds for future controversies over authorship. Moreover, the practice of collecting schemes continued to influence architectural competitions after 1980 under the socialist market system. For many sponsors of architectural projects – very often but not always political leaders or government officials – an architectural competition was actually a collection of ideas and schemes provided by competition participants, a collection perceived as just raw material for a best comprehensive final product. Authorship may be admitted by lip-service, but in practice, copyright was mostly disregarded. This issue is illustrated by the design competition for the National Grand Theatre in 1998-99. Due to the collective nature and political involvement in architectural design, often more than one architect claimed authorship for a successful project after many years of its completion, and none claimed responsibility for a disreputable project.

The spirit of the Great Leap Forward movement in architecture, however, was displayed most dramatically in the construction field. The slogan in the early decades of the PRC was to “construct socialism.” Architectural construction was the most literal way to demonstrate socialist construction. For many Chinese, the proud achievement of the “ten great buildings” was the speed and quality of construction, not the architectural

design. Most of the “ten great buildings” were completed within ten months. It was government officials and representatives of construction workers who presided in the opening ceremonies for these anniversary projects, not architects. Construction workers were the heroes of the “ten great buildings” and, therefore, of socialist construction. At that time, no one cared about the authorship of the designs. The achievement of the “ten great buildings” was attributed mainly to the “wisdom of the leadership from the central government” and the “great support of the people.”

In fact, the “ten great buildings” were envisioned as proof for the correctness of the Great Leap Forward movement initiated by Mao and the victory of Mao’s “general line” 总路线. The buildings acted as propaganda to promote more and greater “leaps-forward” in socialist construction among Chinese people and to refute foreign denigrations of the Great Leap Forward movement. Well-planned visits to the Great Hall of the People went on for weeks in 1959. Before October 1, 1959, foreign ambassadors (September 16), correspondents (September 17), and political and army leaders (September 18 and 19) visited the Great Hall; after the tenth anniversary celebration, the People’s Committee of Beijing City organized two concentrated mass visits. The first was in October, when about 50,000 people toured the Hall. A second one, larger in scale than the first, was to be carried out between December 4th and 26th in order to accommodate the people’s requests for visits..In that period, the Great Hall of the People

was open for sixteen full days (closed on Sunday and an internal rest day on Wednesday), receiving a total number of 463,588 visitors from Beijing and provinces.⁹

In the second, December visiting plan, the purpose of another set of mass visits to the Great Hall was to “arouse the socialist working enthusiasm, to further the education of the ‘general line’ and ‘Great Leap Forward’ for all people of Beijing, and to make the achievement of ‘Great Leap Forward’ widely known.”¹⁰ Visitors’ responses to the building mainly focused on its scale and technical achievement. For instance, many people were amazed by the huge interior space of the “ten-thousand people auditorium” that did not have even one single column to support the ceiling. The Great Hall of the People also showed the superiority of the new socialist society by comparison with monuments from earlier Chinese societies. Compared with the Three Great Halls in the Forbidden City, for instance, many people commented that the new Great Hall was much better because “the wisdom of our laboring people has been fully developed,” a result of the socialist society. Other comments included that “the Great Hall was heaven on earth” and that “entering the Great Hall was like entering communist society.”¹¹

The “mass line” in architectural creation was comprehensively carried out in the “ten great buildings” of 1958-59, from design, to construction, to public response to the completed works. Such a collective approach, however, was carefully orchestrated; the conductor of the orchestra was the Party. To some extent, the collective approach in

⁹ “1959 nian zuzhi qunzhong canguan renmin dahuitang gongzuo jihua ji jianbao 1959 年组织群众参观人民大会堂工作计划及简报 (Plan and reports for organizing people’s visits to the Great Hall),” in BMA: 2-20-101.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

architectural design that matured in the “ten great buildings” project embodied the “democratic centralism” principle of the Party’s organization. According to this principle of the CCP’s political ideal, individuals could express their views on specific political issues freely in group meetings. However, once the decision was made following the will of the majority, everyone should carry it out decisively, putting personal ideas aside. The scheme selection process in architectural design during early years of the PRC corresponded to this principle.

Before the request for schemes went out, there were several general design principles established by the sponsor, usually the Party. First, the process requested individual ideas, or schemes, for a final ideal plan. After schemes were grouped together, designers were invited to present their design concept and to comment on one another’s schemes. After the group meeting, individual designers or institutes worked on their schemes separately again, bearing in mind the comments from their colleagues and officials. A second or third round of group discussion might be organized again. Designers presented their revised schemes, admitting what they had taken from others’ comments or where they had taken advantage of ideas from others’ schemes. The result was that all schemes became more and more similar to one another.

No jury served in the selection of finalists. Virtually all professional authorities participated in the design of this or that scheme. While competition did happen to some degree during the collective selection of the final schemes, when each institute tried to persuade others about the value of their ideas, once everyone was convinced, they were free to use these ideas in the revised version of their schemes. One can imagine that it

was not very hard to reach a common, comprehensive design, since toward the end of the process, all designers were more or less working on the same scheme anyway.

Collective creation in art during the Cultural Revolution

The “Great Leap Forward” movement did not last long. Following the three difficult years of 1959-1961, in which “natural disaster” and political disorder together claimed the lives of tens of millions of Chinese peasants, Mao declared a retreat to the “second line” of Chinese political stage and Liu Shaoqi became the Chairman of the People’s Republic. The following period of 1961-62 was a time of relaxation. Artists returned from the countryside to schools and institutes, art academies opened again, and normal professional training resumed. But, like the previous Hundred Flower Campaign, the temporary relaxation proved to be just an interlude before another even larger political movement – the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution began with theater criticism and throughout the movement, art, especially the theater, played an important role in political struggle. How the Cultural Revolution was initiated is complex and there is no consensus about its origin, but the basic outline of the story begins in 1961. That year, Wu Han staged his Beijing opera “Hai Rui Dismissed from Office,” which aroused great controversy; it was either extolled as a great experiment combining historical research with artistic creation or criticized for eulogizing a feudal official of the Ming Dynasty. In 1962, Jiang Qing banned the opera and claimed that Wu Han was using Hai Rui’s case to insinuate Chairman Mao’s dismissal of Marshal Peng Dehuai as unjustifiable. This was the same

year that Mao declared, “Never forget class struggle”. Thus, Wu’s case escalated to higher and higher levels. His superior officials were taken down one by one: the Cultural Minister Zhou Yang, the Beijing Mayor and CCP Central Committee member Peng Zhen, and finally the Chairman of the People’s Republic Liu Shaoqi. Among other charges, the two main accusations were that they tried to lead China in a shift to capitalism and back to feudalism. Thus, the promotion of a pure proletarian culture was once again raised up to a historical schedule.

In the place of the deposed officials, Jiang Qing and other idealist radicals came to power. Because Jiang Qing herself used to be an actress in Shanghai in the 1930s, she decided to open fire first on old-style theatre. In 1964, Jiang selected 8 operas from dozens of revolutionary theatres to create “Model Operas.” Two of the Model Operas were “Modern Revolutionary Ballet” and six were “Modern Revolutionary Beijing Opera.” The Ballet responded to Mao’s appeal to “use the foreign to serve China” while the Beijing Opera was answered to his demand to “use the ancient to serve the present”. The themes of artistic creations were further narrowed down. This time, the whole country was just watching eight Model Operas and all the eight operas were to exalt Mao and the Party as the savior of the Chinese people. Although the plots differed, sometimes Chinese fighting the Japanese, sometimes fighting Nationalist reactionaries, whenever Chairman Mao was mentioned, the faces of the actors would light up with happiness and their eyes with admiration, their smiling mouths would utter grateful words, and often the sun would rise from a horizon.

Not only the eight Model Operas but also all the other arts were centered upon Mao during the Cultural Revolution. Images of Mao appeared in both traditional guohua painting and western oil painting. Among them, the most well known are “Chairman Went to Anyuan” by Liu Chunhua and “Chairman Mao with the Red Guards” by Xu Kuang. The former became the most reproduced painting in human history. Art works reached every family in the remotest corners of the country.

This was the new version of the mass line in Mao’s “Yan’an Talks”. In fact, it was during the Cultural Revolution period that Mao’s “Yan’an Talks” were published as a single pamphlet. But this time, the aim was to promote art for proletarian revolution, not for liberation, and the petty bourgeoisie in Mao’s 1942 “Talks” was liquidated from the revolutionary majority. Like the revolutionary imagery of the former movements, the images in both the Model Opera and paintings were equally unmistakable. In fact, Cultural Revolution art pushed the heroic approach to an extreme. Whenever the protagonist appeared on the stage, he/she always occupied the center in heroic pose with bright light cast over his/her body; on the other hand, the antagonist always appeared wretched, relegated to dark corners. They all became political and artistic symbols; the color red was restricted to the protagonists. Similarly, when Mao appeared in paintings, he always occupied the central position and showed a healthy reddish face. He was usually depicted slightly bigger than other figures in the painting and was sometimes the source of light in the picture.¹²

¹² Sullivan, 151-158.

The Model Opera and the Mao paintings consolidated Mao's status as the savior of Chinese people from two different directions. Mao as a character never appeared in the Model Operas. The function of Model Operas was to arouse people's love for the new society and for Mao by reminding them of the bitterness of the old society and the difficulty of revolution. The Mao paintings, on the other hand, provided a positive Mao image for people to admire. The participation rate of artistic activity was as high as the former artistic movements, and it really became a mass movement, as Mao prescribed in his "Yan'an Talks". However, this time, the whole country was drawn into a semi-religious zealotry. "Collective creation" during the Cultural Revolution, indeed, became the collective expression of one man's will.

The process of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning

The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was sandwiched between the "Great Leap Forward" movement and the Cultural Revolution. It was just in time to conclude the previous evolvement of the "collective creation"¹³ in architecture before it dissolved into mass movement. The procedure it followed, from "scheme collection,"¹⁴ to individual scheme design, to group discussion and criticism, to comprehensive schemes, represented the basic work cycle of the collective approach in architectural design.

The collective creation in architectural design and urban planning during the early decades of the PRC era was a unique phenomenon in the history of modern architecture.

¹³ "Collective creation" is translated from the standard Chinese expression "jiti chuangzuo" 集体创作.

¹⁴ "Scheme collection" is translated from the standard Chinese expression "fang'an zhengji" 方案征集.

The process involved both political leaders and specialists from many different professions other than architecture. Today, in a world emphasizing individuality and idiosyncratic signature in architecture, the collective process seems outmoded. Such a collective creation process in architecture and city planning, however, shared many similar aspects with the creation of many great monuments produced by humankind. Compared to such a collective approach, the individualism in architectural design today seems more like a temporary phenomenon in history.

The collective approach in architectural design and urban planning prevailing in the early decades of the PRC was also influential. Local cities in China followed Beijing in planning their own futures and “ten great buildings” in constructing provincial, regional, or municipal monuments. The influence of the collective approach can be seen long after the death of Mao in 1976. Even in the construction of monuments for the 21st century, for instance, the National Grand Theatre in 1998-2005, the competition and selection process still bears the strong imprint of the earlier collective approach.

Significance of the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning

To some extent, the collective creation in urban planning reached a zenith in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning. The collective approach in the architectural field initiated by the Monument to People’s Heroes project in 1949-58 had been reinforced by the “Ten great buildings” in 1958-9, which was completed at an astonishing speed of mere ten months. Planning for Beijing had already experienced several rounds since 1949. However, the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning was the only one that called on the

leading figures in the field from all over the country to meet in Beijing. Specialists from other professions, such as sculpture, drama, crafts, architectural construction, and municipal civil engineering, as well as government officials, were also invited for discussion or hearing.

The symbolic nature of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning as the embodiment of the collective approach in design was dramatized by the fact that shortly after the meeting in April for Chang'an Avenue, socialist collective spirit rose to such extreme that all design institutes throughout the country were virtually disbanded. In November 1964, "design revolution" movement was initiated in design institutes all over the country. A "mass line" in architecture and city planning was taken. The movement called on that all workers in design institutes out of their offices and to join the people and work in sites. Many design institutes were closed. Journals ceased publication. Six hundred million Chinese people participated in the new version of collective creation in architecture and urban planning.

The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was also the only comprehensive planning specifically for the avenue. Other schemes on Chang'an Avenue before and after were more or less part of the general planning for the entire city of Beijing. The 1964 planning, however, was meant to be implemented immediately and completed in 1969 for the twentieth anniversary of the PRC. As a result, the details in the 1964 planning could not be compared by any other round of design on the avenue. Virtually every building meant to be on Chang'an Avenue Proper was specifically designed with plans and elevations, even when exact functions for the building were not specified.

The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning also offered the only images of a uniformed Chang'an Avenue. All the planning of other periods only specified functions and the heights and red-line controls of buildings on Chang'an Avenue. Before the "ten great buildings" in 1959, no examples could anchor a consistent façade for Chang'an Avenue; and after the 1980s, when China again had the will and wealth to "complete" Chang'an Avenue, the stylistic issue of buildings was already out of the control of any single social power. Commercialization of the socialist society finally turned Chang'an Avenue into a collage, both diachronically and synchronically.

Chang'an Avenue was always meant to be completed, but never completed.

Scheme collection

The initiation of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was due to the problem of two "gaps" on Chang'an Avenue. These two empty sites, one at the northeast corner of the Xidan intersection, another at the east side of the Fangjinxiang Street, were the legacy of the anniversary projects in 1958-9. Among the originally planned 16 anniversary projects, two were abandoned and three were postponed. The preparation for these uncompleted projects, however, was started in 1958.¹⁵ The site for the Xidan Department Store was prepared and old buildings at the northeast corner of the Xidan intersection were cleared away. For the Palace of Science and Technology at the east side of the

¹⁵ See Chapter Two for details.

Fangjinxiang, the foundation had already been constructed in 1959.¹⁶ They left two empty sites on Chang'an Avenue.

In order to fill these empty spaces on Chang'an Avenue, in 1963, Li Fuchun, the Vice Premier of the State Council, made a report to the Party Central Committee, proposing to roughly complete Chang'an Avenue at the twentieth anniversary of the PRC by finishing what the tenth anniversary had not finished.¹⁷ The Central Committee's response, however, was more ambitious than Li had thought. They asked to complete the Chang'an Avenue for the twentieth anniversary in 1969.¹⁸ The municipal government of Beijing started immediately the process of Chang'an Avenue planning. Vice Mayor Wan Li was assigned to be especially responsible for this project.¹⁹

Like any other significant national project, the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning started with scheme collection. Unlike the scheme collection for the Great Hall of the People, only design units in Beijing were invited. This is understandable since different from a single building, planning of an entire avenue requires familiarity with and frequent visits to the sites, which should be hard for designers outside of Beijing. Although the collection of schemes was not nation-wide, several leading architects from provinces were invited to Beijing to work on a "comprehensive scheme" 综合方案. At the beginning of 1964, the Beijing Municipal Urban Construction Committee invited six design units to provide planning schemes for Chang'an Avenue. They were: Beijing City

¹⁶ "Guanyu guoqing gongcheng de huibao tigang," BMA: 47-1-70-1, 1.

¹⁷ Beijing jianshe shishu bianji weiyuanhui bianjibu, ed., *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di I juan: chengshi guihua* (Urban Construction Data of Beijing City after the Founding of PRC) (Beijing, 1995), 371-374.

¹⁸ BMA: 131-党 9-16-139.

¹⁹ *Chang'an jie*, 78-79.

Planning Bureau, Beijing Institute of Architectural Design, Institute of Industrial Building Design, Tsinghua University, Research Institute of Architectural Science, and Beijing Industrial University.

The collection of schemes, however, was without specific guiding design program. There were only several guiding principles. First, Chang'an Avenue, together with Tiananmen Square at its center, should be the political center of Beijing. Second, Chang'an Avenue should "serve the Party Center, serve the production, and serve the laboring people." Third, Chang'an Avenue should be "solemn, beautiful, and modern" 庄严, 美丽, 现代化.²⁰ The general floor area to be completed on Chang'an Avenue was about 1,500,000 square meters.²¹ The two empty sites were generally agreed to construct department store and office buildings respectively.²²

There were no specific function requirements. No one knew exactly for what and for whom so many buildings were to be planned. Chang'an Avenue should be filled with buildings, but no one knew what was going to fill these buildings. It seems the only reason for the completion of Chang'an Avenue was that Chang'an Avenue needed to be completed.

From January to March, the six design units worked on their individual schemes, completing them by the beginning April. Some institutes, like the Architectural

²⁰ "Chang'an jie gui hua shen cha hui yi, Di 3 zu di 4 ci xiao zu zuo tan hui ji yao 长安街规划审查会议, 第三组第四次小组座谈会纪要 (Chang'an Avenue Planning scheme evaluation symposium, Discussion summary: Group 3, 4th meeting)," 7, SAATU.

²¹ "Chang'an jie gui hua shen cha hui yi, Di 1 zu di 3 ci xiao zu zuo tan hui ji yao 长安街规划审查会议, 第一组第三次小组座谈会纪要 (Chang'an Avenue Planning scheme evaluation symposium, Discussion summary: Group 1, 3rd meeting)," 3, SAATU.

²² I did not find the document for the guiding principles. These principles were extracted from the discussions of the specialist meetings.

Engineering Department of Tsinghua University, had provided two successive schemes by April 6. At the same time, a comprehensive scheme by designers from all the six units and five architects from provinces – Zhao Shen, Yang Tingbao, Lin Keming, Chen Zhi, and Wang Yuanpei – was also undertaken and completed before the symposium on April 11-15.²³ All of these architects mentioned above served on the discussion board to evaluate other institutes' schemes.

All the six units founded special design groups for the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning. The Tsinghua University's group was led by Liang Sicheng, Wu Liangyong, and Liu Xiaoshi. The task became the graduation project for students to graduate in 1964 and they all participated in the work.

Scheme discussion

The preparation for the symposium to discuss schemes for the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning started as early as mid-March.²⁴ By March 28, the Beijing Municipal People's Committee had prepared a list of 17 architectural specialists from 9 provinces to be invited to Beijing. The invitation letter, giving April 10 as the start date of the symposium and indicating a duration of about a week, asked each invited architect to be accompanied by one or two young specialists. The list of invitees from Beijing included a total of 30 people from 16 different units: 27 specialists from design institutes and other related units, plus the heads of 3 government bureaus – the Municipal Construction

²³ Zheng Guangzhong, interview, October 24, 2005, Beijing.

²⁴ BMA: 2-20-172-1.

Bureau under the National Economic Planning Committee, the Design Bureau and the Information Bureau under the Central Ministry of Construction.²⁵

The majority of the Beijing specialists, 19 out of 27, were from the 6 design units invited to provide planning schemes. And all 5 architects from provinces, who had participated in the “comprehensive scheme,” were among the 17 specialists in the other list.²⁶ The scheme collection, after all, was not design competition; and the specialists committee was not a jury. The symposium was to share ideas, make comments on one another’s schemes, and hopefully to come up with a common solution, not to pick up the best scheme.

There were also specialists from fields other than architecture and city planning in the Beijing list. There were 3 government officials; Liu Kaiqu was a sculptor from the National Society of Chinese Artists; Lei Guiyuan was from the Central Institute of Art and Crafts; and some specialists from the municipal engineering and architectural construction institutes were also among the discussants.²⁷ Another document shows that 2 writers and 6 representatives from the Drama Institute of People’s Art 人民艺术剧院 were also present at the meetings, together with reporters from the News Film Factory and Beijing Evening Daily.²⁸

It seems that although the 1964 Chang’an Avenue scheme collection was not nation-wide, the planning of the center of the Center drew attentions from more than Beijing. At least one provincial institute sent architectural specialist to attend the

²⁵ BMA: 2-16-371-1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ BMA: 2-20-172-1.

symposium without invitation. By April 10, 76 specialists were ready for the discussions. The number of discussants was larger than originally planned, 31 from 15 Beijing units and 45 from provinces.²⁹

The meetings of the symposium³⁰ were in the conference rooms of the International Hotel.³¹ The 76 discussants were divided into three groups. Group one was chaired by Liang Sicheng and Yuan Jingshen; group two was chaired by Yang Tingbao and Wang Yuanpei; and group three was chaired by Zhao Shen and Liu Xiaoshi. The symposium went on for five days from April 11 to 15, including site surveys. April 11 was originally scheduled for site survey. However, due to the rain, the day was rescheduled for interior activities. In the morning of April 11, six Beijing design units presented their designs for the two individual buildings at Xidan and Fangjinxiang and the specialists reviewed their schemes for Chang'an Avenue planning during the rest of the morning time. The first round meetings were held in the afternoon. All the three groups meeting simultaneously in different rooms and notes were taken for every meeting, summarizing each speaker's main points. The following two days were scheduled for site survey. The rest four rounds of meetings took place on April 14 and 15.³²

The five rounds of group meetings were not organized according to different planning issues. It seems that speaking were quite randomly. The meeting notes show that most people only formally spoke once during all the five rounds. Some spoke in

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Here, I deliberately make a difference between "meeting" and "symposium." Meeting refers to each separate group discussion, while symposium refers to the entire 5-day event.

³¹ Zheng Guangzhong, interview.

³² "Chang'anjie guihua shencha huiyi, di 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ci gezu taolun jiyao 长安街规划审查会议, 第一, 二, 三, 四, 五次各组讨论纪要 (Discussion summary of the Chang'an Avenue planning evaluation symposium)," SAATU.

length twice or more. Speech by a certain specialist was interrupted sporadically by other people, thus making the meeting more like a free discussion.³³

None of the schemes totally satisfied any one of the discussants, including the “comprehensive plan” by all the six design units from Beijing and five specialists from provinces. This might be the reason why Tsinghua University made its third scheme in July 1964, three months after the symposium.³⁴

The Schemes

All six institutes participating in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning had completed at least two schemes. The School of Architecture at Tsinghua University, for instance, did three successive planning schemes. Two were completed before the symposium in April 11-15: the first in February and second in April. A third scheme was completed in June after the specialists’ discussion meetings. All schemes from different institutes seeming similar to one another today, the schemes by different institutes intrigued heated debates at the time. (Figure 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6)

Similarities

Tiananmen Square occupied a central position in all schemes. The north-south axis was strengthened as buildings around the square were arranged symmetrically on the

³³ Zheng Guangzhong, interview.

³⁴ “Shoudu chang’anjie gajian guihua shuoming, di 3 gao 首都长安街改建规划说明（三稿） (Explanation of the Chang’an Avenue scheme, third draft),” July 1964, SAATU.

east, west, and south side. The northern part of Tiananmen Square, as framed by the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, was an open space with the Monument to People's Heroes at the lower center; the southern part of the square, as framed by two new structures, was mainly a square of plantings, more or less a green park.

All schemes proposed to keep both the Zhengyangmen Towers and the southern moat of the Inner City of Beijing just below the gate towers. Bridges were planned to connect Tiananmen Square with the southern bank of the moat. Low buildings from the imperial time and the ROC era on the southern bank of the city moat would be cleared away and replaced with multi-layered slabs punctuated by high-rise towers. These towers were also symmetrically arranged, conforming to the north-south axis. They divided the complex into sections and highlighted their center and ends. The entire complex formed the southern end of Tiananmen Square. Following the shape of the moat and the vanished walls previously connecting the Zhengyangmen Main Tower and Arrow Tower, all the schemes proposed a circular band for the southern ending building complex of the square.

For most schemes, open squares, high-rises, and additional north-south axes were placed symmetrically along Chang'an Avenue. Open squares were placed at Dongdan and Xidan, the east and west end of Historical Chang'an Avenue. High-rises also highlighted these two historical ends of Chang'an Avenue, as well as the two ends of Chang'an Avenue Proper, namely, Jianguomen and Fuxingmen. All schemes proposed to use the two extant buildings from the tenth anniversary projects, the Cultural Palace of

Nationalities on north side of West Chang'an Avenue and Beijing Railway Station on the south side of East Chang'an Avenue, to establish additional north-south axes.

Differences

One of the major differences between schemes by different institutes was the way buildings were to be organized along Chang'an Avenue. The scheme by Tsinghua University proposed to use the traditional Chinese urban unit of "lifang" 里坊³⁵ as the paradigm for government complexes. Buildings were grouped around central courtyards closed on all the four directions. The main façade of the complex faced Chang'an Avenue, while the main entrance to the central courtyard was located on the back side. (Figure 3.7) Other schemes, for instance, schemes by the Beijing City Planning Bureau and Beijing Municipal Architectural Design Institute, proposed linear solid blocks lining the two sides of the avenue. (Figure 3.8)

The difference was more than different approaches in the formation of building complexes. It was more about the concept of modern urban street. While the solid block approach treated urban street as a linear space framed by facades, the courtyard approach extended the street space into many smaller side spaces. The solid block approach emphasized the one-direction movement of the street; the courtyard approach offered a divergence to such one-direction movement by softening the long linear street space with

³⁵ Lifang was the basic unit for ancient Chinese city. A city usually consisted of at least 4 lifang. The city of Tang Chang'an has 108 lifangs. During the Tang Dynasty, lifang was walled and gated for control of urban life. After Song Dynasty, lifang became more open because of dynamic commercial activities in Chinese cities. It is not clear what type of lifang the Tsinghua schemes were after. From the drawings, it seems what the designers meant by lifang was basically well defined urban organization unit with peripheral buildings and courtyards inside, as opposed to a single monument occupying the center of an empty space.

many static spaces of courtyards. It was true that all the schemes of solid block approach formed lone continuous facades on both sides of Chang'an Avenue. (Figure 3.1) On the contrary, the Tsinghua scheme proposed to place large courtyard complexes (solid buildings encompassing a void space) and smaller pavilions located on green fields (void space encompassing a solid building) alternatively on the south side of Chang'an Avenue.

For Tian'anmen Square itself, Tsinghua University, the comprehensive scheme by specialists from various provincial institutes, and the Beijing City Planning Bureau proposed extending all the way to the south side of the moat, a plan referred to as the "open" approach. The Beijing Industrial Design Institute and the Beijing Municipal Architectural Design Institute also proposed to extend the square across the moat but narrowed the distance between the two buildings on the south sides of the Great Hall of the People and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, which was referred to as "half-closed" approach. The Architectural Science Research Institute proposed to close Tian'anmen Square – the "closed" approach – along the line defined by the north walls of the two new structures to the south of the Great Hall and museum complex. (Figure 3.9, 3.10, 3.11)

For the design of individual structures, Beijing Municipal Institute emphasized horizontality and used mostly flat roofs, while Tsinghua University scheme emphasized vertical elements on elevations with towers and more complex roofs. For the standard of the 1960s in China, schemes represented by the Tsinghua University was referred to as more political for their "heavy" style in individual building forms, while schemes

represented by the Beijing Municipal Institute was more “modern” in the simplified facades and overall lightness of architectural design. (Figure 3.12) (Figure 3.13)

The Three Tsinghua Schemes

The three schemes provided by the Department of Architectural Engineering at Tsinghua University show the progression of the planning design process. While the two earlier schemes were more sketchy in drawings and models and quite brief in textual introduction, the third one that followed the symposium discussion was very detailed and had specific responses to the comments and criticisms raised during the symposium.

The Tsinghua designers emphasized Chinese tradition and political significance in Chang’an Avenue planning from the very beginning. The introduction of the first scheme maintained that as the center of the Chinese capital and the location of national administration and cultural concentration, Chang’an Avenue and Tiananmen Square should represent the wisdom and legacy of all Chinese nationalities. The planning of Chang’an Avenue and Tiananmen Square, it read, should “match our cultural tradition of five thousand years, our great nation of 600 million people, our great Party, and the significant status of our country in the international communist movement. In a word, it should match the great Mao Zedong Time. ... Chang’an Avenue architecture should express the spirit of our time and national style, and be mostly solemn and grandeur in form with some lively buildings only as accompanying elements.” The first draft also

proposed to break the common spatial image of street with large green fields separating monumental buildings.³⁶

The first draft laid down most of the major principles found in the later Tsinghua schemes. First, Tiananmen Square was the focal point of the planning. For sections of Chang'an Avenue, closer to Tiananmen Square meant more significant in political status and more solemn in architectural style. The most significant section in planning was a T-shaped region, which encompassed the section of Chang'an Avenue between Dongdan and Xidan, and a north-south section from Tiananmen Square in the north to Zhushikou in the south. Sections west of Xidan and east of Dongdan should be inferior compared to this T-shaped central area in terms of the width of street, building forms, and planting embellishment. Secondly, Tiananmen Square should not be closed on the north side of the moat but extend across the river. Buildings around Tiananmen Square should be politically significant, such as Memorial Halls of International Communist Leaders, Museum of International Workers' Movement History, Cultural Palace of Workers, or National Theatre, etc. Thirdly, the convention of lining street with facades should be abandoned. Instead, buildings should be organized in groups and separated by large green fields, which was more national in style. The building on the north side could be higher and larger, while buildings on the south side should have more inter-building distances and allow more sunshine into the avenue. More green fields were needed for a more

³⁶ "Shoudu chang'anjie gajian guihua shuoming, di 1 gao 首都长安街改建规划说明（一稿） (Explanation of the Chang'an Avenue scheme, first draft)," July 1964, SAATU.

grandeur avenue and the requirement of mass gathering. The moat should be expanded to create a beautiful view onto Tiananmen Square.³⁷ (Figure 3.14)

The introduction to the second draft mostly repeated that of the first one. Two major differences, however, were noticeable. First, Chang'an Avenue's status as the east-west axis of Beijing was acknowledged in the second scheme. In the first draft, Chang'an Avenue was only named as the east-west thoroughfare of Beijing, while the Zhengyangmen Avenue was proposed to be its north-south counterpart. In the second draft, however, they were referred to as the east-west axis and north-south axis.³⁸ Secondly, the additional notes in the first draft introduction, which pointed out indirectly the difficulty in the planning due to the lack of specific requirements, were deleted. The additional notes of the first draft read:

We have not done detailed research on architectural content along Chang'an Avenue. We suggest that if conditions allow, some responsible units should do further research on the current condition and future development of the avenue, and come up with a more specific planning program, in order to back the planning scheme up with more scientific base. ...

About the red-line issue, we cannot come up with any specific proposal since we have not done in-depth research on it. Thus, we only made some incomplete adjustment to the Fuyoujie region and do not know if it is practical or not. ...³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Shoudu chang'anjie gaijian guihua shuoming, di 2 gao 首都长安街改建规划说明（二稿）(Explanation of the Chang'an Avenue scheme, second draft)," July 1964, SAATU.

³⁹ Ibid.

These notes, with their cautious tone, were deleted in the second draft, but without resolving the problems raised. (Figure 3.15) The uncertainty of architectural content, that is, the specific functions of Chang'an Avenue buildings, was partly resolved by the third scheme.

In the introduction of the third scheme, architectural content was the first issue in discussion for each planning area. The textual explanation for the third Tsinghua scheme, which included “preface,” “Tiananmen Square,” “Chang'an Avenue,” “Zhengyangmen Street,” and “epilogue” five parts, was much longer than the previous two. The “preface” was basically a copy of the introduction for the second scheme with minor rewording. Main designing intentions as stated in the previous two drafts but criticized during the symposium meetings were upheld and more clearly expressed, including: 1. the T-shaped central area as defined by Dongdan, Xidan, and Zhushikou; 2. the spatial hierarchy with accumulating architectural significance toward Tiananmen Square. Architectural imagery would be richer when getting closer to the center. Sections of Chang'an Avenue west of Xidan and east of Dongdan were preludes for the T-shaped central area and buildings in these sections would be constructed right on the red-lines. The architectural forms in these sections would be intentionally banal with relatively flat skylines in order to dramatize the beauty of the central area. 3. Buildings in the T-shaped central area on the south side of Chang'an Avenue would retreat back from the red-line to make a wider and more grandeur street space. The grouped building complexes of government buildings would alternate with small service buildings located on large areas of urban green fields. 4. Tiananmen Square would be extended across the Inner City moat to make an open

central space and strengthen the north-south axis. High-rise buildings would be constructed on the south bank of the moat to complete Tiananmen Square. 5. More green urban areas would be formed in some key positions, for instance, Xidan, the area in front of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, the left and right sides of Tiananmen Square, north and south sides of the city moat, etc. The total floor area to be constructed would be two million square meters on an area of 120 hectares. An estimated six hundred thousand square meters of buildings would have to be demolished.⁴⁰

Completed after the symposium, the following three parts in the explanation of the third scheme dedicated to the defense of their design concepts. Some suggestions made during the symposium discussions were incorporated, but mostly, the texts responded to questions and refuted criticisms raised by specialists. The defense of the “open” approach for the future development of Tiananmen Square occupied about half of the textual length of the “Tiananmen Square” part. The Tsinghua designers argued that the first thing to consider in the design of Tiananmen Square was its political significance. Although Tiananmen Square as proposed by the “closed” approach, which could hold 550,000 people gathering, was already the largest square in the world, it was not big enough for a country of six hundred million people that had the potential of a mass gathering of one million participants. The political function, they said, was the prerequisite and the artistic composition was the tool. When life raised unprecedented

⁴⁰ “Shoudu chang’anjie gajian guihua shuoming, di 3 gao 首都长安街改建规划说明（三稿） (Explanation of the Chang’an Avenue scheme, third draft),” July 1964, 4-5, SAATU.

new architectural content, the tool was to serve the aim. They believed that such an open square space fit the spirit of new time and the taste of the masses.⁴¹

The “Chang’an Avenue” part of the explanation provided a detailed list of all the 85 buildings on Chang’an Avenue and Tiananmen Square, including both the 10 extant buildings and 75 buildings to be constructed. Five of them, the Tiananmen Gate-tower, the Monument to People’s Heroes, the Zhengyangmen Tower, the Arrow Tower, and a future monument, were in Tiananmen Square on the north-south axis. Eighteen were around Tiananmen Square and along Qianmen Street, including the Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, the National Theatre, the Youth Palace, 2 service buildings, 2 residential buildings, 2 hotels, 2 commercial buildings, and 6 office buildings. Sixty-two out of the eighty-five buildings were on Chang’an Avenue, with thirty-one on each side of the Tiananmen Square. Among the 31 buildings on West Chang’an Avenue, only 13 were office buildings; among the 31 buildings on East Chang’an Avenue, only 10 were named for government use. It seems that criticism for too many office buildings on Chang’an Avenue from the symposium had worked to some degree in the revised scheme.⁴² The number is misleading. Because the Tsinghua scheme alternates large office buildings with small service buildings on the south side of Chang’an Avenue, the number of buildings does not reflect the real proportion of construction for different uses. In fact, in terms of actual floor areas, office buildings occupied 536,900 square meters out of the total listed construction area of 830,200 square meters on East Chang’an Avenue; on West Chang’an Avenue, the new construction for

⁴¹ Ibid., 9-14.

⁴² See the section on “Symposium Discussions” for details of the criticism for too many office buildings.

office buildings was 465,700 square meters out of a total number of 795,700.⁴³ Chang'an Avenue, especially the section between Xidan and Dongdan, was still predominantly occupied by government office buildings.

The organization of building complexes in groups around central courtyards was also defended in some detail. The primary purpose, write the Tsinghua designers, was to strengthen the prevailing power of the central area. Central courtyards offered enough space for exterior activities. In addition, courtyard organization provided flexibility for area division in a building complex. Each office building complex had a floor area of about 60,000 to 80,000 square meters, which could house two to three government ministries with 20,000 to 30,000 square meters for each. Larger ministries could occupy a complete complex, while smaller ones could share a complex with others. The disadvantages of the courtyard organization for building complexes, the Tsinghua designers admitted, was that they occupy larger site areas so more old structures would have to be demolished.⁴⁴

In response to a criticism of too much axial symmetry in planning and individual architectural designs, the third Tsinghua scheme argues that a scheme should not be criticized and abandoned simply because it applied symmetry. Although symmetry was thought of by many people as rigid and mechanical, it produced many great architecture and cities in history. Symmetry was the major traditional character of Beijing's layout. Historical Chang'an Avenue had east and west pailou (archways) Dongdan and Xidan, East and West Chang'an pailou, east and west Three-arched Gates, Chang'an Left and

⁴³ "Shoudu chang'anjie gajian guihua shuoming, di 3 gao," 18-20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

Chang'an Right Gates, etc. However, no one felt it was rigid. On the contrary, without the general symmetry, Beijing would lose its power of order.⁴⁵

The scheme's "Chang'an Avenue" part is the focus of the textual introduction. It also provided detailed explanations for some key joint designs, for instance, the squares at Xidan and Dongdan, Jianguomen and Fuxingmen. Jianguomen and Fuxingmen were designed as the new "gates" leading into and out of Chang'an Avenue Proper. The architectural image of time-honored que 阙⁴⁶ of the Han and Tang dynasties was applied in the design of buildings framing Chang'an Avenue at these two ends. (Figure 3.16, 3.17) Chang'an Avenue was conceived as a showcase mainly for foreign visitors. The text explains,

In order to highlight the central road and make Chang'an Avenue more complete and exact, this scheme treats Jianguomen and Fuxingmen as "gates." However, since the status of Jianguomen and Fuxingmen are different, the designs are varied too. Jianguomen is the real "gate" that welcomes foreign visitors from the airport in the east and has a large open area of green field on its east side, while Fuxingmen is actually an "exit" and followed by buildings. For this reason, Jianguomen is more emphasized in the design and more grandeur, while Fuxingmen is banal in comparison.⁴⁷

Chang'an Avenue was conceived and constructed with a presumed Western gaze in mind, a conception common to both designers and politicians. Its Chineseness and

⁴⁵ Ibid., 25-26.

⁴⁶ Que was an architectural type popular during the Han and Tang dynasties, both had Chang'an as the imperial capital. Que usually has two symmetrical towers framing a passageway, symbolically marking out the entrance into a significant or sacred site. The towers allowed a clear symbolism of hierarchy, in which a three-section que was the highest, to be used only by emperors, while a one-section que was for low officials.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 28.

national character can only be understood within the background of China's modernization process in the 20th century.

Chang'an Avenue as the expansion of the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square

If the progressive nature of Chang'an Avenue, that is, the modernity in Chinese architecture, was conceived by designers bearing a Western gaze in mind, the specific forms in planning continued Chinese conventions in political urban experiences.

In the "epilogue" part of the introduction to the third Tsinghua scheme, the version of modern architecture as represented by technological advancement is criticized, and ideological requirements and life experience of the people are promoted as the defining aspects of socialist design. The Tsinghua designers wrote,

During previous discussions, many comrades proposed various views on "modernization" in architecture. We believe that the meaning of "modernization" is quite broad, including both the embodiment of time spirit and the application of advanced technology. There is no question that the construction of Chang'an Avenue should involve new technologies widely; however, the application of new technologies was not the aim but the tool to achieve "more, faster, better, and more economic" construction. We should not neglect the influence of new technologies on architectural form, which offered new possibilities; however, as for architectural form, we should not express new technology simply to use new technology. To think that new technologies represent the time and that time spirit is totally embodied in new technologies is an insufficient understanding. The decisive factor for the artistic architectural image of Chang'an Avenue is its specific ideological content and life requirements, for instance, its significant status as the political center of

the capital, people's feeling, time spirit and conventional habits, the embodiment of national culture, etc. We tried to realize our ideals in the scheme based on our understanding of these issues, though our scheme is still coarse and designs for individual buildings still need to be perfected.⁴⁸

To some extent, the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning represented by the Tsinghua scheme is an expansion of the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square, which, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, was walled and gated. It was defined by the Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tiananmen) in the north, Gate of the Great Qing (Daqingmen, Ming Dynasty Damingmen) in the south, Left Chang'an Gate (Chang'an zuomen) in the east, and Right Chang'an Gate (Chang'an youmen) in the west. With the destruction of structures defining the imperial Tiananmen Square, namely, Qianbulang (the Thousand-pace Corridor), Zhonghuamen, and the Chang'an Left and Right Gates, and the expansion of the square into an open public space, such a T-shaped imperial space disappeared during the 1950s. The ghost of this T-shaped imperial space, however, persisted in the schemes of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning.

The explanation of the third Tsinghua scheme has a special part explaining the Zhengyangmen Street, which was not originally included in the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning. From the site drawings, one can easily notice that the T-shape composed by Chang'an Avenue from Dongdan to Xidan and Tiananmen Square had too long a horizontal arm and a very short vertical arm, whose proportion was very different from the vanished imperial Tiananmen Square with a long vertical arm defined by Qianbulang. By adding Qianmen Street into the central T-shaped area, however, the proportion of the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

new central area was very similar to that of the imperial Tiananmen Square. The proportion of the vanished T-shaped imperial Tian'anmen Square seemed to haunt the minds of the PRC designers.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, there were actually three squares in front of the Imperial City: in the center was the T-shaped Tiananmen Square; between the Tiananmen Square and the Historical Chang'an Avenues, there were two smaller wing squares: the east wing square was defined by the Left Chang'an Gate and the East Three-arch Gate; the west wing square was defined by the Right Chang'an Gate and the West Three-arch Gate. (Figure 1.2) To some extent, in the extended T-shape of Chang'an Avenue planning, Dongdan and Xidan are comparable to the Chang Left Gate and Chang'an Right Gate, Jianguomen and Fuxingmen are similar in status to the East and West Three-arch Gates, and Zhushikou is comparable to the Gate of Great Ming/Qing in the vanished T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square. They altogether made up the center of new political power, just as the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square had functioned during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Designers from Tsinghua University were not the only ones who proposed such a T-shaped central administrative area in their scheme. They were just the group who stated it most clearly and carried out more steadfastly. In fact, as long as Tiananmen Square was decided as the center of the center and the section of Chang'an Avenue between Xidan and Dongdan was agreed to be the extension of Tiananmen Square, a T-shaped central area was formed. The Tsinghua scheme, however, strengthened this T-shaped political space by emphasizing its ends and defining it in a more recognizable form.

Seen from such a point of view, the “open” approach in the future development of Tiananmen Square can also be understood as the effect of a “T-shape complex.” An equal-four-sided square as proposed by the “closed” or “half-closed” plans would not have been in harmony with a prolonged vertical arm in the T-shape. (Figure 3.18)

Similarities between the vanished T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square and the new T-shaped central area in 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning existed not only on the formal level, but also in their ceremonial functions. The time-honored symbolic difference of left (east) and right (west) was still influencing designers’ minds. Some specialists suggested that the architecture of West Chang’an Avenue should mainly be national, while that of East Chang’an Avenue should be international.

The Symposium Discussions

Modern

Compared to previous Beijing city planning and theoretical controversies on contemporary Chinese architecture in the 1950s, the word “modern” was much more frequently mentioned in the group discussions of the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning. One of the guiding principles from political leaders was that Chang’an Avenue should be “solemn, beautiful, and modernized.”

The meaning of “modern” in the context of the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning, however, was different from that of the 1950s. In the 1950s’ discussion, “modern” was mainly defined as a complement to “national” in the modernization process by criticizing

“formalism.” In the 1964 discussion, “modern” was treated as the opposite of political. Politics required “solemn” and heavy architecture and “modern” meant light.⁴⁹ While political dimension was an integral part of the 1950s’ discussion on “form” and “content,” it was now simplified to formal appearance. So was modern. “Modern” proscribed decoration, especially the decoration of ancient Chinese architectural motifs. “Modern” also meant new: new technology, new structure, and new material for a new form.⁵⁰

It seemed that the taboo about modern was over now since the guideline for the planning included modernization in designing principle. Liang Sicheng, who had proposed “Chinese, Western, old, and new” in late 1950s as new terms for stylistic analysis,⁵¹ now argued that the structural principles, construction method, design process, and relationship between form and structure in traditional Chinese architecture were very “modern.”⁵² Liang’s view of the “modern” nature of traditional Chinese architecture was formed long before the founding of PRC. Trained in the American version of the Beaux-Art architectural system, Liang’s writing during the 1930s to early 1950s was characterized by the reconstruction of ancient Chinese architectural history focusing on

⁴⁹ For instance, Su Bangjun said, “(new designs) should take into consideration of the present reality of the site. They should not make a sharp contrast with buildings already there. While they should not be too heavy and thus not modernized, they should not be too light and dilute the political atmosphere either. The color scheme should be consistent with minor variations.” See: “Di 1 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao 第一组第一次小组座谈会纪要 (Discussion summary: Group 1, 1st meeting),” 11, SAATU.

⁵⁰ For instance, Tang Pu said, “for individual buildings, I think we should think more about modernization. Some look stupidly heavy with too many decorations. They have great (bad) relationship with modernization (material, design, and construction). They do not express modernization enough.” Ibid., 10.

⁵¹ See Chapter Two for detail of Liang’s categorization of architectural styles.

⁵² “Di 1 zu di 3 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao 第一组第三次小组座谈会纪要 (Discussion summary: Group 1, 3rd meeting),” 4-6, SAATU.

the rationalist idea of structural integrity.⁵³ In these articles, Liang argued that Chinese architecture was a living tradition whose structural system had matured in Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE). This system, according to Liang, was both uniquely Chinese due to its successful solution to various functional problems through similar and simple architectural means, individual units, courtyards, and roofed corridors, etc.; and universal due to its structural integrity: the bracket system was the result of the ancient craftsmen’s search for suitable architectural form for the material wood, and the beautiful curve of traditional roofs were not due to arbitrary aesthetic taste but the natural and logical outcome of inner wooden structure. In one words, form followed function and structure. Chinese architectural tradition was “modern” also because it was scientific: the principle of Chinese wooden frame was same as that of the modern steel frame or frame structure of reinforced concrete; the use of unit in the design of both architectural complex and individual structure by ancient Chinese was the forerunner of the modular system in modern architecture; and the bracket system and the tenon-mortise wooden joint were traditional Chinese wooden structure’s responses to the anti-seismic requirement of architecture.

The “modern” in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue discussion, however, was mostly used in formal terms as an opposite to “political.” While political aspects in architecture

⁵³ For example, *Architecture of the Foguang Temple in Mount Wutai* originally published in *Zhongguo Yingzao Xueshe Huikan* (Journal of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture) 1937.7.1-2 and *Wenwu cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials on Cultural Relics) 1953.5-6; *Great Architectural Tradition and Heritage of Our Country* originally published in *Wenwu cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials on Cultural Relics) 1951.2; *Images of Ancient Chinese Architecture in Dunhuang Murals* originally published in *Wenwu cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials on Cultural Relics) 1951.5; *Chinese Architecture and Chinese Architects* originally published in *Wenwu cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials on Cultural Relics) 1953.10; etc. See: Liang Sicheng *quanji* (vol. 1-3).

were mainly understood as attaching political meanings to structures, “modern” meant leaving structure as an independent expressive means. Political character required arbitrary symmetry, heavy walls, centralized images, and exaggerated scale of façades, while modern character required asymmetry, open walls, and human-scale in façades.

Seen from such a perspective on political vs. modern, the guiding principle of “solemn, beautiful, and modernized” carries an obvious contradiction. The solemn clearly relates to the political potential of architectural design, but the word modernized could not be parallel with political. The wording of this principal led to many discussions focusing on how to achieve both “solemn” and “modern,” especially in the first few days of the 1964 symposium.

Where to be solemn? Where to be lively?

While “solemn” and “modern” seemed irreconcilable to each other, the question changed into, which sections of Chang’an Avenue were to be solemn and which were to be lively?

Most people agreed that sections closer to Tiananmen Square should be more political and thus solemn and heavy, while for sections toward Fuxingmen and Jianguomen, the western and eastern ends of Chang’an Avenue Proper, architecture should be lighter and provide more “street life,” which means everyday non-political activities on public streets.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ “Di 1 zu di 3 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao 第一组第三次小组座谈会纪要 (Discussion summary: Group 1, 3rd meeting),” 13-14, SAATU,.

Some specialists argued that it was fine for the entire Chang'an Avenue to be solemn since there was only one Chang'an Avenue for the entire China. Some supporters of this view already were considering Chang'an Avenue Proper in a larger picture, as just an Avenue that stretched across the city from east to west. Zheng Yihou argued,

Chang'an Avenue extends 35 kilometer to east and west. Chang'an Avenue Proper is just the central section of it, seven out of thirty-five. Is it necessary to further divide this one fifth into three different sections? The extension east of Jianguomen could be light and lively with more residential buildings. So could the extension west of Fuxingmen.

From the point of view of the entire city of Beijing, there are many commercial areas north of Dongdan and Xidan. Qianmen area has many too. Is it necessary for Chang'an Avenue to be commercial as well? Urban streets should be differentiated functionally in general arrangement. Some are more commercial and lively; some should be political and heavy.⁵⁵

The solemn Tiananmen Square

The key issue for the central sections of Chang'an Avenue was how to complete Tiananmen Square. In 1964, Tiananmen Square already had all the major monuments it has today except for the Memorial Hall of Chairman Mao. There were three difference proposals for enclosing Tiananmen Square. The first approach was called "open" 放, which meant to open the square to the southern moat of the Inner City and extend the square to the south of the moat with bridges. Buildings would be constructed to the south of the moat to make Tiananmen Square a huge elongated courtyard with the Tiananmen Gate-tower screening the north, the Great Hall of the People and a new structure next to it

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

in the south to screen the west side, and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History and a new building next to it in the south to screen the east side. Both the Zhengyangmen Tower and its Arrow Tower would be inside of the Tiananmen courtyard. The second approach was called “closed” 收, which meant to use the two new structures to the south of the Great Hall and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History as the south screen of the Tiananmen Square. The north-south dimension of the square would be much shorter. The only monument inside of the square would be the Monument to People’s Heroes. The third approach was called “half-closed” 半收, which is somewhere between the “open” and “close.” The two structures to the south of the Great Hall and the museum complex would only partly screen the south of the square from the west and east sides, and the Zhengyangmen Tower would serve as the central section of the southern boundary of Tiananmen Square. The positions for the two new structures to the south of the Great Hall and museum complex thus played key roles in the three different approaches to complete Tiananmen Square. If the façades of the two new buildings were in line with the Great Hall and the museum complex, the square was “open;” if the two new buildings totally blocked the Zhengyangmen Tower on the north-south axis, the square was “closed;” if the two new buildings was protruding into the square but still leaving the Zhengyangmen Tower unblocked, the square was “half-closed.” (Figure 3.9, 3.10, 3.11)

Most of the speakers were for the “closed” approach during the first meetings in the afternoon of April 11. They argued the square was already 500 meters wide. If the length was to be extended to the south of the river, the square would be too big. The

empty and elongated square would just look like a “wide street” 宽街. After the field survey during the following two days, however, many specialists changed their mind and voted for the “open” approach. They said the square was so wide on east-west dimension that it would look too squat 扁 from the Tiananmen Gate-tower side because of the perspective effect and lack of spatial depth if it is “closed” or “half-closed.”⁵⁶

The so-called “open,” “closed,” and “half-closed” were really about the north-south axis of Beijing. While both the “open” and “half-closed” approaches would keep the continuity of the north-south axis, the “close” approach would block it at the southern boundary of Tiananmen Square. The form of Tiananmen Square was mainly considered from the views on Tiananmen Gate-tower, where communist leaders look down during national celebrations. Yin Haiyun said,

Looking from the Tiananmen Gate-tower, the north-south axis is more important than the east-west axis. The north-south axis is really there. It confirms to the Chinese tradition and should be more solemn. It should continue to Yongdingmen (the south gate of the Outer City) and should not be closed. Zhengyangmen and its Arrow Tower are on the axis and (the axis) should not be treated lightly. Qianmendajie, (the north-south street in front of the Zhengyangmen Arrow Tower), would not look solemn and would be powerless if used as commercial area. The north-south axis should be taken especially seriously.⁵⁷

Another focal point for discussion was whether to allow public transportation inside of Tiananmen Square. Many speakers said it would be impossible to keep away

⁵⁶ “Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting),” 11; “Di 2 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 2nd meeting),” 4, SAATU.

⁵⁷ “Di 1 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 1st meeting),” 5, SAATU.

any vehicle from such a big square. Even for the “closed” approach, the north-south dimension of the square would be almost a kilometer long. However, considering the solemn character of the center, most specialists were against differentiating the square into vehicle passages and pedestrian areas.

The functions of the two new structures to the south of the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History were among the most frequently raised issues in discussions. Most of the schemes put the National Theatre 国家剧院 next to the Great Hall and the Youth Palace 青少年宫 next to the museum complex. The placement of the Youth Palace on Tiananmen met with little objection. The youth represented the future of the socialist country and should have a place in the political center. The position of the National Theatre in Tiananmen Square, however, was challenged. Those who were against placing the National Theatre in the square argued that the bustling atmosphere of the theatre would ruin the seriousness of Tian’anmen Square and large requirement for transportation could be a problem as well.⁵⁸ Those who voted for the National Theatre on Tiananmen Square argued that a national theatre represented the culture of socialist China. Because national leaders usually invited visiting foreign leaders to the theatre after formal meetings, placing the new theatre next to the Great Hall where those meetings were held would be convenient for diplomatic activities. A national theatre next to the Great Hall also would be the perfect complement to the Grant Banquet Hall inside the Great Hall. They also argued that this National

⁵⁸ “Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting),” 14, SAATU.

Theatre would not be a common theatre, but a symbol of the new socialist culture in China.⁵⁹

Those against the theatre proposed the Science Palace or National Library in that location instead, because those functions were more in tune with the atmosphere of the square.⁶⁰ However, some specialists argued that Tiananmen Square was already too serious. During the day time, there were always people around, but at night, since the entire square was enclosed by political structures, the square was virtually lifeless. Architecture to offer more night activities was needed for Tiananmen Square.⁶¹

Most speakers also agreed that the scale of the two new structures to the south of the Great Hall and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History should be smaller than the two 1959 monuments, to maintain those earlier buildings' dominating status.

From the discussions of the symposium, whether or not to save the Zhengyangmen Tower and its Arrow Tower was still a question in 1964. Although all the schemes kept the twin towers in their planning models, they offered alternative possibilities as well. Most specialists were against the demolition of the former main gate of the Inner City.

⁵⁹ "Chang'an jie guihua shencha huiyi, di 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ci gezu taolun jiyao (Discussion summary of the Chang'an Avenue planning evaluation symposium)," SAATU.

⁶⁰ "Di 2 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 2nd meeting)," 5; "Di 3 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 2nd meeting)," 1, SAATU.

⁶¹ "Chang'an jie guihua shencha huiyi, di 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ci gezu taolun jiyao (Discussion summary of the Chang'an Avenue planning evaluation symposium)," SAATU.

The space and façades of Chang'an Avenue

One issue in debate was the “red-line” width of Chang'an Avenue. It was generally agreed on by the initiators of the 1964 planning to be 120 meters, which people felt was wide enough and could be smaller; 100 meters would be an even better scale for them. But some said it was not wide enough. Streets in the Tang Dynasty capital of Chang'an were more than 200 meters wide, they argue. Monumental street scale was needed for the capital of new China. If the street looked empty, low buildings for exhibitions, commercial service, or rest area with additional pedestrian lanes could be added between the main traffic lanes and monumental buildings on the two sides. But this was just for the sections west of Xidan and east of Dongdan, which could be more lively and fulfill common citizens' habits. The central section between Dongdan and Xidan should be monumental and solemn.⁶²

The general image of Chang'an Avenue was debated from two opposite ideas. One solution was to form a continuous façade on both side of the avenue; another was to alternate large centralized buildings with large open green spaces having small buildings in the centers.⁶³ The idea of the later approach was that the southern façade of the avenue was yin, that is, the shade side with no sunlight for most of the time. Too long a yin façade would be unpleasant and put the avenue space in shade as well. A row of centralized buildings interrupted with large inter-building spaces would provide more sunshine for the avenue floor. Some discussants also suggested that the alternation of large buildings and green space with small buildings would also make the street scene

⁶² “Di 3 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 1st meeting),” 7, SAATU.

⁶³ “Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting),” 13, SAATU.

richer.⁶⁴ Those against this idea felt such an alternating arrangement would harm the continuity of the Avenue façade and thus a unified Chang'an Avenue.⁶⁵

For the continuous façade solution, two different ways to organize individual buildings were offered. One was to line the avenue with longitudinal boxes with the largest plane facing the avenue; the other was to organize each building with a central courtyard.⁶⁶ While the former would avoid large amount of demolition of old courtyard house along Chang'an Avenue, the latter followed the time-honored Chinese "lifang" system in the organization of urban space.

Another debate was the skyline of Chang'an Avenue façades. It was generally agreed that the skyline should be relatively flat with high-rises at several intersections, such as those of Dongdan and Xidan, and the two ends of Chang'an Avenue Proper Jianguomen and Fuxingmen.

As mentioned before, most participators in discussions agreed that sections closer to Tiananmen Square should be more solemn and architecture of sections farther away from it could lighter. However, specialists proposed different scales for the serious sections. Some speakers proposed Xidan and Dongdan as the turning points for the change of street atmosphere, which were located at roughly the mid-points of West Chang'an Avenue Proper and East Chang'an Avenue Proper. Others narrowed down the solemn area to stretch only from Nanchizi to Nanchangjie, which was about three times the width of Tiananmen Square. In fact, according to such a proposal, only buildings on

⁶⁴ "Di 3 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 1st meeting)," 2, SAATU.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

Tiananmen Square would be serious. The Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History were already there in 1964 and quite solemn. Thus, such a proposal was equal to saying all the future constructions on Chang'an Avenue should be lively. In fact, this was what Lei Guiyuan had openly argued for. He said that Chang'an Avenue should become the "socialist Tianqiao."⁶⁷ Tianqiao was a commercial street located to the south of the Zhengyangmen Tower, where many artisans, folk musicians, actors, and poor artists gathered and performed during the Late Qing and the ROC era. Lin wanted Chang'an Avenue to be the entertainment center for common people.

Architectural content

Since the specific functions of each building were not provided, which units 单位 were to move into Chang'an Avenue was also part of the discussion. Many specialists were against the idea to fill Chang'an Avenue with government offices. They argued that if that was the case, Chang'an Avenue would be a totally lifeless street at night. More commercial, service, and entertainment buildings should be put on Chang'an Avenue, they proposed. Old structure characteristic for Beijing, such as Dongdan vegetable market, circus, Chang'an Theatre, etc., should be preserved, they argued, otherwise, Chang'an Avenue might be just in name.⁶⁸

Like the debate on the "solemn" and "lively" issue, the opposite, that the entire Chang'an Avenue be filled with government offices, was also taken by some discussants.

⁶⁷ "Di 3 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 1st meeting)," 6, SAATU.

⁶⁸ "Di 2 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 1st meeting)," 2, SAATU.

They argued that for a big city like Beijing, some streets could be quieter (meaning solemn). If people want a bustling night life, they could go to other streets.⁶⁹

The most challenged principle in the “three serves” – to serve the capital, to serve the center, and to serve the production – was the requirement for Chang’an Avenue to serve the production. Most specialists disagreed to put factories on Chang’an Avenue. Chen Zhi, said,

The “three serves” principle should be followed in any city, but not necessarily on Chang’an Avenue Proper. Otherwise, if we do have to put one or two factories on Chang’an Avenue, they could only be factories for delicate equipments (which are without smoke). Then we have to consider the anti-percussion 防震 issue, which is too unnatural 勉强. We’d better not be so formalist.

Chang’an Avenue should not be filled with office buildings. Nor should it have too many residential buildings. It should serve the majority of the people’s needs. We should think more about how to organize good life on Chang’an Avenue, balancing commercial, cultural entertainment, residential, and office buildings. We also need some teahouses. It’s good to keep The Chang’an Theatre.⁷⁰

Architectural form

No single person was even slightly pleased with the architectural forms from any of the schemes. This was strange since at least half of the specialists attending the symposium had directly involved in at least one of the schemes.⁷¹

⁶⁹ “Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting),” 9, SAATU.

⁷⁰ “Di 2 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 1st meeting),” 3, SAATU.

⁷¹ Zheng Guangzhong, interview.

For the appearance of individual buildings, the primary issue was axuality, which most speakers criticized because all buildings shared the same axial, symmetrical, I-shaped plan. Each building had its own north-south axis. Some discussants were afraid that so many north-south axes would weaken the central north-south axis along Tiananmen Square.⁷² (Figure 3.19)

In addition to ground plans, people criticized the scale of some buildings, finding them unnecessarily large. Chen Zhi maintained that architecture on Chang'an Avenue should be "smaller rather than bigger, shorter rather than longer, and lower rather than higher."⁷³ Finally, the use of glazed tile to decorate the eaves seemed also problematic to some discussants.⁷⁴

To some extent, all criticism of the architectural design of in the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning seemed to refer to the "ten great buildings" completed just five years earlier. In discussing the three principles of "solemn, beautiful, and modernized," Huang Kangyu said,

Beijing is China's capital and has now also become the center for world revolution. It needs to be solemn. But solemn does not mean precise symmetry. Symmetry should be considered from the general plan. Many schemes emphasized the symmetry of each individual building. Seriousness is excessive and liveliness is not enough. There is a lack of "revolutionary enthusiastic spirit" 革命乐观主义精神. Buildings have different statuses and should be symmetrical or unsymmetrical accordingly. They should work together to strengthen the central north-

⁷² "Di 2 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 1st meeting)," 4, SAATU.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting)," 5; "Di 2 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 2, 2nd meeting)," 11, SAATU.

south axis. About “beautiful,” the atmosphere along the 7-kilometer-long avenue should have variations. Everything being serious is not beautiful. To plant seven rows of trees and to have the buildings all as offices is not amicable. We’d better to have some display windows to make the atmosphere more lively. Beautiful means to have variations in color, shape, and mode. About “modernization,” I believe it is more important because it reflects our new society and the new spirit of Mao Zedong era. Some architecture has new structures and new plans, but look like stone and brick after artistic treatment. They are not new. New means new appearance. National style can only be achieved on the basis of new.⁷⁵

Practical considerations

While specialists who spoke in the first several days of the symposium discussed more about the form issues, toward the end of the meeting, discussion topics became more and more practical.

During the third round of meetings on the April 14th, Liang asked, “Do we really need so many floor areas? One and a half million square meters. Each ministry needs ten to twenty thousand square meters. Even if just one million were for government offices, the floor area will be enough for at least fifty ministries. Will that many ministries move to Chang’an Avenue?” He also complained, “I think this article is really hard to write 文

⁷⁵ “Di 3 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 1st meeting),” 5, SAATU.

章难做。⁷⁶ We are clear about what are going to be on Chang'an Avenue. Character of a street was grown out by itself, not made up by designers.”⁷⁷

Liang was not the only one who was baffled by the requirement to complete Chang'an Avenue in so soon in such a large scale. Chen Shiwu said, “I heard it was required that Chang'an Avenue be completed on the 20th anniversary. That means we need to demolish 600,000 to 700,000 square meters old buildings and construct 2,000,000 new ones. It probably won't be realized. Why not proceed step by step and be more flexible. Even if the country has enough money, man-power, and material, Chang'an Avenue still needs to be completed section by section.”⁷⁸

Economic issue

The issue of economics became the focal point for discussion in the last couple days. The official estimation of the cost was 300 yuan per square meters. In the 1960s, the cost for most of the architectural projects in China was less than 100 yuan per square meters. Some argued that Chang'an Avenue should not set up a bad example of a luxurious street and neglect the average living standard of the country. China was still poor after all.

Others argued that there was only one Chang'an Avenue in Beijing and even in China. Chang'an Avenue's higher standard in construction should be understandable to

⁷⁶ “The article is hard to write” is a typical Chinese indirect expression, which means something is difficult. It usually has nothing to do with writing an article. In this case, it refers to the entire task of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning.

⁷⁷ “Di 1 zu di 3 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 3rd meeting),” 3-4, SAATU.

⁷⁸ “Chang'an jie gui hua she ji shen cha hui yi, xiao zu zuo tan hui jiyao, 1 长安街规划设计审查会议小组座谈会纪要（一）(Chang'an Avenue Planning scheme evaluation symposium, group meeting summaries, part 1),” 10, SAATU.

the Chinese people. They want a great street to show the glorious achievement of the mother land. What's more, they argued, 300 yuan per square meters was not too high.⁷⁹

Some proposed that the present standard of Chang'an Avenue buildings could be lower and the scale could be smaller. They could be replaced by higher and grander ones, or new layers could be added, when the economic condition of China was further improved in the future.⁸⁰ Others disagreed and maintained that since Chang'an Avenue was so important, every building on it should be the best. It was better to leave the site empty than filling it with buildings of second grade.

Whether to complete Chang'an Avenue once and for all was also debated. Some argued that Chang'an Avenue could be "roughly completed," saving old buildings in good conditions, fixing some still usable buildings, and filling in some new monuments. The total completion of Chang'an Avenue had to leave for future generations.

Symbolic issues

Chang'an Avenue in 1964 was serving the city well. Most buildings on it were in good condition and the entire street was already full of life. After the site survey on April 13, Tang Pu said, "some buildings on Chang'an Avenue are very good. It is very sad to have them all demolished. ... The present condition in areas around Dongdan and Xidan is very good. The traditional way of living has made Chang'an Avenue very prosperous, which should be preserved. The flourishing atmosphere on Chang'an Avenue is very

⁷⁹ "Di 3 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 2nd meeting)," 7, SAATU.

⁸⁰ "Chang'an jie guihua shencha huiyi, di 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ci gezu taolun jiyao (Discussion summary of the Chang'an Avenue planning evaluation symposium)," SAATU.

strong.” He proposed moving National Theatre to Dongdan and make Xidan a “People’s Entertainment Park” to keep the thriving atmosphere on Chang’an Avenue.⁸¹

It seems that the reason to reconstruct Chang’an Avenue was purely symbolic. It needed to be reconstructed because of its political significance. Chang’an Avenue, together with Tiananmen Square, was the center of Beijing and China. Chang’an Avenue was the passageway, the service corridor, leading into and away from Tiananmen Square, the square that was the real political center.

Most the important diplomatic activities and events took place, and still do, in or around Tiananmen Square. The international airport of Beijing to the northeast of the city brought significant visitors, especially political leaders from other countries, who would stay at the National Guest House located just to the north of West Chang’an Avenue Extension. On their way was Chang’an Avenue Proper, which thus became the street in the Chinese capital significant foreign visitors must see. From it, foreign friends, or enemies, received their first impression of the city and its urban space. For this reason, the east end of Chang’an Avenue Proper Jianguomen is considered the “start,” while the west end Fuxingmen is the “end.” Several schemes therefore designed the structures at Jianguomen and Fuxingmen as gates, following the concept of the Han Dynasty que 阙, at the Avenue’s beginning and end. The que would emphasize the Avenue’s significance, because a que was traditionally a symbolic gate with two towers, often free-standing, framing a passageway and marking a transition into a sacred or otherwise important site.

⁸¹ “Di 1 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 1, 2nd meeting),” 1-2, SAATU.

Chang'an Avenue was meant to display socialist superiority to the world. Even functional and stylistic considerations of different sections of Chang'an Avenue were subjected to symbolic meaning. Some suggested that West Chang'an Avenue should be national, while its eastern counterpart should be international. The international here, however, had specific meaning for the time. Huang Kangyu said, "Chang'an Avenue should not only serve the Chinese laboring people, but also serve the proletarian and laboring people of the whole world."⁸²

While most people emphasized the necessity not to weaken the north-south axis of Beijing, Dai Nianci, the future head of the Ministry of Construction, argued for a more significant status for Chang'an Avenue. He said,

I heard that the main railway station for Beijing will be at the Yongdingmen. It seems that this is to strengthen the central north-south axis. In the past, emperors lived in the Forbidden City. Other people came to see the emperors through this north-south axis. It was really superlative and full of imperial air 很有派势. However, today we are opposite. We have already formed East and West Chang'an Avenues as the main axis, and large scale significant buildings are all on Chang'an Avenue. This is the reality. Qianmen Street is only forming the north-south axis in composition on paper. If we want it really to be an axis, it seems that main buildings should be on Qianmen Street instead of Chang'an Avenue. The East and West Chang'an Avenues we are discussing today should be totally different.⁸³ (Figure 3.20)

⁸² "Di 3 zu di 1 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 1st meeting)," 4, SAATU.

⁸³ "Di 3 zu di 2 ci xiaozu zuotanhui jiyao (Discussion summary: Group 3, 2nd meeting)," 12, SAATU.

Dai's point was clear. Chang'an Avenue was already the *de facto* main axis of the socialist capital, not a continuation of the imperial axis, and therefore should be more important than it.

Collective Approach, Avant-garde, and Architectural Modernization

The collective approach in architectural design as represented by the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was an art policy meant to fight against individualism in artistic creation. As established by Mao's 1942 Yan'an speech, art was to serve the people, not a personal expression of sensitive hearts. Nor was it a practice for pursuing individual artistic ideals. If other "pure" arts like painting, sculpture, and literature shouldered such a social political duty, the more practical architecture and urban planning should follow the policy even closer. The collective approach was the best way China found to avoid individualism in architectural design and to reach a fast and comprehensive solution to significant national architectural projects.

The symbolic nature of the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was dramatized by the following event immediately after it in the same year. Professional architectural and city planning practice were abandoned. In July 1964, architects and urban planners were called on to leave their institutes to join the people in the construction of their socialist country. Such a revolutionary action reminds us of some Western avant-garde movements in the early 20th century. If the earlier Western avant-gardes were still sporadic expressions of individual artistic ideals, the mass movement in Chinese

architecture during the period known as “Cultural Revolution” put these ideals into large-scale social practice.

Collective approach and avant-garde

The ideology behind the collective approach and mass movement in Chinese architecture, however, was very close to the original meaning of avant-garde art when it first came into being in the 19th century. The “avant-garde” originated as a military term for the advance guard of an army in the Middle Ages. It was first used in connection with art as early as the 1820s in the writings of the French socialist Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). In Saint-Simon’s time, “avant-garde” in art denoted paintings and sculptures that could play an emancipating role in society. Therefore the revolutionary aspects of art were not residing in the form but in the content, that is, the social information conveyed by the artworks: the French Revolution in the painting of Eugene Delacroix (1789-1863), the condition of the working class in the paintings of Honore Daumier (1808-79) and Gustave Courbet (1819-77), and social reality in the early paintings by Edouard Manet (1832-83). At this stage, the artistic avant-garde emphasized the social political connection implied by the term, a meaning similar to the term’s original form in military use. In the mid-19th century, the opposite of the avant-garde ideal in art was “art for art’s sake”, which emphasized the independence of art as inherently separate from ethics and politics.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ For details about the origins of Avant-garde movements in Western Arts, see: Paul Wood, ed., *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, Open University, 1999), Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the avant-garde at the end of the century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1996), Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-garde Artist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993),

In the late 19th century, French avant-garde art took a new direction. Social and political concerns retreated from the major concern of artists and more and more artists experimented with new techniques, forms, colors, and spatial concepts in such traditional topics as mythical scenes, still life, and natural scenes.⁸⁵ Starting with Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism continued the exploration of the possibility of “new forms,” which was more and more characterized with the abstract two-dimensional surface in painting. Avant-garde distanced itself with the social problems and turned into its previous opposite of “art for art’s sake”. Such avant-garde movements in French art first appeared as marginal, whose works were rejected by institutional art societies and could only be displayed in private exhibits outside of the official art circle. Yet by the 1920s, these avant-garde art movements, once refused by the galleries dominated by the mainstream academic art, were already well absorbed into the pantheon of officially sanctioned art in France. In the German-speaking countries, social concern was expressed to some degree in the works of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938). On the whole, however, the emphasis on abstract formal character and individuality still overshadowed the social concern, as reflected in the German-speaking artists in such artist groups as Viennese Symbolism and German Expressionism (Die Bruecke and Der Blaue Reiter). In

Rosalind E Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (London & Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), and Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁸⁵ The possible reason for the change might be that some tasks traditional attributed to painting could now be more efficiently carried out by photography, which was invented in 1839 and developed into a new industry in the second half of the 19th century. In the process of exploring an identity as an art form and that would differentiate itself from photography, painting moved toward abstract form. Except for such a technological explanation, social political changes might also have played a critical role during the shift in art direction. The fall of the Paris Commune in 1887 disillusioned the avant-garde artists who had closely participated in social political movements. A similar shift also took place in the development of Chinese avant-garde art after the failure of the Tiananmen Square democratic movement in 1989.

Italy, the Futurist artists embraced the new industrial society with full enthusiasm and developed the aesthetics of speed and machine.⁸⁶

After World War I, the isolation of art from society as represented by pre-war French art became the target of criticism by such post-war European art movements as Dada, the Bauhaus, Constructivism, Surrealism, and De Stijl. In spite of the remarkable differences in specific approaches to art among these movements, they shared the common ground that art should be an integrated part of life, that what they were pursuing was not simply art (art for art's sake) but something more fundamentally significant, and that the intellectual who abdicated all responsibility and stayed away from social reality was the "real philistine."⁸⁷

These various post-World War I art movements were defined by German critic Peter Buerger as "historical avant-garde."⁸⁸ In his 1970s book *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Buerger defined avant-garde as the rebellion against the institutionalization of art. He argued that as the result of two hundred years of development of aestheticism since Kant,

⁸⁶ For details about these Avant-garde art movements, see: James Henry Rubin, *Impressionism*, (London: Phaidon, 1999); Thomas Parsons and Iain Gale, *Post-impressionism: the rise of modern art, 1880-1920* (Toronto: NDE Pub., 1999); Sarah Whitfield, *Fauvism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighton, *Cubism and Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001); Neil Cox, *Cubism* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000); Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, Open University, 1993); Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998); Shulamith Behr, *Expressionism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Max Kozloff, *Cubism/Futurism* (New York: Charter House, 1973); and Richard Humphreys, *Futurism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁸⁷ For details about these Avant-garde art movements, see: Matthew Gale, *Dada & Surrealism* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997); Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000); George Rickey, *Constructivism: Origin and Evolution* (revised edition) (New York: George Brazziller, 1995); Richard Andrew, Milena Kalinovska, etc., *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914 – 1932* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); William S. Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968); and Paul Overy, *De Stijl* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991).

⁸⁸ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*.

art divorced itself from society and became an autonomous social subsystem, or the institution known as “art”. Aesthetics developed in favor of form and treated social, political, and economical content as something outside of the art. The historical avant-garde of the 1920s was the first movement in the history of art that turned against the institution of “art” and the mode in which autonomy functions. The aim of the historical avant-garde, according to Buerger, was to reintegrate art into the praxis of life. They tried to achieve this aim by challenging the autonomy of art, for instance, the Dadaists’ challenge of the individual creation through ready-made materials, and the constructivists’ challenge of the art mediums through industrial production. But, what was ironic was that these anti-artistic arts were accepted by the very institution of art, that is, they were collected by and exhibited in the museums of modern art. The historical avant-garde failed to destroy the institution of art and reintegrate art into life. When the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s used the same strategy to challenge the autonomy of art, it was somewhat pointless because these very protests were already accepted as art. By reenacting the character of avant-garde, neo-avant-garde did not eradicate the idea of individual creativity but rather affirmed it. Its effort was futile.

If in Buerger, the tone is softened by his admission that it is the various art movements that the categories of art undergo that make them meaningful and recognizable, for Donald Kuspit, the linear succession from historical avant-garde to neo-avant-garde is unmistakable.⁸⁹ He not only depicts the neo-avant-garde as the second hand copy of historical avant-garde, but also castigates neo-avant-garde as simply

⁸⁹ Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-garde Artist*.

inheriting the negative aspect of the historical avant-garde, namely, artistic narcissism. He criticizes not only the logic of neo-avant-garde art but also the moral quality of neo-avant-garde artists, whom he called parasitic.

The collective approach used in Chinese architecture during the first three decades of the PRC shared common ideals with historical avant-garde in the West. Both viewed architecture as a critical way to construct a new society instead of a venue for pure artistic creation. The 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was more than a construction of a beautiful avenue, but a collective effort to display the superiority of socialist society. In the West, both Dada in France and the Bauhaus in Germany considered their works as part of the effort to form a better society. While the Bauhaus was trying to construct a new art institution similar to the organizational form of medieval craftsmanship to unite different forms of art and art with life through architecture, Dada's major effort was to destroy the established and thus remained primarily destructive. Russian Constructivists preferred considering themselves "makers" rather than "artists" even before the Bolshevik Revolution. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, artists who had previously sold works to private collectors now relied on other means of economic support from the new communist regime, and Constructivism as well as the concept of construction was attributed with the new meaning of constructing a new socialist society. Unlike the attraction of German Communism to Dada artists, the attraction of the new socialist society to the Constructivists was more than just political radicalism. The new designation of "artistic workers" to Soviet artists, a designation made by the new regime, created an affinity of shared goals and social status among the Constructivist artists.

To integrate art with life was another ideal shared between the collective approach in Chinese architecture and historical avant-garde movements, enacted through an anti-professional stance. For the Russian Constructivists, art could be reintegrated with life through construction, a term borrowed from industrial production, while in the Bauhaus school, an educational system based on the idealized Medieval craftsmen' workshops unified work and life in everyday practice. In China, the Chinese communist leaders first called on artists and architects to learn from the people. Then they virtually disbanded design institutions. Artists and architects were sent to the countryside to form workshop-like design units, in which professional artists and architects worked as both tutors and students of the masses. A model working process in late 1960s was called "gandalei" 干打垒, which means to use local simple, local material and vernacular structure to construct buildings. These "gandalei" structures were different from vernacular architecture because they were constructed under the instruction of professional architects. In the West, parallel to communists' vehement attack on old society and bourgeois value in the 1920s, many artists enthusiastically voiced a social utopian view on art and passionately challenged the traditional art institutions.

The collective approach in Chinese architecture, however, differed from historical avant-garde in the West in that, while the latter was mainly motivated by individual thinking on the ideal relationship between art and society, the former was part of the general social-political movement that individual architects had little power to resist. Although various historical avant-garde movements declared their hostility to institutional art, their practice bore strong imprints of individualism that used certain

useful aspects of that traditional category. While refusing the category “art,” the Russian Constructivists continued using art exhibition as forum; while rejecting art as a viable practice, they still set themselves up as artistic specialists, working in the laboratory. Although all the Constructivists claimed that their works were different from both decorative applied art and spiritual abstract composition, the way they united art with life in the new society either continued abstract painting and sculpture under the name of construction, or was done in conjunction with the factories to produce utilitarian objects with special industrial design.

Individualism, however, was almost totally expelled from the collective creation of architecture in China. No individual architects were responsible for the ten great buildings at the time of their creation. The claim of authorship for some of the buildings constructed during the early decades of the PRC was made only long after their completions. At most, individual institutions were responsible for the projects. For the 1964 planning of Chang’an Avenue, though, not even one single institution could claim the authorship for their schemes. All institutions worked as a group, where individual people shared ideas and criticized the schemes of individual institutions. While politics played a central role in the process, the result in the organization of designing work for significant architectural or planning projects was more than just imposition of political power. From the evidence of symposium records, these meetings were not forced along certain paths in the planning process. Their guidelines came from political need for the symbolism of power, but the solutions to that need were arrived at through personal

interactions of a collaborative nature. To some extent, it was a natural practice under the collective spirit of socialist society.

Another difference between the collective creation in Chinese architecture and the historical avant-garde was that while the latter was mainly concerned with formal issues, the former was mainly concerned with content. On this point, the collective approach in Chinese architecture was more similar to the Western avant-garde in Saint-Simon's time. The Russian Constructivists could legitimize themselves as avant-garde only by designating certain qualities – order, clarity, discipline, control, and the Classical – as the ideal of being modern, at the same time condemning other qualities – decorative, ornamental, fugitive, and incidental – as negative. It was not accidental that all the western avant-garde arts were condemned as western decadent bourgeois formalism in China during the early decades of the PRC. If the neo-avant-garde in the West was a copy of the gesture of the historical avant-garde's revolutionary restoration of art's pre-19th-century situation, the collective approach in 1960s' China was the very "origin" to which such a restoration was aiming for.

What concerned Chinese architects in the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning was how to achieve a solemn socialist capital and display the superiority of the new political system on a modern avenue, not innovation in architectural forms. According to Clement Greenberg's definition, however, such a planning philosophy could produce nothing but "kitsch."

Collective approach and “kitsch”

The concept of “kitsch” was developed by the American critic Clement Greenberg (1909-94) as the opposite of avant-garde. In his 1939 essay “Avant-garde and kitsch”, Greenberg argued that the essence of modern art resided in its avant-gardism, while art polluted by ethic or political concerns was “kitsch.” Such a position could be seen as a reaction to the Fascist art and Stalinist art in Europe. Since the 1930s, because of the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi German, many avant-garde artists, whose social political environments at home were hostile to their artistic practice, emigrated to America. New York became the center for avant-garde art. For Greenberg, the mainstream of modern art movement, as represented by these immigrant artists, was a teleological development from figurative representation to abstract expression. Greenberg claimed that the nature of each art form was determined by its medium – for instance, the nature of painting was located in its two-dimensionality of the canvas – and the avant-garde movement was the main effort toward the purity and essence of each type of artistic expression. In his later writings, Greenberg further developed the concept of value judgment in modern art along with formal standard. For Greenberg, the value of art was objective and it was the form that determined the quality of art. Content was irrelevant. Playing with content in art was propaganda – in other word, “kitsch.”⁹⁰

“Kitsch” was also considered as form without originality. For Buerger and Kuspit, originality was something happened once and for all. When discussing the neo-avant-garde, Buerger treated the historical avant-garde as if it was an absolute origin whose

⁹⁰ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973).

historical significance could be recognized as soon as it first appeared. The challenge of the institutional art by the historical avant-garde was the origin, which was reenacted by the neo-avant-garde. By reenactment, the neo-avant-garde institutionalized the historical avant-garde. As a result, the former marginal avant-garde turned into mainstream and the originality was lost. The neo-avant-garde turned into “kitsch.”

Chinese architecture in the 1950s and 1960s followed the Soviet model not only in form but also in building policies. Most of the “anniversary projects” adopted the Stalinist neo-classicism in plan and façade. The 1964 planning, together with the designs of individual buildings along Chang’an Avenue in the plan schemes, followed the models established by the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History. The Soviet principle of “national form, socialist content” and the “socialist realism” style dominated the architectural discourse in China for decades. If the Stalinist architecture was “kitsch,” a totalitarian copy of Western neo-classical architecture, Chinese architecture in the 1950s and 1960s was a copy of the “kitsch,” the “kitsch” of “kitsch.”

Moreover, the collective approach went against originality by definition. The product of collective creation was often a compromised solution that balanced different opinions; “originality” was very hard to trace. It was not only without an “origin,” but also deliberately author-less. While the participation of masses blurred the boundary between artistic creation and popular fashion, the involvement of political leaders in the designing process colored the final design with their arbitrary will and blurred the boundary between art and propaganda. The collective approach was “double kitsch.”

The literal meaning for the German word *kitsch* is “trash.” While Dadaism became avant-garde by turning “trash” into art, Stalinist neo-classical painters were designated as “kitsch” by turning art into “trash.” This is the irony of the avant-garde and history.

Historical models and collective approach

The dilemma of the collective approach for being both avant-garde (the “origin of origin”) and kitsch (the “copy of copy”) was mostly the effect of a linear model of history.

Buerger’s notion about “historical avant-garde” and “neo-avant-garde” is itself the very product of avant-garde as a symbol for the progressive nature of modernism through its explorative and adventurous connotation. Since the middle of the 19th century, the concept of avant-garde often meant to be ahead of one’s time. What is being done is not for the present but for the future. The present sets up the example and the future will follow, just like the past set up the example and the present follows; the present founds the origin and the future will copy, just like the past founded the origin and the present copies. Behind such a notion of avant-garde is a linear model of history.

The linear model of history is based on the genealogy of continuous successions and causal links among events. By focusing on the totality of a centralized narrative, this historical model constructs progressive developments characterized by constant alternations of evolution and revolution: from gradual accumulation to drastic change, from originality to numerous copying, and from authenticity to different variations. The Hegelian model of history, namely, dialecticism, is often portrayed as an opposite to the

linear model of history. However, the common ground they share is much bigger than the difference that separates one from another. Except for the substitution of linear pattern of development with a spiral ascendant pattern, the Hegelian dialectical model of history is as causal and progressive as the linear model. What's more, the hidden program of the "world spirit" in the Hegelian model of history makes the evolution of history highly teleological.

Foucault called both linear and dialectical models "history in the traditional form", in which discontinuity is deemed as both the given condition and an abnormal situation of history. It is the historians' job to restore the normal, continuous, and coherent form. For Foucault, such a master narrative is arbitrary. It was constructed by a certain group of people or institution, representing their interest and exercising their power. The new historical model Foucault proposed is discorsal.⁹¹ The discorsal model of history deems discontinuity and rupture as the normal condition in history. Instead of trying to construct a total history with highly selective material, the discorsal model highlights differences but covers everything; instead of a linear succession from past to present to future, the discorsal model emphasizes different levels of succession characterized by the interaction between past, present and future; instead of using terms and concepts as if they are universal and natural that can be applied to any situation, the discorsal model defines them within specific discourse and selects and constitutes series of terms and concepts proper to the discourse.

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discovery on Language*, Trans., A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

To treat the collective approach and mass movement in Chinese architecture as avant-garde was to make a linear connection between China and the West. As Rosalind Krauss pointed out, the categories in the discussion of art are meaningful only within a specific discursive structure. Such universal terms in the linear model like works of art, medium, author, oeuvre, and avant-garde, are all open to question when applied to different discourses.⁹² In the Chinese avant-garde discourse, avant-garde was actually defined very differently compared to its Western counterpart.

The same “style” or approach could have totally different meanings in the West and China under specific social historical contexts, illustrating Foucault’s argument that identical enunciations in different discourses are not in fact identical. When Chinese artists and students went abroad to study art in the 1920s, what attracted their attention was the realistic quality in Western classical art and its formal innovations in Impressionism, Post-impressionism, and Expressionism; none of them were interested in Dada or other historical avant-garde movements. Yet, they developed the first avant-garde movement in 20th-century Chinese art. Similarly, what interested Chinese architecture students in the early 20th century was the formal grandeur of Beaux-Art and the scientific quality in structural rationalism. None of them were attracted to the avant-garde movement of De Stijl or Bauhaus. While what was considered as conservative in the West might be quite revolutionary in China, what was avant-garde in Western art could be commonplace in traditional Chinese art. Because traditional Chinese society had long been neglecting the value of individual personality, it would be pointless to

⁹² Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*.

introduce into China the western avant-garde arts of the 1920s and 1930s, whose emphasis was the integration of life and art, an idea inspired by medieval Europe society, which was more or less similar to the early 20th-century Chinese society any way. In such a social context, the more traditional western art with its emphasis on personal expression would have had a more powerful social and cultural effect.

In the discourse of Chinese architecture, the collective approach and mass movement had a closer connection with pre-Modern architectural practice rather than avant-garde. On the other hand, to simply consider the collective approach as “kitsch” is also problematic and the result of linear model of history.

In the Western discourse on avant-garde, the linear succession between historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde in Bueger and Kuspit’s theories and the designation of neo-avant-garde as “kitsch” were challenged by Hal Foster. In *The Return of the Real*, he argues that without the neo-avant-garde reenactment, the importance of historical avant-garde might not be revealed, or might not even be recognized as a unified movement at all.⁹³ It was the neo-avant-garde that grasped the concept of the art institution, not the historical avant-garde. In this case, the linear succession from the historical avant-garde of the 1920s to the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s-1960s is broken and reversed. The historical avant-garde is as much a conceptual construction of the neo-avant-garde as an origin that inspires it. For Foster, originality is an effect of historical accumulation. He points out that historical avant-garde is a retroactive effect of countless artistic responses and critical reading just like other categories. Without later reenactments, originality is

⁹³ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the avant-garde at the end of the century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1996).

meaningless. For Krauss, originality is a modernist myth. Following Levi-Strauss, Krauss defines myth as the co-existence of contradictories in the consciousness. What was conceived as originality in avant-garde or modernist art is the countless and persistent going back to the grid. The grid, being abstract, timeless, structural, and resistant to narrative and further reduction, becomes the symbol of modern art. No matter how similar these abstract arts were, and no matter how repetitive these creations were, they remained “original”.

In the linear model of history, copy served as the opposite of the original, and repetition the opposite of creation. In Buerger and Kuspit, repetition was always negative and an inferior copy of the original as exemplified by the relationship between neo-avant-garde and historical avant-garde. However, for Foster, repetition was the re-writing of history, which was the indispensable part of the construction of the originality. Krauss set repetition within the perspective of postmodernist production. He argued that it was postmodernist art that brought the issues of copy and repetition into light and played art as reproducible sign. For Foucault, repetition was simply impossible. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, Foucault defined statement as the elementary unit of discourse. Different from sentence, proposition, and speech act, statement must be understood as an event that occurred in a particular time and place, that is, within specific discourse. He further argued, “The fact that two enunciations are exactly identical, that they are made up of the same words used with the same meaning, does not, as we know, mean that they are absolutely identical.”⁹⁴ Meaning was generated

⁹⁴ Foucault, page 143.

neither by history (as in Clement Greenberg and Buerger) nor by structure (as in Krauss), but a function of discourse.

In the discourse on avant-garde, the linear model of history constructed a one-directional connection between cause and effect and tended to draw an equation between cause and origin and between effect and copy. It traced the cause back further and further into the historical remoteness of the past. In Buerger's discussion of avant-garde, historical avant-garde was the cause and neo-avant-garde was the effect. The discursual model of history, however, by acknowledging that originality was a later construction of the copies, reversed the direction of cause and effect. Later reenactments were the cause, and originality became the effect of historical accumulation. Thus, the turn and return in the development of artistic movements should not be understood as simply revolutionary change on one hand and a redundant return to the original on the other.

The collective approach in Chinese architecture was neither an effect caused by the historical avant-garde art movement nor a copy of the Soviet architectural policy. At the beginning of the PRC era, the Chinese avant-garde movements emphasizing individualism were already well established. The collective approach of the 1950s and 60s was the direct opposite to such an institutional art practice. Just as the repetition of the neo-avant-garde made the historical avant-garde visible in the Western discourse, without the collective approach during the early PRC era, the avant-garde quality of the individualism and Westernization in early 20th century Chinese art might never be noticeable. In architecture, the collective approach and mass movement drew professional architects' attentions to vernacular architecture. Before the 1960s, architectural discourse

in China focused on the national, as represented by the official tradition, and the modern, as represented by Westernization. It was during the 1960s that surveys on folk traditions in Chinese architecture start to be carried out.

The Soviet policies of “socialist content, national form” and “socialist realism” also engendered very different discourses in China. While such policies in the Soviet Union were the ideological support for a monumental style preferred by the regime, in China, they led to an emphasis on the social dimension of architecture. Style with its professional associations was finally abandoned at the height of the collective spirit and architectural practice merged with mass movement.

From the point of view of discourse, the collective approach could be seen as highlighting the way architectural meaning was generated. In the linear model of history, author as the source of creation and originality was the main generator of meanings. As a result, art history was reduced to a lineage of master artists and a “history of proper names” as Krauss had criticized. From a discursual point of view, Foucault and Barthes claimed that the readers were the meaning-giver and every act of reading would produce new meanings. They questioned the possibility of consistent meaning in the original text and the possibility of the communication of “original” meanings. Without a single author, the product of collective creation in architecture left the meaning-giving totally to the public experience of architecture in political and daily life.

Avant-garde, Modernism and modernization

In the discourses of Western art, while the meaning of avant-garde keeps changing, Modernism with a capital “M” is deliberately and specifically defined. Modern originally simply means present. Modernism in art, however, is associated with specific styles, values and ideologies. The original sense of Modernism in Western art is chronological, connoting the art produced in the “modern era.” “Modern era,” however, could be defined differently depending on what is considered as characteristically “modern.” “Modern era” refers to the time span that extends from the present back to the time when such characteristics first came into being. The designation of a “modern era,” thus, is actually about “origin.” Thus, from the point of view of humanism, “modern era” could refer to the period of history from the end of the Middle Ages to the present; from the point of view of productive forces in Marxism, “modern era” starts with the Industrial Revolution in mid-eighteenth-century; etc.

However, as Foster and Krauss argue, “origin” is more a later reconstruction, a modernist myth, and a product of linear history. The Renaissance, instead of the “origin” of modern humanism, was conceived as the revival of a classical past at the time. Thus, the transformation of “modern,” a chronological term denoting present, into “Modern,” an ideological term connoting specific values, was possible only after the linear model of history came under scrutiny. This is, for me, how post-modernism should be understood. Post-modernism turned the present-tense “modernism” into past-tense “Modernism,” together with its enthusiasm for progressive history, machine, technology, individuality, and various other social-political beliefs. Thus Modernism in Western art has become a

specific term denoting specific historical period, from the late 19th-century to the mid-20th-century, and connotes specific values in art, abstraction, media-specific, etc.

What interests me is not the definition of modern and Modernism, but the fact that Modernism was pinned down as a historical term in the Western discourse, while it retained its chronologically open nature in the Chinese discourse. What is the relationship between Modernism and the avant-garde in the discourse of Western art? What is the relationship between modernization and avant-garde in the discourse of Chinese art and architecture? My argument is that while Modernism and the avant-garde split at mid-20th-century in the discourse on Western art, such a split never happened in the Chinese discourse. An avant-garde ideology occupies the very center of the architectural modernization project of the PRC.

Avant-garde's explorative and adventurous connotation made it a fair analogy to the progressive ideology of Modernism. For Clement Greenberg, avant-garde was the essence and the most important characteristics of modernist art in terms of its originality and the challenging of conventions. The development of modernist art was characterized by a self-critical and self-defining tendency to achieve each medium's pure form. Originality in art meant exploring at the forefront of such a progressive process and always being new. This meaning of originality was, indeed, very close to the original meaning of avant-garde in military usage. Thus, Greenberg equated avant-garde with originality. Designating avant-garde as positive and the only valid quality of modernist art, Greenberg initiated the later widely accepted common usage of avant-garde as the synonym for modernist art.

Greenberg's position on the issue of modernism underlies the compiling of the articles in the anthology, *Modernism, Criticism, Realism*, co-edited by Charles Harrison and Fred Orton.⁹⁵ In their effort to validate modernism, the editors argue that what made modernism forever valuable was its disinterestedness of intuition and of aesthetic judgment, which offered the basis for criticism and correction, and what demonstrated the dominant status of modernism was the fact that such disciplines as art history and art criticism were still considered in professional isolation. This echoes Greenberg's autonomy of each art form in the discipline of art. They also share with Greenberg in the judgment of objective quality of art by its original form. Greenberg was the theorist as well as the promoter of avant-garde, whose theoretical discussion was a part of the Modern movement and the avant-garde itself.

For the American art historian Donald Kuspit, avant-garde was the synonym of modernism and neo-avant-garde was the synonym of postmodernism. In the opening chapter of his 1993 book *The Cult of the Avant-garde Artist*, Kuspit said, "The apotheosis of the avant-garde or modernist artist as the symbol of the heroic resistance to all that is oppressive and corrupt in bourgeois civilization, if not its savior, has been until recently the major way of stating the significance of modern art. So-called postmodernism or neo-avant-garde art is the symbol of its passing, the indication that the idol has feet of clay." Kuspit argued that avant-garde was an artistic movement responding to the decadence of the bourgeois society, which he calls the therapeutic intention of modernist art. Modernists made a definite opposition between experience and knowledge, or sensitivity

⁹⁵ Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, eds., *Modernism, Criticism, Realism* (London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984).

and rationality, and assumed that the latter was the source of the social oppression and corruption. What the modern artists offered to cure the modern social disease was pure aesthetic experience or primordial sense in their art. By assuming that they have the superior authentic experience that the ordinary people had hopelessly lost, they developed a psychological situation comparable to the Freudian concept of narcissism. And as a result of the primordial sense, the modern art emphasizes spontaneous activity and the mysticism of the medium. Kuspit's attitude toward the relationship between avant-garde and modernism reflected the influence of Greenberg's modernism theory on the artistic fields. For Greenberg, avant-garde was the positive quality of modernism, yet as a result of his enthusiastic promotion, modernism was gradually narrowed down as the synonym of avant-garde. Kuspit inherited such an assumed equation, but different from the positive attribution of Greenberg and his western and Chinese followers, he developed a critical position toward both. And at the same time, he also criticized Greenberg's concept that aesthetic judgments were intuitive and involuntary. Yet, Greenberg's shadow was highly visible in Kuspit's discussion, not only in that he saw the essence of modernist art in its mystification of the medium, but also in that his concept of narcissism was a refurbished version of Greenberg's idea of the autonomy of each art form.

Peter Buerger clearly differentiated Modernism from avant-garde. Buerger defined avant-garde as the critical attitude of art toward the very art institution in which it was operating. He claimed that the historical avant-garde of the 1920s was the first movement in art history that turned against the institution "art" and the mode in which autonomy functions. For Greenberg, avant-garde was the central force for modernism to

win autonomy for each art form; for Buerger, avant-garde was fighting against the autonomous status of art as a social subsystem. Modernism was still working inside of the art institution, while avant-garde was turning against it. For this reason, avant-garde defined by Buerger was much narrower than that defined by Greenberg. Buerger argued that Modernism might be understandable as an attack on traditional techniques, while the avant-garde could only be understood as an attack meant to alter the institutionalized commerce with art. Buerger only mention Dada and Constructivism as examples for the historical avant-garde. It sounds like that Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Purism, Bauhaus, and Neo-Plasticism could be only defined as Modernism but not avant-garde. Buerger's concept of art institution might be inspired by Marx. The relationship between the "institution of art" and the bourgeois society defined by Buerger was a reification of Marxist concept of the dialectic relationship between superstructure and economic base. His analysis of the autonomy of art as an ideological category that joints truth (the apartness of art from the praxis of life) and untruth (the hypostatization of this fact, which was a result of historical development as the "essence" of art)" was derived directly from the Marx's model dialectic criticism of the religion as contradictory, that despite its untruth (there was no God), it was truthful as an expression of misery and as protest against this misery.

Like Buerger, Hal Foster also saw modernism and avant-garde as two totally different movements. He pointed out quite clearly that for most western artists in the 1950s and 1960s, Dada and constructivism offered two historical alternatives to the Modernist model dominant at the time, which was the medium-specific formalism

developed by Roger Fry and Clive Bell for Post-Impressionism and its aftermath, and refined by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried for the Abstract Expressionism and its aftermath. The difference between Foster and Buerger resides not in the relationship between Modernism and avant-garde but in the attitude toward avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. Instead of Marxism, Foster proposed the Freudian model of repression and repetition to rescue the neo-avant-garde from desperate situation.

For the Paul Wood, however, both modernism and avant-garde are historically changing ideas. Avant-garde used to be identified as whatever or whoever happened to be newsworthy and slightly scandalous at the present time. In the 1910s and 1920s, three avant-garde movements developed artistic ideas different from the “mainstream” formal approach of Modern art. They were Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism, and Surrealism, which was different from Peter Buerger’s designation of Dada and Constructivism. And sometimes avant-garde was being used as the synonym of the most adventurous manifestations of Modern art. It was a historical term with expansive category. Modernism for Wood was as well a much broader term than that defined by Greenberg and Bueger. Both the avant-garde defined by Buerger and the medium-specific formalism defined by Greenberg were just one of its many manifestations. Rosalind Krauss suggested that modernism and avant-garde were two different terms but sharing significant historical overlapping. In her analysis of the modernist myths, she concluded that “the historical period that the Avant-garde shared with modernism is over.”

If Krauss's conclusion is true for the discourse of Western art, it is certainly not the case in China. The Chinese word for "modern" *xiandai* literally means "the present time" or "the recent generation", which denotes a more recent time period than the English word "modern" does. For this reason, when referring to the modern era in the western sense, the Chinese will use another word *jindai*, which literally means "the near generation" or "the recent past". The Chinese word for the contemporary era is *dangdai*, which literally also means "the present age". But, as we already have *jindai* for the general modern era, some scholars also use *xiandai* denoting the contemporary era.

The terminological difference between the Chinese and Western discourses is more than the division of history into periods, but deeply imbedded in the communist ideology in the reconstruction of Chinese history as discussed in the section on "museum and history" in Chapter Two. According to the official divisions in political history during the early years of the PRC, ancient history *gudaishi* refers to the period before the Opium War (1840), the modern history *jindai* refers to the period between 1840 and 1919 (May Fourth New Culture Movement), and the contemporary history *xiandai* refers to the period after 1919.⁹⁶ In recent years, since the early decades of the PRC era become more distanced, contemporary history *xiandai* is more used to refer to the period after 1949, while the modern history *jindai* is expanded to refer to the period between 1840 and 1949. In Chinese, however, English word "modern" is translated more often (and in common usage) as *xiandai*, which actually means contemporary. Such a discrepancy between the Chinese and Western terms on "modern," I argue, is neither a confusion caused by

⁹⁶ In some cases, the contemporary history *xiandai* refers to the period between 1919 and 1949, and the contemporary history *dangdai* refers to the PRC era (1949-).

translation mistake nor an accident due to lax scholarship, but the result of a linear model of history that the Chinese discourse on art maintained and a deliberate choice the Chinese discourse of art made to form a historical continuity.

China has systematically recorded its history for almost 3,000 years. Each dynasty set up a bureau under the central government whose job was just to compile the history of the previous dynasties. There was a clear single main lineage of succession and passing of tradition even during the most disintegrated period of Chinese history. In fact, the “dai” in the Chinese words *xiandai* (present dynasty, contemporary, modern) and *jindai* (recent dynasty, modern, the recent past) also means dynasty. The linear model of history was already well established before the western contact, and when the western theories about history came to China, the linear model and the Hegelian model were well received by the Chinese intellectuals.

Historically, avant-garde was also a product of a linear model of history. If “avant-garde” is understood to mean being ahead of one’s time, that is, what is being done is not for the present but for the future, and the present sets up the example/origin that the future will follow as the past set up the example/origin and the present follows, such a sense of avant-gardism still occupies the very center of the Chinese modernization project.

After 1957, when a 1956 article titled “We want modern architecture” was officially criticized and the authors were classified as rightists, the term “modern architecture” virtually disappeared in the architectural discourse in China. In the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning, it was replaced by another term “modernization.” Compared

to “modern architecture,” which had so many connotations alluding Western formalism, “modernization” was a relatively neutral term. Its meaning was closer to the original meaning of “modern,” which was a temporal term simply connoting up-to-date. The frequently used statement in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning “to express the greatness of our time” was just an alternative expression to “modernization.” The term, however, was much fussier than “modern” since time spirit could mean very different things for different social political agendas. By substituting “modern” *xiandai* with “modernization” *xiandai-hua*, the Chinese modernization project became very similar to the avant-garde project, which both deliberately positioned themselves at the verge of present and future, never to be fully accomplished.

The Chinese word *xiandai*, like the word modern in English, was also more than a chronological term and was associated with specific qualities and value systems. However, it was precisely the linear progressive aspect, anti-traditionalism, and the avant-gardism that were emphasized by the Chinese term *xiandai*. In their 1991 book *A History of Chinese Modern Art: 1979-1989*, Lu Peng and Yi Dan defined avant-garde as not only original form, but also revolutionary and critical spirit.⁹⁷ They further expanded such qualities of avant-garde to define modernism. They claimed that as long as an artwork was functioning to resist the aesthetic conventions formed over a long period of time, it could be counted as modern, even if its style was familiar for most people.

However, for Lu and Yi, modernism as well as avant-garde was not the opposites of tradition, but the very method by which tradition was created. They asked in reply 反

⁹⁷ Lu Peng and Yi Dan, *Zhongguo Xiandai Yishushi 1979-1989* (History of Modern Chinese Art) (Changsha: Hunan Meishu Chubanshe, 1995).

问, “What is closer to the real spirit of tradition than the aesthetic attitude of searching for survival and resisting destiny in the avant-garde?” The avant-garde is never supposed to become a mainstream in its own time but has the potentiality to become mainstream in the future. Once old avant-garde became mainstream, avant-garde artists have to legitimate their existence through deliberate self-marginalization. Avant-gardism thus is framed by the Chinese modernization project as the driving force in creating a continuous historical narrative; and the Chinese modernization project was framed by the avant-gardism in a way that could never be full achieved.

By replacing “modern” with “modernization,” the modernization process in Chinese architecture as represented by Chang’an Avenue was doomed never to be fully achieved. Modernization connotes always being up-to-date and thus always being an on-going process. Chang’an Avenue was always “to be completed” but never actually completed. This was the same dilemma the historical avant-garde faced in Western art, having developed a love and hate relationship with the future. On one hand, the avant-garde of a culture needed to legitimate its status as avant-garde by claiming what was being done would be the mainstream in the future. However, once this “future” arrived and the previous avant-garde became the mainstream, the previous avant-garde lost its status as avant-garde. Avant-garde had to constantly marginalize itself to keep its avant-garde-ness.

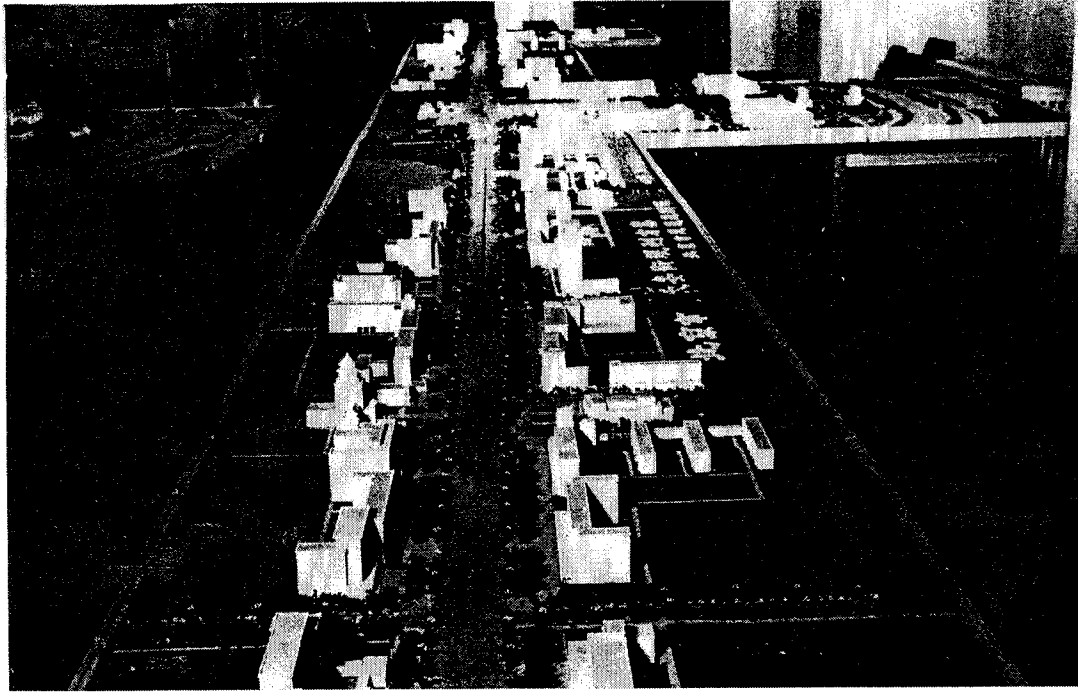


Figure 3.1: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Beijing Institute of Architectural Design and Research, 1964.4

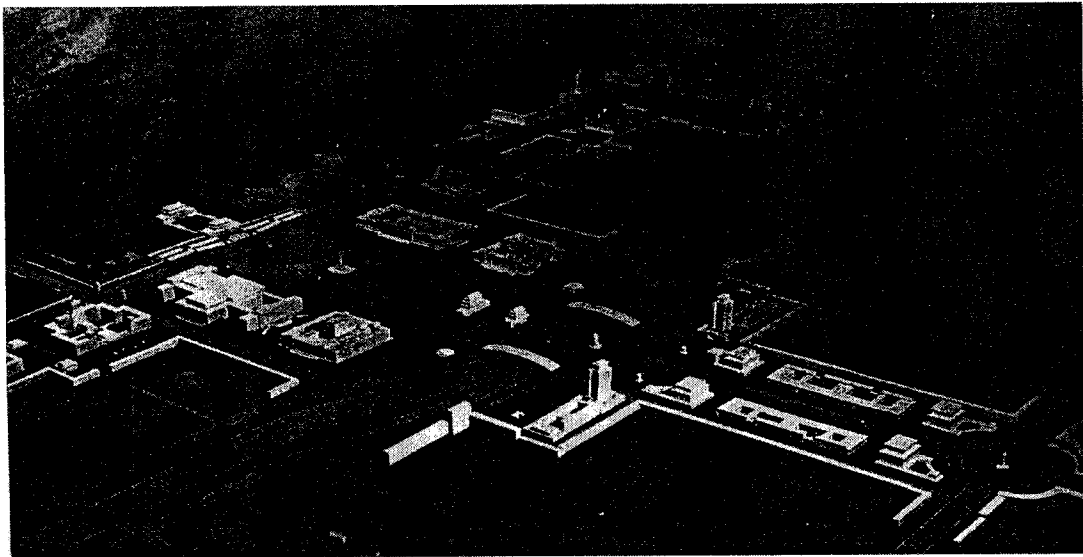


Figure 3.2: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Tsinghua University, 1964.4

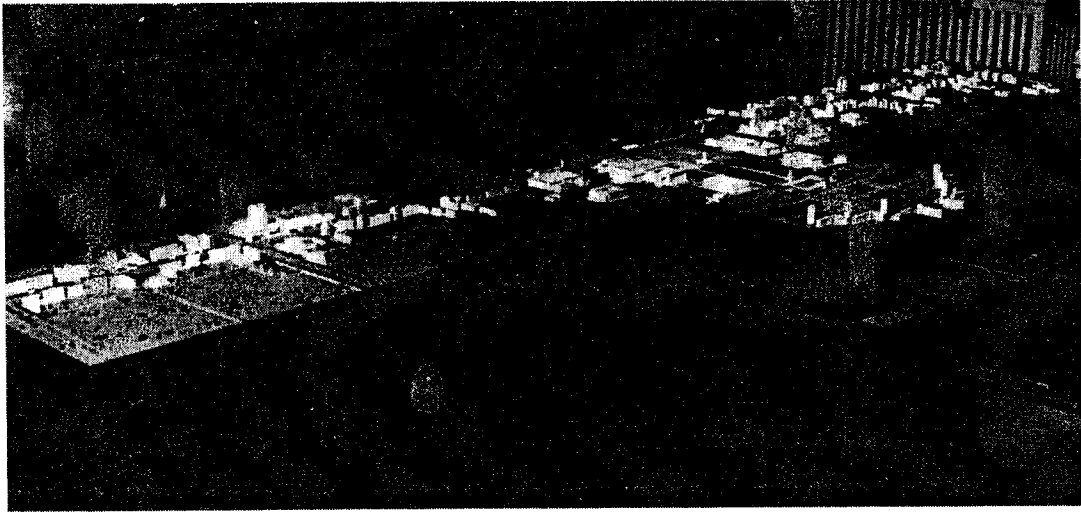


Figure 3.3: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Beijing Industrial Architectural Design Institute, 1964.4

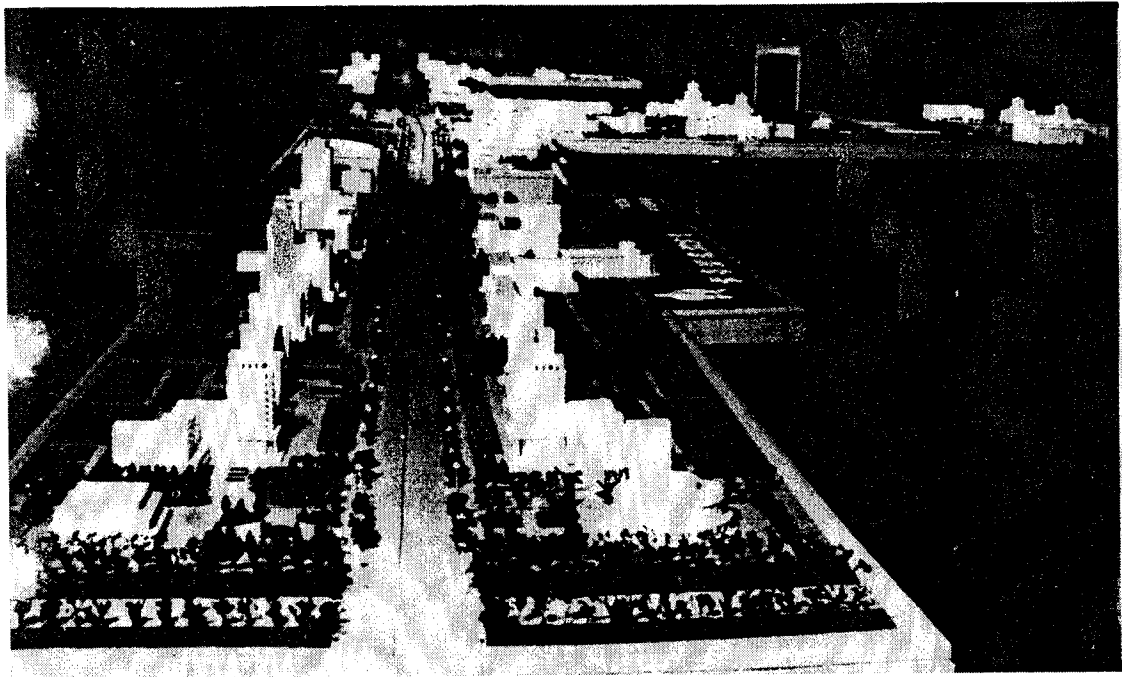


Figure 3.4: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Beijing City Planning Bureau Design Institute, 1964.4

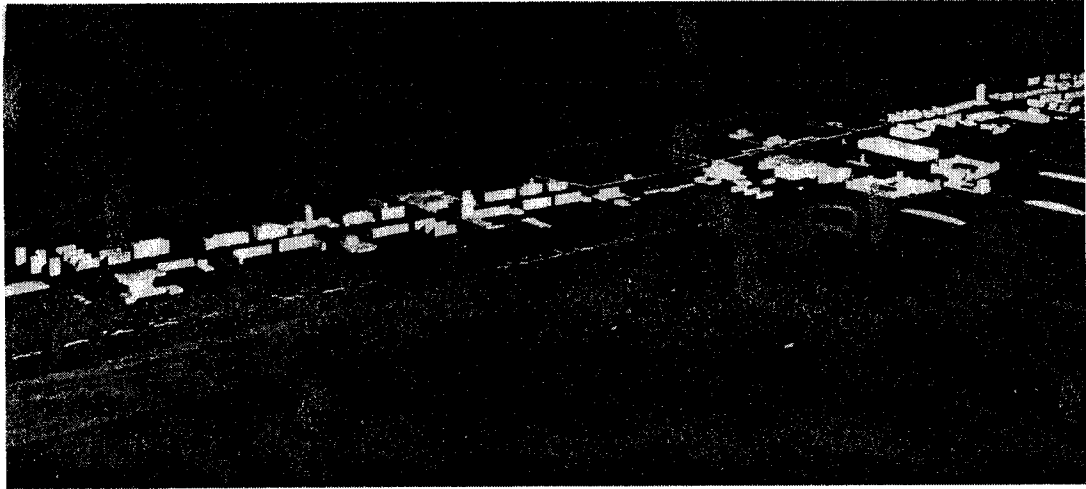


Figure 3.5: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Beijing Architectural Science Research Institute, 1964.4

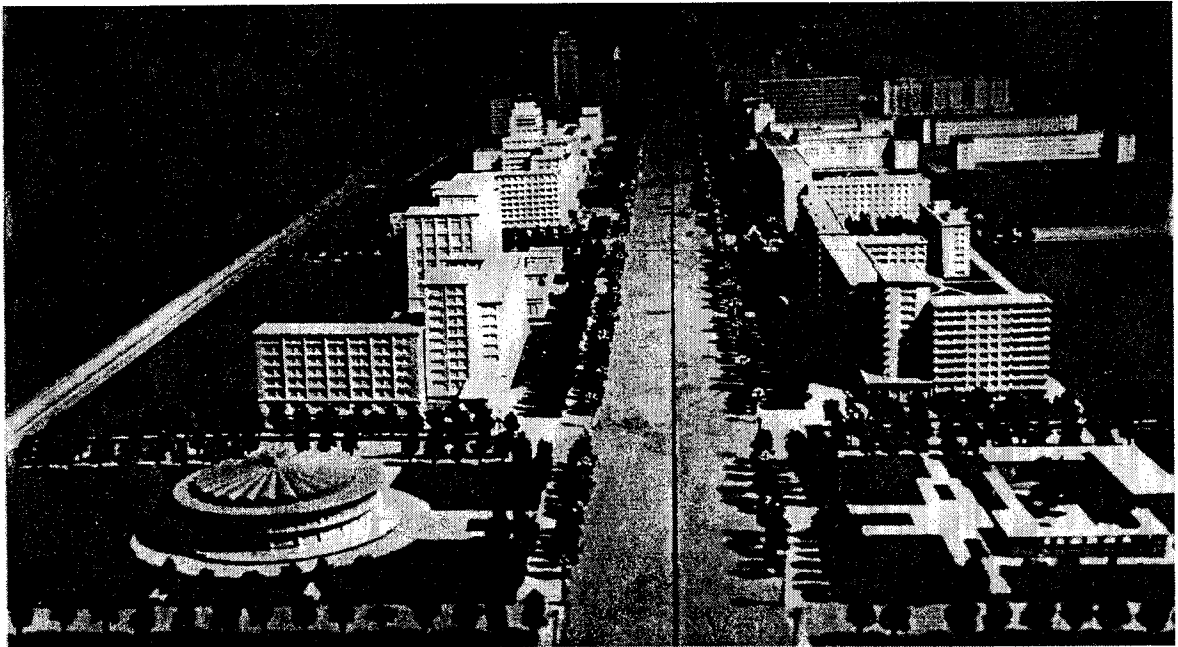


Figure 3.6: Chang'an Avenue Plan, Comprehensive Plan, 1964.4

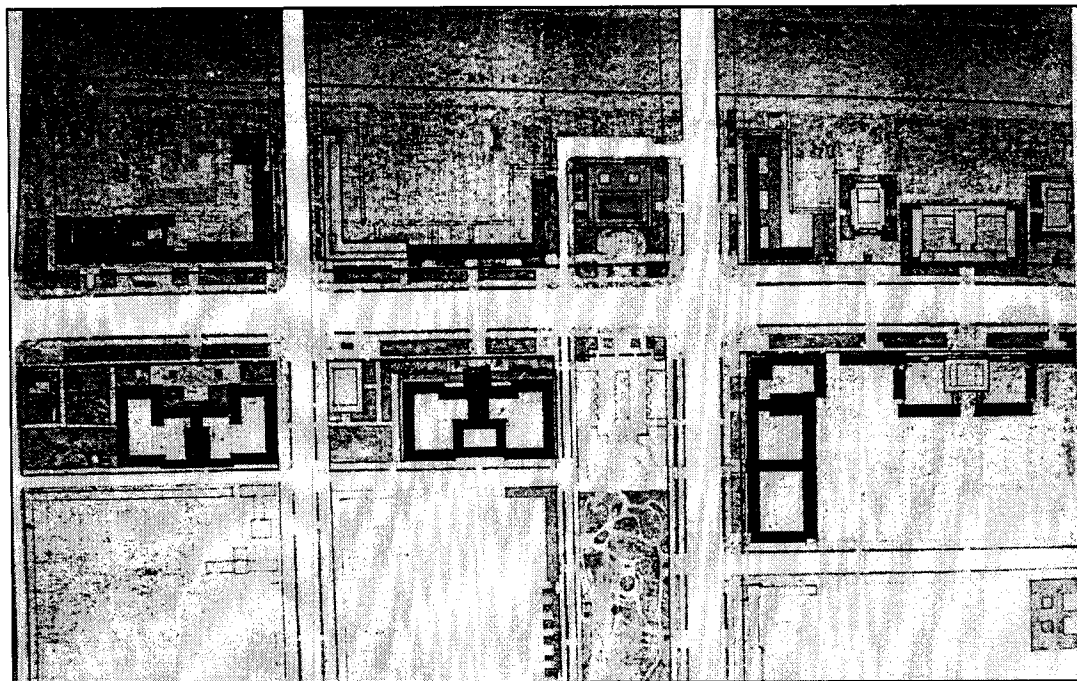


Figure 3.7: The “lifang” courtyards proposed by Tsinghua University, 1964.4

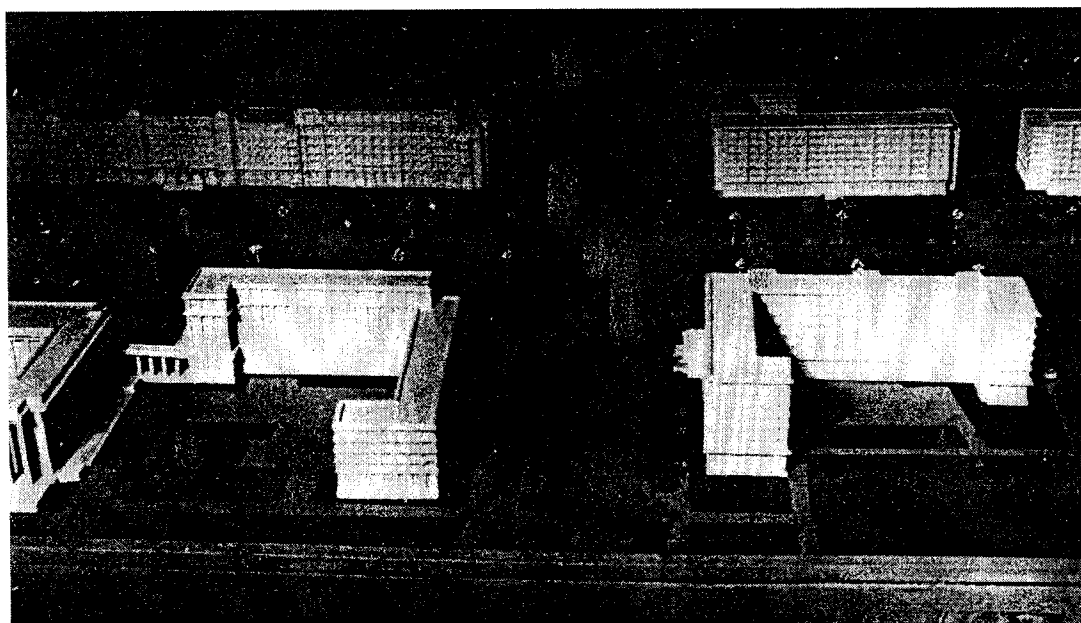


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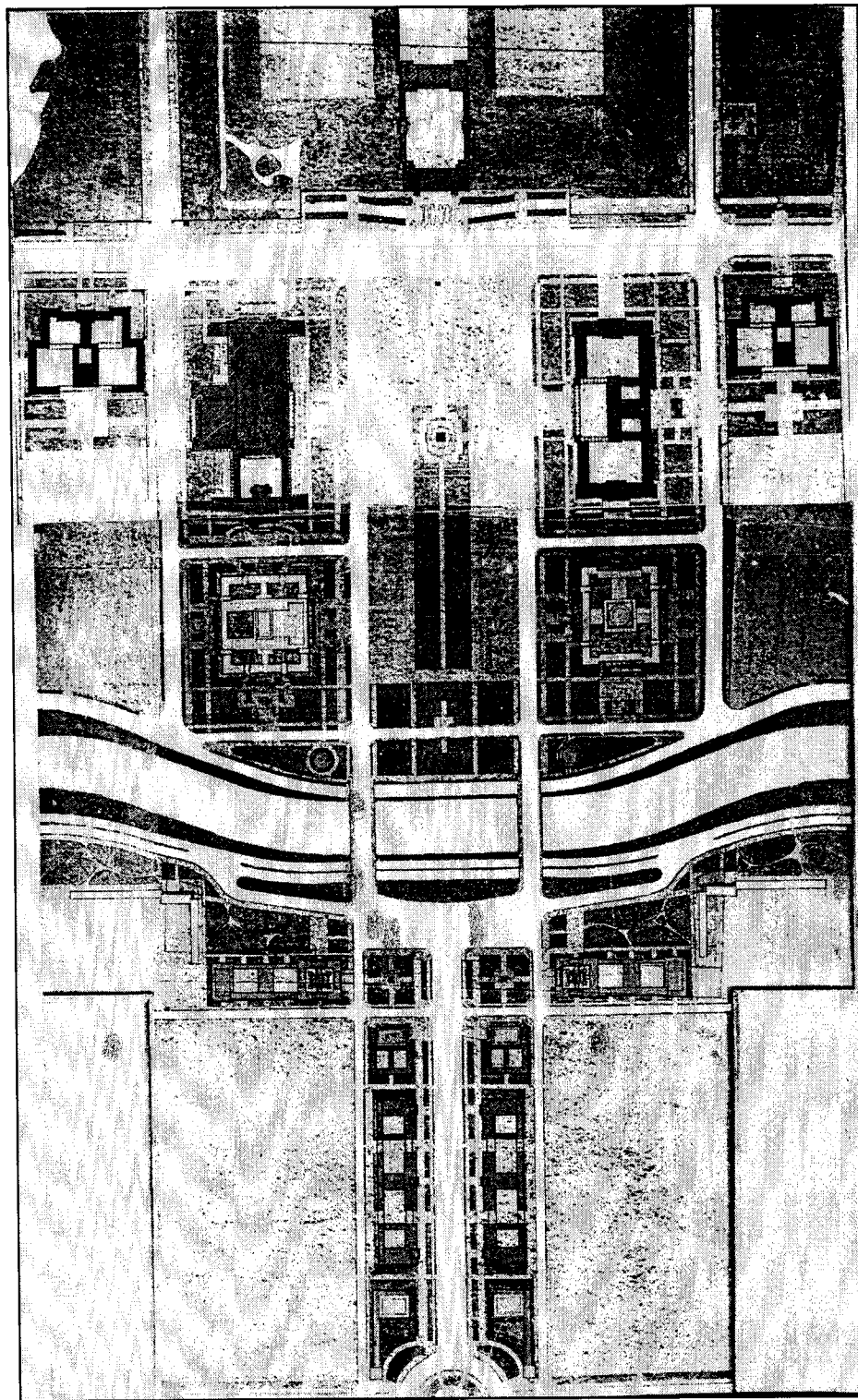


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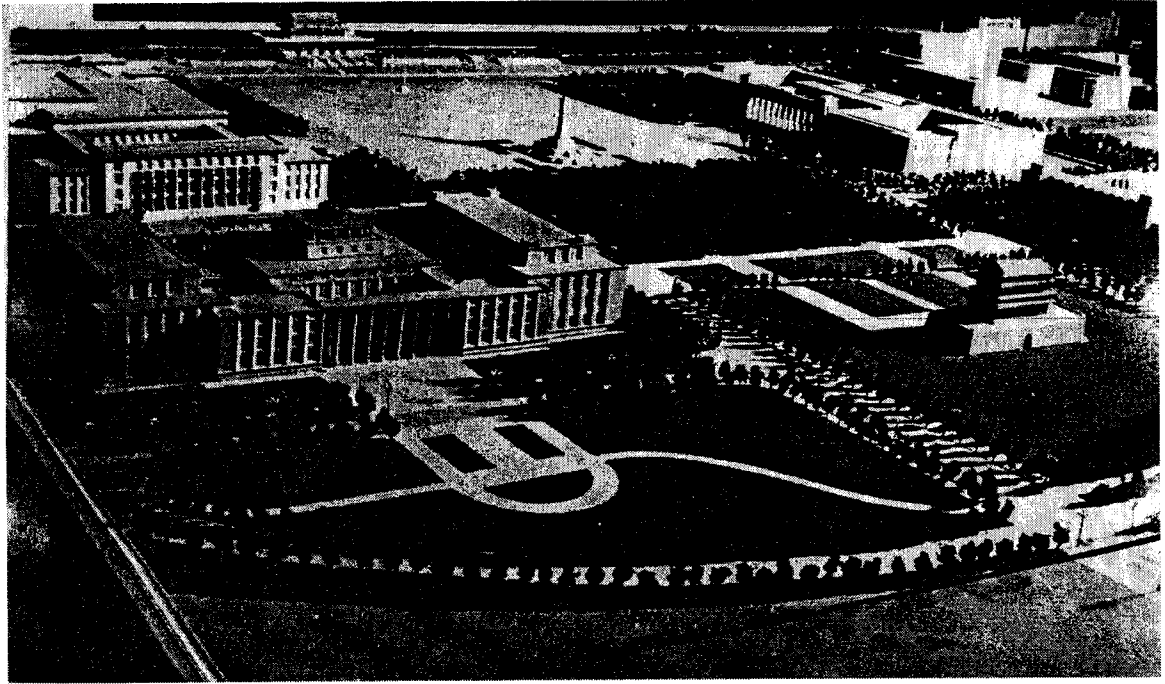


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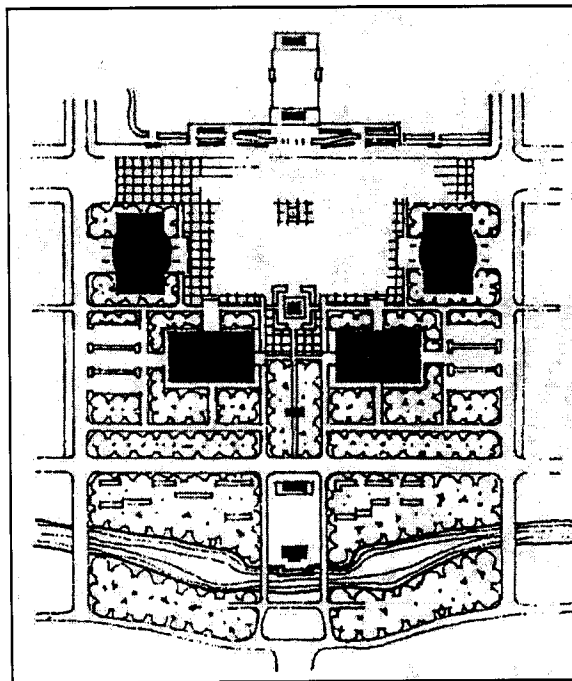


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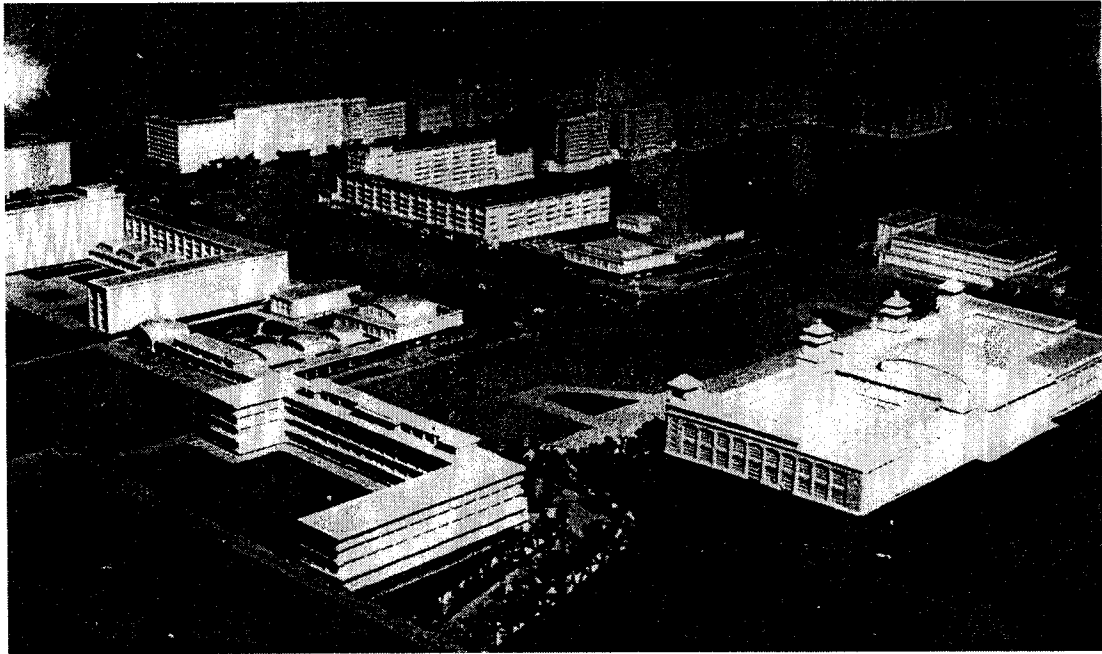


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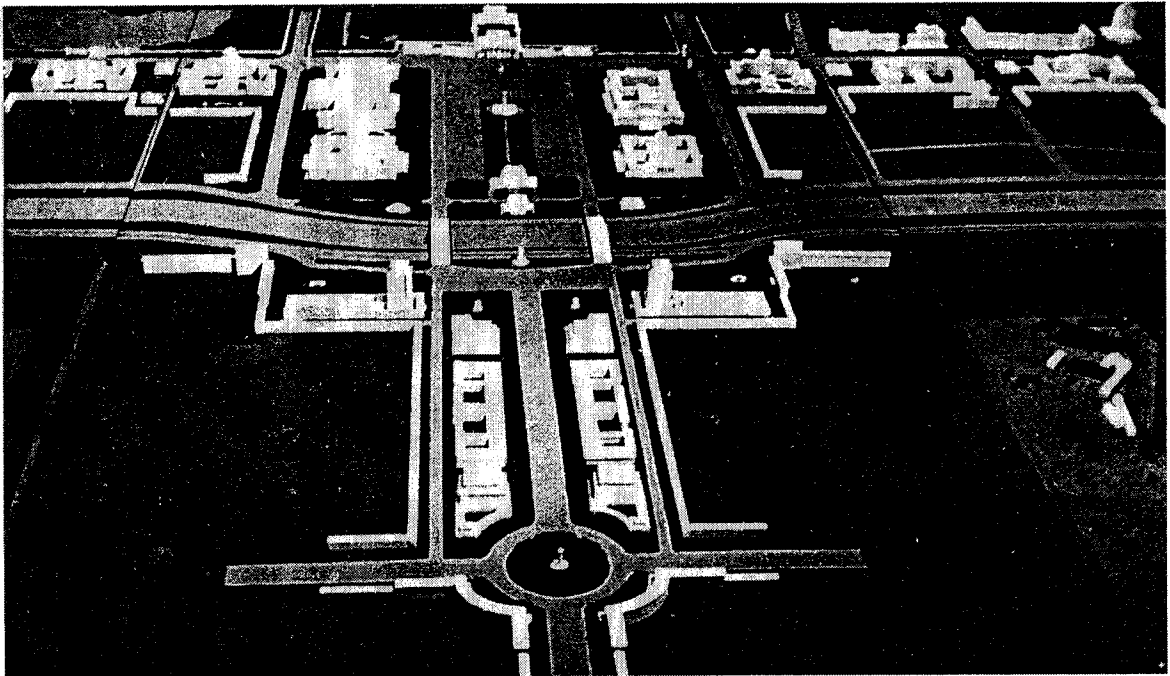


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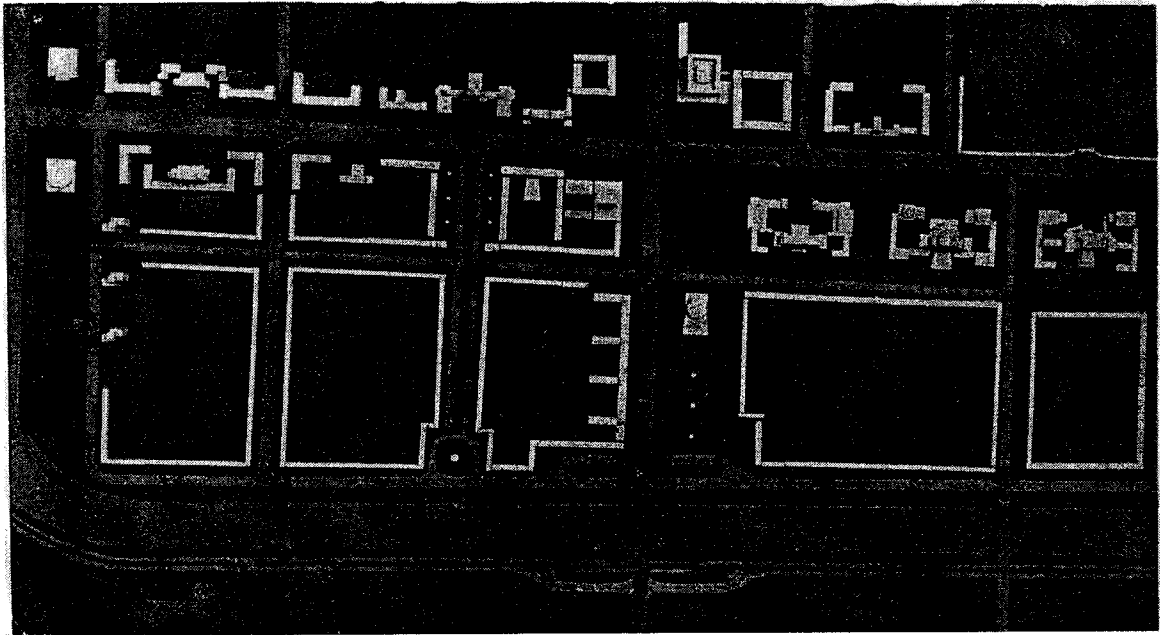


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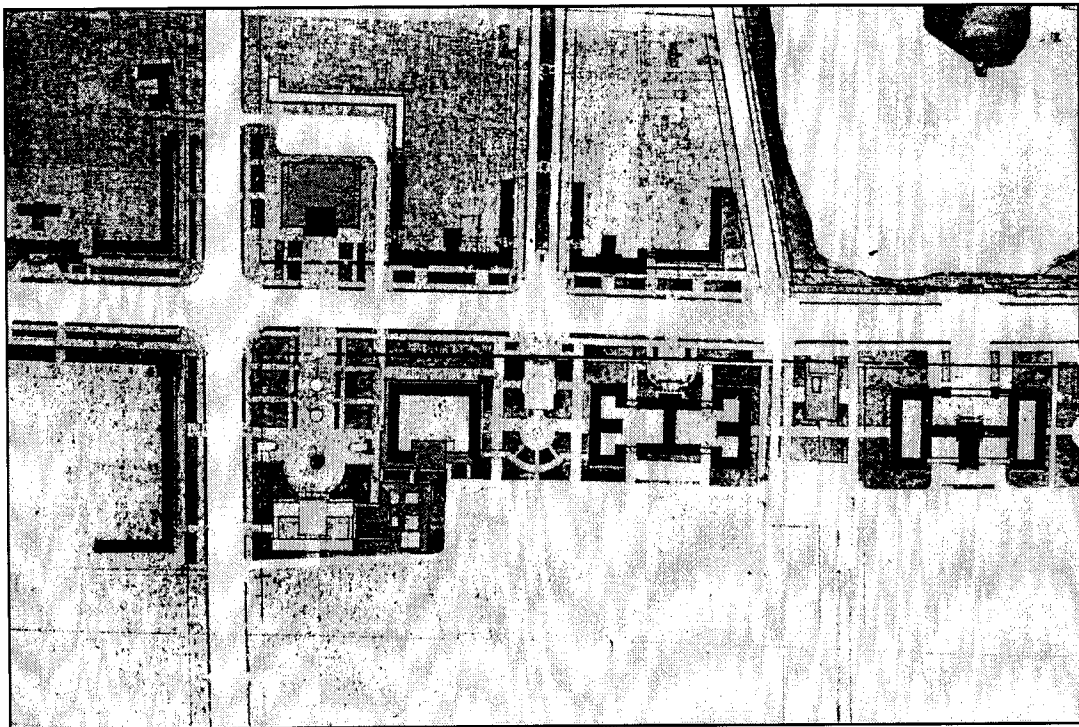


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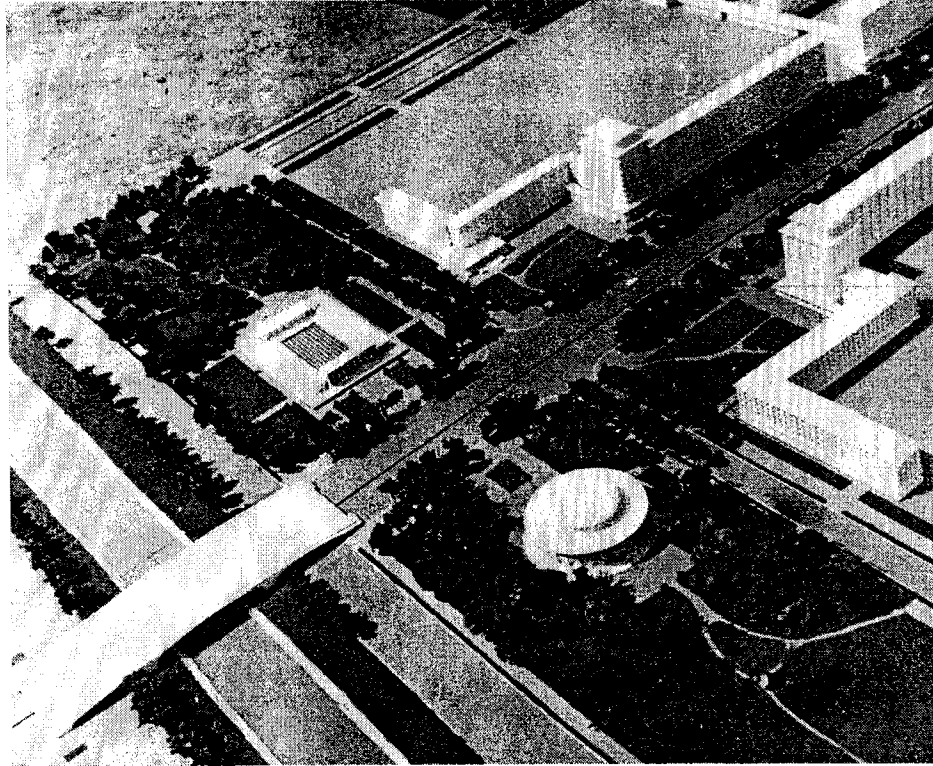


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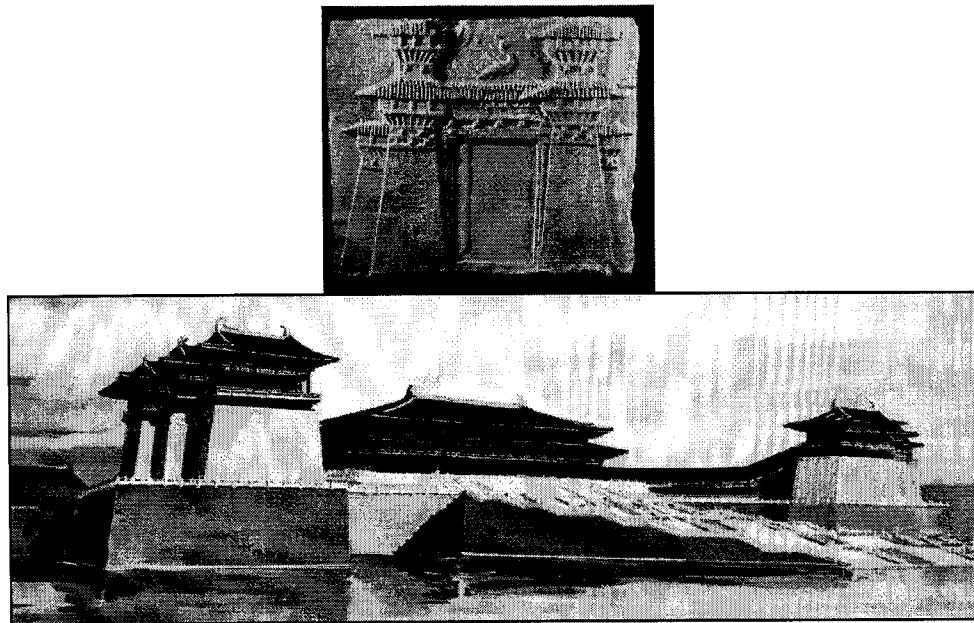


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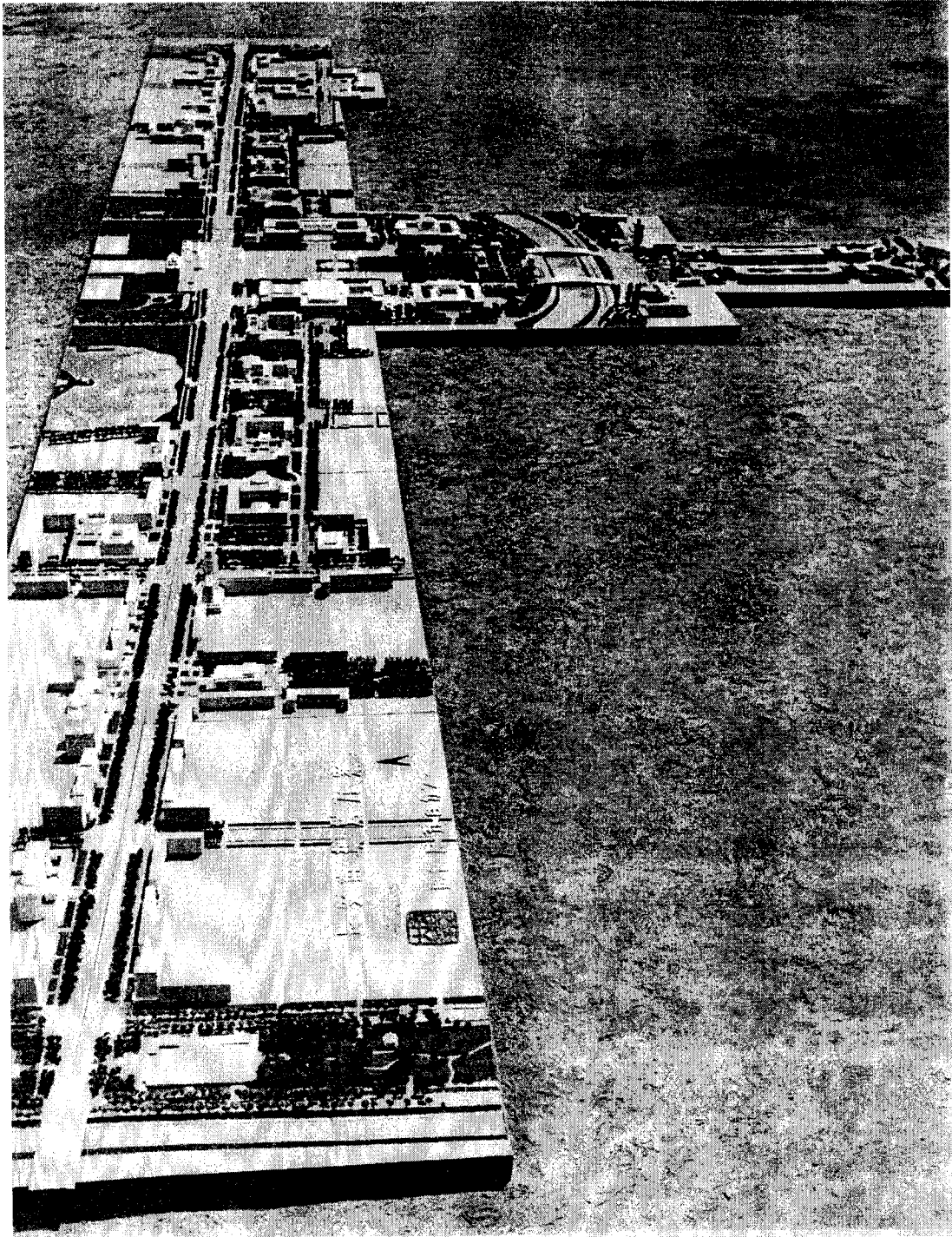


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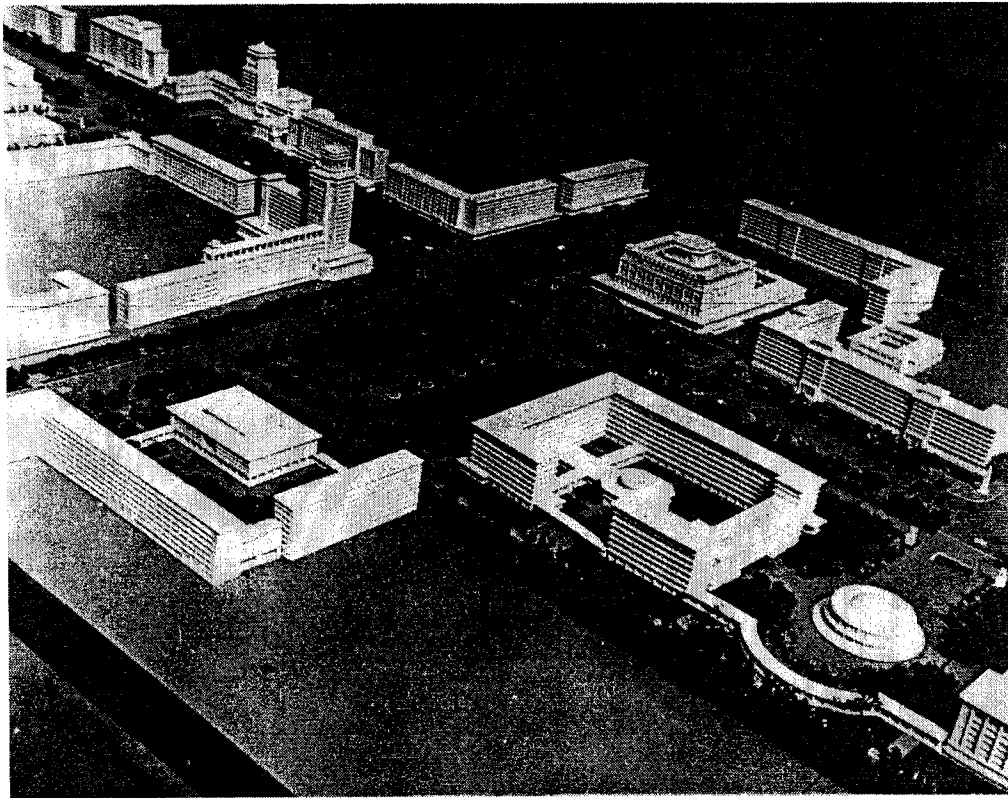


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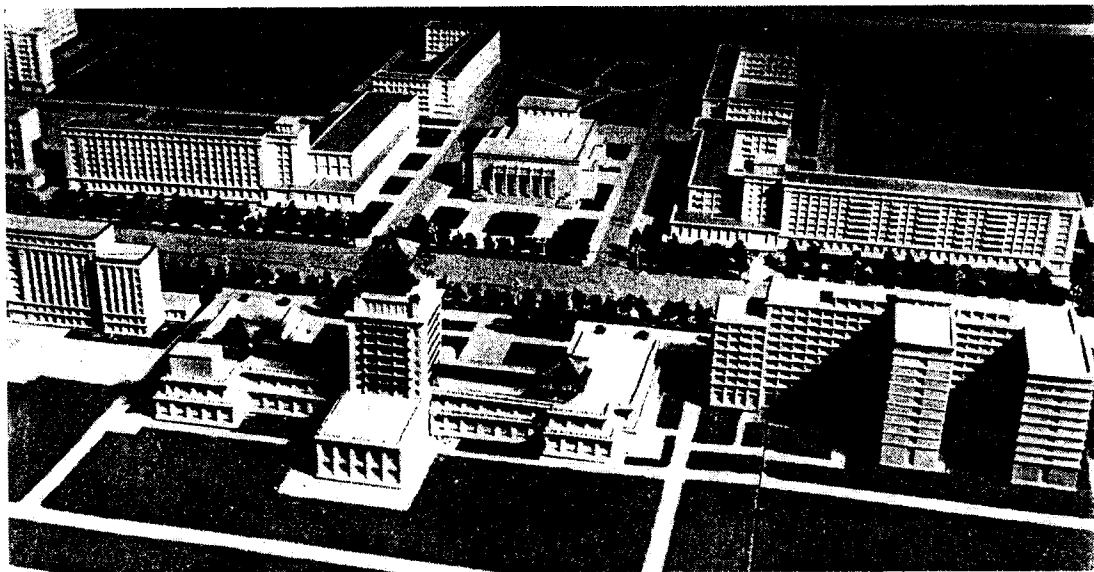


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To Achieve the Unachievable
Beijing's Chang'an Avenue and Chinese Architectural Modernization
during the PRC Era

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Volume Two

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Chapter Four

Modernization in A Post-Modern World – Chang’an Avenue in the 1970s And 1980s

The 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning was the last nation-wide collective creation project in China’s architectural design and urban planning before the Cultural Revolution. After that, the collective spirit eventually led to the total abandonment of the institutionalized design in the field. The months of hard works by the six leading institutes in Beijing and the engaged discussions by the leading professionals from all over the country in the six-day long symposium have left us only some photographs of the huge models made by different design units, piles of drawings, and about 200 pages of discussion notes. The overall plan was never to be realized. The most controversial issue in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning, namely, how to finish Tiananmen Square, the central section of Chang’an Avenue, however, was solved, though only after Mao died in 1976. Tiananmen Square was completed in a way that none of the participants in the 1964 planning could have anticipated.

The Completion of Tiananmen Square

Chairman Mao Memorial, 1976-77

Mao died on September 9, 1976. On October 8, the decision to build a Chairman Mao Memorial in Beijing was announced by Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng. (Figure 4.1)

The Chairman Mao Memorial was a project to legitimate Hua's position as the true successor of Mao. Although Hua became the Mao's heir apparent before Mao's death in September, his power was far from consolidated. Hua's authority was challenged from two opposite directions: the younger generation political radicals, including Mao's widow Jiang Qing, who had been the main force supporting Mao's Cultural Revolution; and Mao's old comrades, who had survived the numerous political movements and remained sympathetic to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, and others who had been suppressed during the Cultural Revolution. Compared to both groups, Hua was a late comer to the political stage in Beijing, promoted from a provincial party secretary to vice-premier only after Premier Zhou Enlai became seriously ill and was hospitalized in 1975. It was clear that the former group had a better chance to claim themselves the true successor to Mao's revolutionary spirit. Leaders of the Cultural Revolution radicals, who were later designated as the "Gang of Four," together with Hua, appeared in central locations during Mao's funeral ceremony in Tiananmen Square on September 18. On October 6, however, they were all arrested. Two days later, Hua announced the decision to build the Chairman Mao Memorial.

The official announcement in the October 9 *People's Daily* made two decisions: first, great leader and guide Chairman Mao Zedong's memorial would be constructed in Beijing; second, after the completion of the memorial, a crystal coffin containing Mao's body would be kept in it for reverence by the people. The location of the Chairman Mao Memorial was yet to be decided.

The site

As early as mid-September, 1976, architects, artists and workers from eight provinces, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shaanxi, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang, were summoned to Beijing to study prospective sites and to prepare design schemes.¹ After paying respects to Mao's remains, they started working, according to an article in *Architectural Journal*, day and night, with tears in eyes. Several possible sites were selected and studied during field surveys in Beijing, including Fragrant Hill in the western suburb, Scenery Hill 景山, Tiananmen Square, and the area inside the Imperial City between Tiananmen Gate-tower and the Meridian Gate. Tiananmen Square was finally chosen.

According to the official explanation, the construction of the Chairman Mao Memorial in Tiananmen Square symbolized hundreds of millions of Chinese people's loftiest reverence to Mao, expressed their steadfast determination to uphold the great banner of Mao and carry on cause of the proletarian revolution to the end, and would strengthen and highlight the political content of the square. On the urban construction

¹ "Mao zhuxi jiniantang jianzhu sheji fang'an de fazhan guocheng 毛主席纪念堂建筑设计方案的发展过程 (Design process of the Chairman Mao Memorial schemes)," in *JZXB*, 1977/4, 31.

level, it expanded Tiananmen Square and made a complete and harmonious architectural ensemble together with the Tiananmen Gate-tower, the Great Hall of the People, and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, which, according to the article, realized Mao and Zhou Enlai's vision during their lifetime to make Tiananmen Square grander with great political significance.² (Figure 4.2)

Compared to the other proposed sites, Tiananmen Square was the best place to make such a political statement at the time. The site inside of the Imperial City between Tiananmen Gate-tower and the Meridian Gate may have been more dramatic in revolutionary gesture in terms of the disruption it would cause to the imperial order. Located to the north of Chang'an Avenue and inserted inside of the former imperial monuments just in front of the main gate of the Forbidden City, the construction of the Chairman Mao Memorial there would have required the demolition of the Duanmen Gate, a ritual gate leading to the former imperial palace. The site, however, was sealed behind Tiananmen Gate-tower and the square in front of the Meridian Gate was too narrow for the future memorial to gain sufficient public notice. (Figure 4.3) The other two sites also would have lacked the high political visibility of Tiananmen Square. The arrangement of memorial monuments along a hill side in the sites of Fragrant Hill or Scenery Hill also would too closely resemble the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum at the Zijin Hill in Nanjing built by the GMD government, which again faithfully followed imperial Ming and Qing dynasties tombs in planning concept. (Figure 4.4, 4.5) Tiananmen Square, on the other hand, was not only the largest square in the world, which provided the Chairman Mao

² "Mao zhuxi jiniantang zongti guihua 毛主席纪念堂总体规划 (The design of the Chairman Mao Memorial), in *JZXB*, 1977/4, 4.

Memorial with high visibility from all directions, but also open to Chang'an Avenue, the widest and most significant urban thoroughfare in the capital.

There were still two options for the Chairman Mao Memorial's location at Tiananmen Square. According to the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning, no more major monument other than the Monument to the People's Heroes had been planned to occupy the central area of the square. The southern area of Tiananmen Square adjacent to the Zhengyangmen Gate Tower had been designated as a "green square" covered with trees and grass, to contrast with the northern area's vast vacant space for mass assembly. Two monuments had been planned south of the Great Hall and the Museum, whose specific locations would define an either "open" or "closed" or "half-closed" Tiananmen Square. Thus, the question in 1976 was whether to follow the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning and locate Mao Memorial along the side or in the center of the square following the north-south axis of Beijing city. It did not take long before a decision was made in favor of the location on the north-south axis of Beijing along Tiananmen Gate-tower and the Monument to the People's Heroes. On an ideological level, the central location would highlight the great heroic image of Chairman Mao and express the political significance of the memorial. On a formal level, or in the language of the time, the level of artistic effect, the Mao Memorial would be the principle building for the area, since the central location would prevent its being dwarfed by the two extant, relatively larger buildings, the Great Hall and the Museum, thus making it the dominating structure in the architectural ensemble of Tiananmen Square.³

³ Ibid.

The exact site had still to be narrowed down. Since the area north of the Monument to the People's Heroes had to be reserved for public assembly, it was unanimously agreed that the Mao Memorial should be located to the south of the monument. However, there were still four different proposals for the location along the north-south axis between the monument and the Zhengyangmen Gate-tower. The first was to put the Mao Memorial close to the monument and make them a memorial group, an idea that was rejected because both would lose individuality and the larger scale of the Mao Memorial would overwhelm the monument. The second was to demolish the Zhengyangmen Gate-tower and use its site for the Mao Memorial; this proposal was also rejected since the memorial would be exposed to the busy traffic at the southern end of Tiananmen Square, ruining the solemn atmosphere it deserved. The third was to put the Mao Memorial close to Zhengyangmen Gate-tower, which was again rejected since the height of the gate tower would dwarf the memorial. The fourth was to locate the memorial at the mid point on the north-south axis between the Monument to the People's Heroes and the Zhengyangmen Gate-tower, 200 meters to each end, which became the final exact site where the foundation stone was laid. The rest of the southern area of Tiananmen Square joined its northern part, becoming assembly ground and expanding the potential of the square from holding 400,000 people to 600,000. Such a site planning, according to the official explanation, embodied the theme that "Chairman Mao is among the people and lives forever in our hearts," since during significant political assembly, the

Mao Memorial would be surrounded by the masses.⁴ The site was finally anchored, both physically and ideologically. (Figure 4.6)

The main façade and entrance of Mao Memorial face north, just like the Monument to the People's Heroes built two decades ago, which is opposite to traditional architectural orientation. Like the Tiananmen Gate-tower and the Forbidden City, imperial monuments in Beijing all face south. The communist monuments in Tiananmen Square broke the time-honored south-facing orientation of traditional Chinese architecture. Framed by these two opposite architectural orientations, Chang'an Avenue became the boundary as well as the joint for past and present, imperial and communist, and history and modernity, both physically and symbolically.

“Three combinations” and on-site design

If the site planning of the Chairman Mao Memorial totally disregarded the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning, the design procedure continued and developed its collective approach in architectural creation.

The radical “design revolution” initiated in 1964 immediately after the Chang'an Avenue planning had asked designers to leave their institutes and work with the masses on the construction sites, implementing the new method of “gandalei.” Gandalei had been invented by workers in the city of Daqing in Helongjiang Province, the petroleum site discovered by the “New China” and Mao's model industrial city. This new method, with

⁴ Ibid.

its application of local materials and vernacular techniques in design and construction,⁵ was partly a product of the specific political situation of the time. During the Cold War years in the late 1960s, a strong sense pervaded China that a real war between China and its main enemies could happen at any time. As a result, constructions in big cities ceased and major industrial plants were relocated to China's hinterlands in the western parts of the country. This was generally referred to as "three lines construction." "Gandalei" was mainly influential in the countryside and predominantly in such fields as dwellings and factories. No monument was built on Chang'an Avenue during this period.

The movement of "design revolution" did not last very long, however. China's international political situation changed in the beginning of the 1970s. In 1970 to 1971, Kissinger and President Nixon visited China, followed by the "normalization" of the Sino-US relationship and PRC's replacement of ROC (Taiwan) in the United Nations' Security Council. As a result, constructions for new diplomatic needs revived in large Chinese cities. Design policy swayed back to the pre-1964 collective approach. Although the "design revolution" together with its "gandalei" method only last for a couple years, its legacy materialized in the new collective approach in the 1970s, which called on for "three combinations" in design, referring to the combination of the leaders, the mass, and the specialists, or in other words, cadres, workers, and designers.⁶ All achievements in

⁵ Yan Zixiang 阎子祥, "Zhongguo jianzhu xuehui di 4 jie daibiao dahui ji xueshu huiyi zongjie fayan 中国建筑学会第四届代表大会及学术会议总结发言 (Summing-up speech at the 4th conference of the Society of Chinese Architecture), *JZXB*, 1966/4-5.

⁶ According to Chen Zhihua, Professor of Architectural History at Tsinghua University, "three combinations" primarily refer to the combination of leaders, specialists, and masses. But he also explained that it varies depending on different cases and times, for instance, it could refer to the combination of old, middle, and younger generations, etc. If it was mentioned before 1974, then it should be the former. Chen Zhihua, telephone conversation, 2006.3.6 2:20 am.

architecture and urban planning were claimed to be the results of “three combinations.” “Three combinations” as a political slogan acquired such great media exposure that virtually no explanations about their exact meaning were offered when it was evoked to justify a design. It seems that “three combinations” acquired individual ideological significance of its own right regardless of its original designations. Various versions of “three combinations” are implied or specified in written records: combinations of old, middle, and young generations, combinations of construction, design, and theatrical teaching, combinations of teaching, production, and research, combinations of worker, technicians, and teachers, etc.⁷

Although the exact meaning of the “three combinations” was not specifically pinned down and seemed somehow irrelevant in the discourse, the emphasis of the new policy was clear. It abandoned the radical approach of totally relying on the masses as in the “design revolution” movement of late 1960s, but nevertheless continued to play down the role of professionals in the design process. In practice, “three combinations” marginalized the contribution of architects to mere technical support. Their task was to serve politics – the leaders and cadres in different “three combinations” – by learning from and with the help of the mass. In spite of verbal variations of the “three combinations,” its practical meaning is clear: on-site design, relying on the masses (especially workers) instead of technical specialists, architects participating in both design and construction, etc.

⁷ JZXB, 1975.

The design and construction of the Chairman Mao Memorial in 1976-77 were carried out under such a political atmosphere. Major decisions were made by Hua Guofeng and the Central Committee of the CCP, including the final selection of site at Tiananmen Square and reviewing to narrow down design schemes.⁸ Design schemes were provided by old, middle, and young generations of architects from eight provinces. The final designing group consisted of workers, cadres, and professionals from different design institutes in Beijing. During the designing process, more people and design units proposed ideas, schemes, comments and suggestions. Every detail in the design, from construction drawings to selection of materials, was decided only after going through the procedure of “three combinations” of leaders, masses, and specialists.⁹

President Hua also gave one general instruction for the design and construction of Mao Memorial. “The memorial should be practical, firm 适用坚固, solemn, serious 庄严肃穆, beautiful, and natural 美观大方 in design. It should have a Chinese national style at the same time be easy for the people to pay respect to and assist the preservation of Mao’s remains. The construction and its organization should be wholeheartedly careful.”¹⁰ Although there was nothing specific in Hua’s instruction except for the request for “national style,” any guidance on one specific architectural project directly from the top leader was unusual. Although leaders before him, such as Mao, and after him, such as President Jiang Zemin, had used architecture for political purposes, none of them publicized their instructions for specific buildings. Hua’s special attentions to the Mao

⁸ *JZXB*, 1977/4, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *JZXB*, 1977/4, 3.

Memorial can only be explained by his desire to legitimize his status as Mao's authentic heir; after all, compared to his rivals such as Deng Xiaoping and the "Gang of Four," he was relatively unknown to the Chinese people.

The construction of the Mao Memorial showed again what kind of miracle the Chinese people could achieve when the whole country was mobilized for one architectural project. Within half a year, the building was standing in Tiananmen Square. Workers, cadres, designers, and PLA soldiers had worked on the site day and night. Construction materials and equipments were contributed from all thirty provinces. In some places, when the materials or equipments were to be shipped to Beijing, special ceremonies were performed to express people's great respect for Mao.¹¹

The selection of schemes

Although the slogan of "three combinations" was so generalized as to become vague in specific meaning, it does offer us some key insights into Chinese architecture in the 1970s. It might be misleading in understanding architectural design; however, it summarizes meatly the procedure of monument construction in general. While the mass provided manual and material support for monument building, the political leaders made their presence felt by giving instructions and eliminating undesirable schemes at different stages of the design. What linked these two ends were architects, who on one hand constantly provided options for leaders to choose from, on the other hand, provided drawings for workers.

¹¹ Ibid.

Like the selection of the site, the selection of schemes was also by exclusive method. The schemes provided by architects at first all looked like tombs, characterized by solid walls and small windows with a long passageway leading to the main entrance. Some of them resembled horizontal stele; others resembled ancient Egyptian mastabas. (Figure 4.7) The most important example that Chinese architects were following in the early stage of the design in 1976, however, might be the Lenin Tomb at the Red Square in Moscow constructed more than half a century ago, with which they were very familiar. The official explanation for the many heavy and solemn designs was that Chinese architects were so overwhelmed by the great grief at the time. The instruction from leaders indicated that what President Hua wanted was not a tomb but something more forward-looking. Architects were organized to learn Mao's writing, especially his poem "Dielianhua: In response to Li Shuyi,"¹² to be inspired by Mao's "revolutionary romantic" spirit and the proletarian attitude to life and death. Revolutionary soldiers had died for the people but remained alive in people's hearts and would encourage them to march forward.¹³ What the Mao Memorial should emphasize, therefore, was not the end of the Mao era represent by a tomb, but rather the continuation of Mao's cause and a smooth transition into a new era with Hua as the center.

¹² Li Shuyi was a good friend of Mao's wife Yang Kaihui, who was killed by the GMD. Li's husband was also killed in 1933 during a war with the GMD army. During the Spring Festival of 1957, Li sent Mao a poem she wrote in 1933 in the poetry format of "dielianhua," expressing her grief and condolence to her husband. Mao responded her with his own poem in the same poetry format in May 1957, which suggests that the heroic soul of the sacrificed hero was now in heaven welcomed by immortals, and their great contribution to Chinese revolution would be remembered and celebrated forever by the people.

¹³ "Mao zhuxi jiniantang jianzhu sheji fang'an de fazhan guocheng (Design process of the Chairman Mao Memorial schemes)," in *JZXB*, 1977/4, 32-33.

Designers soon reached an agreement that the Chairman Mao Memorial should be both solemn and open. Most schemes proposed during the second round of design applied a surrounding colonnade to make the building lighter and more open. Some schemes combined colonnades with solid walls. At least one scheme proposed a dome of a rising – or setting – red sun surrounded by a ring of sunflowers at its base on top of a colonnaded hall; and at least one scheme proposed a giant column piercing the sky from a horizontal base of solid walls and colonnades, also with sun and sunflowers decorating the base and top of the column. (Figure 4.8) Although these two types were in the minority, sun and sunflowers, representing Mao and the people respectively, were popular decorative motifs common to all the schemes. At this stage, the site was not decided yet. Many designers still envisioned the Mao Memorial as a complex either organized around a courtyard or linearly spreading along a passageway.¹⁴ (Figure 4.9)

During the last 10 days of October 1976, design representatives from the provinces but working in Beijing returned to their hometowns so comments could be collected from all over the country. In Beijing, designers from various institutes fleshed out their designs and prepared schemes to be proposed to President Hua and the party center. It was during this stage that the site was finally decided to be at Tiananmen Square. Schemes of architectural complexes with courtyards and linear layout were then naturally eliminated for their great expansion. The colonnade style was chosen as the

¹⁴ Ibid., 32-36.

direction for further development because it was in harmony with the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History on Tiananmen Square.¹⁵

In order to achieve a complete image of the memorial and considering that its size was relatively small, the option of interchanging colonnades with solid masonry walls on the façades was eliminated. It was also decided that the plan of the memorial should be a square of 70 meters by 70 meters. Located in the center of southern Tiananmen Square with four identical colonnaded façades, it seemed that there was very little more work for the designers to do in terms of design. As in traditional Chinese architecture, the façade was divided into base, colonnade, and eaves. Designers unanimously agreed that the base should be a double-layer terrace of red granite, symbolizing that the red China as founded by Mao and other first generation communist leaders would never change color.¹⁶ The colonnade had only one option. Variations for different schemes, once again, focused on the roof.

In total, seven roof types for the Mao Memorial were classified, including single-eave without frieze (yanbi 檐壁), single-eave with frieze, single-eave with recessed parapet, double-eave with the upper eave recessed, double-eave without the upper eave recessed, sloping eaves (luding 录顶), and no eave. For each type, multiple schemes were tried out. (Figure 4.10) While the terms of frieze and parapet as used for classification clearly indicated that Chinese architects at the time were looking to classical Western architecture for inspiration, the concepts of single-eave (danyan) and double-eave (chongyang) suggested Chinese architecture of the “national style.” It was not accidental

¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

that the final building of the Chairman Mao Memorial strongly resembled the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. However, designers in 1976 were painstakingly striving for “national style” without the application of big roof and fake brackets under the eaves. The single-eave with frieze option and the no eave option were first eliminated for their “sharp contrast with the Great Hall.” The single-eave with frieze option and the single-eave with recessed parapet option were also eliminated because “they were too similar to the proportions of Western architecture and some of the schemes in this category resemble some memorial buildings for foreign celebrities.” Obviously, Chinese designers in 1976 were quite conscious and uneasy about the resemblance of their schemes with the Lincoln Memorial, and tried hard to avoid it, at least in words. Many people supported the double-eave with the upper eave recessed option, which they believe “absorbed traditional character while at the same time being creative and original.” Some supported the double-eave without the upper eave recessed option, which “while being heavy, had more national style.” The sloping eaves option was widely welcomed by the masses, since “it had stronger national character.”¹⁷

After collecting comments from the masses, cadres, and professionals, the design group decided to develop three comprehensive schemes based on the double-eave with the upper eave recessed option (scheme 1), the double-eave without the upper eave recessed option (scheme 2), and the sloping eaves option (scheme 3). In early November 1976, President Hua and members from the CCP Central Committee reviewed the three final schemes and were positive about all of the three. The specific instructions for

¹⁷ Ibid., 39.

further development, however, virtually eliminated the sloping eaves options. They asked the design group to propose two further schemes: one combining the base of scheme 3, the colonnade of scheme 2, and the roof of scheme 1; the other based on scheme 2 but absorbing other schemes' merits. President Hua and the party center finally chose the former as the scheme to implement.¹⁸ (Figure 4.11)

Great effort was made to achieve a Chinese character in the Mao Memorial without resorting to big roofs and traditional decorative motifs. Following traditional Chinese timber structure, the inter-column distance of the central bay (8.7 meters) was larger than that of the side bays (6.6 meters), which were again larger than that of the end bays (6 meters). The double-eave roof covered with yellow glazed tiles slightly curved up toward the corners, mimicking a traditional “chongyan”¹⁹ roof. The frieze under the eaves more resembled that in the post-and-lintel construction of the Forbidden City rather than that of a Greek temple. The brackets under the eaves mimicked the “mazhatou” motif in the Chinese timber structure. The double-layered base was a masonry xumizuo like that in the Three Inner Halls of the Forbidden City. Although both the Great Hall and the Museum applied similar treatments, the relatively smaller size and the general proportion of the Chairman Mao Memorial made it more like a double-eave Chinese pavilion. The colonnade running all the way around the periphery of the structure enhanced such an appearance.

Great effort was also made to achieve a proper image of the Chairman Mao Memorial that took into account the view of it from Tiananmen Gate-tower, Tiananmen

¹⁸ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹ Chongyan 重檐: double eave style in traditional Chinese architecture.

Square and Chang'an Avenue. The height was designed in such a way that from the rostrum of the Tiananmen Gate-tower, the view of Zhengyangmen Tower would be blocked by the memorial, thus avoiding the intrusion of the former imperial gate tower's sloping roofs into a view of the top of the memorial. At the same time, it had to be lower than the Monument to the People's Heroes since the monument was vertical and much smaller in size. The appropriate height was finally decided as 33.6 meters. The width of the Mao Memorial should also be wide enough to block the Zhengyangmen Tower and at the same time not too wide to maintain Tiananmen Square's openness. The appropriate width, therefore, should be 75 meters. Such a height and width also guaranteed that looking from any point in Tiananmen Square and on Chang'an Avenue, the Chairman Mao Memorial was higher than the Zhengyangmen Tower but lower than the Monument to the People's Heroes. (Figure 4.12)

Tiananmen Square was completed as a backdrop for a proper view of the Chairman Mao Memorial.

The Hotels and Chang'an Avenue in the 1970s-80s

The political and social life of China experienced dramatic change before and after the years around Mao's death in 1976. The Chairman Memorial stands at the threshold of such a historical change. The application in architectural history of such periodical division in political history, however, is problematic. After more than a decade of hibernation, constructions revived on Chang'an Avenue as early as 1972. They were

hotels and other accommodation facilities for foreign visitors. More hotels were added to Chang'an Avenue throughout the 1980s, with growing foreign involvements in the development of the Avenue, both in design and investment.

The International Club and the Diplomatic Apartments

The rift between communist China and the Soviet Union appeared as early as 1952, the year of Stalin's death in Moscow. After that, although China remained in the Socialist Bloc and the policy of "leaning to one side" was still active, China no longer followed everywhere the Soviet Union would lead. China did not share Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's totalitarian rule; for China, Stalin remained the spiritual leader of the whole communist world.²⁰ When Khrushchev recalled all Soviet experts working in Chinese firms back to Russia in July 1960, the hostility between the former "comrades plus brothers" was brought into the open. The Soviet Union under Khrushchev's leadership was criticized as "revisionism" and "socialist imperialism."

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, after the Sino-Soviet relationship was damaged beyond repair, China revived its interest in developing new relationships with the West.²¹ In January 1971, Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to China, followed by President Nixon's visit in February 1972; in October 1971, the PRC replaced the Republic of China in Taiwan as the permanent member on the Security Council of the UN. Keeping

²⁰ In February 1950, China and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance.

²¹ In 1969, Chinese and Soviet troops fought over the sovereignty of the Zhenbao (Damansky) island in the Wusuli (Ussuri) River.

Western developed countries as the goal for emulation, the following two decades saw the most Western inspired movements in architecture, art, and politics in China.²²

The development in early 1970s of new relationships with the West, especially with the United States, was acclaimed in China as the “victory of Chairman Mao’s revolutionary diplomatic line.” Together with diplomatic personnel, more foreign visitors from the West were allowed to enter China. In order to house the rising foreign population from the West, accommodation facilities that met the Western living standards at the time were planned on East Chang’an Avenue near the former concession area.²³

The design for new facilities started as early as 1971.²⁴ In 1972, three major projects, the No. 9 Apartment Building, the International Club, and the Beijing Friendship Store, were completed on East Chang’an Avenue Extension to specifically serve the foreign population in Beijing.²⁵ In 1973, the Diplomatic Apartments with a floor area of 34,000 square meters were completed just next to the Beijing Friendship Store, extending the so-called “diplomatic projects” 外事工程 area further eastward along Chang’an Avenue.²⁶ In 1974, before the 25th anniversary of the PRC, a new building (the East Building) for the prestigious Beijing Hotel was added to the east of the 1917-19 old building (the Middle Building).²⁷ They were all completed within two years.

²² Such Westernization tides were abruptly subdued in 1989 symbolized by the brutal destruction of the statue of the “Goddess of Liberty” on Tiananmen Square during the June 4th Bloodshed. And after that, the attention of majority Chinese was drawn to commercialism and nationalism.

²³ For details about the concession area in Beijing, see Chapter One.

²⁴ *JZXB*, 1974/1, 32.

²⁵ *JZXB*, 1973/1, 32.

²⁶ *JZXB*, 1974/1, 32.

²⁷ *JZXB*, 1974/5, 18.

These buildings were designed according to Western living standards and life style. The International Club mainly provided foreign visitors and diplomatic personnel in Beijing recreational and social activities after work. With 13,831 SM of floor area, it had an outdoor swimming pool, a movie theatre, body-building rooms, rooms for playing billiards, ping-pong, and chess and card games, a bowling hall, a barbershop, a banquet hall, a hall for cocktail parties, various dining rooms, etc. Most of these types of entertainment were unheard of for the majority of the Chinese in the 1970s. All the rooms were air-conditioned and had heating facilities. The outdoor swimming pool had filters for circulating water to keep it clean and hygienic, and could also be used for diving and race. (Figure 1.29, 4.13) Though only of five stories, the Beijing Friendship Store was equipped with two elevators, one for customers and one for goods, an unusual allowance since, according to construction codes of the time, only buildings more than six stories high could have elevators. The sales halls were all air-conditioned for comfortable environment in both winter and summer.

These buildings created a sharp contrast with the living standards of most Beijing citizens. In China of the 1970s, air-conditioning and family bathrooms were still luxuries. Most Beijing dwellers used public toilets in the narrow residential alleys, which were usually without bath equipment and shared by the whole neighborhood. In the early 1980s, when the famous Chinese writer Xiao Jun was interviewed by reporters in San Francisco, a reporter asked him, “Mr. Xiao Jun, what is your deepest impression about

the United States?” Xiao answered, “The toilets here are really good!”²⁸ Even at the end of the 1980s, Liu Xinwu, another renowned Beijing writer, was still complaining of the poor quality and filthy smell of the shared toilets in China’s capital. He announced,

On the toilet issue, I admit that I am a supporter of the “wholesale Westernization.” Flush toilets, water supply and drainage, hot water baths, elegant ornamentation of ceramic tiles, water-soluble toilet tissues, and the filth-free and fragrant excretory environment, this living style was created by human and is thus universal cultural wealth. Since China has been “naturalized of the earth citizenship” 加入球籍 and since we Chinese want to join modern civilization, there is no reason for us to reject such a cultural wealth. Today, although we already have the Western style toilets for the minorities of “foreign guests” and “leaders,” there is still no or very little awareness to work for the welfare of the public toilets and filthy latrine pits still fill the Chinese lands, and there is no sign of improvement so far. I hope my leisure comments will not be considered as redundant or disobedient.²⁹

Liu’s “leisure comments” at least illustrated two contradictory conditions in China of the 1970s and 1980s. On one hand, Western life style represented by its toilet was still deemed as the decadence of bourgeoisie life, which the socialist China should keep away from; on the other hand, it was a symbol of modernization, which a modernizing China should continue to strive for.

Stylistically, the new diplomatic buildings were deliberately designed as “modern,” following the principles of the “international style” as codified by Henry-

²⁸ Liu Xinwu, *Wo yanzhong de jianzhu yu huanjing* (Architecture and environment as I see) (Beijing: Jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1998), 84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in 1932.³⁰ The plans were asymmetrical, with L-shaped buildings defining courtyards, and characterized by the interchange and infiltration of interior and exterior spaces. On the main façade of the International Club facing Chang'an Avenue, the open porch in the middle and the void corner of the circular balcony made the building have more to do with "volume than mass," matching the first of Hitchcock and Johnson's principles. The rhythm of the slender rectangular columns of the porch and the sun-shading boards met the second principle of "regularity rather than axial symmetry as the chief means of ordering design." Finally, there was no big roof, no pretentious central tower, no glazed tiles, no sculptural embellishment, in a word, no "arbitrary applied decoration." Compared to other monuments built in the previous periods on Chang'an Avenue, which were mostly symmetrical and with super-human scale colonnades and solid walls, these new buildings were less solemn and much lighter in general appearance.

The asymmetrical plans and elevations were made after careful selection. In the design of the Diplomatic Apartments, three options had originally proposed a symmetrical block plan with axis, a Y-shaped plan, and an overlapped double rectangular plan.³¹ The first was abandoned due to its lack of "flexibility in composition," flexibility in composition basically meaning asymmetry, and the second because it was not in harmony with the surrounding buildings. Its complex shapes were also a disadvantage for the prefabricated assembly method of construction, the key to architectural industrialization at

³⁰ Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, [1932], 2nd ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), 20.

³¹ *JZXB*, 1974/1, 33.

the time and a synonym for architectural modernization. Although the third plan option was also criticized for requiring more types of pre-fabricated members due to the “plan variation (from normal symmetrical forms),” it was preferred because of its “richness and liveliness in shapes and façades, which was required by general planning.”³² The overlapping double rectangular plan was chosen for its lack of solemnity. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning, solemnity in architecture was often interpreted as political; the adoption of the asymmetrical plan for the Diplomatic Apartments was deliberately apolitical. (Figure 4.14)

The East Building of Beijing Hotel

The construction of the prestigious Beijing Hotel on East Chang’an Avenue spans almost the entire history of 20th-century Chinese architecture. It started with a small restaurant in 1900 and was developed into a hotel run by the Sino-French Industrial and Commercial Bank 中法实业银行 in 1907. The earliest extant building is today’s Middle Building, designed by the French company Brossard, Mopin & Cie and completed in 1917.³³ In 1953, the West Building (designed by the Ministry of Architectural Industry Design Institute led by architect Dai Nianci) was added to the west side of the Middle Building along Chang’an Avenue. The 1973-74 addition, known as the East Building, was the second expansion during the PRC era. In 1989-90, the Beijing Hotel underwent a

³² Ibid.

³³ Zhang Fuhe, *The Modern Architectural History of Beijing from the End of 19th Century to 1930s*, (Beijing: Qinghua University Press, 2004), 344-45.

total renovation,³⁴ in which all three former buildings were connected and a new building on Chang'an Avenue, known as the Grand Hotel Beijing (Guibinlou 贵宾楼, literally meaning “Distinguished Guests Building”), was added to the west of the 1953 West Building.³⁵ The façades from four different periods spread along the north side of East Chang'an Avenue like a screen, displaying the stylistic changes of Chinese architecture during the 20th-century. (Figure 4.15)

The styles of the four buildings of Beijing Hotel bear clear imprints of their time periods. The 1917 Middle Building is a colonial style Renaissance Revival structure, characterized by horizontal divisions on the façade and such Western architectural motifs as arches and cornice brackets. While the 1953 Western building explores the combination of “national form” with “socialist content” with time-honored motifs, such as double-eave roofed pavilions and memorial archway pailou, applied to a solid masonry façade, the 1990 Grand Hotel Beijing juxtaposes a direct copy of ancient pailou and a section of the red wall from the former Imperial City with the modern structure. The 1974 East Building, contrasting with all the buildings before and after it, distinguishes itself from the ensemble of façades for its lack of historical references. Compared to other buildings of the Beijing Hotel, it also appears less solid. The grids of vertical columns and horizontal balcony bands on the façades make the entire structure seem much lighter. (Figure 4.16)

³⁴ According *Chang'anjie* published in 2004, renovation design was by the Beijing Architectural Design Institute led by Zhang Bo, Cheng Delan and Tian Wanxin. Lenore Hietkamp provided me more information about this project in her comments on my dissertation, which suggests NBBJ was responsible for the design of part of the revitalization.

³⁵ *Chang'anjie*, 43, 87, 114-15.

The East Building also distinguishes itself from the group by height. It is 80 meters high with 18 above-ground stories. While all the other 3 buildings have 7 upper-ground stories and their facades are unified by cornice-like horizontal motifs, the main tower of the East Building is set back from Chang'an Avenue and rises twice as high as the rest of the group. The urban planning codes of Beijing issued in the 1980s requires that buildings in this area should not exceed the 45 meters height limit. Built in the early 1970s, the 80-meter height of the East Building of Beijing Hotel is an exception on Chang'an Avenue. Such a height on Chang'an Avenue Proper could only have been possible when the yearning for modernization loomed high and the revolutionary spirit had not completely died out.

Beijing Hotel is the first modern building on the north side of East Chang'an Avenue from the Forbidden City, which is only about half a kilometer away. While the East Building certainly dwarfed all the imperial monuments around the Forbidden City, the new height control laws guaranteed at least in theory that no such threat would happen to East Building itself.

Architectural industrialization: modernization in design and construction process

All the buildings completed in the early 1970s on Chang'an Avenue were constructed using the assembly method. Major parts such as the reinforced concrete beams and floor slabs were pre-fabricated in factories and assembled on the construction sites. In the 1970s, this assembly method in architectural design and construction was

considered as the key step in architectural industrialization, synonymous with architectural modernization.

The modernization project of China was at a new threshold by the late 1970s. Before Mao's death in 1976, the focus had been on political and social revolutions, including revolution in architectural design. Mass movement was the main force for professional development. All the diplomatic projects in the early 1970s on Chang'an Avenue were claimed to be achieved through "three combinations," the combinations of leader cadres, worker, and technical personnel, users, builders, and designers, etc. Chinese modernization shifted gradually toward social and economic improvement after 1976. During the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP in December 1978, the modernization project acquired its official format with unambiguous clarity known as the "Four Modernizations." The "Four Modernizations" referred to modernization in the areas of industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology, all intended to be achieved by the end of the 20th century.³⁶

Architecture was considered at the time mainly as a type of industry. In order to be modernized, architecture first needed to be industrialized. Architectural industrialization replaced "three combinations" as the central issue for discussion in 1978's *Architectural Journal* – an official journal of the Society of Chinese Architecture. Although there were disagreements and debates about what specifically "architectural industrialization" meant, the general consensus was that in order to industrialize architecture, design must first be standardized so that parts could be manufactured

³⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 653-659.

systematically in factories.³⁷ Some articles also called on for changes in construction organization to cope with the industrialized building procedures;³⁸ others assured designers that architectural industrialization would not sacrifice architectural art and that architects could still have plenty of rooms to show their talent.³⁹ It seems that there was a shared concern that architectural industrialization and design standardization would lead to monotonousness in Chinese cities. Some authors expressed their anxiety directly,⁴⁰ while others disagreed and tried to prove otherwise.⁴¹

The discussion on “architectural industrialization” was the first organized discussion in the field of architecture published in a main Chinese professional journal. The editor’s note in the first 1978 issue of *Architectural Journal* stated,

In order to achieve the magnificent aim of “Four Modernizations” at the end of this century, all trades and professions are engaged in excited discussions and making their own specific development plans. How to achieve technological revolution in the architectural fields? This is a significant issue that concerns every aspect in the architectural profession, design and planning, scientific research, construction, production, etc. as well as the relevant government departments. We hope that comrades in the architectural field all pay attention to this issue, and be engaged in the dynamic discussion on questions about the way to achieve technological revolution in architecture, the contents, approaches, methods, and technical policies of architectural industrialization, and especially the way architectural design and planning is adapting to the requirements of architectural industrialization. (We) hope everyone will explore carefully

³⁷ *JZXB*, 1978/1-4.

³⁸ *JZXB*, 1978/1, 1-3.

³⁹ *JZXB*, 1978/2, 10-12.

⁴⁰ *JZXB*, 1978/4, 33-35.

⁴¹ *JZXB*, 1978/2, 13-14,

both positive and negative experiences of both Chinese and foreign, combine it with the specific situation of our country, and air your own views freely according to the policy of “let a hundred flowers bloom together, let the hundred schools of thought contend.”⁴²

Such an appeal in an official professional journal signaled the shift in architecture from revolution-oriented mass movement approach to technology-oriented professional study.

Architectural style: modernization in form

The enthusiasm for industrialization as a key step for architectural modernization waned toward the end of the 1970s. As more and more identical concrete slabs appearing in cities all over the country, it seemed that the previous anxiety about monotony as a result of design standardization had come true. Although the design process was far from standardized and the assembly method in construction was far from popularized – in fact, the advanced construction technique of on-site assembly method was only used for the most prestigious projects such as the “diplomatic projects” on Chang’an Avenue – the push for industrialization and standardization encouraged direct copying of pre-existing buildings. Many construction drawings, especially those for residential architecture, were repeatedly used in different cities.

Since 1979, more and more voices calling for exploration in architectural form appeared. During the symposium on “Architectural Modernization and Architectural Style” in October 1978, many speakers expressed their dissatisfaction about the

⁴² *JZXB*, 1978/1, 1.

monotony in architectural form and the issue of “national form” was raised again.⁴³ An article entitled “Attach Importance to the Exploration of Architectural Forms” appeared in the first issue of the 1979 Architectural Journal.⁴⁴ Such appeals for architectural form and style would have been condemned as formalism in the early 1970s. At the same time, the use of symbols, such as torch, red flag, beacon, red sun, sunflower, star, etc., to emphasize socialist or revolutionary content was criticized. Such blatant application of political concepts in architectural design, one writer argues, was against the nature of architectural art, which was based on function and could only evoke such feelings as solemn or lively, rich or simple, and delicate or bold, but not such political ideologies as revolutionary or reactionary, progressive or conservative, and “leftist” or rightist.⁴⁵

After almost two decades – from the early 1960s to 1979 – of emphasis on “design revolution,” the discussion about form and style revived, but the discussion that began in 1979 and continued throughout the 1980s was significantly different from that of the 1950s, in spite of a common focus. Conveying ideological content was generally considered as beyond the ability of architectural design and relatively trivial compared to innovations in form and function. While the exploration of “national form” in the 1950s had been more philosophical, analyzing the relationship between form and content that aimed to be both Chinese and socialist, the discussion of architectural form in the 1979-80s was more methodological, analyzing specific ways to achieve forms and styles that

⁴³ *JZXB*, 1979/1, 26-30.

⁴⁴ *JZXB*, 1979/1, 56, 59.

⁴⁵ Hu Dunchang, “Railway Station and Torch – on the Ideology of Architectural Art,” in *JZXB*, 1979/3, 21-22, 48.

were both national and modern. The former period asked “what” while the latter asked “how.”

Such a shift was partly triggered by a new accessibility to theoretical work in architecture coming out of the West. Articles introducing contemporary Western architecture appeared for the first time after Cultural Revolution in early 1979.⁴⁶ In an article on the application of visual analysis in architectural creation, the author cites H. Blumenteld’s *Scale in Civic Design* and Paul Zucker’s *Town and Square*. The author borrows G. W. Elderkin’s model of the visual analysis of the Acropolis in Athens to analyze buildings in Tiananmen Square.⁴⁷ Sigfried Giedion’s concept of space as the key element in the analysis of architecture similarly inspired Chinese architects to look at architectural form in a different way. Like Giedion had done in his influential book *Space, Time and Architecture – The Growth of a New Tradition*, some architects applied the concepts of space versus volume and interior versus exterior to reevaluate traditional Chinese architecture.⁴⁸ Dynamic space were appreciated and studied.⁴⁹ Some authors equated the previous architectural dichotomy of form/content with space/function.⁵⁰ As a result, in the exploration of “national form,” traditional Chinese garden with its complex spaces, asymmetrical plans, permeation of interior and exterior, and careful scenery view designs, became the main inspiration for achieving new Chinese modern architecture.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *JZXB*, 1979/2, 38.

⁴⁷ Bai Zuomin, “The Application of Visual Analysis in Architectural Creation,” in *JZXB*, 1979/3, 9-15, 52.

⁴⁸ Hou Youbin, “Architecture – the Unity of Opposites of Space and Volume,” in *JZXB*, 1979/3, 16-20.

⁴⁹ *JZXB*, 1983/10 70-74.

⁵⁰ *JZXB*, 1982/6 62-67.

⁵¹ Feng Zhongping, “Environment, Space and the New Exploration of Architectural Style,” in *JZXB*, 1979/4, 8-16.

The spirit of Chinese architecture now resided in its space; big roofs, memorial archway *pailou*, and glazed tiles for “national form” were now outmoded.

As the requirements for political correctness in architectural design suddenly disappeared at the end of the 1970s, the yearning for originality – “new creation” in fashionable Chinese terms – in architectural form built up in the 1980s, as is evident in the pages of the *Architectural Journal*. Form was given such high esteem in architectural creation that some authors announced “long live the forms.” Architectural form was considered as an inseparable part of function and structure.⁵² To legitimate the pursuit for form, they argue that first, form is objective existence that can not be evaded; second, form should not be equated with beauty, let alone decoration; third, form should not be considered as the opposite of function; and fourth, architectural form has no incompatible contradiction with economy.⁵³ Various sources were mobilized to inspire new creations, from traditional gardens to modern sculpture,⁵⁴ and from aesthetic concepts to information theory, systems theory, and cybernetics.⁵⁵ “Liberation of individuality” and “self-expression” are encouraged. Similar to what was happening in other cultural fields in the early 1980s, numerous articles call for “breaking spiritual shackles” and the cultivation of personality in architecture. They target criticism not only at the collective approach in architectural creation from the 1950s to the 1970s, but also at the recent “standardization and industrialization.”⁵⁶

⁵² Zheng Guangfu, “To Pursue Forms but Oppose Formalism,” *JZXB*, 1982/7, 38-41.

⁵³ Wang Tianxi, “Architectural Form and Its Status in Architectural Creation,” *JZXB*, 1983/5, 50-57.

⁵⁴ *JZXB*, 1984/5, 45-49, 50-56.

⁵⁵ *JZXB*, 1985/4, 2-21, 22-26.

⁵⁶ Bu Zhengwei, “We Should All Have Our Own – the General Trend of Liberation of Individuality in Architecture,” in *JZXB*, 1985/4, 27-31.

All these articles calling for architectural creation widely cite famous buildings in contemporary Western and Japanese architecture as examples to support their claims. In the 1980s, Chinese architects were eagerly learning from the West.

From Jianguo Hotel (1980-82) to International Hotel (1984-87)

Chinese architects in the 1980s studied foreign architecture not only from books and journals, but also by observing buildings designed by Western architects on Chinese soil. In 1980-82, the first building in the PRC era designed by Westerners and operated in Western manners appeared on Chang'an Avenue. This was the Jianguo Hotel on East Chang'an Avenue near Jianguomen, the east end of Chang'an Avenue Proper.

Jianguo Hotel was designed by a Hong Kong firm headed by the American architect Chen Xuanyuan. Construction started in July 1980 and completed in April 1982. Located on a site of 10,970 SM, the hotel has 528 guest rooms with a total floor area of 29,506 SM. With an initial investment of 20 million US\$, the Jianguo Hotel was not meant to be a luxurious but a middle rank hotel comparable to the "Holiday Inn" in the United States.

Different from most other buildings on Chang'an Avenue at the time, which all had large-scale façades facing the avenue, Jianguo Hotel has its volumes broken down into several smaller-scale buildings. These buildings are asymmetrically arranged around a water courtyard. Along Chang'an Avenue, façades of five individual buildings of different heights and widths formed a continuity of diversified fronts. The tallest building, a ten-story guestroom block, is at the west end. The main atrium, an individual building,

connects with other parts by corridors. The main entrance, without a high terraced approach or wide stairs, but instead hidden in a concaved semi-circular wall and recessed back from busy Chang'an Avenue, is unpretentious and welcoming, creating a private, street-level environment on a human scale. Behind the divided long façade on Chang'an Avenue is a zigzag screen of a five-story guestroom building, visible from the street level but modest in character. In general, the Jianguo Hotel lacks the grandeur of other earlier Chang'an Avenue buildings that try to cover everything under one roof in order to achieve a giant façade. It also broke the convention of combining a high main structure with low apron buildings, an architectural composition seen so often in Chinese cities at the time. (Figure 4.17)

With a design not unusual in the West, the Jianguo Hotel drew great attention from Chinese architects in the 1980s. To some extent, the invitation of a foreign company to design a hotel on Chang'an Avenue was meant as a way for Chinese architects to learn from the outside world at home. On June 15, 1982, only two months after the completion of the Jianguo Hotel, a symposium was organized by the Architectural Journal editorial committee and the Beijing Architectural Design Institute to discuss the designs of two hotels recently completed in Beijing: Jianguo Hotel and the Huadu Hotel, a hotel of similar size and grade but designed by Chinese architects. Although participants in the symposium praised and criticized different aspects of both hotels, the predominant atmosphere of the discussions was to find out what was lacking in Chinese architectural designs as compared to buildings designed by foreign architects. Major criticisms of the Chinese design for Huadu Hotel included: the lack of spatial variation, too much

attentions on decoration, the lack of liberation in “design thought” (lack of freedom in thinking about design), and the conservativeness in design approach and motifs.⁵⁷ The Jianguo Hotel, on the contrary, was praised for its variety in spatial experience, natural and cordial environments, and emphasis on the convenience of the customers instead of extra decoration. The spatial organization was acknowledged as possessing characteristics of ancient Chinese architecture.⁵⁸ The amount of effort foreign architects spent in the design of the guestrooms, especially the bathrooms, impressed their Chinese colleagues, which contrasted with the Chinese habit of making the central atrium and banquet halls the focal areas of design. Criticism of the Jianguo Hotel design primarily focused on its lack of familiarity with the Chinese life style and the special condition of a developing country.⁵⁹

Similar symposia were organized for Chinese architects to exchange comments on the first building in China during the PRC era to be designed by a world-renowned architect – I. M. Pei’s Fragrant Hill Hotel, completed in 1983 in the western suburb of Beijing. The Fragrant Hill Hotel evoked large-scale discussion on the future direction of modern Chinese architecture. Admirers of the building acclaimed its Chinese character in spirit within a modern structure, while others complained that it was too expensive and the scale of the hotel complex ruined the beautiful scenery of the Fragrant Hill.⁶⁰ Despite the difference of opinion, it was extremely influential for Chinese architecture in late

⁵⁷ “Notes of the Symposium on the Designs of Huadu and Jianguo Hotels in Beijing,” in *JZXB*, 1982/9, 21-23.

⁵⁸ Liu Li, “Impressions and Inspirations,” in *JZXB*, 1982/9, 35-37.

⁵⁹ *JZXB*, 1982/9, 21-23.

⁶⁰ *JZXB*, 1983/3, 57-79; 1983/4, 59-71.

1980s. In fact, some decorative motifs first used in the Fragrant Hill Hotel were widely copied and have become symbols of Chineseness in new buildings.

In 1987, the International Hotel on East Chang'an Avenue Proper designed by Chinese architects concluded the learning process. To some extent, this project was to display what Chinese architects could achieve in the pursuit of modern Chinese architecture. In the first sentence of an introductory article, the designers proudly announce that the Beijing International Hotel is “a large-scale hotel of both modern and Chinese characteristics that was invested by ourselves, designed by ourselves, constructed by ourselves, and equipped with domestic equipments and materials.”⁶¹

Located on the same north side of East Chang'an Avenue, the International Hotel is much larger than the Jianguo Hotel in scale and closer to Tiananmen Square. The hotel had 1049 guestrooms and suits with a floor area of 105,000 SM. Contrasted with the Jianguo Hotel, which has no clear division between major structure and apron buildings and which spread along Chang'an Avenue horizontally, the International Hotel has a hotel tower of 29 floors and a two-story apron building housing the main atrium, banquet halls, and other business facilities. While the Jianguo Hotel has many small-scale buildings arranged freely around a central water courtyard, the International Hotel is a single structure with a strong north-south axis linking different parts inside, which according to the designers, embodies the traditional method in spatial organization.⁶² (Figure 4.18)

The International Hotel aimed to achieve “both Chinese and new, and both national style and time character.” The Chineseness and national style in the hotel,

⁶¹ *JZXB*, 1988/7, 2-9.

⁶² *JZXB*, 1988/7, 9.

different from the “national forms” of previous periods, is mainly in interior. The main building is a clean white concrete tower with rectangular windows regularly arrayed. The entrance and main atrium, however, incorporates such traditional architectural motifs as memorial columns like those in front of the Tiananmen Gate-tower, caisson ceiling (zaojing 藻井), red and gold coloring, and traditional interior decorations of painted screen panels, semi-permanent wooden space divider (luodizhao 落地罩), wood carving, bamboo weaving, etc. The formal motifs of circle and octagon, which according to the designers, were the most popular shapes in folk designs, are applied everywhere to unify the design.⁶³ Such an approach of using a formal motif to give the building a recognizable character might have been inspired by I. M. Pei’s Fragrant Hotel, whose diamond shape motif was admired by many Chinese architects as being both Chinese and modern.

“National Form” and Modernization in a Post-modern Framework

In the 1980s, when Chinese architects had only just “broken the shackles” of requirements for political correctness in architectural design and were gathering their full energy to “modernize” Chinese architecture, they suddenly found that the world facing them was no longer “modern,” but “post-modern.” Modernism as represented by functionalism, industrialization, and “international style” was being criticized in the West. Embarking upon a modernization project as recently framed in slogan of “Four Modernizations,” Chinese architects’ first response to postmodernism was that it was a

⁶³ Ibid.

new development of modernism. The first article in *Architectural Journal* introducing postmodernism called it “neo-modernism” 新现代主义.⁶⁴ Architectural theories in the West since the 1950s were relatively unknown to the Chinese because of the political isolation of the PRC before the 1970s. As Chinese architects in the early 1980s familiarized themselves with more “new developments” in Western architecture during the last three decades, they developed different attitudes toward postmodernism.

Three attitudes toward post-modern architecture

There were in general three different responses toward postmodern architecture among Chinese architects during the 1980s. The first response totally rejected it and wholeheartedly supported Modernism; the second maintained that postmodernism was fine for Western developed countries but not yet for developing countries like China; the third attitude warmly welcomed postmodern architecture and considered it a way to achieve regional diversity.

The first attitude rejected postmodernism by proving that modernism was not “dead” but still the driving force for the development of contemporary architecture. Modern architecture, argued proponents, was never as rigid and inhuman as the postmodernists depicted. The modern movement in architecture had begun with fighting for a better life for the common people. The “international style” was not the only modern architecture and “monotonous boxes” were not the unavoidable outcome of

⁶⁴ Yang Yun, “Thoughts after the New Trends in Western Modern Architectural Thinking,” in *JZXB*, 1980/1, 26-34.

modernism. Diversity could be achieved without post-modernism.⁶⁵ Among this group, there were also modernist extremists, who claimed that the “international style” was the inevitable result of historical development. As the cultural exchanges among different peoples became more and more frequent, the national differences were becoming smaller and smaller. The difference in architecture among different regions and nations lost its base for existence. “People from all nations wear suits,” they argued, and so “instead of arguing whether we should support or oppose ‘international style,’ it is more important to study why ‘international style’ appeared everywhere in the world.”⁶⁶ Some suggested that as long as architects are solving specific functional problems and being creative, regional or national character would emerge automatically.⁶⁷

Supporters of the second attitude recognized the discrepancy in the development of contemporary architecture between China and the West. They argued that while “post-modern” was the character of contemporary architecture in the United States, “late-coming modern” 迟现代 is the character of contemporary Chinese architecture. In the 1970s, while the United States had been tired of the monotonous modernism of the 1950s and geared toward a new eclecticism, China just shook off the eclecticism of the 1950s and marched on to modernism. While the contemporary eclecticism in the United States came after modernism, the eclecticism of China in the 1950s was pre-modern.⁶⁸ Such an assessment of the situation, however, was based on the assumption that the development

⁶⁵ Mei Chen (Chen Zhihua), “Reading Notes – Advancing and Retreating,” in *JZXB*, 1984/9, 58-62. See also: *JZXB*, 1989/2, 33-38; 1989/11, 47-50.

⁶⁶ Qu Zhenliang, “Again On Modern Architecture and National Form,” in *JZXB*, 1987/3, 22-25.

⁶⁷ Zhang Mingyu, “On Issues of ‘National Form’ etc. as Inspired by the Evaluations on the National Olympic Gymnasium by Kenzo Tange,” in *JZXB*, 1982/1, 13-15.

⁶⁸ *JZXB*, 1987/10, 17-23.

of architecture had only one line to follow, which was the Western model. China had missed the lesson on modern architecture and needed to make it up. This is a very popular opinion even today.

The third attitude, like the postmodernism it was supporting, blamed the current monotony in architectural form on modernism. Some scholars and architects translated Western theoretical works about semiotics and Charles Jencks's books into Chinese and introduced postmodern works by such architects as Robert Venturi, Philip Johnson, and Michael Graves into China. More people used post-modern theory to justify the exploration into traditional architecture in the process of creating new Chinese architecture. They argue,

It seems that we are still very interested in and inspired by the "international style." Some may think that the Western orthodox modernist architecture reflects the characteristics of new materials and new technologies, and represents the style of the 1970s. What they do not know are that the aesthetic source of the modern architecture is cubist art and that architectural forms always reflect some specific aesthetic viewpoints. The architectural form of "international style" boxes might not be able to represent the style of the 1970s. Now, monotonous "square boxes" are still popular throughout the country, regardless of north and south, regardless of regional differences, regardless of scenery districts or downtown areas, and regardless of high-rises or multi-floor buildings. On the other hand, research into and inheritance of the national and cultural traditions of our country are indiscriminately condemned as "revivalism" with no "time character" and totally rejected. After acquainting ourselves

with the developing trend of Western modern architecture, shouldn't we think it over again?⁶⁹

Post-modernism as a new theoretical framework

The different attitudes toward postmodernism were not simply passive responses of China to the Western impact. It was a way for Chinese architecture to continue its own discourse. Throughout the controversies on postmodernism, the focal points are always on “national form” and “modernization.” To some extent, postmodernism provided the 1980s' China a new framework to continue the ongoing debate. During this process, such old concepts as tradition, modern, national form, socialist content all acquired new meanings.

It was postmodernism's emphasis on specific cultural meanings that attracted most Chinese architects' attention. They found that although the theories of different postmodern architects and theorists were often diverse, inconsistent, and sometimes confusing, all the theories shared the common opinion that national and local cultural characteristics should be considered in architectural design.⁷⁰ Compared with such practical interests, other aspects of postmodern theories were less popular. Most Chinese architects took the new postmodernist terms and imbued them with new meanings by applying them to the discourse of Chinese architecture.

In China of the 1980s, postmodernism was first understood as a reaction or rebellion to the monotony of modernism. Very few architects really paid much attention

⁶⁹ Yang Yun, *JZXB*, 1980/1, 26-34.

⁷⁰ Xu Shangzhi, “On Issues about Architectural Modernization and Architectural Creation of Our Country,” in *JZXB*, 1984/9, 10-12, 19.

to the theoretical sources and background in the West for postmodernism. On one hand, they found in it a new way to fight the monotony in architectural form that had appeared in contemporary Chinese architecture since the late 1970s. On the other hand, the postmodern emphasis on meaning and a spirit of a specific place equipped Chinese architects with new terminology and methodology in dealing with “national form.”

In the Chinese context, the arbitrary nature of the meaning of sign as understood in Western semiotics disappeared, as well as the differentiation of sign into “index,” “icon,” and “symbol.” “Sign” as framed in the Chinese architectural discourse of the 1980s was equated with cultural motif or any conventional concept that might have something to do with architecture. The semiotic “reading” was understood as studying or exploring. “Reading” as a way to generate meaning instead of looking for meaning was not accepted by the Chinese. Instead, for Chinese architects, meanings were firmly imbedded in history and function.⁷¹

“Context” was another postmodern term popular among Chinese architects in the 1980s. For Chinese architects, instead of structure defining specific meanings, “context” became the cultural and physical environment into which new forms should fit. Such a linguistic transformation of “context” in China allowed Chinese architects to use “contextualism” to argue for either “national form” or modernism, depending on their different standpoints. Some Chinese architects argued that instead of a total rejection of modernism, postmodernism was actually a continuation and new form of modernism.⁷² Others argued that “context” referred to both physical and abstract environments, and that

⁷¹ Luo Xiaowei, “Using Semiotic Analysis to ‘Read’ Modern African Cities,” in *JZXB*, 1983/5, 44-49.

⁷² Zhou Puyi, “Craze for ‘Contextualism’ Appeared in Chinese Architecture,” in *JZXB*, 1989/2, 33-38.

revivalism based on architectural “context” was at least one of the many avenues for creation.⁷³

The semiotic dimension of “national form” on Chang’an Avenue

The new postmodern framework allowed Chinese architects in the 1980s go beyond formal or spatial exploration of “national form” and to make a semiotic transformation of cultural symbols in architecture. Rather than focusing on traditional architecture and gardens for inspiration, Chinese architects—not just those of the third attitude but also those who were opposing postmodernism in China as well—set their eyes on much broader cultural spheres. Unlike the previous adoptions of national, political, or cultural motifs, new symbolism was not simply applied on the decorative level, but within the entire design concept in general.

One of such architectural “signs” was the gate. Many buildings on Chang’an Avenue built in late 1980s and early 1990s utilize the image of a gigantic gate. Instead of using the traditional gate as decorative motif, the gate as symbol became the key design concept. The Custom Headquarters of 1987-90 on East Chang’an Avenue uses the gate to symbolize that the building complex is the gate through which goods are imported into and exported out of China. The two towers – one for the National Custom Bureau, the other for the Beijing Custom Department – are connected on the top, leaving the center of the complex a gigantic void doorway. (Figure 4.19) The West Railway Station completed in 1996 on West Chang’an Avenue Extension is also an enormous gateway framed by

⁷³ Zhang Qinnan, “An Argument for ‘Craze for Contextualism’,” in *JZXB*, 1989/6, 28-29.

symmetrical solid concrete walls, symbolizing the entrance into and out of the capital. Built in the 1990s, the entire complex is topped with time-honored double-eave pavilions and decorated with other architectural motifs from China's imperial past. (Figure 1.33)

Not only architectural symbols, but also cultural symbols from both the imperial and folk traditions became common vocabulary in new architectural creation after the postmodernist semiotic transformation.

The Head Office of the People's Bank of China of 1987-90 at the western end of the West Chang'an Avenue Proper takes symbols from China's folk tradition. The plan and the general image of the building mimic *yuanbao* (a gold or silver ingot used as money in dynastic China) and *jubaopen* (treasure bowl that will generate jewels). Both would have been considered as feudalistic, superstitious signs during Mao's time, but now they were considered as traditional Chinese cultural symbols of prosperity. People's Bank is the national central bank of China, which will strongly justifies such traditional motif as an appropriate symbol for national identity.⁷⁴ Stylistically, the juxtaposition of solid walls of raw concrete and uninterrupted shin glass surface is more in tone with the New Brutalism popular in the 1960s in Western countries. (Figure 1.31)

Buildings constructed in the 1970s-1980s on Chang'an Avenue reflect the cultural political changes of China during these two decades, as well as the theoretical and ideological repercussions they caused in architectural design. The general trend was a rising quest for freedom in architectural creation and a moral distrust of a direct application of "national form." However, the profound sense of history and tradition

⁷⁴ These symbols were acclaimed as "expressing the character and the spirit of the time of a national bank." See: Zou Denong, *Modern Chinese Architecture*, 569.

loomed so large in the minds of Chinese architects that, as soon as a new theoretical framework allowed, Chinese architects quickly seized it to frame a new phase of exploration in “national form.” Neither “international style” nor Chinese architectural motifs would be sufficient to achieve a new Chinese architecture that was both “national” and “modern.” It is among the buildings of the 1970s and 1980s that we find the least amount of time-honored Chinese roofs with sloping and upturned eaves on Chang’an Avenue. In this sense, the modernization project in the postmodern world prepared new ground for the future development of Chinese architecture.



Figure 4.1: Memorial service for Mao, 1976

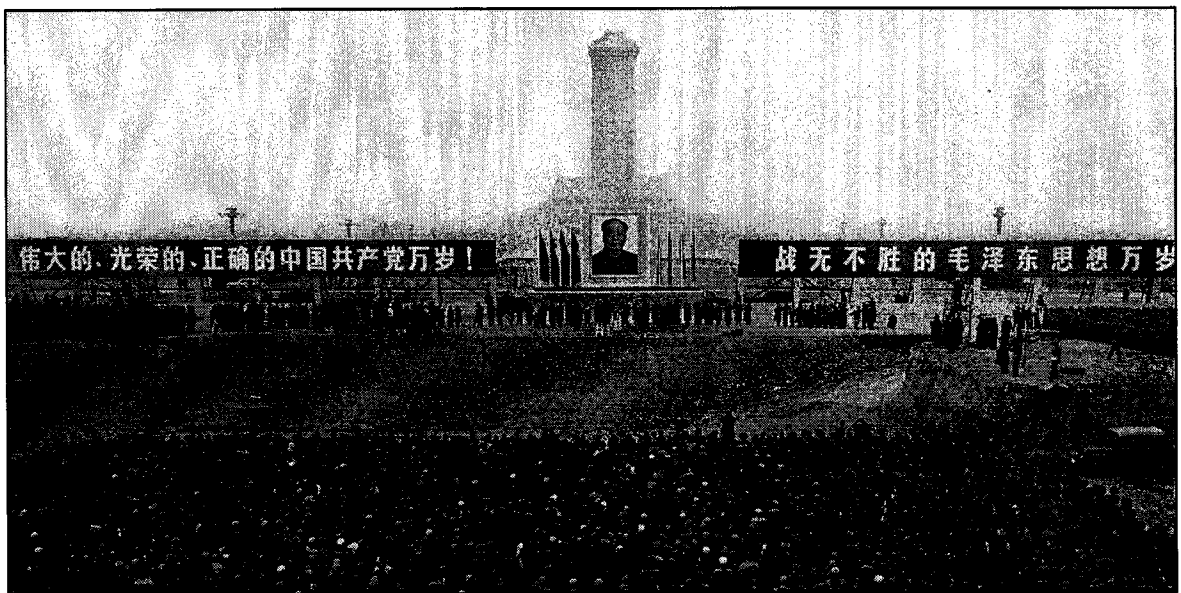


Figure 4.2: Foundation ceremony for Chairman Mao Memorial, 1976

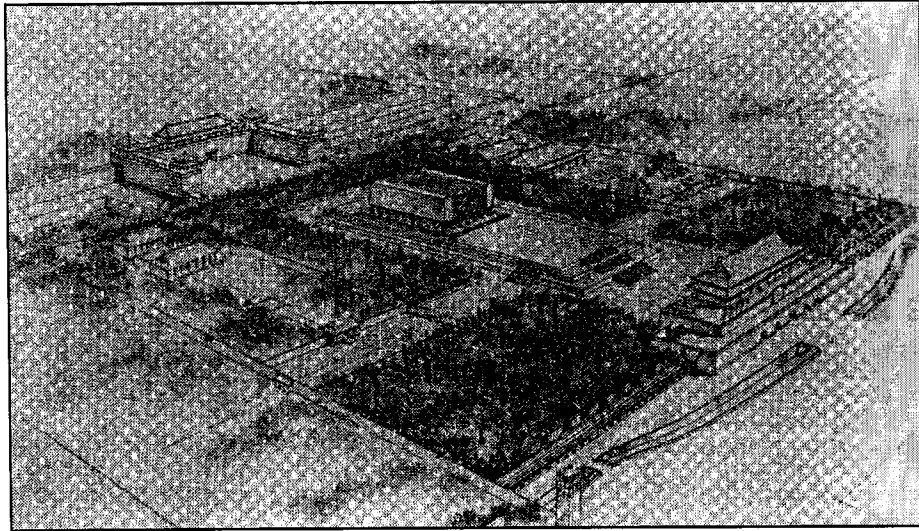


Figure 4.3: Proposal for the Chairman Mao Memorial at the site between Tiananmen and Wumen

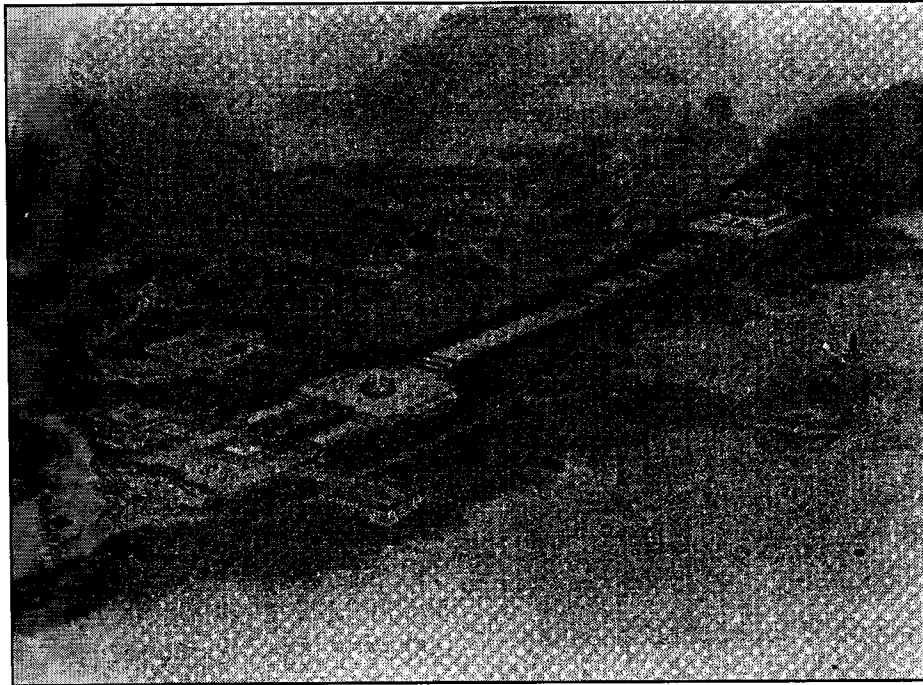


Figure 4.4: Proposal for the Chairman Mao Memorial at the site of Fragrant Hill

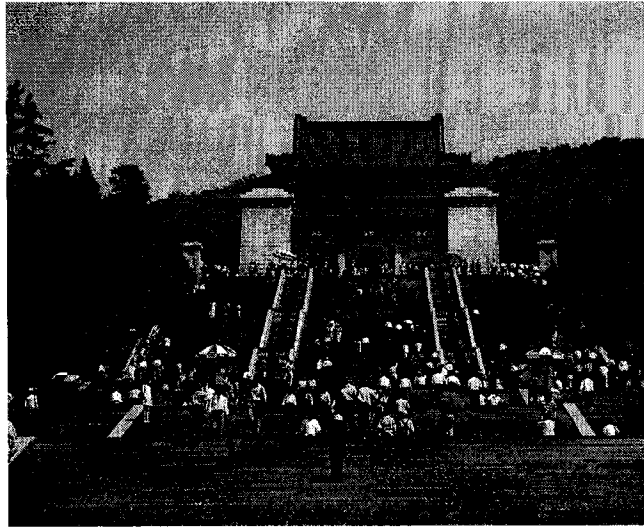


Figure 4.5: Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, Nanjing, architect Lu Yanzhi, 1925

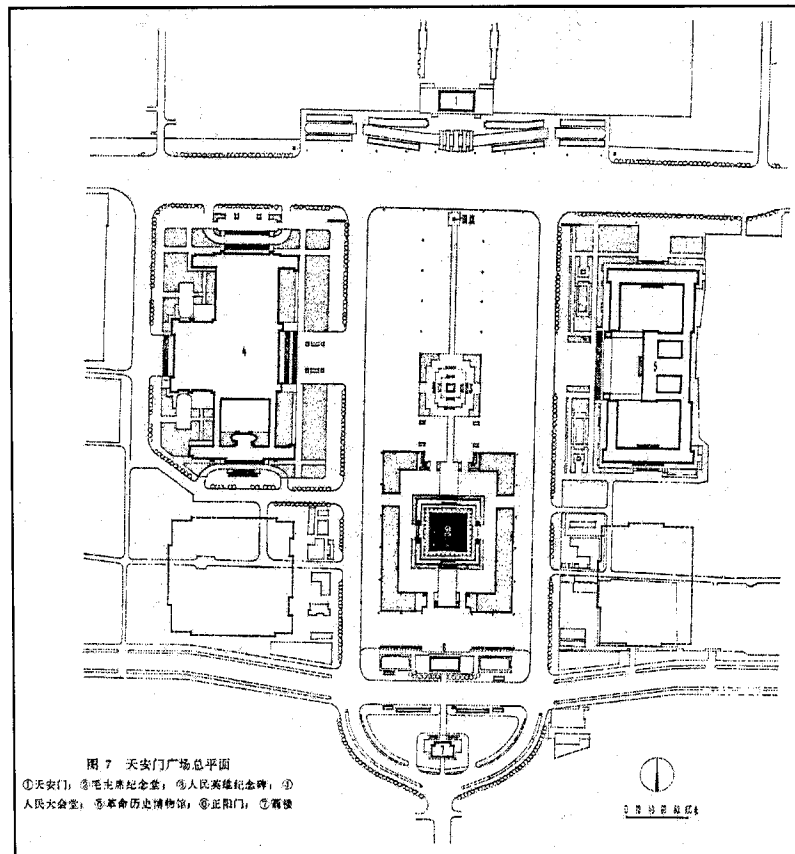


Figure 4.6: The final location of the Chairman Mao Memorial at Tiananmen Square

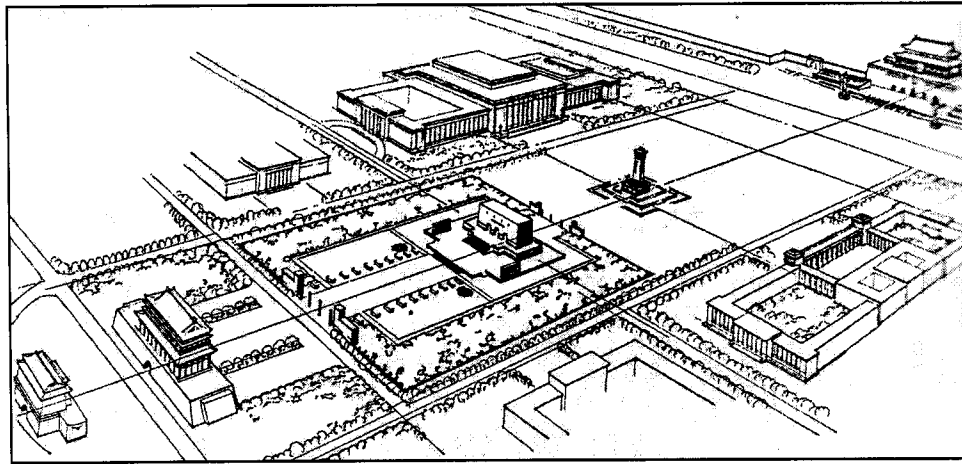


Figure 4.7: One of the early designs for Mao Memorial resembling a tomb

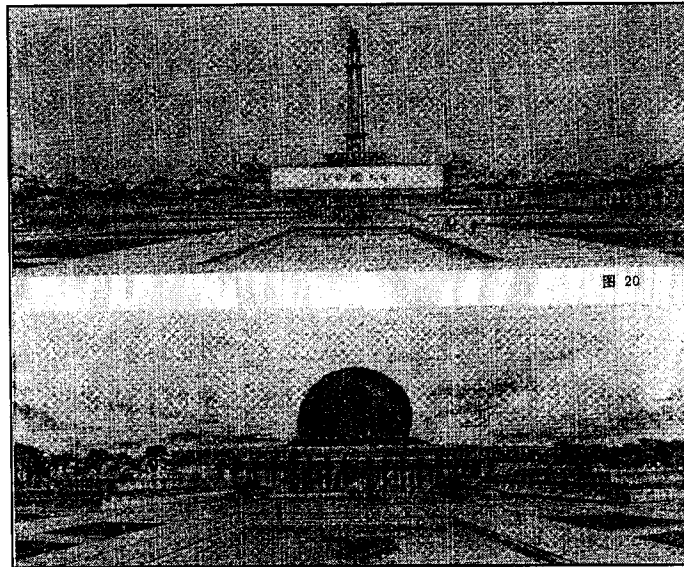


Figure 4.8: Different schemes for Mao Memorial in 1976

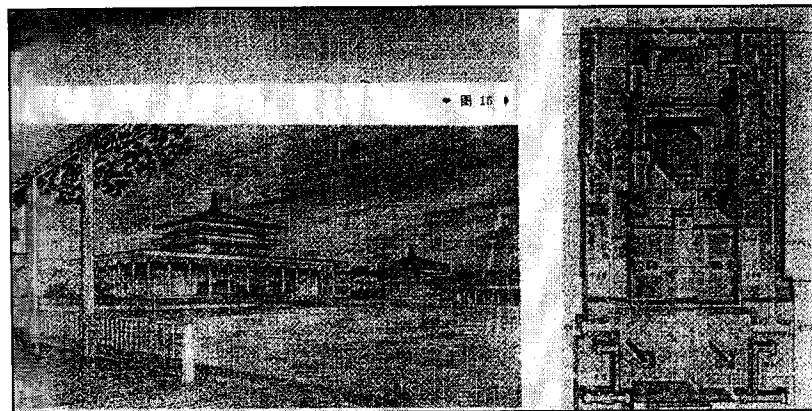


Figure 4.9: Courtyard scheme for Mao Memorial in 1976



Figure 4.10: Different schemes for Mao Memorial in 1976 with variations only in roofs

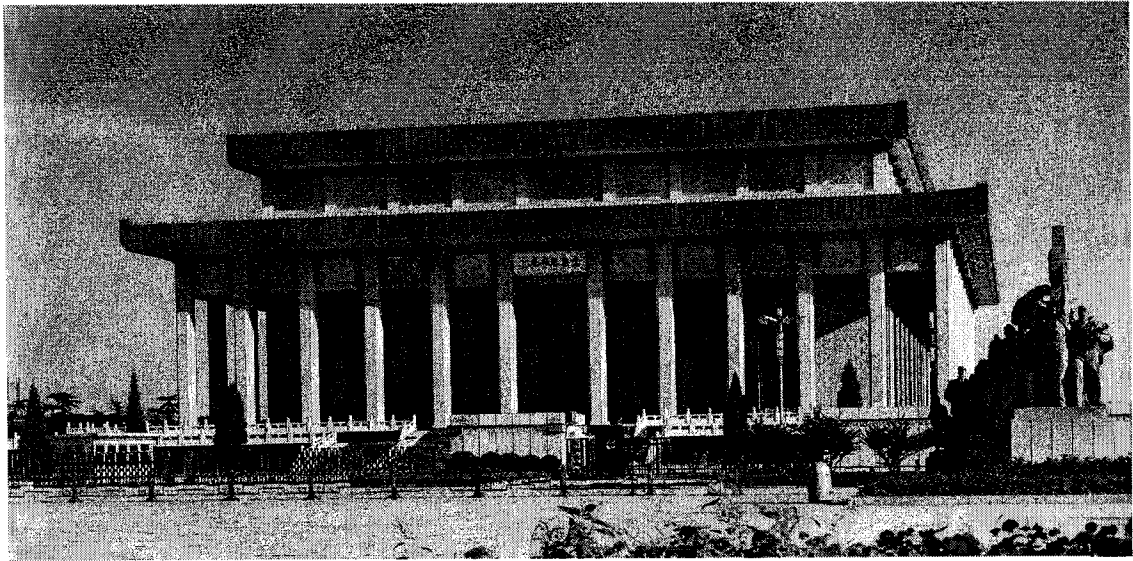


Figure 4.11: Chairman Mao Memorial, 1976-77

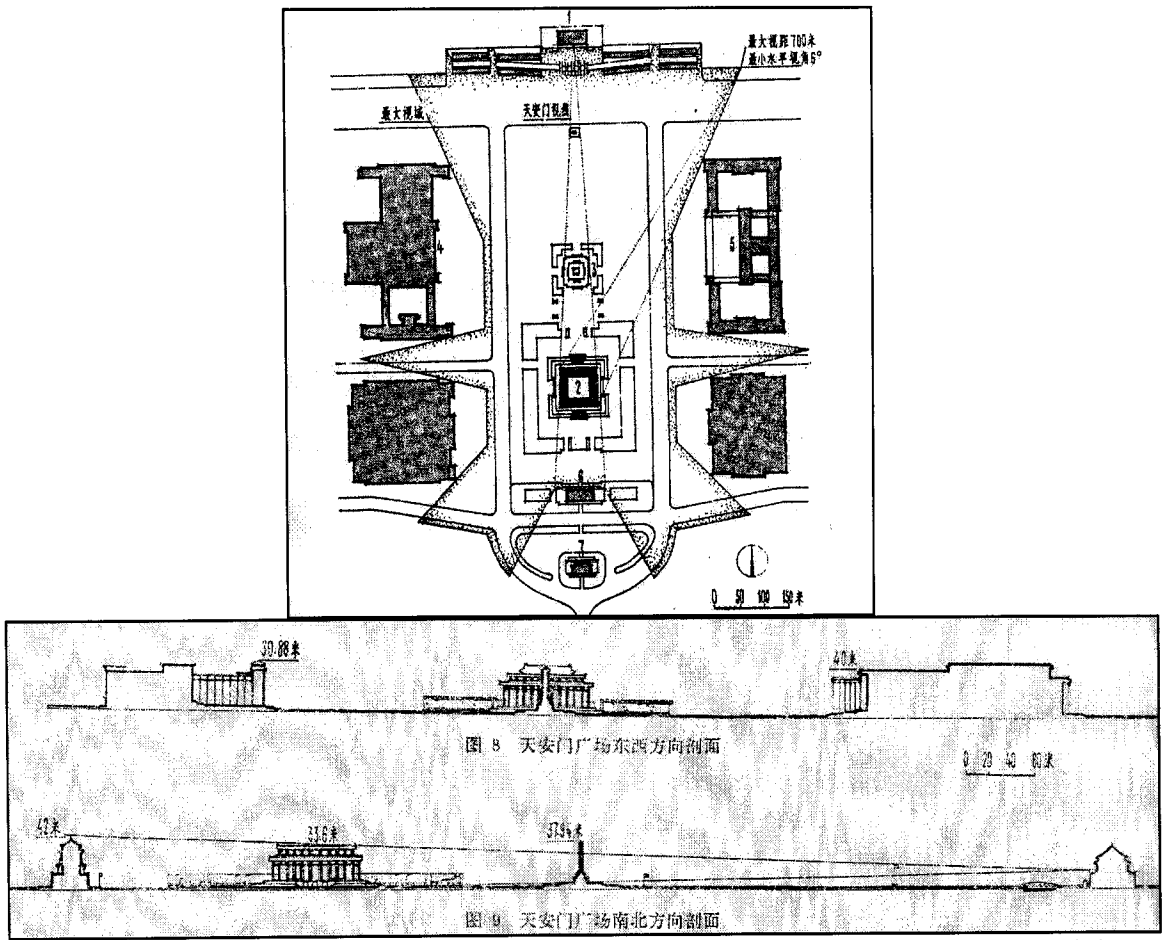


Figure 4.12: Analytical drawings in 1976 for a proper scale of the Mao Memorial

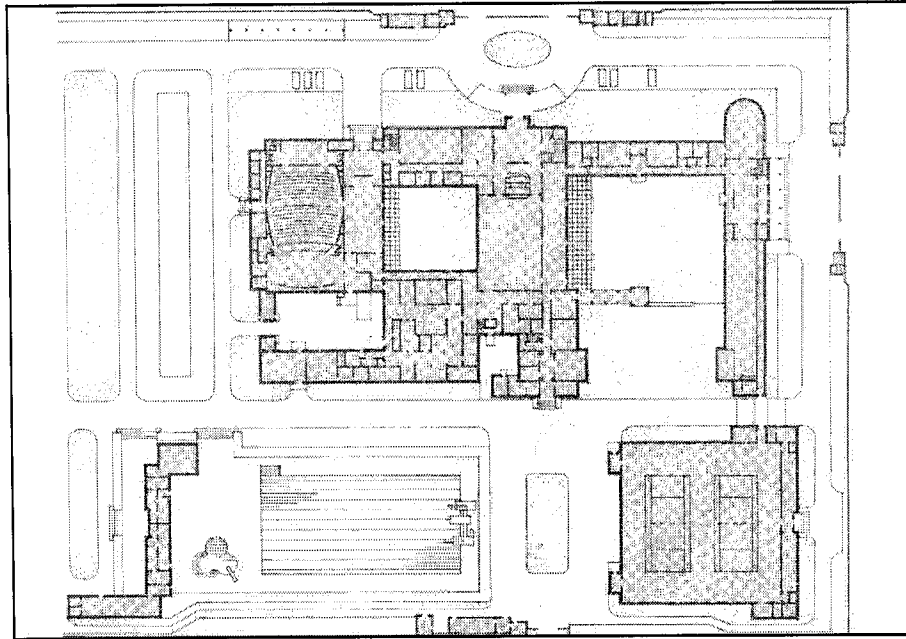


Figure 4.13: International Club, plan, 1971-72

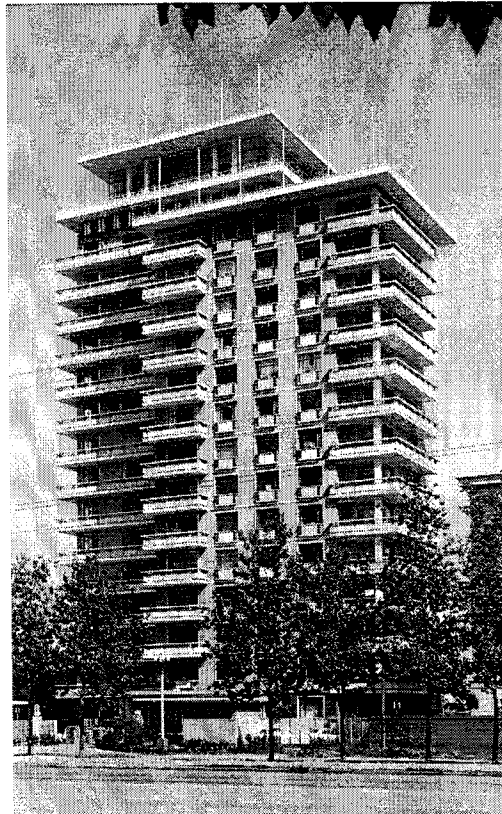


Figure 4.14: The Diplomatic Apartment, 1971-72

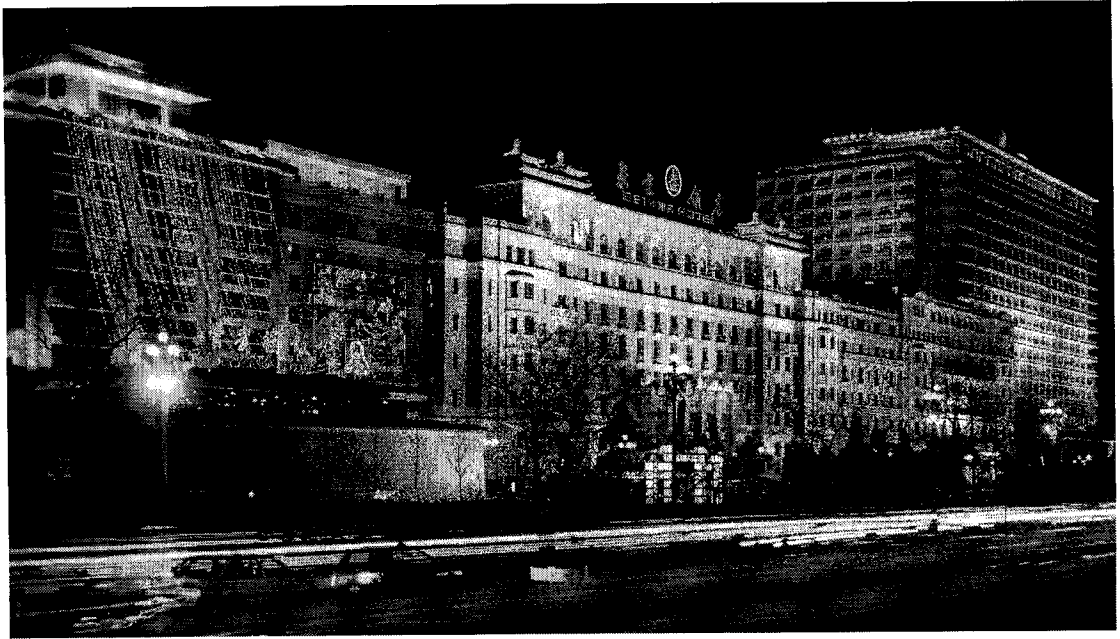


Figure 4.15: Beijing Hotel (from left to right: the 1990 Grand Hotel, the 1953 West Building, the 1917 Middle Building, and the 1974 East Building)

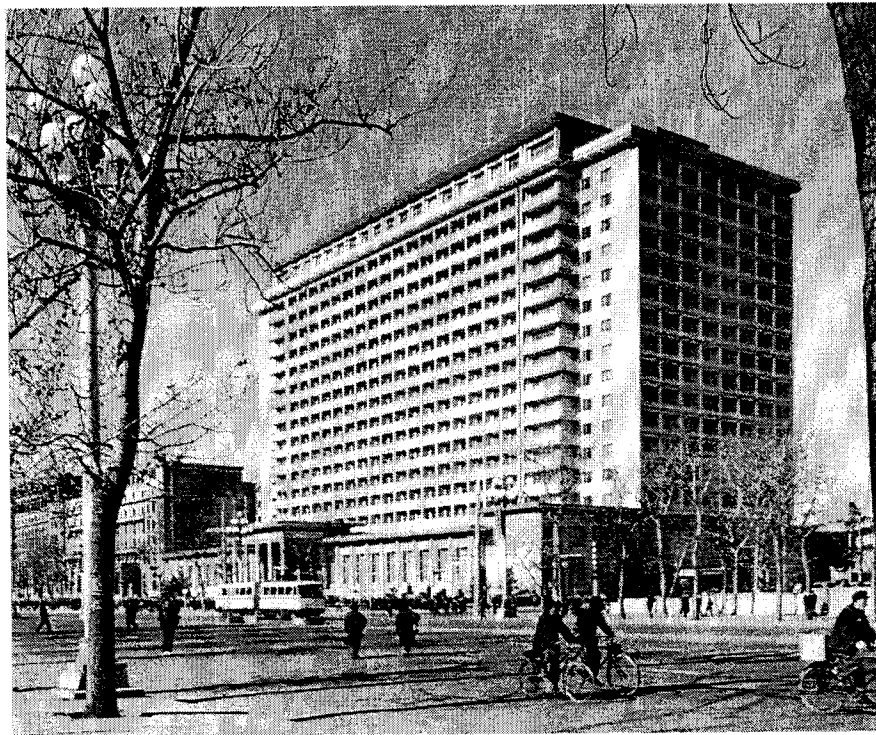


Figure 4.16: East Building of Beijing Hotel, 1974

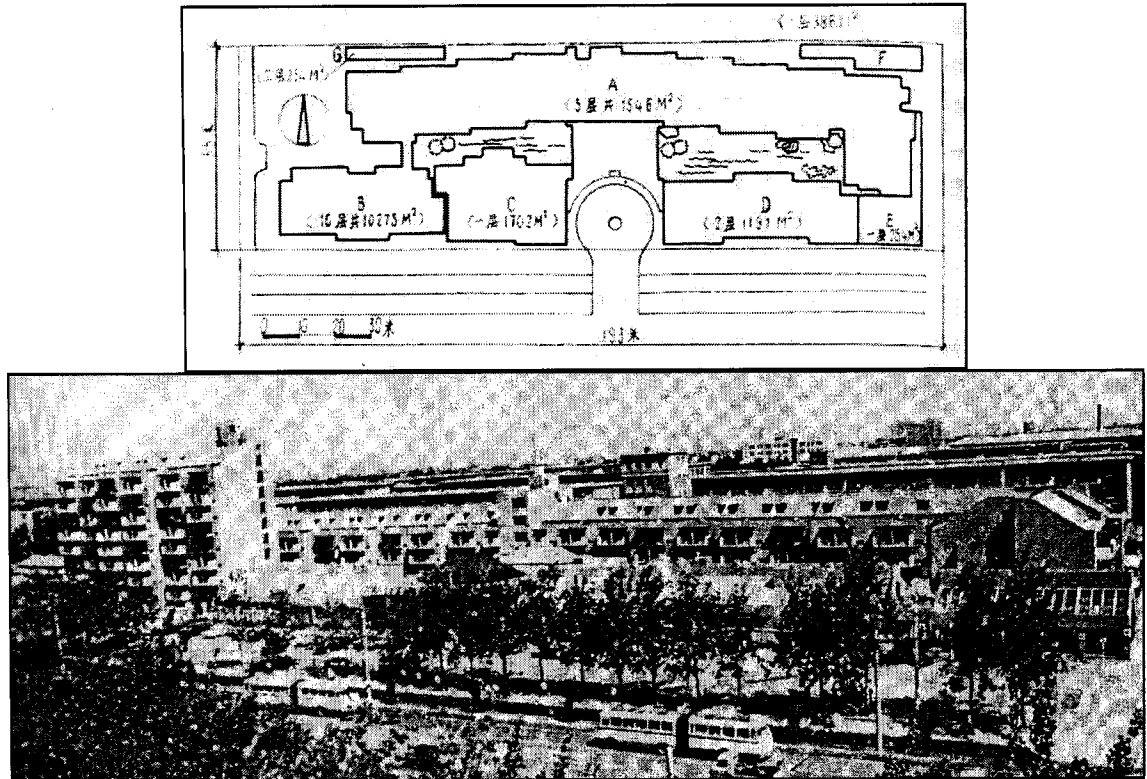


Figure 4.17: Jianguo Hotel, site plan and view on Chang'an Avenue, 1980-82



Figure 4.18: International Hotel, 1987

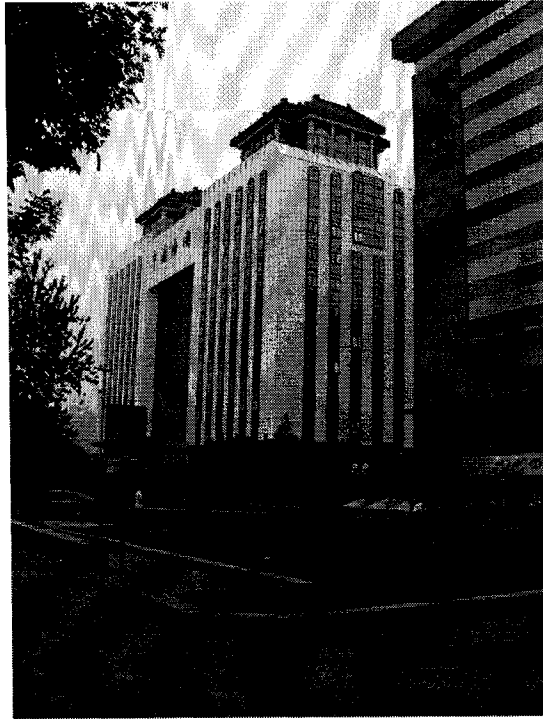


Figure 4.19: Custom Headquarters, 1987-90

Chapter Five

Collage Without Planning – Toward the New Century

During the first three decades of the People's Republic, detailed planning for Chang'an Avenue was prepared but very few buildings as planned were actually constructed; in the 1990s, Chang'an Avenue became clustered with monumental façades during a very short time span without any comprehensive planning. Buildings of different historical styles and new experiments stand side by side. Chang'an Avenue became a collage.

Behind the architectural collage of Chang'an Avenue façades were struggles of different social forces in China toward the new century, commercial, political, intellectual, popular, etc. The central government still wanted to control and exert political power onto the image of Chang'an Avenue. The rise of commercial forces in the Chinese society after Deng's socialist market policy, however, rendered impossible the total control of art and architecture like that of Mao's time. The restoration of Chinese intellectuals' social status added new voices to the discourse on Chang'an Avenue architecture. Not only writers and artists outside of the architectural circle but also

common Beijing and Chinese citizens alike no longer hesitated in expressing their personal feelings about the image of the “Number One Street of China.”

The Commercial Patches and the Political Patches

Conflict and cooperation between political ideology and commercial profit

During the 1990s, when the policy of “socialist market economy” initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 had already been carried out for a decade, China became fully integrated into the global market. Under the slogan of “constructing socialism with Chinese character,” the entire Chinese society was revitalized by the desire for economical success. The Chinese Communist Party, previously legitimatizing itself as a revolutionary party to fight against capitalist imperialism, generally lost its ideological claim to rule the country. The conflict between the Maoist communist ideology and the new economic and social reality led to the democracy movements in the late 1980s that ended with the tragic military suppression of June 4, 1989, known as the “Tiananmen Massacre.” Chinese society, however, remained tranquil after that, and focused its full attention on economic development.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had successfully diverted people’s attention from political pursuit to economic desire. Today, the CCP claims its right to rule mainly by its success in economic development, providing the Chinese people with better lives, and raising China’s international status. The last one had the potential to be developed into a new nationalist ideology. Although the Party documents still paid lip-service to

Marxism and Mao Zedong Thoughts, few people in China subscribed any longer to the Maoist ideologies focusing on revolutionary spirit and class struggle. The official propaganda of the 1990s promoted the CCP more as the savior of China that had ended the century-long humiliation of China's military, territorial, and political losses to Western powers since the Opium War in 1840 and that had started the construction of an independent, prosperous, socialist new China. Mao, instead of a Marxist revolutionary, was depicted more as a national hero.

During the "June 4th Democracy Movement"¹ in 1989, while Tiananmen Square was the space for political protest occupied mainly by students and their supporters, including those from the Party media and national police, Chang'an Avenue was the urban space where real conflicts were taking place. The so-called "Tiananmen Massacre" is an inaccurate name. In fact, no one died in Tiananmen Square. According to the CCP sources, students and protesters retreated from Tiananmen Square peacefully in the early morning of June 4.² Most killings actually happened along Chang'an Avenue. After martial law was declared in Beijing on May 20 and 200,000 People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops surrounded the city ready to suppress the protesting citizens, workers erected barricades along main roads leading to Tiananmen Square, especially Chang'an Avenue, to protect the students, who were still on a hunger strike in the square. On the night of June 3, PLA troops invaded Beijing from the outskirts of the city, advancing toward Tiananmen Square through main avenues leading to the center of the capital. East

¹ The spring 1989 event in Beijing is referred to in different terms for different political interests. While the CCP called it "political upheaval and anti-revolutionary riot," Western media called it "Tiananmen massacre." I adopt the relatively neutral term "June 4th Democratic Movement," which was widely used by participators of the events. Most Chinese today simply refer to the event as "June 4th" (liusi).

² *Renmin ribao*, 1989.9.19.

and West Chang'an Avenues were the main passageways through which the troops approaching Tiananmen Square. Equipped with tanks, machine guns, and AK-47s, they met the civilian defenders who were armed with bricks, sticks, and Molotov cocktails. The first killings happened at Muxidi, a major intersection on West Chang'an Avenue Extension near the Military Museum, one of the "ten great buildings" of 1959.³ According to CCP sources, the two PLA soldiers killed in the early stage of the conflict were both "beaten to death by counter-revolutionary mobs" on Chang'an Avenue: one near the entrance of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities on West Chang'an Avenue; the other on the Jianguomen Bridge at the east end of Chang'an Avenue Proper.⁴ According to some witnesses of the June 4 event, when the troops finally reached Tiananmen Square shortly after the midnight, West Chang'an Avenue and East Chang'an Avenue had become bloody trails of death and destruction.⁵ According to CCP sources, on Chang'an Avenue, burnt buses used as barricades by the "counter-revolutionary mobs" blocked communication for many days after the event.⁶ (Figure 5.1)

After the "June 4 Democratic Movement," on one hand, the CCP tried to dilute the political trauma of the event by highlighting economic development and encouraging pursuit for private wealth; on the other hand, the party redirected its political ideology focusing more on patriotism and nationalism. Chang'an Avenue architecture during the 1990s reflects these two tendencies in the post-June 4th Chinese society. In general, buildings constructed after 1989 can be categorized into two groups: one glorifies the

³ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 509-10.

⁴ *Renmin ribao*, 1989.6.5.

⁵ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 509-10.

⁶ *Renmin ribao*, 1989.6.9.

Chinese nation, for instance, the China Millennium Monument, the Military Commission Headquarter (August First Building), projects for various central government ministries, and the reorganization of museum displays; the other is primarily the outcome of the pursuit for profit, such as the Oriental Plaza, the Guanghai Chang'an Building, and the Henderson Center. The former has been purposefully induced for certain political goals; the latter is the natural outcomes of a commercial market. While the former has been firmly controlled by the party, the latter has been mostly manipulated by overseas capitals, especially investments from Hong Kong.

Both cooperation and conflict between political ideology and commercial profit occur on Chang'an Avenue. Buildings produced by nationalist ideology and buildings produced by pursuit for profit created political patches and commercial patches on Chang'an Avenue in the 1990s. Inserted into Chang'an Avenue along its a hundred *li* façades, they gradually filled in the gaps between earlier monumental structures. On the whole, however, political patches are concentrated on western sections of Chang'an Avenue and commercial patches are focused more on its eastern parts.

East Chang'an Avenue and West Chang'an Avenue

Eastern Chang'an Avenue and Western Chang'an Avenue had different characters since the very beginning of their formation when the city of Beijing was founded as the capital of the Ming Empire by the third Ming Emperor Yongle in 1420. Western Chang'an Avenue was mainly associated with punishment, military power, and authority, while Eastern Chang'an Avenue was more associated with business, civil power, and

celebration.⁷ Such associations with east and west along Historical Chang'an Avenue were mainly a product of different functions of government agencies located on it, and the different spatial experience they produced during the imperial periods. (Figure 5.2) Such associations with orientation were also deeply imbedded in the time-honored popular belief in the symbolic nature of different directions. According to the "five elements" theory in Daoism, east belongs to the element of wood and is associated with spring, growth, and life, while west belongs to the element of metal and is associated with autumn, decay, and death. The arrangements of urban functions on East and West Chang'an Avenues followed these conventions established by the "five elements" theory.

Such symbolic associations with East and West Chang'an Avenues continued after 1949. Most of the "anniversary projects" displaying the power of the new socialist regime on Chang'an Avenue in 1959 were located on West Chang'an Avenue. In the 1970s, following the normalization of Sino-US relationship, diplomatic complexes were constructed on East Chang'an Avenue; and in the 1980s, more commercial buildings filled in East Chang'an Avenue.

The commercial patches

The largest victory of free market on Chang'an Avenue in the 1990s was the Oriental Plaza, the gigantic commercial complex guarding the southern end of Wangfujing completed in 1999. Located on East Chang'an Avenue about one kilometer east of Tiananmen Square, it was the largest civil property development project in Asia at

⁷ See the section "Chang'an Avenue during the Imperial Periods" in Chapter One for detail.

its construction. The 2 billion US\$ project was financed by Hong Kong capital. In its final form, the complex comprises 11 buildings, including one “super-five star” hotel and ten commercial office buildings, all connected on the basement and ground level. The project also includes two separate residential buildings at the rear of the complex for the relocation of dwellers of the site’s former courtyard housing. (Figure 5.3)

The Oriental Plaza represents the victory of commercial power over political control of urban space in that its architecture defies all city planning rules for the political center of Beijing. According to the official “building height control for the Old City of Beijing” issued in 1987, building height on the site of the Oriental Plaza should not exceed 45 meters.⁸ The Great Hall was 40 meters and Museum of Chinese Revolution and History was about 30 meters high. In the original design of 1994, however, the tallest building in the Oriental Plaza reached 85 meters, twice as high as the limit set by the city planning codes. Only after protests by Chinese architects and the interference of the Central Government were heights lowered to 68, 59, and 49 meters, diminishing as the complex approaches Tiananmen Square.⁹

The volume of the Oriental Plaza architecture also totally disregards the city planning principles for the Old City of Beijing. The maintenance of a historical urban texture characterized by the small volumes of individual courtyard structures linked by the alley (hutong) system has been emphasized in all the successive versions of master plan for the capital. Both architectural professionals and municipal officials generally

⁸ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 313; see also, Wu Liangyong, *Rehabilitating the Old City of Beijing* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 36.

⁹ Anne-Marie Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing*. (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 118-121.

agreed that new buildings in Beijing's Old City should merge with the old checkerboard street system instead of spanning several blocks with one gigantic structure.¹⁰ The building complex of the Oriental Plaza, however, extends 500 meters along Chang'an Avenue, and the original plan was for one comprehensive structure. Although the final completed complex is divided into three sections, the visual continuity of the facades still dwarfs all its surrounding buildings. (Figure 5.4)

The insertion of such a gigantic structure into the historical center of Beijing, however, was not without the encouragement and cooperation of the government officials in Beijing. According to Ms. Zhou Kaixuan, the initiator of the Oriental Plaza project and a close friend of the project sponsor Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing, what they originally planned in 1992 was simply buying a small six-story building, the Children's Cinema, and replacing it with a store on Chang'an Avenue. During negotiations with the municipal officials of the Dongcheng District of Beijing, however, they were told that the entire area of the 10,000 square meter site, in which the building was located, needed to be developed comprehensively according to the master plan of the East Chang'an Avenue and the Wangfujing district. They should either rebuild the entire 10,000 square meter area or do nothing. Encouraged by the Beijing officials and supported by the enormous wealth of the Hong Kong tycoon, Zhou accepted the offer without hesitation and raised an even more ambitious proposal. She proposed to take all the adjacent blocks and redevelop the entire area between Wangfujing Street and the Dongdan intersection along Chang'an Avenue. The redevelopment area was ten times what was offered by the

¹⁰ Master plans of Beijing city, 1991-2010, 2004-2020.

Beijing officials, 100,000 square meters. As the saying in Beijing goes, “one inch of earth at Wangfujing equals one inch of gold.” Given the unrivaled land price of this area, 100,000 square meters was an astronomical figure. It was one seventh the size of the entire Forbidden City. The Beijing officials accepted her plan.¹¹

The tallest buildings on the site before the construction of the Oriental Plaza were six-story ones and most of the structures directly on Chang’an Avenue were only two stories high. They had all been recently constructed within the twenty years since China opened its doors in 1979, filling in the former “gaps” of one-story siheyuan courtyards. In the 1990s, they themselves became “gaps.” Behind them remained old one-story siheyuan-style houses, which the earlier city planning of Beijing had claimed to preserve. The Oriental Plaza project erased them all. In order to expedite the demolition of these old buildings, the Hong Kong investors rewarded those who relocated their homes from the old buildings faster with better monetary compensations. Those who vacated their houses within 10 days could get the first grade relocation fee, within 20 days, second grade, and so on. This policy proved to be very efficient. Within a month, all the siheyuan-style houses – located in the back – in the site were ready for demolition. According to the project manager Zhou, the successful fast and smooth relocation of the siheyuan-style house dwellers speeded up the excavation of the larger old buildings – located in the front directly on Chang’an Avenue – in the site.¹² Although the preparation of the site for the construction of Oriental Plaza was not as easy as Zhou’s personal account might have suggested, for instance, the negotiation for relocating the largest

¹¹ Fang Xiangming, “Tell you a true Oriental Plaza,” *Chinese Women*, 2003.6.

¹² *Ibid.*

McDonald's restaurant in the world built in the 1980s lasted for two years from 1994 to 1996,¹³ the site was eventually fully emptied for the commencement of construction work at the end of 1996.

The power of commercial expansion also overshadowed the cultural preservationists' protests. Harsh criticism by prominent scholars and scientists of the scale of the Oriental Plaza only led to minor adjustments in its height and volume. During construction in December 1996, a Paleolithic Period archeological site some 20,000 years old was discovered. Even such a significant cultural discovery caused no revision on the general image of the commercial complex. Accommodating the ancient site took away only 400 square meters of the third basement's floor area from the complex's total 880,000 square meters, and the museum was housed inside next to a subway entrance.¹⁴

It seems that even the political image of the capital could be sacrificed to pursue the promise of commercial development. In August 1995, the National Chinese Political Consultant Committee issued a long statement condemning the design of the Oriental Plaza. In addition to the transgression of the city's height control regulation, the statement specifically pointed out that the colossal building complex of the Oriental Plaza would divert people's attention from the Tiananmen Square, the symbol of new China. Although the revised design had broken the original volume into three sections, the visual continuity of the facades still made it one gigantic, integrated structure that dwarfed both the Great Hall of the People – the symbol of political power of the communist China – and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History – the central site for displaying the

¹³ Broudehoux, 118.

¹⁴ Broudehoux, 123.

communist version of Chinese history that legitimatizes the current regime.¹⁵ The statement also pointed out that such a design was fueled by blatant greed for profit at the price of the political image of the people's capital. Even such a harsh appeal from inside the communist regime could not stop the march of the international market on Chang'an Avenue, which Broudehoux refers to as "Hong Kong's takeover of China" in 1997.¹⁶

While the victory of money in the political and historical heart of the Chinese capital as represented by the Oriental Plaza is obvious, there are different versions about how the relationship between politics and market led to the realization of the Hong Kong project. The most popular version associates the project with the former Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong, who was ousted from office and imprisoned in 1995 due to a corruption scandal within the Beijing municipal government. A major charge that terminated his twelve-year service as one of the most prominent and powerful communist leaders was the allegation that he and his associates received more than 37 million US\$ bribe from Li Ka-shing. Another version alleges that during President Jiang Zemin's visit to Hong Kong for the ceremonies celebrating Hong Kong's return to the motherland in July 1997, Li and Jiang had some under the table agreement, which eventually led to the continuation of the project even after Chen was liquidated from the party. The investor of the project tells a quite different story. According to Ms. Zhou, former Beijing Mayor Chen had nothing to do with the Oriental Plaza. Her business was mainly with the government of Dongcheng District and Mr. Li Ka-shing had hardly been involved in the

¹⁵ "Report from the 8th Conference of the National Chinese Political Consultant Committee on Urban and Suburban Construction," report no. 101, August 17, 1995.

¹⁶ Broudehoux, 123.

early stage of the development. “The project just went through the proper real estate procedure from lower official levels to higher ones and that is all,” she told a journal reporter.¹⁷

While Zhou’s account might be too simple given the open secret of bribe-taking in China’s socialist market economic system since the 1980s, the direct association of the project with a political leader who had recently lost his power is equally questionable. It is too easy to connect disgraced projects with disgraced persons. Chen was famous for his enthusiasm for “retrieving the character of the ancient capital of Beijing” 夺回古都风貌 and was also notorious for imposing his personal architectural taste in Beijing’s new architectural projects. He was given a nickname “Chen Xi-ting,” which renders a caricature of his real name Chen Xi-tong by replacing the last character in his name with the character meaning “pavilion,” due to his inclination to top every modern building in Beijing with time-honored pavilions with overhanging roofs. In both the original design and the completed buildings of the Oriental Plaza, however, none of such features in typical Chen-style projects presents.

While the project’s name is “Oriental Plaza,” there is virtually no plaza at all in the entire complex. Interchanging solid and glazed blocks fill the entire site, retreating back from the street just behind the redline as required by the city planning regulations. The basement floors fill the entire 100,000 square meters of the site area. The predominant consideration in design was to maximize the floor area. The solid walls are flat and straight, while the glass surfaces are curved. Except for the regular square

¹⁷ Fang.

patterns composed by windows of different sizes, there are no extra decorations on the solid walls. And the only patterns on the glass curtain walls are made up of the mullion lines. The main entrance in the center of the middle section on Chang'an Avenue opens in an enormous concave circular glass curtain wall with a huge flight of steps in front of it, leading customers from the sidewalk of the avenue directly to the main atrium of the hotel. This is the largest open air area in the entire complex, originally the only open air area before the Chinese scholars' protest and the forced breaking down of the monolithic volume of the original design. Even this open area might serve more for better fengshui rather than for any aesthetic, cultural, or social considerations. According to fengshui theory, which is very popular among Hong Kong real estate investors, the main entrance of a building should have a sizable open and half-enclosed area to contain the benevolent qi (energy), which will bring wealth and luck to the businesses housed inside. (Figure 5.5)

The official explanation of the Oriental Plaza design, however, does emphasize the cultural character of the building complex. Although the three open areas around which the three groups of buildings are organized were claimed to be in the form of the siheyuan-style courtyard, the physical character of the spaces actually have very little in common with that traditional space. While the Beijing siheyuan courtyard is rectangular in shape, all the three courtyards of the Oriental Plaza are circular; while the siheyuan courtyard's horizontal dimension is much larger than its vertical dimension due to the fact that all buildings around the courtyard are virtually one story, the courtyards of the Oriental Plaza are more like sky-wells, whose defining walls are higher than the diameters of the open space; while the main buildings surrounding siheyuan courtyards

are located on the main north-south and east-west axes of the complex, the towers defining the courtyards of the Oriental Plaza are all located at the corners, leaving the axes of the complex open. In addition, the overhanging members protruding on top of the towers are meant to mimic the far-reaching eaves in traditional timber structure roofs in modern material, but at street level, they are only visible as long and narrow shadows floating above the shining surfaces of concrete slabs.

The style of the Oriental Plaza is perceived in China by architectural professionals as a combination of modernism with neo-classicism.¹⁸ Such a stylistic designation reflects the dilemma Chinese architecture of the late twentieth-century faced at a time when modernism was re-introduced in the midst of post-modernism. When modernism had already become past tense in the western context, it continued pointing to the future in China. While in the discourse of Western architecture, modernism had shifted to become a specific historical style, in the discourse of Chinese architecture it never went beyond its chronological present tense designation of “modernization”. As a result, modernism always needs to be combined with something else in order to signify a specific style. During the Maoist era, modernism was combined with Soviet version of neo-classicism in name of socialist content in order to render itself as progressive modernization. After the 1980s, when post-modernism was introduced into the Chinese architectural field, it was primarily adopted and perceived as a new version of eclecticism that combined modernism with classical motifs.

¹⁸ *Chang'anjie*, 121.

The pursuit for commercial expansion and the semantic transplantation of post-modernism can also be observed in other buildings constructed on East Chang'an Avenue during the 1990s. The historic landmark Grand Chang'an Theatre was relocated inside of a seventeen-story comprehensive commercial office building named Guanghai Chang'an Building. The former renowned theatre for Beijing Opera occupies a small part of the first floor area. Above it, more floor areas were added for more profitable businesses. On the exterior façade facing Chang'an Avenue, a simplified pailou decorates the main entrance in a flat and shining blue glass curtain wall with yellow glazed sloping roofs raised above on cylindrical columns. (Figure 5.6)

The political patches

While market forces advanced on East Chang'an Avenue by replacing small-scale neighborhoods with gigantic commercial complexes supported by overseas¹⁹ finance, new monuments that indicate political development in the 1990s appeared on West Chang'an Avenue under the sponsorship of the government. Unlike the government sponsored projects on Chang'an Avenue in the 1950s, which were meant to glorify the communist revolution and rendered the past history as oppressive dark night preparing for dawn of the new age, the new monuments glorify the entire Chinese history and yearn for a new golden age for the Chinese nation.

¹⁹ Although Hong Kong returned to the PRC in 1997, it is still considered by the Chinese as an "overseas" territory because of its different social system from the mainland.

The best example with the strongest nationalist tone is the China Millennium Monument completed in 1999 on the western extension of Chang'an Avenue Proper. The monument was dedicated to the commencement of the new century and millennium. The title of the monument “Zhonghua-shiji-tan” 中华世纪坛, which literally means “Chinese Century Altar,” however, could be read in Chinese in several different ways. It could be understood as an altar within China dedicated to the new century; it could also be read as an altar dedicated to a new Chinese century. The latter suggests that the coming new century will be the new era for a Chinese renaissance, or in the official language, the “great renaissance of the Chinese nationality” 中华民族的伟大复兴.

The main structure of the China Millennium Monument houses various spaces for conferences and exhibitions. The main interest of the entire monument, however, lies not in the specific functions of the main structure, but the symbolisms of the structure's imagery and of the spaces preceding it. The entire monument comprises three parts: the “Plaza of Holy Fire” 圣火广场 at the south end, the circular building in the form of a giant sundial located in a park at the north, and the “Bronze Causeway” 青铜甬道 of 270 meters long and 3 meters wide that connected the previous two parts. (Figure 5.7)

The Plaza of Holy Fire is a microcosm of the motherland China. The plaque at the site explains that the circular floor of the plaza, one meter below ground level, is paved with 960 square granite slabs, representing China's vast territory of 9,600,000 square kilometers. (Figure 5.8) At the south wall of the sunken plaza, a cascade of 300 electronic lights with light-guide fiber represents the beautiful shining seas of the motherland. Along both the eastern and western sides of the plaza, a steady current of water cascades

down the steps, symbolizing the two major “mother rivers” of the Chinese civilization, the Yellow and the Yangtze Rivers. (Figure 5.9) The floor of the plaza slightly rises toward the center, representing the rise of the Chinese nationality. At the very center of the plaza is an ever-burning fire, the “Chinese Holy Fire,” whose seed was picked at the Paleolithic Beijing Man site Zhoukoudian,²⁰ representing the eternal creative force of the Chinese civilization.²¹ At the north end of the plaza is a map of China on a circular plate with gilded dragons decorating its fringe. At the south end, raised above the sea of lights, rests a marble horizontal stele with a Han dynasty fu style prose incised celebrating China’s long history and recent rise. On the other side of the stele facing Chang’an Avenue is engraved title of the monument, “Zhonghua shiji tan (China Millennium Monument),” written in calligraphy by President Jiang Zemin.

To the north of the Plaza of Holy Fire is the Bronze Causeway. The central bronze part is 3 meters wide and 270 meters long, on which the entire chronology of human history from 3 million years ago to 2000 CE is marked on the sides, and major cultural and political events of China is inscribed in the center. (Figure 5.10) The historical information becomes more and more detailed as time getting closer to the end of the second millennium, with the last 100 years illustrated by not only the traditional calendar of Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches but also their corresponding symbolic animals. Like the exhibitions in the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History and the Military Museum, the recording of historical events in the Bronze Causeway has

²⁰ Zhoukoudian 周口店: an 18,000-year old archaeological site near Beijing where the fossil of the skull of a “Beijing Man” was discovered in early 20th century.

²¹ Texts in the explanation plaque at the site.

a teleological agenda that legitimatizes the socialist revolution, though the glory of Chinese nations of the past is celebrated with a strong nationalist tone. The political aspect of the monument, however, is deliberately played down in the official explanation of the causeway on the stele at the site, which only mentions that the text inscribed in the bronze “succinctly recounting important events of Chinese history in science and technology, culture, education and other fields.”²²

The so-called “Bronze Causeway,” however, is not meant to be walked on in the original design. Instead, according to the design concepts, a clear stream of water should run on the surface of the bronze pass, a movement “harmonizing and contrasting with the stillness of the pavement to indicate the continuity and renewal of the nation’s history.”²³ But the water in the Bronze Causeway, and in the fountains elsewhere in the monument, might actually only run during special days of celebration. For most of the time, the Bronze Causeway remains dry and is a de facto passageway, leading visitors from the Plaza of Holy Fire to the altar. Without the water, inscriptions in the bronze panels is hard to read and pilgrims are often found crouching over the central pass, slowly moving through the carefully designed history toward the giant altar ahead.

The main structure at the north end of the Bronze Causeway is the largest receptacle of Chinese cultural symbolism of the three parts of the monument. (Figure 5.11) It consists of two parts: a dynamic upper rotunda in the form of a giant sundial, representing “qian” (Heaven); and a static peripheral base in the form of a stepped terrace, representing “kun” (Earth). The qian-body is 47 meters in diameter and 28 meters high

²² Texts in the stele on the site.

²³ Texts in the stele on the site.

with a roof slope of 19.4 degrees, whose central rotunda revolves once every 2.6 to 55 hours, depending on the control of the rotating speed. A 27.6-meter-long bronze needle stretches up into the sky from the top of the qian-body, symbolizing the infinity of time and space. The kun-body is 85 meter in diameter with seventeen circular tiers of steps paved with light-yellow granite slabs. The outer wall of the qian-body is carved with 56 relief panels, representing the 56 ethnic groups of the Chinese nation in their unity and solidarity. The top parts of the kun-body, where qian joins with and rotates in kun, are two semi-circular corridors of 6-meter-wide, 4-meter-high, and 70-meter-long (140 meters in total), inside of which bronze statues of 40 most outstanding figures in Chinese cultural history will be housed. Passing through the corridors, visitors can pay homage to these cultural heroes in the kun-body while observing the 56 ethnic designs inscribed on the outer wall of the qian-body. Ethnic diversity is unified into the single linear cultural history of the Chinese nation, just as qian is united with kun, male united with female.

(Figure 5.12)

“Qian” and “kun” are two of the most time-honored Chinese philosophical, cosmological, and ideological symbols. They first appear in the Confucian classic “Book of Changes,” whose source has been traced back to legendary early Chinese kings five thousands year ago. While their literal meanings are “heaven” and “earth,” they represent the most basic opposite forces in both nature and society, for instance, yang and yin, male and female, husband and wife, father and son, ruler and subject, etc. Qian and kun are also loaded with Confucian moral values of Chinese literati. In the “Book of Changes,” it is said, “As heaven moves constantly, so should the superior man rely on himself and

work ceaselessly; as earth extends infinitely, so should the superior man embrace all with magnanimous virtue” 天行健，君子以自强不息；地势坤，君子以厚德载物. The inscriptions on the site also explains, “‘Qian’ refers to the eternal, ceaseless movement of celestial bodies, embodying an idea of eternal edification, endeavor and progress, while ‘kun’ stands for the all-embracing earth, displaying a spirit of tolerance, magnanimity and harmony. The main structure as a whole, combining a harmony of movement and stillness with a grandeur of conception, manifests the Chinese nation’s great spirit of ceaseless endeavor, as well as their broadminded emphasis on virtue and tolerance.” Nationalist ideals imbedded in China’s long imperial history became the predominant ideology behind the construction of the China Millennium Monument.

While the passage from the Plaza of Holy Fire to the altar per se enshrines a strong nationalist ideology, the functions housed inside of the main altar structure reinforce it in different format. The roofs of the revolving giant sundial qian-body can serve as a raised amphitheatre during celebrations. Inside of it is the Century Hall, whose interior circular wall is a 5-meter-high, 117-meter-long low relief sculpture with an area of 588 square meters, the largest stone relief sculpture in China. The entire relief, called “Ode to the Chinese Millennia” 中华千秋颂, is divided into four sections: the first displays the rational spirit in Chinese civilization of the pre-Qin period with an emphasis on the source of Chinese thought; the second displays the magnanimous spirit in Chinese civilization from Han to Tang dynasties, with an emphasis on the magnificent quality of the Chinese nation; the third displays the loyal integrity during the period from Song to Qing dynasties, with an emphasis on the power of personality of the Chinese people; and

the fourth displays the historical duet of enlightenment and national salvation in the recent and modern history of China, with an emphasis on the independent and self-strengthening spirit of the Chinese nation. According to the official explanation, this relief sculpture encapsulates the spirit and developmental framework of the five-thousand-year civilization of the Chinese nation.²⁴ The imagery in the relief consists of both historical figures from Huangdi to the First Emperor to Deng Xiaoping, and cultural symbols from a Shang Dynasty bronze tripod to a Tang Dynasty palace to the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square. It ends with an inscription in President Jiang Zemin's handwriting: "The Chinese nation will achieve a great renaissance based on the final attainment of the motherland unification and the construction of a rich, powerful, democratic, and civilized socialist modern country." The relief was created by the best craftsmen with 15 types of stone of different colors from all over the country. While the Bronze Causeway leading from the Plaza of Holy Fire to the altar provides a textual narrative of the rise of the Chinese nation, the relief sculpture "Ode to the Chinese Millennia" visualizes this narrative in tangible forms. To some extent, it is the succinct illustration of the Bronze Causeway. (Figure 5.13)

On the same floor as the Century Hall of the qian-body (second floor), the qun-body houses a Western Art Exhibition Hall to the west and an Eastern Art Exhibition Hall to the east, bisected by the rotating qian-body. A Modern Art Exhibition Hall is located in the northern part of the first floor in the qun-body, whose southern part is the main communication space leading to various staircases, elevators, and escalators.

²⁴ Texts in the stele inside Century Hall.

Directly below the rotating qian-body on this floor is a souvenir shop. The basement houses a Multi-media Art Exhibition Hall and a wide-screen cinema called Millennium Theater.

Other government-sponsored monuments added on Western Chang'an Avenue after 1990s include the Military Commission headquarter (August 1st Building) and the Capital Museum. The former used pre-Tang period style roofs with straight eave lines and the imagery of the Great Wall, symbolizing military forces of the PLA are the new "iron Great Walls" of the PRC. (Figure 1.34) The latter consists of the imageries of over-reaching "big roof" and ancient bronze tripod ding, but are both made highly abstract and juxtaposed with glass curtain walls and steel plates. (Figure 5.14) National symbolism plays a central role in the design of both these two buildings.

The contrasts and complements

The contrast between commercial buildings represented by Oriental Plaza and political monuments represented by the China Millennium Monument from the 1990s on Chang'an Avenue is sharp. While the Oriental Plaza occupies every inch of the land possible for commercial profit, and forces itself into vertical reaches well beyond the height strictly limited by the city planning code for the site, the China Millennium Monument leaves most of the site as an open passageway, spreading horizontally on the ground. The former is devoid of decoration, while the latter is full of symbolism. The Oriental Plaza houses complex functions inside of a relatively simple box of imposing concrete and glass facades. The China Millennium Monument, on the contrary, houses

relatively simple interior functions but elaborates on outdoor experience in movement.
(Figure 5.15, 5.16)

The commercial patches and the political patches on Chang'an Avenue during the 1990s, however, also complement each other. While the construction of the Oriental Plaza involves various political episodes and might have been impossible without strong political support from top leaders, the China Millennium Monument is commercialized after its completion. Most of the exhibition spaces are rented out for temporary shows. The Millennium Theatre screens history documentaries as well as imported foreign movies. A ticket for entry to the whole Monument can be purchased by the Plaza of Holy Fire for 30 RMB yuan. If visitors want to sound the huge bronze "Chinese Century Bell" in the park where the altar is located, they pay 5 RMB yuan for three strikes. Although the words inscribed on the bell are as solemn as those in the Monument to the People's Heroes of the 1950s in Tiananmen Square, and the gilded inscriptions on the surface are as magnificent as those on a Zhou Dynasty ding vessel, they are little more than a curio display. The political monuments on Chang'an Avenue in the 1990s are mostly an accumulation of public spectacles for tourist consumption. To some extent, they are not much different from the public space represented by the Disneyland in the West.²⁵

²⁵ Diane Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 43-62.

The Chinese Patches and the Foreign Patches

During the 1990s, more and more buildings invested by overseas capitals and designed by architects from Hong Kong or abroad appeared on Chang'an Avenue. While buildings designed by Chinese architects continued the struggle in design to balance the "national" with the "modern," architecture by overseas architects found an "avenue" to continue the postmodernist exploration in cultural and political context other than the Western worlds. The two streams converged on Chang'an Avenue, mutually misunderstanding each other at the same time constructing a dialogue to make themselves understood. Chang'an Avenue became a collage for multi-language communication, communication in a sense that every speech is interpreted in a way that may or may not have been intended by the original speaker.

The Chinese patches

The new architectural theory of post-modernism introduced into China in the 1980s provided Chinese architects with a new framework to continue the debate on "national" vs. "international" and "tradition" vs. "modern." While Aldo Rossi's typology inspired the Chinese architects to reevaluate the Chinese architectural tradition, Venturi's preference for hybrid over purity and Michael Graves' play with historical motifs offered specific strategies to incorporate time-honored architectural details in modern design.

To some extent, postmodernism justified the claim for developing a new national style based on historical architectural motifs. In specific design, however, instead of

being comprehensively applied to an entire building, these historical architectural motifs were attached to main structures, juxtaposing glass surfaces and tiled concrete walls. Historical motifs were reduced to cultural signs and became fragmented and decorative.

The most frequently adopted historical motifs during the 1990s are the same as those of the 1950s and 1960s – the tiled-roof pavilion, the over-reaching and up-turning roof, the pailou memorial archway, and the xumizuo masonry terrace. In the Chang'an Club completed in 1993 on East Chang'an Avenue, two pavilions with yellow tiled roof and red columns protrude from the white wall on top of corners of the main façades facing Chang'an Avenue, with a corridor in the same colors and style connecting in between; above them, a flattened gable mimics the form of a juanpeng roof²⁶ of a traditional Beijing dwelling; the main entrances on the ground level are also framed in similar style pavilions but on a larger scale, located on a xumizuo terrace of white marble. (Figure 5.17) However, compared with buildings in “national forms” constructed in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance the Cultural Palace of Nationalities of 1959 and the National Gallery of 1962, the historical motifs in the Chang'an Club are confined to the narrow bands in the main façade; (Figure 1.26) the areas directly below or surrounding them do not continue with the historical references. In the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, xumizuo rostrums sloping roofs with green glazed-tiles appear on every floor, and yellow glazed roofs dominate the facades of the National Gallery. Historical motifs also continue in the interior of “national forms” buildings from previous periods in the form of

²⁶ Juanpeng 卷棚: a traditional roof style of Chinese architecture, in which the two roof slopes smoothly curved to join each other instead of forming a sharp ridge as in most other roof styles.

simplified caihua.²⁷ While the “national forms” rendered buildings in the 1950s and 1960s in an integrated traditional flavor, historical motifs in the Chang’an Club are like fragments of memory floating in a neutral background of glass and concrete, which is otherwise un-differentiable from any other commercial building on Chang’an Avenue.

The appropriation of historical fragments by glass and concrete structures can be observed in many other buildings designed by Chinese architects in the 1990s on Chang’an Avenue, the renovation project for the Ministry of Textile Industry office building in 1991, the new building of the Beijing Hotel of 1990, the All China Women’s Federation building of 1995, the Ministry of Communication office building of 1992-94, the Guanghua Chang’an Building of 1994-96, the Huanan Mansion of 1991, and the Huacheng Plaza of 1997. The office building for the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee of 1992-93 is an exception, whose entire structure is covered by over-reaching roofs and large pavilions with elaborate historical details. Such a closer affiliation with architectural styles of China’s imperial past, however, is a result of its specific position on Chang’an Avenue, immediately to the west of the imperial garden Zhongnanhai of the Ming-Qing dynasties. (Figure 5.18)

Another strategy to combine “national” with “modern” in the 1990s was to follow the general composition, both in plan and façade, of “traditional” Chinese architecture but using contemporary construction materials such as concrete, steel frame, and glass. According to such an approach, what characterizes Chinese architecture in plan was the courtyard organization of space and what made a Chinese façade were the three vertical

²⁷ Caihua 彩画: paintings on the wooden members in traditional Chinese architecture.

sections of over-reaching roof, post-and-lintel frame, and a solid base. Such a characterization of Chinese architecture was strongly promoted by Liang Sicheng in the 1930s and 1950s. In the National Electricity Power Distribution Center on West Chang'an Avenue completed in 1998, two giant pillars raise a giant up-turned roof of steel frame above a steel and glass box. The proportion of the eave to steel frames under it recalls that of the rafters to brackets in Chinese timber structures. The main body below is divided into two sections: the upper part contains more transparent glass areas than solid wall, mimicking the time-honored post-and-lintel framework; the lower part contains more solid walls than open space, representing the masonry base in palace or temple halls. The details of the Power Distribution Center, however, demonstrate substantial influence from steel-frame structures designed by some Western architectural firms. The gothic-inspired spires on tops of the buttresses in the upper part of the façades were directly copied from buildings by the American firm KPF, and the giant roof in the form of an upturned truncated pyramid recalls works by the Taiwanese architect Li Zuyuan. (Figure 5.19) While the previous approach inserts historical details in new structures, the latter sacrifices specific details for a general composition. Other buildings that show an approach similar to the Power Distribution Center include the Zhongliang Plaza of 1992-96 on East Chang'an Avenue and the Commercial Building of the Armed Police of 1999-2003 on West Chang'an Avenue.

A third approach adopted by the Chinese architects in dealing with “national forms” was to dissect historical motifs in Chinese architecture, predominantly the roof, and reconstruct the fragments to form an incomplete image to remind the audience of

China's architectural past. An example of this approach is the Beijing Book Mansion 1994-98. Instead of a complete roof, the four slopes on top of the building are disconnected by solid walls, which, according to the design explanation, protrude into the sky like the stone pillars in Ming Dynasty pailou. The angle of the east and west slopes is sharper than the angle of the north and south slopes. One can imagine the extensions of the east and west slopes meeting at a line – the ridge – above the center of the main façade, and thus form a gable, whose imagined vertical walls could meet the extensions of the north and south slopes. The complex roof slopes thus could be a fragment of a time-honored xieshan style (hip-and-gable) Chinese roof. According to the design explanation, the Beijing Book Building also adopts such traditional motifs as the gate in Chinese vernacular dwellings and achieves the “organic integration of modern life, cultural tradition, and local characteristics.”²⁸ (Figure 5.20)

The foreign patches

In the 1990s, three buildings designed by foreign architects, collaborating with local architectural design institutes as required by law, were completed on Chang'an Avenue Proper. They are the China Industrial and Commercial Bank of 1994-98 by SOM with the Beijing Institute, the Bank of China of 1996-99 by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners with the Chinese Architectural Science Research Institute, and the COSCO Building (Yuanyang Mansion) of 1996-99 by APEC/NBBJ with the Mechanical Engineering Design Institute. All the three foreign architectural firms are American.

²⁸ *Chang'anjie*, 128.

Both SOM and NBBJ are famous for their commercial design of steel frame structures with large areas of glass. Aiming mainly for commercial success instead of experimental design innovation, they have produced large numbers of elegantly designed buildings all over the world since World War II. In the 1950s, SOM helped to popularize the Miesian style glass box in the West. In the 1980s and 1990s, their work was highly influenced by the high-tech trend of the 1970s with open transparent structures and exposed frameworks.

The China Industrial and Commercial Bank on West Chang'an Avenue is not much different from other SOM building in other part of the world. The main façade on Chang'an Avenue, however, does adopt a tripartite division of base, main frame, and over-reaching eave. (Figure 1.35) The over-reaching eave is by no means unusual for SOM buildings. In projects like the Arlington International Racecourse in Illinois, United States of 1987 and the Dallas Convention Center of 2002, protruding eaves are even more dramatic than the bank in Beijing. They are either due to functional requirements to shelter the tiers of seats below as in the former example, or integrated into the main structural framework as in the latter. The up-turned eave in the China Industrial and Commercial Bank, however, is attached to the upper part of the façade, neither functionally necessary nor part of the structural framework. The steel frame of round columns standing on a stone base was acclaimed by some Chinese architects at the time as embodying both the spirit of high technology specific to the 1990s as well as lingering charm of traditional Chinese architecture.²⁹ While the apparently superfluous eave might

²⁹ *Chang'an jie*, 126.

actually be part of SOM's purposeful design to fit their building into the specific architectural context of the site, such a reception of its façade is a misreading. (Figure 5.21)

Although the Bank of China on West Chang'an Avenue is officially attributed to I. M. Pei Architect, no record of this project can be found in the website of the Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. The main designer is actually Pei's son C. C. Pei. The building, however, has some of the main features of most I. M. Pei buildings. The interlocking of glass bodies with concrete bodies characterizes many I. M. Pei buildings.³⁰ In the Bank of China on Chang'an Avenue, a glass body containing the central atrium inserts into solid walls containing modularized windows. The glass body is a miniature of the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong of 1989 designed by I. M. Pei, with its characteristic diagonal steel frames and gradual setbacks toward the top. The interior garden in the atrium was interpreted as having much Chinese flavor. I. M. Pei was born in Canton and raised in Suzhou, the famous garden city of Southeast China. Many I. M. Pei buildings have garden or plantations in central interior public space, for instance, the Warner Building and the Guggenheim Pavilion in New York completed in 1992. (Figure 5.22)

C. C. Pei's Bank of China building is one of the very few asymmetrical structures on Chang'an Avenue. It also lacks the painstaking struggle to demonstrate national character so common in other buildings along the central section of Chang'an Avenue. I. M. Pei, after all, was so famous at the time for his Bank of China in Hong Kong that, it

³⁰ For instance, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts completed in 1979, the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, Texas of 1989, the Warner Building in Washington, D.C. of 1993, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Cleveland, Ohio of 1995.

could be argued, a signature building of a world star architect overrules the preoccupation for Chineseness. Such a trend of collecting signature buildings by internationally famous architects would become commonplace for Chang'an Avenue at the turn of the millennium, rendering the previous struggles for "national" vs. "modern" as outmoded. The competition for the National Grand Theatre has such a story to tell.

The National Grand Theatre

The Chinese word for theatre "juyuan" is used to refer to many different types of performance space. While film theatre has a specific Chinese term "dianyingyuan" and concert hall was referred to in Chinese as "yinyueting," "juyuan" refers to buildings dedicated to Western opera, ballet, various Chinese "xiqu" 戏曲 or "xiju" 戏剧 (traditional Chinese operas), and drama ("huaju" 话剧).³¹ The "theatre" in the National Grand Theatre, however, was conceived primarily as Western style opera, which was considered as the highest form of all performing arts. Thus, a contradiction is contained within the very title of the project: on the one hand, it is a house to display Western culture; on the other, it is to be national.

³¹ The translation of Chinese term into English and English terms into Chinese causes much confusion, especially when dealing with the ideologies behind these terms. "Chinese opera" is a confusing expression because it is not clear whether it refers to Western style opera written by Chinese or various Chinese "xiqu," which has been translated as "Beijing Opera," "Kun Opera," "Yue Opera," etc. For this reason, I will use English words for those of Western origin and Chinese words for those of Chinese origin in this dissertation. Thus, Beijing Opera, Kun Opera, etc. will not be referred collectively as Chinese Operas but as xiqu. When the term "Chinese opera" is being used in this dissertation, it refers to Western style opera written by Chinese. Drama or "huaju" was imported into China from the West through Japan, thus the English word is used here.

Another contradiction is that Western style opera was believed to be able to best represent the new socialist culture in China. Most operas performed in China are of European origin but most Chinese normally will not go to the opera. Such an odd position for the National Grand Theatre raised much debate about the justification of the project at the turn of the century.

The National Grand Theatre project possesses the same source of contradictions as the contradiction within Chinese modernization. Although the Chinese communists promised to take whatever is good from “ancient, contemporary, Chinese, and foreign” in the creation of a new socialist culture, the Western model was the predominant paradigm for the Chinese modernization during the PRC era. Chinese tradition, under such a theoretical structure, was never possible to be modern, only to be “modernized.” Historically, there were three approaches for dealing with the relationships between “traditional Chinese culture” and “modern culture.” The first was provided by the first generation of Chinese intellectuals, namely, the “May-fourth” generation of Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, who considered traditional Chinese culture and modern culture as incompatible and proposed a total rejection of Chinese tradition and a total westernization for Chinese modernization.³² The second approach was represented by such figures as Lu Xun and Mao, who proposed that Chinese modernization could be achieved only by combining national tradition with Western modern culture. “Model Operas” (yangbanxi) during the Cultural Revolution were official attempts to combine national and modern in theatre. Traditional xiqu was modernized by the adoption of Westernized orchestra and

³² Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).

stage setting; and Western ballet was nationalized by using Chinese folk dances to tell a revolutionary story. The former was officially called “Revolutionary Modern Beijing Opera” and latter was called “Revolutionary Modern Ballet.” A third approach claimed that traditional Chinese culture was already very modern and modernization of Chinese culture could be achieved by consciously developing the advantages of Chinese tradition. While the third approach seems to be anti-Westernization, as it indeed claimed to be, the true result of the approach was not. What were considered “advantages” of Chinese tradition were often selected according to the Western standards. For this reason, the Westernization agenda of the third approach became even more powerful by turning itself into an invisible prerequisite.

National Theatre as one of the anniversary projects in the 1950s

The National Grand Theatre of China is important not only because it is one of the largest single projects ever planned in modern China to its day, but also because the process has been lasting for almost half a century since the beginning ten years of the PRC era. Originally, the project was simply referred to as the “National Theatre” (the “grand” adjective having been added in the 1980s), one of the “anniversary projects” in 1958 for the tenth anniversary in 1959. The site it was to occupy was very important. Located on the south side of Chang’an Avenue, the National Theatre was to be right next to the Great Hall of the People. Although it was not directly on Tiananmen Square, many considered the National Theatre building as part of the Tiananmen Square architectural group. (Figure 5.23)

Like the other anniversary projects, scheme collection was organized for the National Theatre in 1958. The scheme by Department of Construction 營建系 at Tsinghua University was chosen as the design to implement. A Tsinghua faculty Li Daozeng, then in his twenties and the main designer for the winning scheme, would play an important role in the future development of the National Grand Theatre design.

It is impossible today to find the original schemes proposed for the National Theatre in 1958, even for the winning scheme. All the models and drawings were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. A single watercolor rendering of the scheme by Li has been preserved in the School of Architecture Archive at Tsinghua University. But other than that, nothing is left. (Figure 5.24) The drawing shows that the 1958 Tsinghua design for the National Theatre is similar to the adjacent Great Hall of the People in style. The building sits on a platform with wide steps leading to its major entrances. The symmetrical façades are vertically divided into two sections. The eaves of both sections are decorated with yellow and green glazed tiles, the same as the eave treatments in the Great Hall and the museum complex. It was said that the convention of using glazed tiles for flat roof eaves founded by the “ten great buildings” was first invented in Tsinghua’s design for the National Theatre.³³ The corners of the glazed-tile eaves rose up slightly, mimicking the raised over-reaching eaves in time-honored Chinese roofs. Like that of the Great Hall, colonnades screened the main entrances at the ends of grand exterior stairs.

³³ Niu Fangli and Huo Jiguang, “Remin dahuitang ce dakeng youwang tianping, guojia da juyuan gongcheng choucuo jianshe 人民大会堂侧大坑有望填平，国家大剧院工程筹措建设 (The big pit next to the Great Hall is hopefully to be filled as the construction of the National Grand Theatre project is being prepared),” in *Jianzhu bao* 建筑报 (Architectural News), 1998.2.17 (635).

The National Theatre project was abandoned in early 1959. Although it was not the only project for the tenth anniversary that went unrealized – the National Science and Technology Hall was also abandoned, and the National Art Gallery was not built until 1962, the National Theatre, however, was the only project since then to leave a huge empty site. No one has ever questioned the possibility of its construction; it seems that leaders of all successive PRC governments since Premier Zhou Enlai believed that the National Theatre would be built in the near future. The reason for aborting the National Theatre in the late 1950s is not clear. The most common explanation is that the central government had run out of money and the available time to complete it was too short.³⁴

The site

Since 1959, no further action over the theatre's construction occurred until the 1980s. The site as originally designated for the National Theatre, however, experienced various controversies during this intervening period.

In the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning, some schemes put the National Theatre directly on Tiananmen Square, to the south of the Great Hall. Occupying such a critical

³⁴ Interviews with some key figures of the 1950s anniversary project suggest that the true reason may be more complex than that. Professor Li Daozeng, architectural professor in Tsinghua University in Beijing and a key figure in the design of the National Theatre in the late 1950s was reluctant to be interviewed by me on this topic in 2003. Whether it is because discussing the National Theatre was too painful, as he had lost the final competition in the 1990s, or because it is such a politically sensitive subject that he didn't want to risk the possibility of offending the current political leader, is not clear. Shi Qing, Professor Li's wife and a civil engineering professor in Tsinghua University, also said, "it was a political problem. The design (of the National Theatre) by Mr. Li passed the inspection and censorship of all the heads of the nation, including Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai. What's more, many suggestions from Premier Zhou were absorbed into the design. It was more a question about the political situation, or more specifically, economic conditions, than a question of artistic solution. I don't know what you (the author) are going to achieve by your research. I am sorry I cannot encourage you to work on this subject." Professor Wu Liangyong at Tsinghua University also refused to talk anything about the National Grand Theatre during my interview in 2003.

site, the National Theatre would become one of the key factors in defining Tiananmen Square. If the proposed National Theatre served as part of the southern boundary of Tiananmen Square, the square was considered to be “closed” or “half-closed;” if it served as part of the western boundary together with the Great Hall, Tiananmen Square was considered as to be “open.”³⁵ Such a proposal for the new site further elevated the status of the National Theatre. As part of the Tiananmen Square, the National Theatre would be the representative of new socialist Chinese culture. The function of a performance stage would become secondary.

Many specialists in the April symposium were against the idea of locating the theatre on Tiananmen Square. The argument they offered was precisely that the primary function for a theatre was entertainment, not political. They argued that the entertainment mode of the National Theatre would ruin the solemn atmosphere of Tiananmen Square, and therefore that the original site west of the Great Hall on Chang’an Avenue, further away from Tiananmen Square, was a better choice.³⁶

After the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning, the site for the National Theatre became uncertain. At the end of the 1970s, Ministry of Culture again proposed building the National Theatre project but the proposal was turned down. Some source attributed the failure of the late-1970s proposal to economic constraints.³⁷ Poor economic condition of the country after the Cultural Revolution, however, did not stop the construction the Chairman Mao Memorial in the center of Tiananmen Square in 1977, one year after

³⁵ See Chapter Three for detail.

³⁶ “Chang’anjie guihua shencha huiyi, di 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ci gezu taolun jiyao (Discussion summary of the Chang’an Avenue planning evaluation symposium),” 1964.4, SAATU.

³⁷ Niu and Hou.

Mao's death. With the construction of Mao's tomb in Tiananmen Square, the controversy over "open" or "closed" approaches in the development of Tiananmen Square no longer existed. The question about the site for the National Theatre was simplified. In early 1990s, when the colonial style buildings with Western classical domes³⁸ south of the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History were declared historical heritage and their domes restored – they were unanimously proposed to be cleared away in the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning – the only possible site for a politically significant National Theatre was the original 1958 site to the west of the Great Hall.

The original site, however, was already jeopardized at the time. In fact, proposals about other uses of the site for National Theatre had appeared long ago. In September 1959, immediately after the completion of most of the "Ten Great Buildings," the site west of the Great Hall was proposed for the construction of residences for members of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC). The name of the proposed building was "Ruijin," the name of the first Red Capital of China in the 1920s in Jiangxi Province. As with other proposals for Chang'an Avenue, which usually started with an intent to make Chang'an Avenue "relatively complete," the 1959 proposal also began by stating the proposal's intent to resolve problems with the Avenue: it was "according to Comrade Peng Zhen's intention to quickly improve the appearance on the two sides of

³⁸ They were built in the 1920s. See, Zhang Fuhe, *Beijing jindai jianzhushi*, 253-257.

Chang'an Avenue."³⁹ It seems that the reason for such an early proposal for filling in the site of the National Theatre with something else was a "fear of vacancy" on Chang'an Avenue.

The site was not used for the residence. In early 1980s, the Standing Committee of the NPC, which was housed in the southern courtyard of the Great Hall, decided to build a new office building on the site.⁴⁰ In 1983, buildings west of the Great Hall were cleared away and the base pit was dug. The project for the new office building, however, was forced to be abandoned due to strong opposition from the representatives of the NPC. The 90 million yuan already spent on the "NPC project" only left a huge empty pit that would quietly lie in the heart of the Chinese capital for almost two decades.⁴¹

During the period between 1959 and the late-1990s, though nothing was done on the National Theatre project, a large number of smaller local theatres were constructed. They resembled the 1958 Tsinghua scheme for the National Theatre in proportion and façade division, but decorations were simplified and glazed-tiles were not applied. Designers were unlikely looking at the Tsinghua drawings when designing these local theatres, but following the example of the Great Hall and the Museum led to such stylistic similarity any way. Professor Li, who became China's leading specialist in theatre design for his work in 1958, continued his research for the National Theatre, hoping to have it built one day.

³⁹ "Beijing chengshi guihua guanli ju, guanyu zai chang'anjie liangce jianfang wenti de qingshi baogao 北京城市规划管理局, 关于在长安街两侧建房问题的请示报告 (Beijing City Planning Bureau, on the construction of buildings along Chang'an Avenue)," 1959.9.28, BMA: 131-1-党 10-29 (79).

⁴⁰ Niu and Hou.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Preliminary study and scheme collection in early 1990s

The battle over the site continued until 1997, when the final decision was made to construct the National Grand Theatre instead of the NPC office building next to the Great Hall. All documents indicate that the battle was mainly between the Ministry of Culture and the Standing Committee of NPC. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Culture again proposed the project of National Theatre and again did not pass since the NPC project was already being carried out. In 1991, the construction of the National Grand Theatre was again postponed “because of the disputation on the construction site of the NPC project”.⁴² The design for the National Grand Theatre, however, was already under way while the debate continued.

In 1990, the Ministry of Culture set up a preparation office for the National Theatre project, which organized the research on its feasibility and the design of new schemes in 1990-91. The new project would be much larger in scale and more expensive in cost compared to the original 1958 project, and was first officially called “National Grand Theatre.” The construction area was expanded from 38,098 square⁴³ meters to 100,000 square meters with an estimated cost of 1 billion RMB yuan. Instead of housing just one Western style opera house as in the 1958 schemes, new schemes had to combine opera house, concert hall, and Chinese xiju theatre in one building.

⁴² Zheng Ping, “Kua shiji de gongcheng – zhongguo gojia da juyuan gongcheng luochui qianhou 跨世紀的工程 – 中國國家大劇院工程落錘的前後(Project to bridge centuries – before and after the decision to construct the Chinese National Grand Theatre),” in *Zhonghua jinxiu* 中華錦繡 (Beautiful China), 1998/9 (47)..

⁴³ Reports on the anniversary projects, 1959.2.23, BMA: 47-1-70-1.

The schemes were called “feasibility research schemes.” Professor Li from Tsinghua University, who had been working on the National Theatre project for more than thirty years and built several theatres already, was one of the major scheme providers. Like his 1958 scheme, Li’s 1991 scheme also has a symmetrical plan with the opera house in the center, and the concert hall and Chinese xiju theatre on either side. The three theatres were separated by two courtyards and connected by offices and service rooms. The 1991 scheme bears a strong influence from the post-modernism introduced into China in the 1980s. Instead of the Chinese glazed tiles in the 1958 project, the upper parts of the façades are topped by arches and arched beams. Floating arches directly attached to glass decorate the two side entrances on the main façade. I. M. Pei’s influence can also be seen here. In Pei’s recently completed Fragrant Hill Hotel, dark diamond-shaped windows decorate the white walls. In Li’s 1991 scheme, Pei’s Chinese window motif is reversed. Small pieces of diamond-shaped white wall relieve the dark glass backgrounds above entrances. The protruding walls above the central stage of the opera house are encircled by a colonnade with pointed arches that remind people of gothic architecture like the colonnades in Seattle’s Pacific Scientific Center by Yamasaki. The facades of Li’s 1991 National Grand Theatre scheme are full of symbols from Western classical architecture. (Figure 5.25)

It seemed that the National Grand Theatre project was soon to continue further. At this time, however, the Standing Committee of the NPC renewed its claim on the site for its new office building. The supporters of the new NPC project argued that in term of the architectural environment, the NPC project would be better suited to balancing both sides

of Tiananmen Square, conforming to its political atmosphere. Others, however, believed that the National Grand Theatre would make Tiananmen Square more lively and turn it into a true people's square. Moreover, the site had already been decided by the much "respected and beloved Premier Zhou Enlai" for the construction of National Theatre. The arguments about whether to construct the National Grand Theatre or the new NPC offices only led to the postponement of both projects.⁴⁴

The Six Plenum of the Fourteenth CCP Congress in 1997 finally broke the stalemate. During this highest meeting of the Chinese Communist Party, the party center decided that before 2010, two significant national cultural projects would be completed. They were the National Grand Theatre and the National Art Museum. The projects were written in the conference report. In October 1997, the party center proclaimed that the National Grand Theatre was to be constructed over the existing pit to the west of the Great Hall of the People as soon as possible. A "Proprietor Committee" 业主委员会 was founded under the "Leader Team for the National Grand Theatre Construction" 国家大剧院工程领导小组.⁴⁵ The Leader Team, led by the Party Secretary of Beijing Jia Qinglin, included high officials from the party center and the Standing Committee of NPC, heads of various State Council ministries concerned, and Beijing mayor Liu Qi. The Proprietor Committee also mostly comprised officials from the party, the government, and the Political Consultative Conference. However, it had two

⁴⁴ Niu and Hou.

⁴⁵ The English translations of these committees are from: Zhongguo guojia dajiuyuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji bianweihui, ed., *Zhongguo guojia dajiuyuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji* 中国国家大剧院建筑设计国际竞赛方案集 (A Collection of Design Schemes for the International Architectural Competition of the National Grand Theater of P. R. China) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2000).

professionals in the field, Chief Engineer of the Ministry of Construction Yao Bing and Chief Architect of the Ministry of Construction Architectural Design Institute Zhou Qinglin.⁴⁶ The estimated cost was raised again to 3 billion RMB yuan. The initial scheme was expected to be completed at the end of the year (only two months were left for the year!) and construction would start the next spring. By 2001, the project would be roughly completed, they hoped, and put in use before the Sixteenth CCP Congress in 2002.⁴⁷ Obviously, in 1997 the party center had expected no complex designing process. The time estimated for the construction was more practical.

The designing process for the National Grand Theatre could have been quite simple if Chinese architects competed only among themselves for the project. In fact, within a month, eight schemes had been collected and three finalists voted upon: designs by Tsinghua University, Beijing Municipal Architectural Design and Research Institute (hence simplified as the Beijing Institute), and Ministry of Construction Architectural Design Institute (hence simplified as the Ministry Institute) respectively.

Professor Li's Tsinghua scheme is not very different from his initial scheme six years earlier. The plan remains the same. Post-modern decorative motifs are simplified and four golden equestrian statues are added on the four corners of the central opera house. The color scheme has changed from white and brown to light yellow, golden, and blue, more in tune with the color scheme of the Great Hall next to it. The columns, however, instead of simple white cylinders in the 1991 scheme, had more decorations

⁴⁶ *Zhongguo guojia dajiu yuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji* (A Collection of Design Schemes for the International Architectural Competition of the National Grand Theater of P. R. China), 4, 9.

⁴⁷ Niu and Hou.

following the column style of the Great Hall. In other words, Professor Li's 1997 scheme is somewhere between his 1958 scheme and 1991 scheme in style. (Figure 5.26)

While Professor Li's schemes show no interest in the time-honored Chinese roof, both schemes by the Beijing Institute and the Ministry Institute have gigantic roofs on top of the complexes. The roofs, however, are simplified and made of totally modern materials of metal and glass. While the roofs in the Ministry Institute scheme emphasized the continuous slopes in traditional Chinese architecture, the roofs in the Beijing Institute scheme mimic the up-turned eaves in an exaggerated form. The scheme by the Beijing Institute also follows the Great Hall in the colonnade design, in which the inter-column distance of the central bay is larger than the side bays, believed to be a character of traditional Chinese architecture. The Ministry Institute scheme is the only one of the three without colonnade. The general proportion, however, is most close to that of an old timber structure from ancient China. (Figure 5.27)

It seems that none of these three finalist schemes satisfied the central leaders at the time. In order to make the National Grand Theatre a first-class "artistic temple" in the world, the Chinese government finally decided to choose a scheme to implement through an international architectural competition.⁴⁸

The process of international competition

The international architectural competition organized for the National Grand Theatre of China lasted for about a year and four months from April 13, 1998, when

⁴⁸ *Zhongguo guojia dajiu yuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji*, 4.

competition invitations were sent out, to July 22, 1999, when the design by the French company Aeroports de Paris with the assistance of the Chinese design unit from Tsinghua University was declared the scheme for implementation. The competition process was officially divided into two rounds of competition and three times of scheme modification.⁴⁹

The competition was open to anyone. However, in order to make sure that the best architects in the world would participate, on April 13, 1998, the Proprietor Committee invited 17 architectural design units from China and abroad to provide schemes, including 11 Chinese institutes and 6 foreign companies. They would be paid for their participation. In addition to these paid participants, there were also 19 volunteer units, including 5 from China and 14 from abroad. The 36 participators provided 44 schemes on July 13, 1998, including 24 Chinese schemes and 20 from abroad. The Technical Committee assessed the 44 entries from July 14 to 23 and the jury evaluated them from July 27 to 31.⁵⁰

There were two consultant teams to address the two major issues of the project, architectural design and theatre design. China's top architects formed the "Team One Consultants," led by Wu Liangyong, professor of urban planning from Tsinghua University and member of both the Chinese Academy of Science and the Chinese Academy of Technology. Theatre specialists formed Team Two Consultants. For the first round of competition, Wu Liangyong also chaired the jury of eleven members who included 8 Chinese, plus 3 foreign architects – Arthur Erickson from Canada, Richardo

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Bofill from England, and Yoshinobu Ashihara from Japan.⁵¹ The relationship between the consultant teams and the jury in the 1998 National Grand Theatre competition is unclear. According to the Western convention of architectural competition, jury is responsible for final selection of the scheme for implementation. However, the Chinese have already developed a well-established scheme selection procedure – the collective approach – during Mao’s time, which produced such socialist monuments as the Monument to People’s Heroes and the Great Hall, as introduced in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The consultant teams could be a legacy of the previous practices. In the future development of the future National Grand Theatre competition, most controversies were generated between these two groups – the consultant groups and the jury.

Originally, three schemes from the 44 entries were to be chosen for submission to the Leader Team for consideration as schemes to implement. According to the official explanation, however, the jury found none to be fully qualified, which meant no scheme was of sufficiently high quality that comprehensively and perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the design program. Pursuant to section 8 of the Design Scheme Competition of the National Grand Theatre, which provides that should the jury find “the requirements cannot be satisfied, the jury may leave the position vacant,” the jury selected five entries that received more than half of the votes as the recommended schemes by an anonymous voting. The authors of these five schemes would participate in a second round of competition. The five selected schemes were:

No. 101 by ADP (Aéroports de Paris) of France

No. 106 by Terry Farrell & Partners of UK

⁵¹ Ibid., 10-11.

No. 201 by Arata Isozaki & Associates of Japan

No. 205 by Architecture Design Institute Ministry of Construction of China

No. 507 by HPP International Planungsgesellschaft mbH of Germany

The Leader Team approved the jury's suggestion and the Proprietor Committee held the second round design scheme competition from August 24 to November 10.⁵² (Figure 5.28, 5.29, 5.30, 5.31, 5.32)

The authors of the five selected entries, however, were allowed little sense of victory, because not only were their schemes considered as only relatively better, but the second round of competition was soon expanded to allow almost all the original invited participants in the first round to submit entries again. In addition to the previously mentioned five units, the Proprietor Committee also invited four Chinese institutes and five foreign companies that had participated in the first round to provide entries. The total submission for the second round of competition reached 14 entries.⁵³

Plenty of lobbying and back-stage operations must have occurred. This unusual result according to standard design competition practice in the West may have been a solution to the problem that some of the Chinese jury members' home institutes were not chosen by the anonymous vote to participate in the second round of competition. In order to give their home institutes a second chance, they manipulated the process again and again until their home institutes were chosen. Tsinghua University is likely the most significant institute in this problem, for none of its 3 designs were among the final five of the first round, yet of all the Chinese institutes participating in the competition, Tsinghua University had the longest history of involvement with the National Theatre project. The

⁵² Ibid., 4.

⁵³ Ibid.

Tsinghua scheme by Professor Li Daozeng had been chosen by Premier Zhou Enlai as the scheme to implement in 1958. Tsinghua had also won the preliminary scheme selection process in 1997. Before the 1998 competition, Tsinghua University had been considered by both media and the public as one of the most promising competitors; Li was described by media as having a “National Theatre complex.”⁵⁴ Tsinghua University provided three entries for the first round competition yet none of them was among the five recommended schemes. And finally and most importantly, Wu Liangyong, Professor of Urban Planning from Tsinghua University, served as both the chair of the jury and the head of the Team One Consultants.

My inference that the source of the problem was the lack of Chinese representation among winning designs is also supported by the fact that of the 9 added participants in the second round, only the 4 Chinese institutes were invited, while the 5 foreign companies were volunteers. The only possible explanation is that in order to get some Chinese institutes further involved in the National Grand Theatre project, more Chinese institutes (including Tsinghua) were invited to participate in the second round competition; but after accepting the Chinese participants, there was no reason to reject foreign companies when they volunteered.

In addition, after the first round of competition, Yoshinobu Ashihara from Japan retreated from the jury and his position was filled by a Chinese architect for the second round. It is possible that his retreat was due to his indignation over the manipulation by some Chinese members, which was unfair to Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, whose

⁵⁴ Zheng Ping, in *Zhonghua jinxiu* (Beautiful China), 1998/9 (47).

entry was considered the best by many Chinese and foreign professionals.⁵⁵ Other circumstantial evidence includes the refusal of both Professor Li and Professor Wu to say anything about the National Grand Theatre during my interviews.⁵⁶

During the evaluation process of the second round of entries from November 14 to 17, the Proprietor Committee proposed a new scheme selection method. Instead of simply voting for one or more winning schemes from the fourteen entries, the jury should choose two entries from the five revised recommended schemes from the first round (first group), one from the invited four Chinese institutes (second group), and one from the five voluntary foreign companies (third group). Thus, the final number of schemes submitted to the Leader Team would be four.⁵⁷ The new selection method would secure the survival of at least one Chinese scheme after the second round competition.

The result of the second round voting, however, again defied the previously promised procedure. Instead of selecting four participants, five were chosen to carry on the competition further. After the jury voted, the two winners from the first group were ADP (Aéroports de Paris) of France (Figure 5.33) and Arata Isozaki & Associates of Japan; the one winner from the third group was Hans Hollein + Heinz Neumann Design Group of Austria (Figure 5.34); but the second group, which was the Chinese group,

⁵⁵ Arthur Erickson, lecture, University of Washington, April 12, 2003. Erickson, one of the foreign jury members, expressed his appreciation for Isozaki's entry in a lecture at the University of Washington in 2003.

⁵⁶ During the interview by the author, when the issue of the theatre was brought up, Professor Wu said, "I don't want to talk about this. We can discuss anything except for the National Grand Theatre. But I have several articles about the local identity and the problem of historical tradition in contemporary architecture published in some major architectural periodicals. You can check them out if you are interested." Here, Professor Wu talks around the issues, not only insinuating that Paul Andreu's winning scheme lacks local identity and historical tradition of China, but also suggesting that Chinese architects might have provided a better solution to the project. Wu Liangyong, interview, September 12, 2001; Shi Qing, wife of Li Daozeng, interview, September 2001.

⁵⁷ *Zhongguo guojia dajiu yuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji*, 4.

produced two winners instead of one: the Beijing Institute and the Tsinghua University (Figure 5.35), because, according to the official explanation, they received same number of votes.⁵⁸ The true reason for two Chinese schemes instead of one as originally planned is unclear. However, it is certain that the jury members could achieve no consensus about which were the best schemes. It seems that every scheme favored by some jury members was strongly opposed by others, which made the final decision making difficult. The only conclusion acceptable to all jury members was that none of the selected schemes were good enough. The jury even reminded the Leader Team and decision makers to carefully consider the situation and avoid making any final choice.⁵⁹

Under such a situation, the only thing the Leader Team could do was to continue the competition. The following competitions, however, were called scheme modifications instead of third or fourth round of competition. The following first modification required each foreign company to cooperate with one Chinese institute to offer one scheme. Three such pairs were designated to provide three schemes. Arata Isozaki & Associates of Japan and Hans Hollein + Heinz Neumann Design Group of Austria, however, were not among the participators during the first modification. The prolonged and unpredictable process of the competition might have convinced them that they were not going to get the project anyway and the wisest thing to do was to quit. Their positions were filled by Terry Farrell & Partners of UK and Carlos Ott & Associates of Canada, and a third Chinese institute, the Architecture Design Institute Ministry of Construction, was also added to make three pairs: France ADP + Tsinghua University, UK Terry Farrell + Beijing Institute (Figure

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

5.36), and Carlos Ott + Ministry Institute (Figure 5.37). The phase of “first modification” lasted for one and a half months from December 15, 1998 to January 31, 1999.⁶⁰

The outcome of the first modification, again, was different from what was originally planned. The pair of France ADP + Chinese Tsinghua University, instead of providing one scheme, submitted two: one mainly by ADP with assistance of Tsinghua (Figure 5.33), one mainly by Tsinghua with assistance of ADP (Figure 5.38), making four total entries. At this time, however, all the foreign jury members lost their patience and refused further involvement in the competition. Maybe they believed their opinions made no difference any way. The Chinese would pay lip-service to the significance of their opinions but could always find a way to bypass their decisions, a method of working Arthur Erickson diplomatically called “uniquely Chinese.”⁶¹

At this point the Leader Team invited the two consultant groups and the Chinese members in the jury to evaluate the four schemes from the first modification. According to the official explanation, most experts agreed that they were impressively improved but still not satisfying. A second modification was made between March 2 and May 4, 1999. Meanwhile, on the suggestion of some experts and with the approval of the Leader Team as well as the Municipal Planning Department, the construction site was moved 70 meters southward, with the greenery patches shifted from the south side in the back to the north side on Chang’an Avenue.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Arthur Erickson, lecture, University of Washington, April 12, 2003.

⁶² *Zhongguo guojia dajiyuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang’anji*, 4-5.

The same four schemes in revised versions were submitted for evaluation after the second modification: ADP + Tsinghua University, Carlos Ott + Ministry Institute, Terry Farrell + Beijing Institute, and Tsinghua University + ADP. The pair of Carlos Ott + the Ministry Institute was eliminated at this stage. According to the official explanation at the time, the scheme designed by ADP with the assistance of Tsinghua University was the favorite of most experts for its unique idea, novel form, and original concept, although what happened later proved that this could not be the case, for hundreds of Chinese intellectuals and experts, including Wu Liangyong, chair of both the jury and the Expert Group at the time, submitted protests to the party center against the ADP scheme in the following years. The ADP scheme, however, changed the site again in order to fit its concept. The building was further moved southward to align with the Great Hall and the southern boundary of the site was expanded to the West Qianmen Street. The Leader Team appreciated ADP's changes to the site, calling it an "environmental improvement of the Tiananmen Square area" and asked the three remaining units to provide a third modified scheme according to ADP's new site. These three units were: ADP of France assisted by Tsinghua University (Figure 5.39), Terry Farrell assisted by Beijing Institute (Figure 5.40), and Tsinghua University of China assisted by ADP (Figure 5.41).⁶³ Tsinghua University appeared after this round as not only an assistant but also the only Chinese institution to be in charge of an individual entry.

In the early July, the Proprietor Committee invited some of the deputies of the National People's Congress and Political Consultative Conference to discuss and

⁶³ Ibid., 5.

comment on the three schemes after the third modification. People were told that most of the deputies supported the design by ADP of France. The Leader Team finally recommended the French design, together with the scheme by Terry Farrell of UK and the scheme by Tsinghua University of China, to be submitted to the central government for examination and final decision.⁶⁴ The central government finally chose the scheme by ADP of France, and Tsinghua University was designated as the Chinese cooperative unit.

In general, the entire process of the 1998-99 National Grand Theatre competition was characterized by Tsinghua University's persistent effort to get involved in the project. All the Tsinghua entries were eliminated in the very beginning of the competition. Nevertheless, it finally became the only Chinese institute to participate in the final construction of the National Grand Theatre. The "National Grand Theatre complex" belongs not only to Professor Li but also to the entire School of Architecture at the university. As Freud has said, if some personal feeling has been previously oppressed, it will surely return in the future. This is what happened with Tsinghua University and its passion for the National Grand Theatre.

If the result of the 1998-99 National Grand Theatre competition seemed ridiculous to foreign architects and scholars, it was certainly not for the Chinese. The competition process shared much in common with the collective creation approach in architecture during the early three decades of the PRC, which was still the living experience for most of the Chinese leaders, Chinese jury members, and Chinese participants in the competition. The scheme selection process started with something

⁶⁴ Ibid.

similar to a standard design competition in the world, but became more and more similar to the collective creation of pooling ideas as the process evolved. After the first round of competition, participants already knew one another and were familiar with one another's schemes. The five winning schemes from the first round became the targets, the models for the other nine participating units to learn from, and the second round of competition had little sense of real competition. Starting with the first modification, all entries were collectively created by two cooperating units. Because they knew one another so well, the entries for the third modification all looked similar although debate was vehement – the same outcomes of the collective approach in the early decades of the PRC. During the three modifications, there was collaboration not only between cooperating units in the same pair, but also between the scheme designers, experts in the evaluation groups, and the officials in the Leader Team and other higher decision makers. Specific comments and instructions were given to the designers before every modification and designers could even suggest changes of the construction site to better suit their schemes. This would never happen in a real competition as it is known in the western world.

The schemes: expectation and disillusion, expecting the unexpected

The main focus of the competition was architectural style. In terms of architectural plan, there was very little freedom for manipulation. Four theatres, three large and one small, had to be fitted into a relatively small site. A total floor area of 120,000 square meters was designated for a site of 38,900 square meters. The four theatres, a 2500-seat opera house (22,529 SM), a 2000-seat concert hall (11,987 SM), a

1200-seat xiju theatre (12,006 SM), and a 300-500-seat mini-theatre (7,427 SM), took more than half of the non-parking construction area. After filling in the three large theatres, there was only a corner left in the site. Because the height of the entire building was required not to exceed 45 meters and the above-stage area for theatres was very high due to functional requirements, it was impossible to pile up the large theatres. Actually, there were only two possible ways to arrange the three large theatres in plan. The first was to line them up one after another from east to west, which would leave some space for other functions in the north and/or south sides. (Figure 5.42) The second way was to line two of them on the same side from north to south and put the third one on the opposite side, which would leave some space in a corner. (Figure 5.43) There were some possible variations of these two planning types but most schemes followed one or the other.

Since the plans of different entries were all more or less similar to one another, the real competition took place in architectural form. According to the design program, the form of National Grand Theatre should be in harmony with its architectural environment due to the significance of its site close to Tiananmen Square, the political and cultural center of the capital of the People's Republic of China. It should serve as an organic component of the architectural group of Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue to which the square is connected. The design should artistically express power with solemnity and grace, and at the same time, show a distinctive affinity for the people and the trends of the time.⁶⁵ The program for the design scheme competition also

⁶⁵ Ibid., 29.

required that the future National Grand Theatre “will be a monumental work to carry the Chinese cultural [culture] forward, to reflect the spirit of the time, to collect modern architectural arts and high technologies in the world, and to contribute to the development of human performing arts.”⁶⁶ The requirements for both Chinese culture and spirit of the time with an emphasis on modern arts and technologies made most participants in the competition take same action without prior consultation, applying Chinese symbolism and architectural motifs using contemporary construction materials.

For both Chinese and foreign architects in the first round competition, the time-honored curved roof was the paramount symbol for Chinese architectural culture. Many entries crown the theatre complex with gigantic roofs of various formats. Some of them are manipulated or simplified beyond recognition but still referred superficially to the traditional Chinese roof. Entry scheme number 104 by the Beijing Institute, for instance, emphasizes the up-turned over-reaching eaves and the brackets under them, like its scheme in 1997. (Figure 5.44) Scheme 201 by Arata Isozaki transforms the three major elements of Tiananmen Square architecture – the roof, the colonnade, and the base – into abstract figures by special 3-D programs with the help of computer. (Figure 5.30) Scheme 507 by HPP (Germany) offers a Miesian style box of steel and glass but claims to have a “big roof,” which is more or less justifiable because the proportion of the façades was more akin to traditional Chinese architecture with a high platform. (Figure 5.32) Scheme 302 by Jean Nouvel provides three deconstructionist roofs with many pieces of disconnected and overlapping slopes, ridges, and eaves. (Figure 5.45) Others

⁶⁶ Ibid., 15.

simplify,⁶⁷ dissect and recompose the traditional Chinese roof in a more rational way.⁶⁸ Traditional Chinese architectural motifs other than the sloping roof, for instance, courtyards,⁶⁹ bridges in front of the Tiananmen Tower,⁷⁰ and pailou,⁷¹ were also used in some entries.

Except for architectural motifs, cultural symbols from Chinese arts and life were frequently associated with architectural forms in the first round competition. Both scheme 105 by the Beijing Institute and scheme 205 by the Ministry Institute (Figure 5.31) incorporate the image of a guqin – a seven-stringed Chinese zither with a history of thousands of years – in their design. While scheme 105 only shapes the opening in the cement floor in the image of a guqin, in scheme 205 the entire image of the building is inspired by a guqin. In scheme 302 by Nouvel, in addition to the deconstructionist roofs, the design also incorporates color symbolism. According to its scheme introduction, red walls are inspired by traditional Chinese architecture, and decorations on the three protruding boxes of golden, black, and red colors – representing gates – symbolize the golden nails on the doors in gates of imperial monuments.⁷² Other cultural symbols

⁶⁷ For example, scheme 202 by Carlos Ott and Associates, scheme 203 by Wang & Ouyang (HK) Ltd., scheme 404 by Wilhelm Holzbauer Architect (Austria), etc.

⁶⁸ For example, scheme 107 by the Shanghai Modern Architectural Design Co. Ltd, scheme 601 by Design Group (Italy), etc.

⁶⁹ For example, scheme 401 by Takenaka Corporation (Japan).

⁷⁰ For example, scheme 102 by Architecture · Studio (France).

⁷¹ For example, scheme 506 by Central Engineering & Research Institute for Non-Ferrous Metallurgical Industries, scheme 208 by Zhejiang Building Design and Research Institute, etc.

⁷² *Zhongguo guojia da juyuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang'anji*, 142.

utilized in various schemes include the painted mask of Beijing Opera,⁷³ the red lantern,⁷⁴ phoenix,⁷⁵ famous guqin music “High Mountains and Flowing Waters,”⁷⁶ etc.

All these traditional architectural motifs and national cultural symbols, however, are manipulated, simplified, dissected, and recomposed in totally new materials, predominantly glass and metal. None of the entries applies the time-honored roofs of tiles and wood directly. None of the entries even incorporates the glazed tiles that decorate the Great Hall next to the National Grand Theatre. The entries by Chinese architects and those from abroad, however, can be easily told apart. In general, Chinese schemes are characterized by painstaking effort in making attractive facades that divide the elevations into smaller parts according to classical or traditional proportions; the schemes by foreign Western or Japanese architects, on the contrary, treat the building complex as a comprehensive body and propose type of monolithic geometric super-structure, whose main interest resides in the texture of materials instead of a composition of sub-divisional bodies.

The stylistic difference between the Chinese and the foreign entries parallels the difference between post-modernism and super-modernism in contemporary Western architecture. The rise of post-modernism in the 1960s challenged the modernist values founded by previous modernist masters such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. The functional rationalism and formal abstraction in modern architecture was criticized by Robert Venturi as expressionless and dull due to its lack of complexity

⁷³ Scheme 304 by Dennis Lau & NG Chun Man Architects & Engineers (HK) Ltd.

⁷⁴ Scheme 305 by China Architecture Science Research Institute.

⁷⁵ Scheme 503 by Shenzhen University, the College of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

⁷⁶ Scheme 506 by Central Engineering & Research Institute for Non-Ferrous Metallurgical Industries.

and contradiction.⁷⁷ Instead of “less is more” cherished by Mies and his followers, Venturi declared that “less is a bore.” The post-modernism in architecture as codified in Charles Jencks’ *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* was mainly a classically-inspired style. Historical motifs and figurative and symbolic ornamentation as rejected by Modernism became again a popular approach in architectural design. Instead of the functionally universal space of the International Style, post-modernism emphasized the creation of meaning in architecture and specific character of the place based on urban context and collective memories.⁷⁸ This Post-modernism, introduced into China in the 1980s, had a tremendous influence in Chinese architecture of the 1980s and 1990s. Books by Venturi, Jencks, Norberg-Schulz, and Aldo Rossi were translated into Chinese and widely read by architects and architecture students.

In the West, however, by the 1990s, that post-modernism was already receding to a back stage. The movement’s professional and academic visibility was blurred by a new architectural movement called deconstructivism that appeared in the 1980s and was promoted by an exhibition in 1990 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As the twentieth century marched toward its end, there was a sudden rise of glassy, transparent and translucent monolithic buildings which, according to Dutch architecture critic Hans Ibelings, demonstrate little concern for formal considerations.⁷⁹ The 1995 book *Monolithic Architecture* by Rodolfo Machado and Rodolfo el-Khoury describes the trend

⁷⁷ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction of Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

⁷⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci: Toward A Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984).

⁷⁹ Hans Ibelings, *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1998), 55-62.

towards buildings that look as if they have been made in one piece, buildings with the capacity “to deliver tremendous eloquence with very limited formal means.” In most cases they are solid, massive structures, but occasionally the solidity is mitigated by light and transparency.⁸⁰ With the revival of simplified forms devoid of decoration, the modernist maxim “less is more” was also back in the form of minimalism.⁸¹ Such was what Ibelings designated as “supermodernism,” characterized as a new “sensitivity to the neutral, the undefined, the implicit, qualities that are not confined to architectural substance but also find powerful expression in a new spatial sensibility.”⁸²

While the concern for elevation division and the expression of symbolic meaning is a common character of the Chinese entries for the National Grand Theatre, almost all the foreign schemes are characterized by monolithic super-structures and large-span constructions that play with the texture and color of transparent or translucent surfaces. In the 1990s, the Chinese caught the Western post-modern; but the West moved on to super-modern and the Chinese were again “left back.” But while the architecture professionals maintained their rear-looking perspective in the world-wide architectural design continuum, China’s national leaders were looking toward the newest the world had to offer.

The Chinese architects soon recognized the gap between their practice and this latest development in the wider architectural world. By the second round of the design process, many Chinese entries had adopted the monolithic super-structure in their revised

⁸⁰ Rodolfo Machado and Rodolfo el-Khoury, *Monolithic Architecture* (Munich/New York, 1995); in Hans Ibelings, 57.

⁸¹ Vittorio Savi and Joseph Ma Montaner, *Less if More: Minimalism in Architecture and the Other Arts* (Barcelona, 1996); in Hans Ibelings, 57-62.

⁸² Hans Ibelings, 62.

schemes. The Beijing Institute abandoned the compilation of smaller glass and solid bodies in its scheme 105 of the first round and covered everything inside of a relatively flat surface. The new entry by Tsinghua University also adopted a mega-structure supported by twelve gigantic pillars, serving as transportation cores with elevator and stairs inside. (Figure 5.35) The entry by the Ministry Institute, which only made minor revision and insisted on its old approach, was not selected to enter the next round.

The copying of appreciated forms and concepts from others' first round schemes was not uncommon in the entries for the second round. The rich and complex interior design in Arata Isozaki's first round scheme, characterized by frequent changes of floor elevations and the use of bridges to connect different floors, was copied by the Beijing Institute scheme. (Figure 5.43, 5.46) The new scheme by HPP borrowed both the exposed wavy ribs in the roofs in the Ministry Institute's first round scheme and the glass sky-wells in Isozaki's design.

A common awareness of rivals' schemes and patrons' attitudes about them informed the three levels of modification.⁸³ Paul Andreu, of ADP, had proposed the halved oval shape in a pool in the second modification scheme. It is clear that the preference for his scheme by the Proprietor Committee was immediately understood by all the remaining three finalists. In schemes of the third modification, the other two

⁸³ I have participated in the competition of the National Grand Theatre in 1998-1999 as one of the designers for the scheme by Ministry Institute for both rounds of the competition. I also worked with Carlos Ott on the collaborated schemes during the first two stages of "modification." Except for the public exhibition of the schemes from the first round of competition, our knowledge of other participants' successive design ideas was mainly gained through connections of former classmates and friends who were working on the same competition for other institutes. Everybody was talking about the National Grand Theatre in 1998-1999 in the architectural circle, during meetings as well as casual chats.

schemes – Terri Farrell and the Tsinghua University – also become round and curving, located in a pool. (Figure 5.39, 5.40, 5.41)

Toward the end of the modification process, final schemes become more and more similar to one another, which were characterized by the neutral monolithic transparent mega-structures. Schemes sticking on facade-construction and roof-symbolism were eliminated one by one. Finally, a form that could hardly be more neutral – neutral in a sense that it is devoid of specific cultural reference of a specific nation – and minimalist was selected. It was partly translucent and partly transparent. It was an egg.

The huge egg, the brainchild of the French architect Paul Andreu of ADP, was located in a square pool. He covered everything under a monolithic shell of titanium, split in the center by a curvy, symmetrical glass opening. Seen together with its reflection in the water, the egg shape is completed, glimmering and ephemeral. The form is so simple and devoid of any symbolism, Chinese or otherwise, that people could say little about it. It was like the egg from before the universe came into being, neutral and universal, ephemeral at the same time eternal. This was hardly what the Chinese had anticipated before and at the beginning of the competition.

According to the tacit consent among Chinese officials and architects before the competition, National Grand Theatre was to be recognized at first sight as “a theatre, a theatre that belongs to China, and a theatre close to Tiananmen Square.”⁸⁴ The egg, however, had little association with either Tiananmen Square or Beijing. It was so

⁸⁴ “Si dashi ‘zhi’ shang tanbing 四大师 ‘纸’ 上谈兵 (Interviews with the four masters of the National Grand Theatre),” *Beijing qingnian bao* 北京青年报 (Beijing Youth Daily), 1998.4.24.

universal, timeless, and characterless a shape that no nation, China or any other country in the world, could claim a specific cultural affinity to it. What is ironic is that Andreu, the main designer of the egg, claimed that this egg was specifically for China and nothing else could be better. He said in the scheme introduction, “There is no other building like it in the world. It is a unique building, born in unique circumstances for a singular place, inconceivable anywhere else. Its design expresses serenity and simplicity of the most ancient harmony between opposites.”⁸⁵

This is the irony of Chinese modernization. Maybe what China was expecting at the time was nothing but uniqueness. Issues of Chineseness and national character were only paid lip-service. Whatever was unique could be claimed as national. However, because Chinese modernization pursues the newest developments in the West, any expectation for what would be considered as modernized in China will always remain past tense. In this sense, China was never to be fully modernized.

Paul Andreu and the final scheme: the victory of a “universal space” and the confirmation of Western self-assurance

No matter how much Andreu asserts the Chineseness and site-specificity of his scheme for the National Grand Theatre, his design bears strong similarity to his previous designs, many of them airports.. Before the National Grand Theatre of China, Andreu’s design career had been dedicated to large-span architecture: airports, railway terminals, and later stadiums. The concept and method of designing large-span structures has a

⁸⁵ *Zhongguo guojia dajiu yuan jianzhu sheji guoji jingsai fang’anji*, 54.

tremendous influence on his design philosophy in general, and the design of the National Grand Theatre specifically, in terms of the structural systems, the application of material, the spatial concepts, and the contextual considerations.

Paul Andreu was born on July 10th, 1938 in Cauderan, France. He received his secondary education from the Lycee Montaigne de Bordeaux (Montaigne de Bordeaux High School), where his father taught mathematics. After preparing for higher education at the Ecoles au Lycee Louis-le-Grand (Louis-le-Grand High School), Paul Andreu was accepted simultaneously by both l'Ecole Normale Superieure and l'Ecole Polytechnique. He became a student of the latter in 1958 and studied bridge and architectural engineering there⁸⁶. In 1963, Paul Andreu graduated from l'Ecole Polytechnique and entered l'Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts, where he studied architecture in the workshop of Paul Lamache until his graduation in 1968.⁸⁷

Most of Andreu's projected and executed works are airports. In the 1960s, when he was still a young engineering graduate student working on his architecture degree, he took a job with Aéroports de Paris (ADP) working on the master plan of the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Roissy-en-France. He has worked for ADP since then, for more than 35 years. The evolution of Charles de Gaulle Airport thus became a 30-year preoccupation for him.⁸⁸ He participated in and later became the architect in chief for almost every stage in the development of the Charles de Gaulle Airport: the Air Terminal I of 1967, the Air Terminal II of 1971, the airport expansion of 1974, the 1981-1982 expansion, the New

⁸⁶ "Paul Andreu." <http://www.deconews.net/directorio/p_andreu_hm.html> (1 June 2002)

⁸⁷ "Paul ANDREU." <<http://www.academie-des-beaux-arts.fr/membres/actuel/architecture/Andreu/fiche.htm>> (1 June 2002)

⁸⁸ Claire Downey, "The Crossroad of France", *Architectural Record*, January 1996: 78.

Exchange Module of 1994, the Air Terminal III of 1996-7, new addition of 1998, and Air Terminal II F of 1999. For more than 30 years, Paul Andreu has designed and built dozens of airports all over the world. The list of his airport projects is long. In France, besides the long-term evolution of the Charles de Gaulle Airport, the airport terminal extension in Montpellier (1990), the Airport of Merignac Terminal Hall B in Bordeaux (1996), and the airport terminal extension Terminal T2 in Nice (2002) are also among Paul Andreu's works. Outside of France, he designed and built the Doha airport in Qatar (1976), the Dacca airport in Bangladesh (1979), the Manila airport in Philippines (1981), the Abu Dhabi airport in United Arab Emirates (1982), the Cairo airport in Egypt (1986), the Djakarta airport in Indonesia (1991), the Kansai Airport in Osaka Japan (with Renzo Piano, 1994), the Pudong Airport in Shanghai China (1999), and the new airport terminal in Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates (2000). These are just the major airport works by Paul Andreu. (Figure 5.47)

The airport is not the only building type Andreu has worked with, although serious work on other types began only after the 1990s. From 1983 to 1989, Paul Andreu had worked with the Danish architect Johan Otto von Spreckelsen and the English engineer Peter Rice on La Grande Arche, Tête Défense in Paris. However, it was von Spreckelsen who won the La Défense Project; Andreu served as the major consultant architect before von Spreckelsen's resignation in July 1986. In 1995, Paul Andreu designed the French-side Terminal of the Channel Tunnel at Calais together with its commercial center "Cité Europe." In 2000, Andreu's Maritime Museum in Osaka Japan

was built, and in 2001, his Sports Center of three gymnasiums for the 9th Chinese National Games appeared in Guangzhou (Canton).

All these projects by Andreu were mega-structures encompassing complex spaces. Like an airport, the Calais Terminal is also for transportation and receives tens of thousands of travelers every day. The Guangzhou Sports Center, whose main gymnasium houses 13,000 seats, spans a 160-meter-wide space. Even the Maritime Museum in Osaka is covered by a huge glass dome. In all these structures, as in his airport projects, technology to span a monolithic interior space plays the most important role in their design.

Another common characteristic of Andreu's most notable projects before the National Grand Theatre of China was a lack of urban context. Airports are always constructed outside of the city proper on an empty site due to their gigantic size and the environmental problems, such as noise, they cause. As one architectural critic pointed out, the task Andreu deals with in airports is

to create a piece of city where the city does not exist. A fragment of urban environment projected into empty space, which, nevertheless, is a focus of social life. A place of interaction without the density of an urban center, but with the same pulling power as the old medieval fairs: strategically placed meeting points along the paths taken by wandering pilgrims.⁸⁹

However, once an airport is built up, the former empty space where it was located becomes a new city center for future development as the result of the airport's mass circulation. Commercial centers develop around or in the airport because travelers often need to kill time while waiting for the next flight. All kinds of architecture for services

⁸⁹ "La porta del Tunnel: Cailais Transmanche Terminal", *l'Arca*, 104 (May 1996): 67.

follow, centered around the airport, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation exchanges, banks, and so on. “The airport has developed into a significant economic center that is sometimes so large that the airport starts to compete with the very city it was originally intended to serve.”⁹⁰ Starting from an empty space and creating a new city, the airport becomes architecture without context. The architectural form for airport is virtually neutral with little reference to regional style.

In his 1998 book *Super-modernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization*, Hans Ibelings summarizes the characteristics of what he calls an “architectural airport aesthetic” as “exposed steel construction (a space-frame or gigantic trusses), a marked preference for vaulted roofs, a color palette of grey, white, pale blue and light green and, above all, acres and acres of glass.”⁹¹ This is an almost exact description of Paul Andreu’s airports. Besides the lack of contextual architectural environment, three other factors contribute to the neutrality of the “airport aesthetics”: first, an airport is a product of globalization and there is no traditional prototype for it; second, the scale of the airport is of a mega-structure, much larger than and beyond the grasp of any traditional or local architectural type; and third, the airport is the temporary home of people from all over the world and so requires no specific regional character.

After almost 30 years of practice in airport design, Andreu continued such an “airport aesthetic” in buildings other than airports. Most of his non-airport projects in the 1990s were also located in empty spaces with little urban context. The French-side Terminal of the Channel Tunnel at Calais is located near the coast and surrounded by

⁹⁰ Hans Ibelings, *Super-modernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization*, 80.

⁹¹ Ibeling, 79.

farmlands, villages, and lakes; and the Maritime Museum in Osaka is actually constructed in the sea. (Figure 5.48) The Sports Center in Guangzhou is a little different since prior to construction some apartment buildings already stood near the site. However, located at the foot of the Baiyun Hill, the site was far away from the city center of Guangzhou. (Figure 5.49) All these non-airport buildings are mega-structures that fit very well with Ibelings' characterization of "airport aesthetic." The forms are neutral, abstract, monolithic, and with a minimalist quality. The differences of the sites, one in France, another in Japan, and yet another in China, did not concern the architect and their forms are virtually interchangeable.

Some of the key technological and aesthetic factors in Andreu's airport designs also inform his other buildings, including his final scheme for the National Grand Theatre. Andreu's architectural space is characterized by its enormous public interior under a monolithic shell that is often separate from inner structures that are independent of but unified by it, so that the complex and scattered spaces are disguised with a single identity.. In the Abu Dhabi airport, "the Terminal's huge interior space, held up by a ventral core, is flooded with light and transparency. This creates the overall effect of a night sky sheltering passengers from the bright sunshine, although natural light does gradually creep in on the horizon to create a deceptive sense of a newly dawning day."⁹² Like sky, Andreu's shell is not part of the structure proper, but something added to construct a spatial illusion. The same use of shell can also be observed in his Maritime Museum in Osaka Japan. The interior floors are separate from the hemispherical shell. The scattered

⁹² "Opaco trasparente: Abu Dhabi New Terminal", *l'Arca*, April 1998 (125), 37.

sub-spaces of rooms, staircases, bathrooms, and elevator make the plan of the exhibition space like a diagram of cell structure. This is exactly the same way that Andreu unifies the four theatres - three major ones and one mini-theatre – in the National Grand Theatre. They are all covered under a shell of titanium and glass that is separate from the individual structures below.

As a unifier, Andreu's shell is always geometric and symmetrical, hiding the complexity of the structures inside. The shell is usually supported by a steel space frame, and gravity's pull on the overhead portion is counteracted by gigantic steel trusses that are in turn supported by cantilevered pylons or struts. Steel chords consolidate and balance the trusses and roofs. The materials for the overhead portion are either metal or glass, sometimes totally transparent, sometimes translucent, and sometimes both.

Airport design provides Andreu with not only technological solutions for spatial construction, but also an architectural philosophy. For Andreu, the airport is not just a new type of architecture, but, more importantly, it is the very symbol of the contemporary human condition. He writes,

Aeroplanes have changed the nature of political boundaries. Put in mathematical terms, one might say that because of aircraft, national borders have ceased being continuous lines on the earth's surface and became nonrelated sets of lines and points situated within each country. Any surviving illusions about 'natural' borders were duly 'snuffed out' by the possibilities of flight.⁹³

The airport has destroyed political boundaries and unified the world. In other words, the airport is the producer as well as the product of globalization. Old-fashioned traveling on

⁹³ Paul Andreu, "Borders and Borderers", *Architectural Design* 69 (May – August 1999), 57.

the ground and passing through political borders were more than a way of transportation, but a way of life, which Paul Andreu calls “a rite of passage.” This way of life has changed, and the present airport type illustrates a new way of life. “No doubt one day soon a way will be found for machines to check passengers, who will move through with no further need to pause. This will put a final term to any surviving trace of a rite of passage.”⁹⁴

The concept of border, however, is not a negative thing. It occupies a significant position in Andreu’s thinking about limit and freedom in architecture. “The passage across political borders is in its essence an act that involves a curb on freedom. ... We are content to proclaim an end to borders and even, ... an end to all limits This blindness has a price, and the price is confusion.”⁹⁵ For Paul Andreu, a border is also a protector of life. “Life presupposes the existence of boundaries, membranes and systems of protection, places where exchanges with the exterior can take place without danger: this is a fact that any biologist could analyze better than myself.”⁹⁶ The airport provides us with both the means to create a new way of life and the nostalgia for the old way of life. It breaks the limits of temporal and spatial existence, yet still allows us to be protected by boundaries. This is, for Andreu, the contradictory condition of contemporary life. This is also why the airport is so important and so attractive to him. The importance of airport the airport lies not in its function but in its symbolic meaning because “indeed, architecture springs from the relationships between construction and representations of symbolic thoughts.” He

⁹⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 57-59

explains further, “Once the necessity of borders is understood, a need for discontinuity emerges as an equally vital force. It enables the passage and its accompanying rite, or conversely, it allows for a disrespectful leap that transgresses such a rite.”⁹⁷

Exactly how Andreu’s philosophy on limit and transgression influenced his design remains unclear. The neutral monolithic architecture represented by his airports, characterized by Filippo Beltrami Gadola as “universal space,”⁹⁸ however, leaves a strong mark on Andreu’s schemes for the National Grand Theatre. From the schemes Andreu proposed during the successive initial rounds and later modifications, we can see that, at first, he tries to create a dialogue between the new theatre and the old buildings around. Although his scheme of the first round competition also has a monolithic and geometric mega-structure of glazed steel space frame, covering all three large theatres inside, the rooflines are straight instead of round and similar in height to the neighboring Great Hall of the People. Grand tiers of steps leading to the main entrance opening to Chang’an Avenue remind people of the grand facades of the “ten great buildings” from the 1950s. His next two schemes, the second round scheme and its first modification, are not very different from his original design. Only minor changes of exterior materials were made. The building remains a square box of transparent glass and solid walls.

In the second modification, almost at the close of the competition, however, Andreu’s scheme changes to what we have seen is so prevalent throughout his entire career—a huge shell. All the theatres and other facilities are covered by a monolithic

⁹⁷ Ibid., 59

⁹⁸ Filippo Beltrami Gadola, “Introduction,” in *Paul Andreu: the Discovery of Universal Space* (Milano: l’Arca Edizioni spa, 1997), 9-13.

shell. The grand stairs have disappeared and the main entrance has been moved below the water, similar to the entrance of his 2000 Osaka Maritime Museum. The curving shape of the glass opening in the titanium shell also bears great resemblance to entrances in his 1998 Charles de Gaulle Airport extension.

Maybe finally Andreu realized that what the Chinese leaders were expecting was exactly what he was so good at. Maybe the Chinese did not know what they were expecting any way. There was no need to flatter with attempts at Chineseness. Inclusion of Chineseness in design will only be used as a standard to criticize others, never really seriously considered in practice. The Chinese criticism of Andreu's design about its lack of Chineseness was mainly due to the loss of the competition, the damages to national self-esteem, and the loss of face, not really about Chineseness. Although everyone claimed that the National Grand Theatre should be a perfect combination of modern and Chinese, when the final decision had to be made, the Chinese were still looking at what was considered the most advanced in the world, the Western "original." During the National Grand Theatre competition, foreign architects were first listening to what the Chinese officials wanted, but they found the Chinese were actually looking at them. They were finally assured that they should just do what they want to and what they were good at, and the Chinese would follow. The National Grand Theatre competition ended with the victory of both a "universal space" and the confirmation of Western self-assurance.

Behind the “harmony”: modernization by a total surrender of Chineseness

Behind Tsinghua’s manipulation of the process was such an insistence on Chineseness, represented by the Tiananmen Square architecture from the tenth anniversary of the PRC. In the 1990s, Tiananmen Square with its surrounding monuments, the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese Revolution and History, was already the prime symbol of national spirit. Maintaining the square’s architectural harmony was the driving force behind designs by Tsinghua’s architects over the years; from the beginning to the end, Professor Li’s schemes for the National Theatre followed the style of the Great Hall. Resisting at the same time the Western dominant culture, the cultural surrender, and the public psychology, Professor Li’s final design was doomed to fail. They were tragic heroes.

However, what was behind the architectural harmony of Tiananmen Square? Tiananmen Tower in the north and the Zhengyangmen Tower with its Arrow Tower were imperial monuments from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Great Hall and the museum complex were combinations of Soviet style neo-classical architecture with motifs from ancient Chinese buildings. The Chineseness Tsinghua had insisted on in the 1998 competition could be traced back, after all, to Western neo-classical architecture, which had now become fully national for the Chinese due to the “ten great buildings” in 1958-1959.

No wonder Professor Li finally set four groups of golden statues in the manner of Garnier’s Paris Opera on top of the roofs in his last scheme for the National Grand

Theatre. No wonder it failed. His was a design of the 19th-century West competing with the contemporary West.

After the competition: battle over the “egg”

Immediately after its announcement in July 1999, the chosen scheme for the National Grand Theatre by Andreu was widely debated, primarily in China and France. In China, the discussions took place not only among architectural professionals and historians, not only in the cultural circle, but throughout the whole society. People from all walks of life and all social strata were eager to express their opinions and concerns, from top leaders of the nation to street vendors, from members of the Chinese Academy of Science and Technology to common teachers in remote villages, from practicing architects to actors of Chinese xiqu.

People shared their different views through many different channels. Critical articles appeared in professional journals as well as newspapers and popular magazines; architects and scholars involved in this project were interviewed on TV and radio programs; column discussions were opened on several major Chinese websites.⁹⁹ Of all these different media, the Internet emerged as the most powerful for the fight over popular supports, the sharing of opinions, disclosing scandals, spreading of rumors, and releasing emotional feelings. It was the popularization of that most global medium – the Internet – that made possible, and at the same time promoted, a nation-wide, and global, instantaneous discussion over an architectural project – the first such discussion in China.

⁹⁹ These interviews, programs, and websites will be discussed in detail later.

The Internet served as the contemporary version of “Big Character Post” 大字報, a popular format for debate and class struggle during the Cultural Revolution.

It seems that people either liked or hated Andreu’s final scheme. Those who were against it call the huge titanium-glass shell “a broken egg with egg-white flowing on the ground,” “a great stupid egg,”¹⁰⁰ “a gigantic tomb,” or “a donkey’s dung.” Those who supported it praise the minimalist dome as “an egg giving birth to a new era,” “a pearl,” or “a drop of clear water,” and welcome its great contrast with the environment as an architectural revolution around Tiananmen Square. (Figure 5.50)

From among the many discussions, criticisms of Andreu’s scheme emerge primarily on three fronts: legitimacy, practicality, style. The criticism of legitimacy mainly focuses on the procedure that led to the selection of Andreu’s scheme. The argument is that first, Andreu did not win the competition. There was in fact, they point out, no winner of the two rounds of formal competition since none of the entries sufficiently qualified. Andreu’s scheme was chosen not by the jury, but by the manipulation of the Proprietor Committee: the jury had been disbanded after the two rounds of formal competition. Those who were against Andreu’s scheme had been deliberately removed from the Specialists Committee – a committee formed by combining members from former consultant groups and Chinese jury members after the jury was disbanded, whose job was to evaluate schemes of the three rounds of modification. The two rounds of competition were impartial, and produced no winner; but the three rounds of modification were unjust and led to Andreu’s scheme. The second

¹⁰⁰ “Stupid egg (*ben-dan*)” is a Chinese expression to scold someone, especially when the person being scolded has done something wrong.

part of this argument is that some backstage dealing happened between Andreu and some Chinese officials. Directly or indirectly, the charge goes, Andreu bribed Chinese officials to win the project. In other words, it was money and profit for some unknown individual that led to Andreu's success, not the quality of his design. The scandal stories spreading online sometimes provided quite specific details, including names, dates, and exact amounts of money; the anonymous authors of these "news" items narrate them as facts. However, these scandals are difficult, almost impossible, to either verify or prove false, at least at present.

The criticism of practicality offers three major arguments against Andreu's scheme: safety, economy, and maintenance. First, Andreu's building, at least in design, was considered unsafe. The long underground entrance way and the indirect approach to theatre would make it difficult for evacuation during a fire alarm. Moreover, since all the theatres would be buried underground 7-8 meter deep with a pool covering the top, it would be a disaster if the pool ever collapsed or the water broke through somehow. Secondly, Andreu's scheme would be very costly. It was said that Andreu had raised the original cost of 2 billion to almost 5 billion RMB yuan. The useless gigantic shell alone would cost 700 million RMB yuan. Thirdly, the maintenance of the building after its completion would be difficult. The windy sandy weather of Beijing would make the shining surface of the "giant pearl" dirty – the reason why some people call it "a donkey's dung" – and hard to clean. Energy wasted by the monolithic interior space and metal and glass surface would also make the maintenance fee of the building extremely high.

The criticism of style focuses on the lack of contextual consideration and respect for Chinese culture in Andreu's scheme. According to such an opinion, the scheme was not in harmony with the architectural environment around Tiananmen Square because, somehow, the shining surface would spoil the red walls and glazed-tiled roof of the Forbidden City, the minimalist form would ruin the political atmosphere of Tiananmen Square, and its scale was so large that it would dwarf the neighboring Great Hall of the People. The scheme was also considered to be disrespectful to Chinese culture since the design bore no Chinese architectural spirit whatsoever. Andreu's design was totally formalist, reflecting neither the function it served nor the architectural context. Protesting commentators especially invoked the original requirements of the so-called "old three looks" 老三看 – that the design should look like "a theatre, a theatre that belongs to China, and a theatre close to Tiananmen Square" at the first sight – to prove the unqualified nature of Andreu's scheme. The requirements of the "old three looks," however, had disappeared in the documents for the later parts of the scheme selection procedure. This is one of the main reasons why people thought there might be some backstage deal that cleared the way for Andreu's success.

Support for Andreu's scheme basically argues against the three criticisms. In response to the criticism of legitimacy, supporters argue that the procedure was totally open and following the law. The three rounds of modifications were evaluated by the Specialists Committee, who selected the finalist schemes by voting. The story of a backstage deal, supporters say, was totally made up by some person who had ulterior motives. In response to the criticism of practicality, they argue that all problems could be

solved and had already been carefully considered by the designers from the very beginning. Paul Andreu and the ADP (Aéroports de Paris) had enough experience to deal with technological issues of constructing and maintaining such a large and project as this. Moreover, the cool air brought by the pool and the fountains in it would bring great benefit to the hot and dry air of the notorious summers in the capital. In response to the criticism of style, supporters argue that there are many different ways to keep in harmony with surrounding buildings, contrast sometimes being a quite effective one. There is by no means just one approach for carrying on the traditional Chinese spirit. Traditional Chinese architectural character does not mean big roofs, red walls, traditional motifs of decoration, and rectangular yards. The supporters ask, "Do we just want another Tiananmen Tower or Great Hall of the People for the new millennia?" The building was designed for Chinese people and on Chinese earth and would therefore surely be a Chinese building in Chinese history. Instead of simply following history, Andreu's design shows that it is possible to create a new heritage. Besides, the Great Hall is dramatically different from the Forbidden City in style yet is considered as very Chinese now. And although the scale of Andreu's design is huge, the transparent and reflecting surface would make the structure appear much lighter than the solid walls of its neighbors, and the reflections of the surroundings by the metal, glass and water would form a unique dialogue with its context. Besides, the dome of Andreu's new theatre was slightly lower than the Great Hall, so it would not overshadow it.

Although the debates involved a large population covering various social groups, journalist, architects, students, common folks, etc., it seems that there were major

promoters for both sides. The core of the protesters was mainly older-generation intellectuals, while the defenders of Andreu's scheme were mainly younger-generation architects and members of the Proprietor Committee for the National Grand Theatre. It is interesting, and maybe not accidental, that key figures on both sides were from Tsinghua University.

Two people were most active in the working to overturn Andreu's scheme: Peng Peigen, professor of architecture at Tsinghua University; and Xiao Mo, a 1950s Tsinghua graduate who later became an architectural theorist working at the Chinese Art Research Institute. On March 8 2000, Xiao published the first journal article that vehemently chastised Andreu's scheme in *Zhonghua dushu bao*,¹⁰¹ and continued to write and distribute articles that criticized Andreu and his scheme in various media. He finally compiled the relevant articles into a book *Shiji zhi dan – guojia dajuyuan zhi bian* 世纪之蛋—国家大剧院之辩 (The Egg of the Century: Debates on the National Grand Theatre of China), which was published in 2004 in Taiwan. Peng, meanwhile, was an active figure who made frequent public talks to criticize Andreu. He also tried to overturn Andreu's scheme by organizing the petitions to convince the top leaders that the chosen scheme had serious disadvantages.

The two most active figures supporting Andreu's scheme, Zhou Qinglin and Wu Yaodong, were also from Tsinghua University. Zhou was a Tsinghua graduate who became the chief architect of the Ministry of Construction Architectural Design Institute

¹⁰¹ Xiao Mo 萧默, ed., [*Zhuti*] *Shiji zhi dan guojia dajuyuan zhi bian* [专题]世纪之蛋国家大剧院之辩 (The Egg of the Century: Debates on the National Grand Theatre of China). In *Lao Beijing: luntan: chaguan: gucheng baohu* 老北京网 >> 论坛 >> 茶馆 >> 古城保护. Beijing, China. http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50. August 2-19, 2005, article (5).

in 1986 and was the only architect in the Proprietor Committee for the National Grand Theatre during 1998-99. Wu was a young scholar who graduated from Tsinghua in the 1980s and later became a faculty member in the Architecture Department. He was one of the main architects from the Chinese side, the Tsinghua University, to collaborate with Andreu on the National Grand Theatre project. Among other appearances on various media, these four persons were the main participants invited for two major television debates, in July 2000 by Phoenix TV in Hong Kong and in May 2004 by the CCTV in Beijing.¹⁰²

It seems that the first person who questioned the legitimacy of Andreu's scheme was a Frenchman. In the September 16 1999 French newspaper "The World," Fredric Adman claimed that Andreu's scheme was chosen through suspicious procedure.¹⁰³ The Chinese protesters' criticism to Andreu's design, however, had first focused on the economic problem of the scheme. On March 14, 2000, Guangxi representatives raised the issue of the problem in Andreu's National Grand Theatre scheme at the Fourth Meeting during the Ninth National People's Congress. They criticized Andreu's design as formalist and as too expensive, saying it is not practical to spend so much money on a theatre in a developing country.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, however, news appeared in media that the construction of the National Grand Theatre would start on April 1, 2000, the structure would be finished by the end of 2002, and the entire project would be completed

¹⁰² *Shiji zhi dan guojia dajuyuan zhi bian*, http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (14), (46).

¹⁰³ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (4).

¹⁰⁴ Dongfang xinwen, "Renda daibiao cheng guojia dajuyuan sheji fangan hua er bu shi," <http://www.news.eastday.com>, 2000.03.14 07:37.

by March of 2003.¹⁰⁵ On March 30, 2000, the head of the Ministry of Construction told reporters that the newly founded National Grand Theatre Art Committee was already working on the organization of future performances and new works that would express the spirit of our time were being created. His speech also indicated that Jiang Zemin, the highest leader of China at the time, was directly involved in the National Grand Theatre project.¹⁰⁶ On April 1, 2000, however, when reporters went to the site for the ceremony to start the construction, they only found several guards and workers there and were told the ceremony had been cancelled. According to an online article, reporters saw the Beijing Mayor Jia Qinglin arriving and holding a meeting with the Proprietor Committee, the Lead Group, and representatives from the construction companies. They were told by their editors that the stories they had written about the cancellation of the ceremony were not allowed to be published according to official order.¹⁰⁷ In fact, construction did start, but without an opening ceremony.

Two serious events threatened Andreu's scheme after construction began. The first was in 2000, when 49 members from the Chinese Academy of Science and Chinese Academy of Engineering submitted a written statement to the Central Government criticizing Andreu's design and suggesting the suspension of the project on June 10, and 114 architects¹⁰⁸ signed a similar appeal on June 19.¹⁰⁹ While the architects' appeal mainly took issue with the architectural style, the Chinese Academy members' letter

¹⁰⁵ Bandaο chenbao, "Mingri zhongguo guojia dajuyuan jiang zhengshi donggong," <http://www.sina.com.cn>, 2000.03.31 05:14.

¹⁰⁶ CCTV, "Wenhuabu buzhang jiu jianzao guojia dajuyuan yishi shou jizhe caifang," <http://www.sina.com.cn>, 2000.03.31 11:16.

¹⁰⁷ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (7).

¹⁰⁸ 108 according to another source.

¹⁰⁹ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (10).

criticized the project's practicality. In fact, it criticized not only Andreu's design but also the Proprietor Committee's whole design program. It claimed that what led to such a bad design was the irrationality of the design program, which asked to combine four theatres into one building.¹¹⁰ Wu Liangyong, the chair for both the jury, Group One Consultants, and the Specialists Committee of the 1998-99 competition, was among those who signed the letter. The second serious threat to Andreu's scheme came on May 23, 2004, when Terminal 2E of the Airport Charles de Gaulle in Paris, also designed by Andreu, collapsed after 10 months of service. What made the issue particularly serious for the National Grand Theatre was that among the four persons killed were two Chinese citizens.¹¹¹ The news spread quickly throughout all the Chinese media. Once again, National Grand Theatre became the focus for heated public discussion. Criticism to Andreu's scheme revived, but with a clear focus on the legitimacy of the competition procedure and the safety of the design.

The former protests by the two groups of respected members of Chinese society led to the suspension of the project for almost a year, from July 2000 to June 2001. There are, however, different explanations for the pause in construction in July 2000. Some media reported that the National Grand Theatre project was suspended to allow time for hearing more different voices. Others reported that according to some authorities, the project was still going on and the temporary pause was just to perfect the design details. During the suspension period, members from the Proprietor Committee went to some

¹¹⁰ Changjian ribao, "He Zuoxiu cheng guojia dajuyuan sheji zhong cunzai sida quexian," <http://www.sina.com.cn>, 2000.07.14 16:01.

¹¹¹ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (41).

major Chinese cities, for instance Guangzhou and Shanghai, to hear feedback from leading architectural specialists there.¹¹² The project resumed quietly on June 1, 2001 during the night without any advance announcement.¹¹³

The latter accident gave new hope for those against Andreu's scheme, whose new articles are infiltrated with pleasant surprise. Criticism resumed not only on the safety issue of the design but also about how Andreu won the project. Articles in French media criticizing Andreu were translated and circulated in the Chinese media. According to an article on the Chinese government website "People's Net," the French media disclosed that Andreu had bribed Chinese officials in the National Grand Theatre competition. It was said that Andreu was sued in France for "abusing public wealth," "working in double identities (ADP and private architect company simultaneously)," and "involuntary homicide," which might imprison him for 20 years if the accusations were proved tenable.¹¹⁴ The information about Andreu's offense of bribery these articles provided was very detailed. It was reported that, in April 1998, Andreu had signed a contract in name of the ADP with a British company called Sodefinance, which promised to help Andreu win the National Grand Theatre project.¹¹⁵ The Sodefinance hired a Chinese woman, whose name was Rulina Zhana-blein (Chinese name Zhang Ruling), to mediate between Andreu and the Chinese government. According one the source, Zhang was a native of Sichuan Province who had moved to France in the 1980s and received a Ph.D degree in

¹¹² Yangcheng wanbao, "qingting butong shengyin, guojia dajuyuan zhanxing shigong," <http://www.sina.com.cn>, 2000.07.11 19:09.

¹¹³ Renmin wang: Jiangnan shibao, "guojia dajuyuan gongcheng yi yu 6 yue 1 ri qiaoran donggong," <http://www.sina.com.cn>, 2001.06.04 08:45.

¹¹⁴ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (41).

¹¹⁵ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (42).

Art History from an American university. It was said that Andreu had paid Zhang and the Sodefinance a 9.1 million francs “success fee.”¹¹⁶ All these accusations of Andreu in both French and Chinese media were denied by the Proprietor Committee, which were called rumors not worth refuting.¹¹⁷ The Chinese government also claimed that Andreu’s scheme was chosen from among hundreds of competing schemes through appropriate procedures and the design had no safety problem although further investigation to ensure its safety was being carried out after the airport accident in Paris. In general, the project would not be affected and would proceed as originally planned.¹¹⁸ The project, however, was still not finished at the time when these claims were made at the end of May 2004, which was already more than one year after the original opening date of March 2003 as planned in 2000. And it is still not completed today at the time of the completion of this dissertation in 2006.

Behind the surface debates

What is behind the surface debates on the National Grand Theatre was the Chinese intellectuals’ concern about the Chineseness of Tiananmen Square and Chang’an Avenue. After decades of socialist construction, the site has become so sacred that it embodied the national spirit of communist China and the hope for a revival of China’s past greatness in the new millennium. In such a cultural historical context, the design of a national monument by a foreign architect near Tiananmen Square would be considered as

¹¹⁶ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (44).

¹¹⁷ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (45).

¹¹⁸ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (48).

an invasion, equal to any of the past military humiliations China had received from the West.

Anderu's scheme was criticized by Gu Zhengkun, a professor from the English Department at the Beijing University and a scholar of Chinese-Western comparative cultural studies, as post-colonial cultural invasion. He invented the term "artist tort," by which he means contemporary artists imposing their artistic values onto the public while totally neglecting and violating the feeling of the people. He explains,

"‘Artist tort’ is a term I made up. ... It refers to the phenomena that some artists impose their own aesthetic taste on the people with their authority through the promotion of the media. The people will unconsciously abandon their own taste and accept the artists' aesthetic values. In other words, when the artists no longer consider people's taste as traditional artists did, but impose their taste on the people at will in name of 'originality,' they are performing 'artist tort.' They violate people's aesthetic right. ... This incident [Andreu's winning of the National Grand Theatre project] worries me because it shows how easily foreign culture can so brutally interfere the aesthetic right of the Chinese people, without any consideration for traditional Chinese aesthetic conventions. This is absolutely an 'artist tort.'"¹¹⁹

Gu's concept of "artist tort" oversimplifies the situation, which virtually precluded any serious artistic creation. For Gu, it seems that the aesthetic taste of a nation was unanimous, unchangeable and innate, innocent of any outside influence. He forgets that his aesthetic taste, as well as that of the people whom he supposed to be able to represent, is also the result of education and susceptible for change. The blind anti-foreignism and

¹¹⁹ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (16), translation by author.

xenophobia in his argument, however, illustrates vividly how strongly the Chinese intellectuals felt, and how hopeless, about counteracting Western cultural dominance.

“Colonialism refers to the Western capitalist countries’ exploitation of under-developed countries during the imperialist stage, territory expansion, colonization, slavery, and plunder of raw materials, dumping goods, controlling the politics and economy of the colonized countries, etc. This is common knowledge to everyone. Post-colonialism is a new form of colonialism in the contemporary world, that is, imperialism monopolizes the capital and infiltrates the culture of the under-developed countries depending on its military dominance. It exports the Western life style, culture, customs, artistic forms, and values to the Third-World countries. The people of these under-developed countries will unconsciously absorb them, generally lose the national consciousness of the non-Western nations, and eventually be assimilated by the Western culture. This is the general framework of post-colonialism. A better translation for the term should be ‘neo-colonialism,’ which is easier to understand and clearly differentiates it from old-fashioned colonialism. Andreu’s blob-shaped National Grand Theatre scheme is a typical representation of the new cultural invasion by a small group of Westerners who are obstinately imposing their aesthetic taste upon the Chinese people.”¹²⁰

Gu’s criticism is valid only if it is put against the larger cultural background instead of only read as a repudiation of a specific architect or scheme. The final choice of Andreu’s scheme does reflect the post-colonial situation in the global cultural product; however, it is misleading to simply repudiate Andreu’s scheme for the National Grand Theatre as an action of cultural invasion. No cultural invasion could happen without the

¹²⁰ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (22), translation by author.

consensus of the culture being invaded. After all, Western media and architects criticized Andreu's scheme as well, and toward the end of the competition procedure, Chinese architects' schemes were trying to catch up with Andreu in the producing of a monolithic universal form. Criticism on the competition procedure was made only after Andreu's scheme was chosen. Why did they not raise the question about proper procedure earlier during the process and restore it to proper process? The answer may be that everyone else, including the Chinese architects, wanted to win too. To some extent, Andreu's refutation of such criticism as "architects' jealousy" is justifiable.

Among Andreu's various talks regarding his scheme, two points in his argument guarding his scheme were under vehement attack by Chinese scholars. First, in response to the criticism that his scheme reflected no Chinese culture, Andreu once argued that his aim was deliberately to "cut the history" instead of simply following it. Secondly, Andreu argued that most advanced architecture is at some point attacked by the general public, who finally do accept it as part of a nation's cultural heritage; he cites, for instance, the Sydney Opera of Australia, the Eiffel Tower, the Pompidou Center, and the Louvre Expansion project in Paris. The last one was designed by a Chinese whose glass pyramid used to be also criticized as an insult to a nation's history by a foreigner. The Chinese criticism to Andreu's first argument is somehow quotation out of context. By stating "to cut the history," Andreu meant getting rid of historical burden rather than totally disregarding Chinese culture. He expressed such views very clearly in various contexts.¹²¹ The Chinese critics' refutation of Andreu's second argument about the

¹²¹ Paul Andreu, interview, September 10, 2003, Beijing.

general unpopularity of new architecture is more convincing. They argued, first, that none of the first three buildings Andreu mentioned are located in such central, historical, and politically sensitive spots as the National Grand Theatre is; secondly, the cultural legitimacy of those buildings was by no means eventually unanimously accepted; and thirdly, I. M. Pei's glass pyramid is just an entrance, not a whole building, and has a much smaller visual impact than Andreu's giant "egg." They argue that Andreu's scheme would be acceptable if it were located somewhere else in Beijing.¹²²

It seems to me that the central un-asked question for most Chinese intellectuals was: Why not have a Chinese design such a significant project on such a significant site? All the emotional debates about the legitimacy, practicality, and style of Andreu's scheme, were really about the politics of the site.

Chinese politicians, however, have kept silent from the beginning to the end of the process. They have made no public statement about the project. All selection of works had been authorized by specific committees independent of political power, at least in name. Some sources indicated that Andreu hinted at top leaders behind his scheme, while Chinese critics claimed that Andreu was misleading the Chinese leaders. It was possible that such claim on the anti-Andreu part was simply a strategy of the protesters to gain more popular support.

Both sides, however, understood the importance of gaining support from the top leaders. Those protesting Andreu's scheme only targeted their criticism at the middle-level leaders, whom they believed to have misled the top leaders. Some of them proposed

¹²² *Shiji zhi dan guojia dajuyuan zhi bian*, http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50.

that among courses offered for political leaders in charge of cultural affairs, architecture, urban planning, and historical preservation should be included. According to some protesters, Andreu once claimed that by protecting his scheme to be realized, he was protecting the Party Center of China 保卫党中央. Protesters countered by saying that it was Andreu who had put the Chinese leaders in a position of being alienated from the people, and they, the critics, were really protecting the political leaders by their effort to eliminate Andreu's scheme.¹²³

The reliability of such information taken from adversarial debates is questionable. However, it is clear that if the top leaders expressed disapproval of Andreu's scheme, neither the Proprietor Committee nor the Leaders Group would be able to defend it. They were either supporting Andreu's scheme or totally disengaged from the selection procedure. Previous Chinese history tells us the latter was almost impossible. There are two possible answers to the question why communist leaders chose Andreu's scheme: first, they actually liked it; second, they wanted to show the world that China today was really open and forward-looking. I vote for the second answer. The construction of Andreu's scheme for the National Grand Theatre of China on Chang'an Avenue was a political gesture made in awareness of the world's opinion.

For decades, Chinese intellectuals have been educated that the fall of China in modern history was mainly due to the Western imperialist oppression and its recent rise was the result of the communist revolution. Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue, as witnesses to this official version of Chinese history, have become sacred sites for most

¹²³ http://www.oldbeijing.net/Article_Special.asp?SpecialID=50, article (21).

Chinese intellectuals. After the National Grand Theatre project, however, they seem to have felt disillusioned. The very party that had imbued them with such an ideology finally abandoned them in the final decision making, supporting a foreign architect and his very un-Chinese ideas. These intellectuals might feel even more wounded if they were to realize that at the professional level, they themselves were not essentially different from the political leaders, following the game of stylistic development whose lineage was constructed by Western practice and whose principles were founded according to Western standards.

The Legacy of the National Grand Theatre

The National Museum remodeling and expansion project

The Museum of Chinese Revolution and History was one of the anniversary projects completed in 1959. As the counterpart to the Great Hall of the People on the opposite side of Tiananmen Square, it occupies a similar amount of site area although the floor area of the museum complex is only about one third of the Great Hall (65,152/171,800). In 2001, the Museum of Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History merged and was renamed the National Museum of China.¹²⁴ The exhibition content was significantly revised, eliminating the History of Chinese Revolution display in favor of history and art displays.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *Zhongguo bowuguan nianjian* 中国博物馆年鉴 (Year books of museums in China).

¹²⁵ For detail, see the section "Museums and the Representation of History on Chang'an Avenue" in Chapter Two.

In June 2003, the Ministry of Culture proposed to the State Council the expansion of the museum complex with the addition of more floors to the extant buildings. An official memo of reply in January 2004 from the National Development and Reform Committee 国家发展改革委员会办公厅 under the State Council agreed that the National Museum could expand eastward and the courtyards in the 1959 complex could be covered with roofs and converted into interior spaces. The response also agreed with the raising of the height of the old buildings by adding more floors as long as the original style of the complex was not harmed. The memo also asked to maintain the integrated style of Tiananmen Square and keep the remodeled National Museum in harmony with adjacent buildings. In order to fulfill these requirements, feasibility research should be done and a design scheme chosen by public competition and final selection made by permission of the city planning branches in various levels of government.¹²⁶

The proposal to and acquisition of official permission for the remodeling and expansion project from the State Council was an achievement following protracted stages of approval. The proposal had first been submitted to the National Planning Committee. After acquiring the permission from the committee to conduct preliminary scheme research and requests for designs, the National Museum authorized the Beijing Guojin Management Counsel Company 国金管理咨询公司 and the Beijing Municipal Engineering Counsel Company to organize conceptual design schemes collection. From April 25 to June 9 in 2003, four design institutes, Beijing Municipal Architectural Design

¹²⁶ National Museum Expansion program and documents: 国家发展改革委办公厅关于国家博物馆大楼加高方案有关问题的复函，发改办投资[2004]106号。

and Research Institute, China Architectural Design and Research Institute (the former Ministry of Construction Architectural Design Institute), Tsinghua University Architectural Design and Research Institute, and the Architectural Design Institute from the Chinese Architectural Science Design and Research Institute, were invited to do research and provide schemes.

The organization of preliminary scheme collection was a legacy from the collective approach of the early years of the PRC as represented in the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning. From June 12 to 13, 2003, authorities and specialists in the field and government officials in Beijing were invited to a meeting to discuss the four schemes, exactly like what happened for significant national architectural project decades ago and the recent project of the National Grand Theatre. The meeting participants all agreed that although the old museum buildings were functionally inappropriate for contemporary use due to the "historical limitation" in the 1950s, although its architectural image was very beautiful and possessed a strong "national character." The remodeling and expansion of the National Museum should keep the original style and harmonize new additions with the old. New buildings should appear to grow out of rather than be inserted into the old.

All the meeting participants agreed that Tiananmen Square, which showed grandeur and "strong national characters" and whose surrounding buildings were all designed by Chinese architects, was "loved by the people of China and the whole world" and praised by many renowned international architects. They decided, therefore, that the predominant task for the National Museum remodeling and expansion project was to glorify the "national spirit." The specialists all believed that Chinese architects possessed

a full and deep understanding of the national spirit and therefore could provide the best design for Tiananmen Square, so there was no need to select an executive scheme through international architectural competition.¹²⁷ It seems that the trauma of the National Grand Theatre project still lingered in the minds of Chinese architects and with the National Museum, they wanted to avoid a repetition of that failure.

For most Chinese architects, Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue meant so much to them that they had to be constructed by Chinese hands; the final project, however, once again fell into the foreign hands. From February to July 2004, an international competition was held on government request. The competition was open to all qualified architectural design institutes and companies throughout the world. The remodeling and expansion project of the National Museum required a scale to match the Great Hall of the People. 111,000 square meters were to be added, making the total architectural area of the museum complex 176,000 square meters, slighter bigger than that of the Great Hall.

In spite of such legacy as the preliminary conceptual scheme collection and discussion, the scheme selection for the National Museum in 2004 was significantly different from previous collective approach in Chinese architecture. Instead of simply “collecting,” Chinese government paid for the schemes. According to the competition material, all the qualified entries would be paid 300,000 RMB yuan for schemes not entering the final list and failed finalists would be paid 600,000 RMB yuan. However,

¹²⁷ National Museum Expansion program and documents: 中国国家博物馆改扩建工程概念设计方案介绍及专家评审会会议纪要, 中国国家博物馆改扩建工程建筑设计招标文件(第三卷): 设计任务书, 37-40.

after these entries were paid, the sponsor would have the ownership of these schemes. The new National Museum would have the right to “borrow or encompass the advantageous ideas from these failed schemes in order to perfect, enrich, and deepen the design of the winning scheme.”¹²⁸ Schemes entering the final list would be displayed for the public and public opinions would be provided for the consideration of jury and sponsor.¹²⁹

Compared to the 1998-1999 National Grand Theatre competition, the 2004 design competition for the National Museum is different in three ways. First, the process was through the market system rather than a government behavior; the Central Government, the sponsor who pays the bills, was not directly involved in the scheme selection process. The National Museum was the unit to organize the competition and a specific office – the Preparation Office for the National Museum Project – was founded to run the daily work. The specific planning and organizing of the entire scheme selection process were further delegated to the Beijing Guojin Management Counsel Company and the Beijing Municipal Engineering Counsel Company, who were paid to organize the entire event.¹³⁰ Secondly, any negotiation among competitors was strictly prohibited. While participants in the collective creation during the early decades of the PRC shared their ideas freely and frequently held meetings to discuss and criticize one another’s progressing schemes, and even schemes by different designers during the final stages of the National Grand Theatre competition were well-known among all participants, schemes this time would be

¹²⁸ Notes to the Participants in the Architectural Competition for the National Museum Remodeling and Expansion Project, 中国国家博物馆改扩建工程建筑设计招标文件（第一卷），8.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 5.

deemed invalid if the designers negotiated with possible participants in order to control or direct the competition program.¹³¹ The 2004 program encouraged the individual character of each scheme and warned about possible violations of intellectual copyright. Thirdly, an independent jury was founded to vote for the final executing scheme, while in the National Grand Theatre competition, the jury just voted for recommended schemes for political leaders to choose from.

Compared to the 1964 Chang'an Avenue planning, the contrast is even greater. The three-volume set of documents for the architectural competition contrasts, while in 1964, there was virtually no program for the scheme selection. The "Notes to the participants" outlined in very exact terms everything from the organization of the competition to the announcement of the winning scheme, from the qualification of participants to the rights and responsibilities of both the sponsor and the competitors, from specific dates in every step during the process to the economic issues in the process. The "Design program" provided not only specific area requirements for every room and museum function, requirements for every field of architectural production (architecture, civil engineering, heating and air conditioning, water system, electricity, etc.), formats requirements for final documents, and measure system, but also key official documents of the founding of the project. Major drawings of the old building complex and a detailed site map were attached, together with a 19-page "display contents" for future permanent exhibitions. The contract items between the National Museum and the future winning designers formed the entire third volume.

¹³¹ Ibid., 11.

Such a well-organized architectural competition should have produced the ideal scheme for the National Museum. In terms of architectural image, however, the winning scheme, as well as most of the finalist schemes, contrasted sharply with the design principles for architectural form in the program – a repetition of what happened in the National Grand Theatre competition.

The requirements for architectural elevations and forms specified that (1) they should be in harmony with surrounding buildings, especially the new Headquarter for the Ministry of Public Security (34.8 meters high) on the east side of the National Museum; (2) all the four elevations (the original façades of the west, north, and south elevations of the old building should be kept) and the fifth elevation (meaning the roofs) should be studied carefully, especially the west elevation facing the Tiananmen Square, which should work as a transition from old to new and harmonize the two; (3) the building complex should look beautiful and harmonious from all directions, especially from the balcony of the Tiananmen Tower; and (4) elevation and form design should conform to the principle of “form works in combination with function,”¹³² The last requirement was a Chinese version of Louis Sullivan’s “form follows function,” but in order to make the statement less one-sided (on the side of function), the Chinese expression replaced “follow” 追随 with “combine” 相结合. However, by such a replacement, a compromise that suggests that neither form nor function should be neglected, the principle became almost meaningless since every function necessitates a form in architecture anyway.

¹³² National Museum Expansion program and documents: 中国国家博物馆改扩建工程建筑设计招标文件（第三卷）：设计任务书, 8.

Form and function could be combined in many different ways and form itself could be the very function as some Chinese architects argued.

Instead of an appearance to “grow out of rather than be inserted into the old,” most of the scheme entries proposed a glass box inserted into the solid masonry body made up of the three original façades on the west, north, and south sides – exactly what the conclusion of the meeting in June 2003 had warned. (Figure 5.51) Bringing a design in harmony with surrounding buildings can include making a sharp contrast with the environment and reflecting the environment with glass and metal, as Andreu had explained in his design ideas for the National Grand Theatre. It seems that the participants in the National Museum competition had learned something from Andreu.

Conclusion

Andreu’s success is due to his precise grasp of the public/political psychology of the Chinese modernization – following the West in the name of national character and Chineseness. Whatever the West does to China, the Chinese could always find something Chinese in them, regardless of the seemingly vehement resistance. Without the West, the Chinese will never realize its own Chineseness. It is such uncertainty in the Chinese modernization project that has further fragmented Chang’an Avenue in the 1990s and the new millennium.

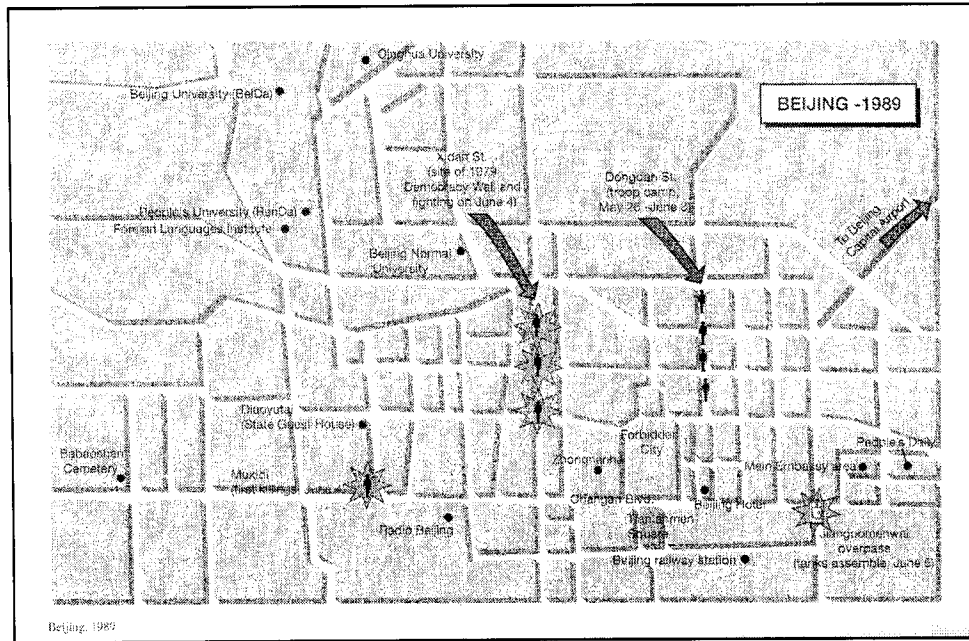


Figure 5.1: “June 4th Democracy Movement” and Chang’an Avenue

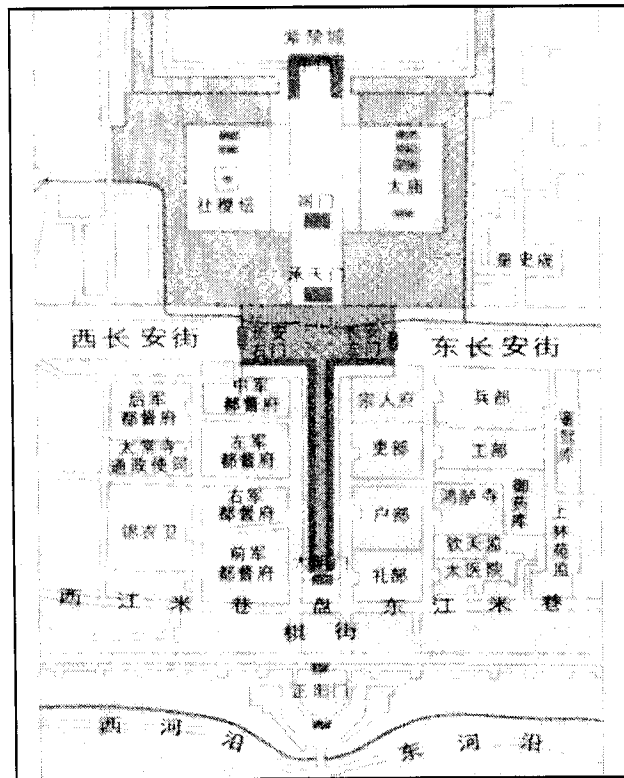


Figure 5.2: The Two Chang’an Avenues in Ming Dynasties

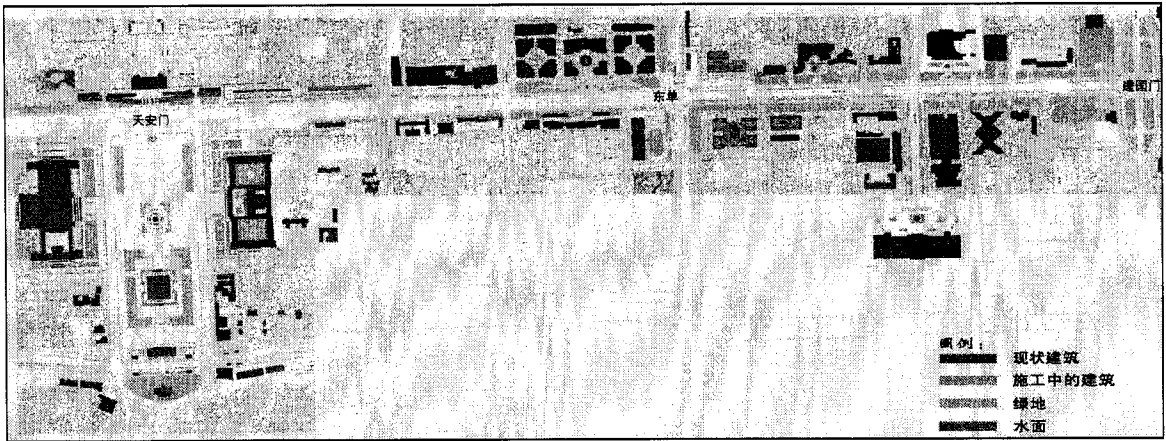


Figure 5.3: Tiananmen Square, East Chang'an Avenue, and Oriental Plaza



Figure 5.4: Oriental Plaza, 1997-99

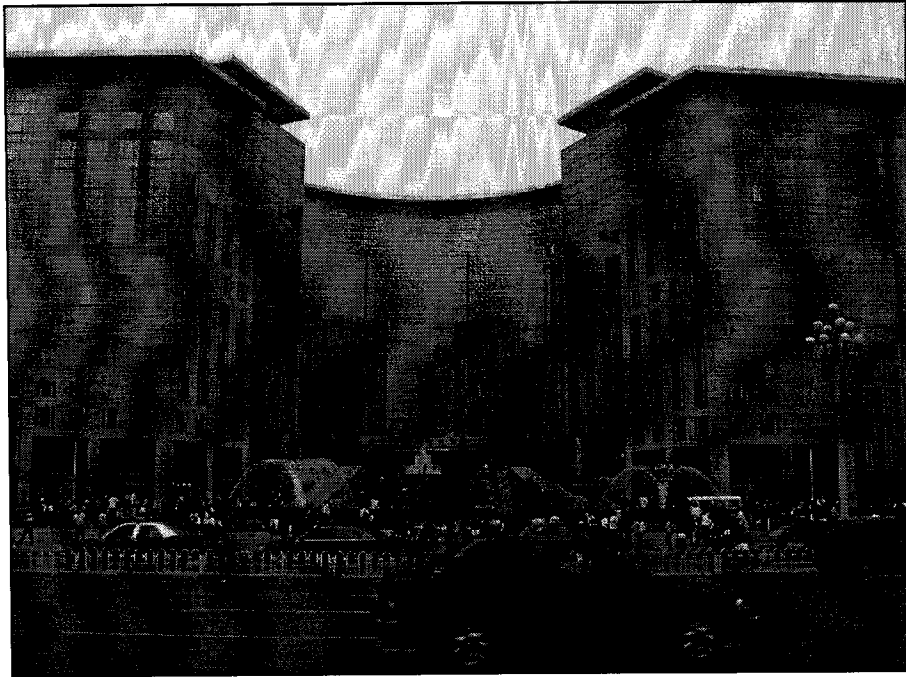


Figure 5.5: Main entrance of the Oriental Plaza on Chang'an Avenue

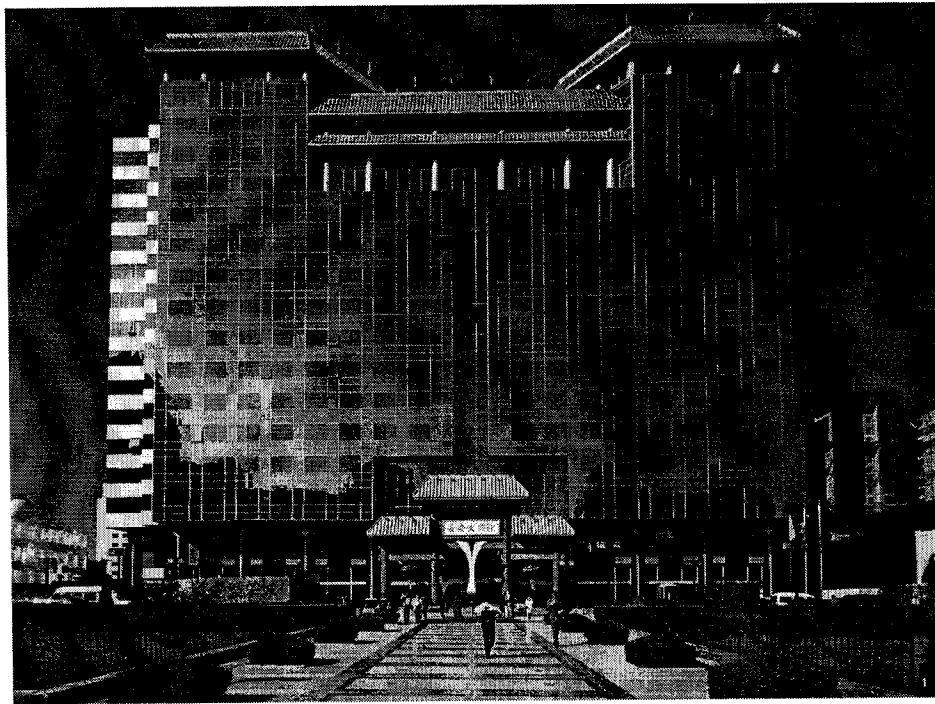


Figure 5.6: Guanhua Chang'an Building, 1994-1996

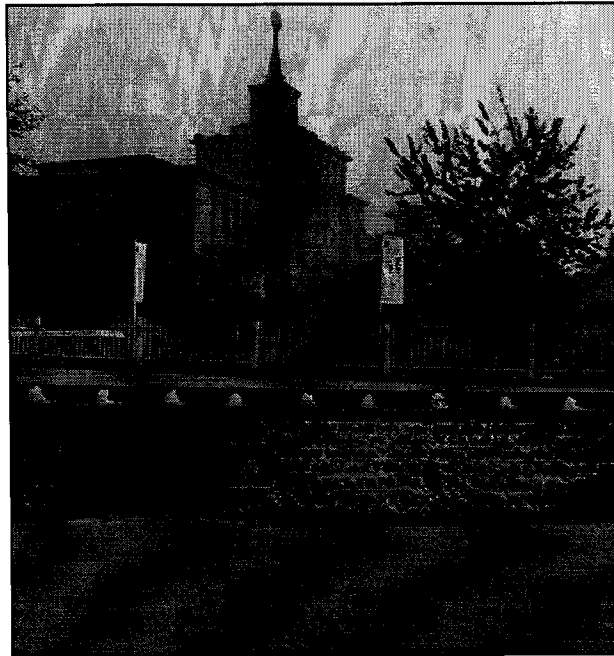


Figure 5.9: Waterfalls representing rivers, China Millennium Monument, 1999



Figure 5.10: Bronze Causeway, China Millennium Monument, 1999

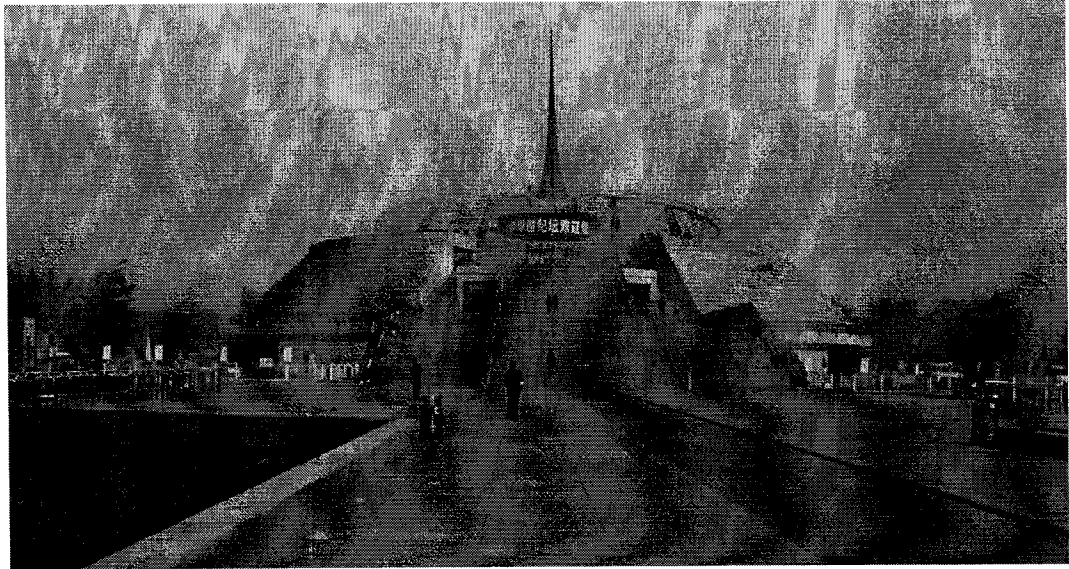


Figure 5.11: China Millennium Monument, 1999

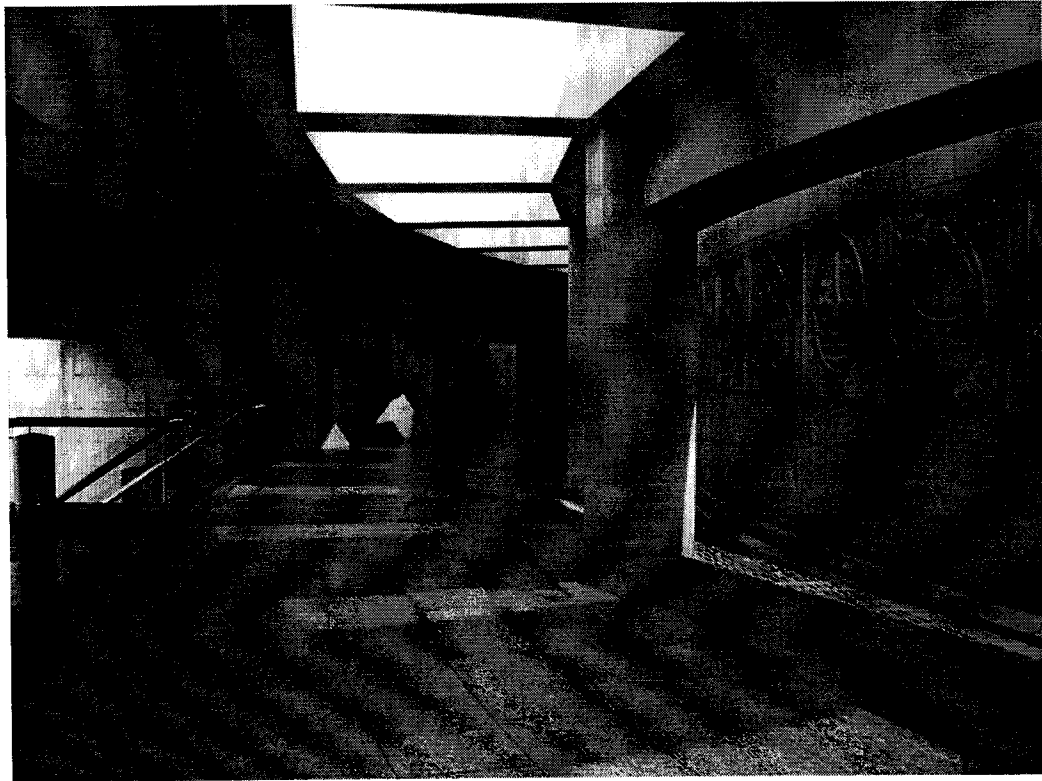


Figure 5.12: The joint of “qian” and “kun,” China Millennium Monument, 1999

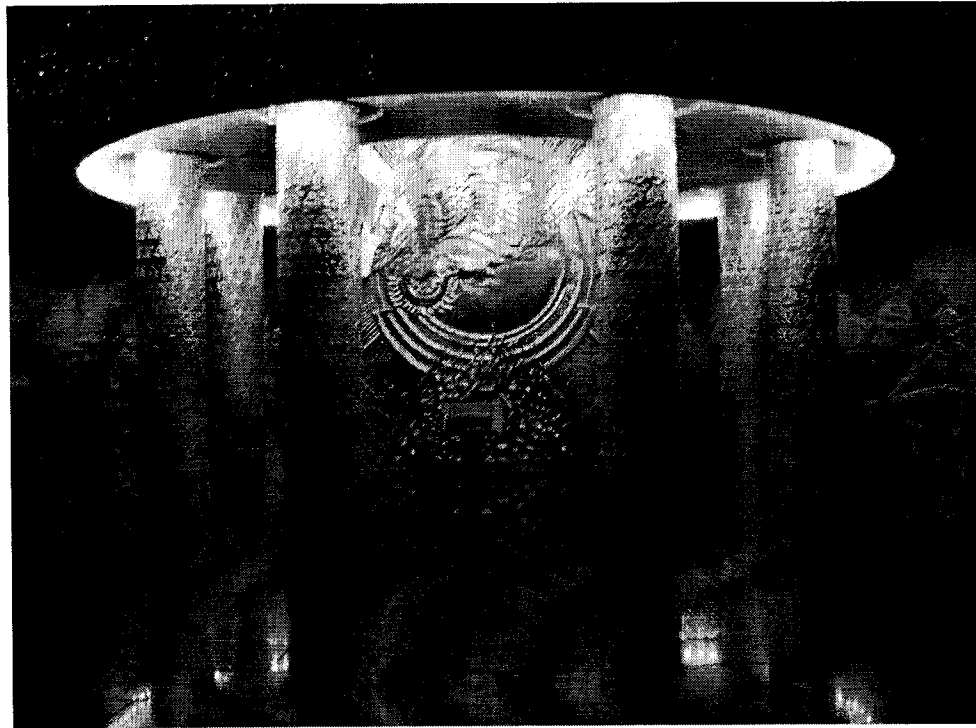


Figure 5.13: The Century Hall, China Millennium Monument, 1999

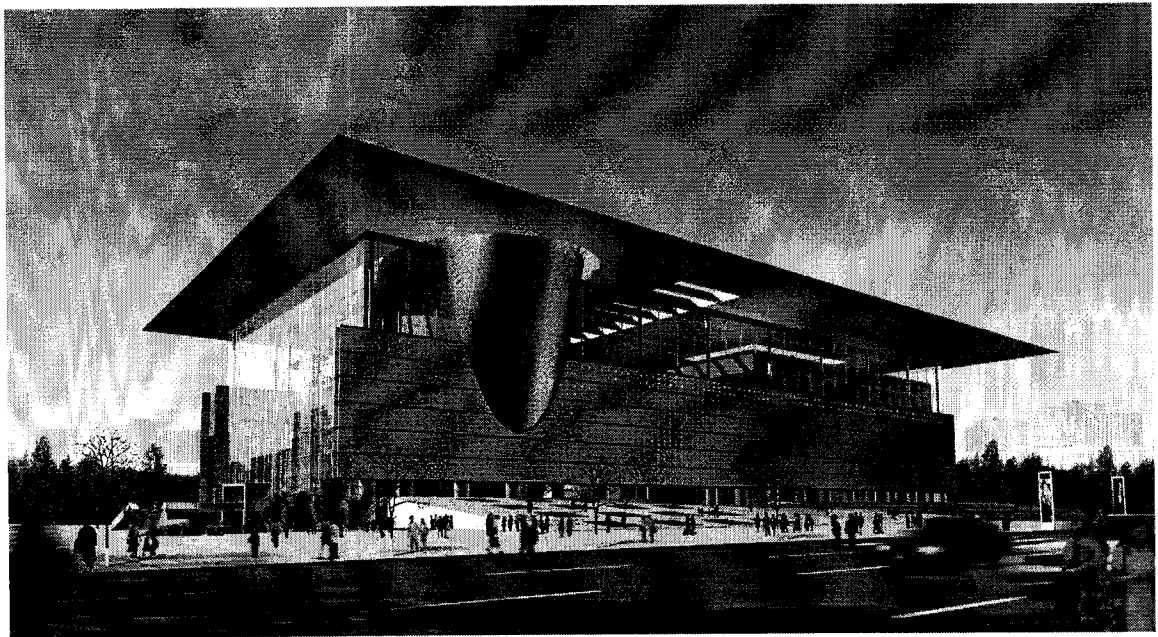


Figure 5.14: Capital Museum, 2005



Figure 5.15: Oriental Plaza

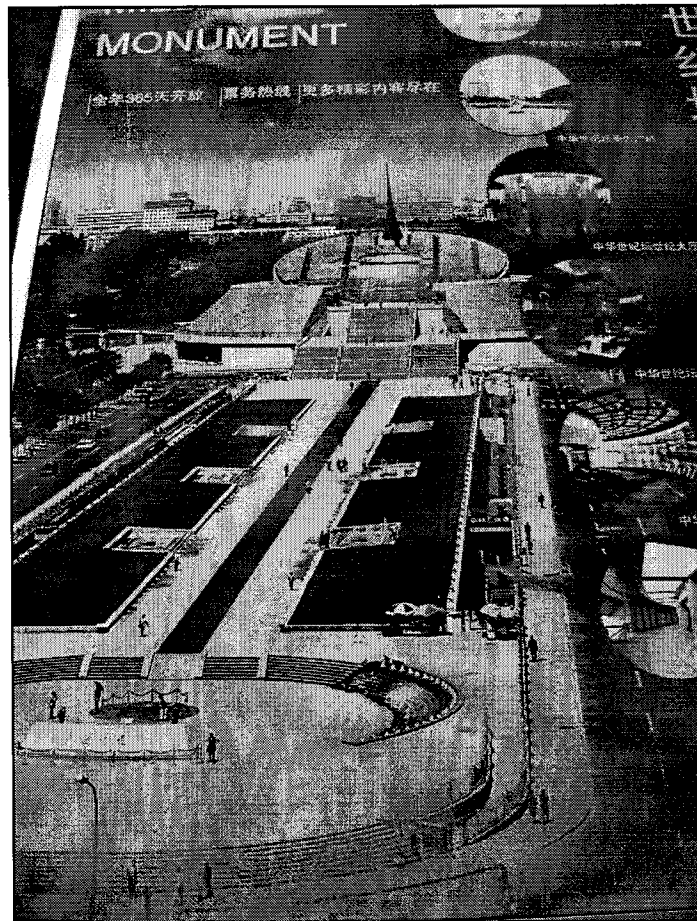


Figure 5.16: China Millennium Monument

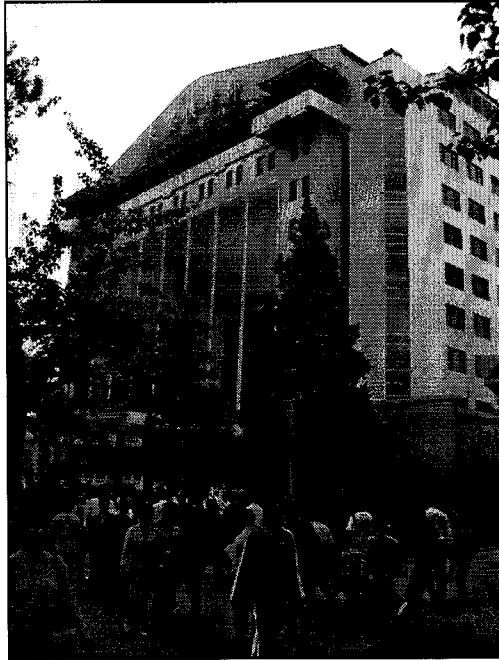


Figure 5.17: The Chang'an Club, 1993

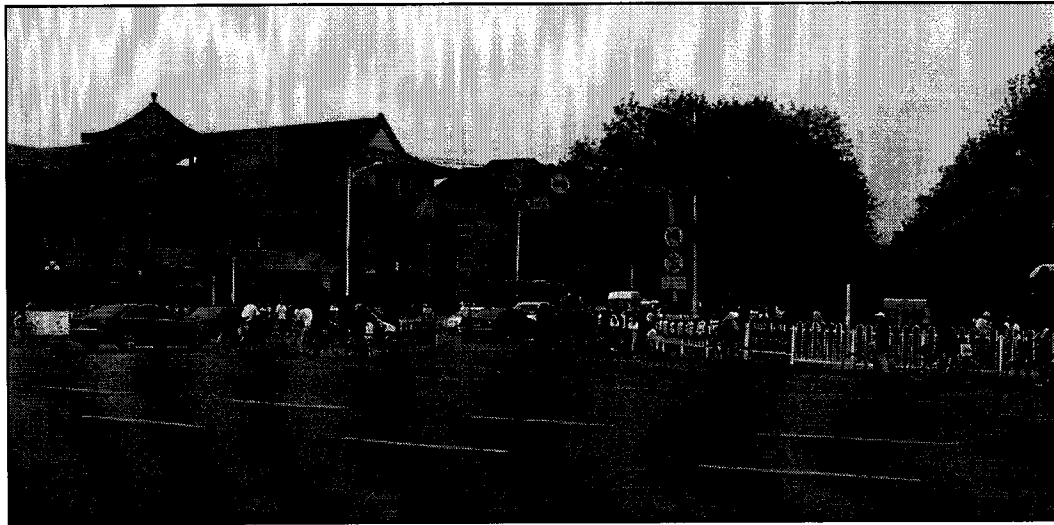


Figure 5.18: The Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee, 1992-93



Figure 5.19: National Electricity Power Distribution Center, 1998

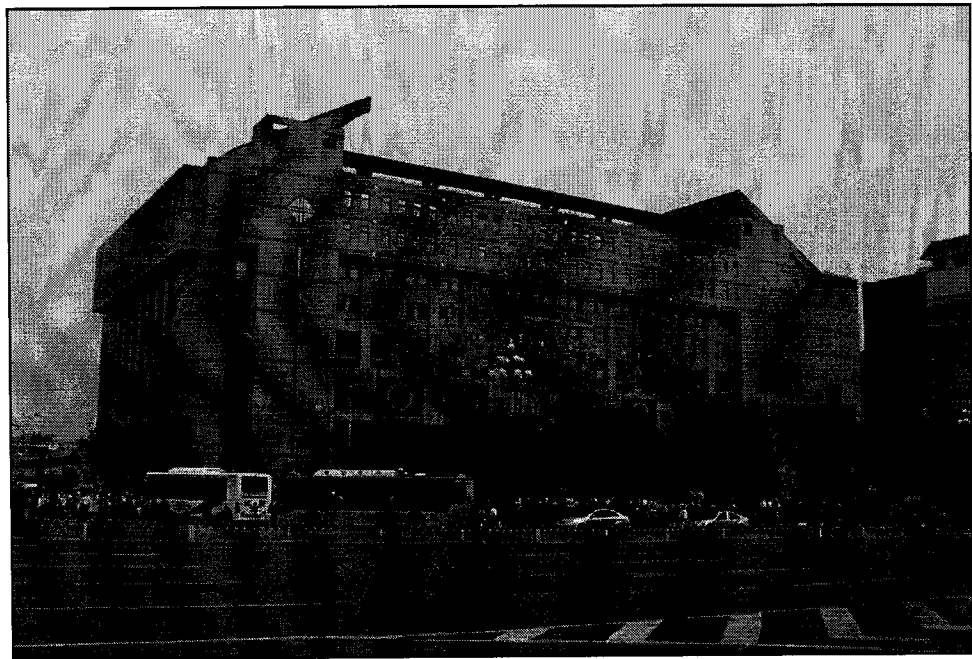


Figure 5.20: Beijing Book Mansion, 1994-1998

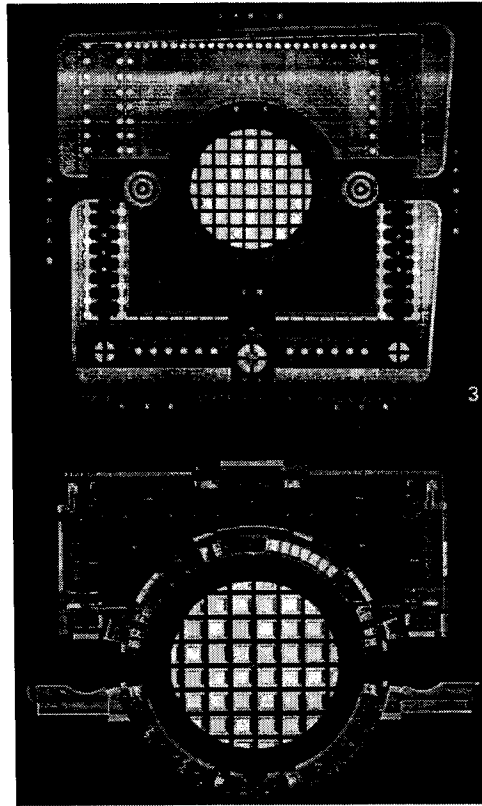


Figure 5.21: China Industrial and Commercial Bank, plans (top: site plan; bottom: ground-floor plan), 1994-1998

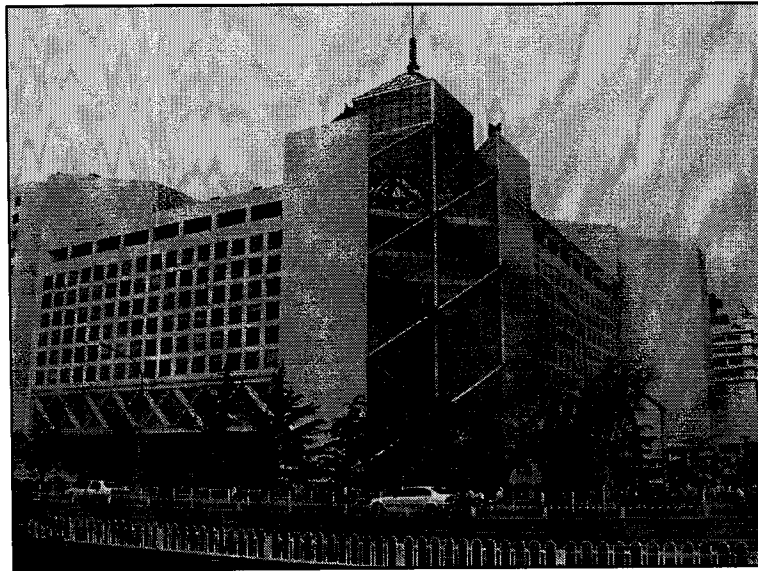


Figure 5.22: Bank of China

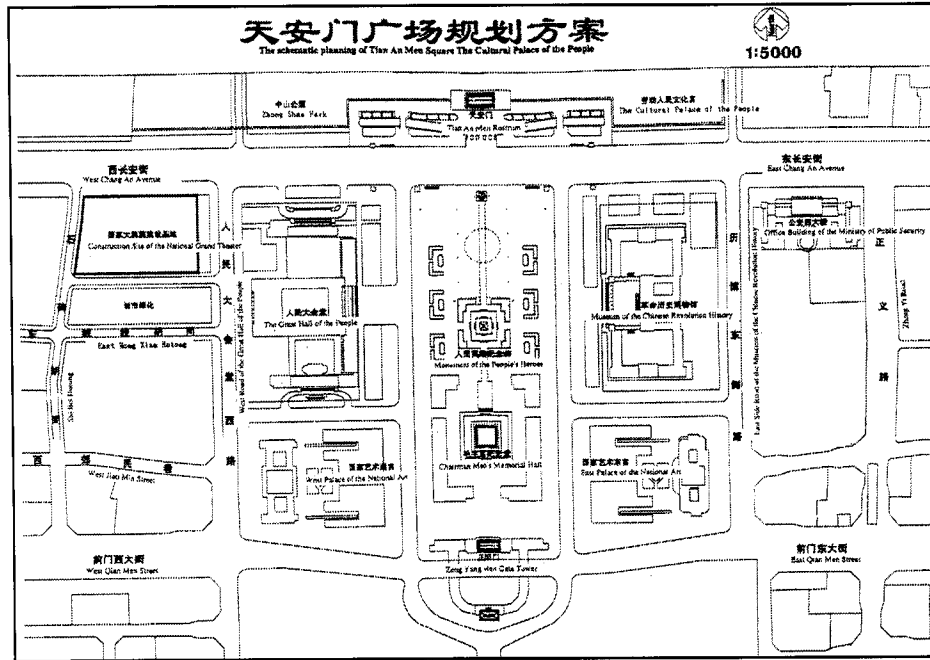


Figure 5.23: The site for the National Grand Theatre

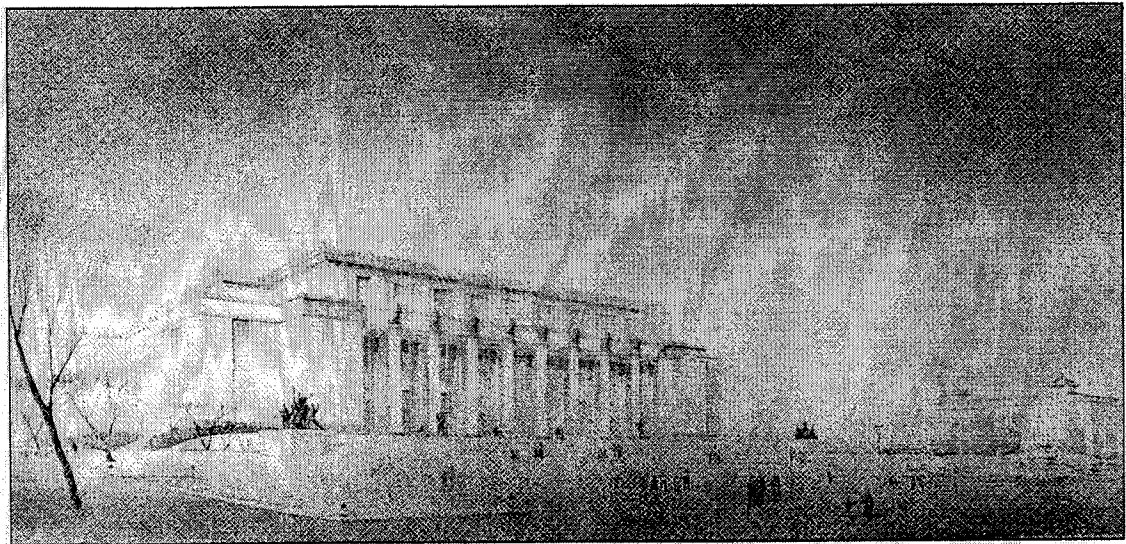


Figure 5.24: National Theatre design, Tsinghua University, 1958

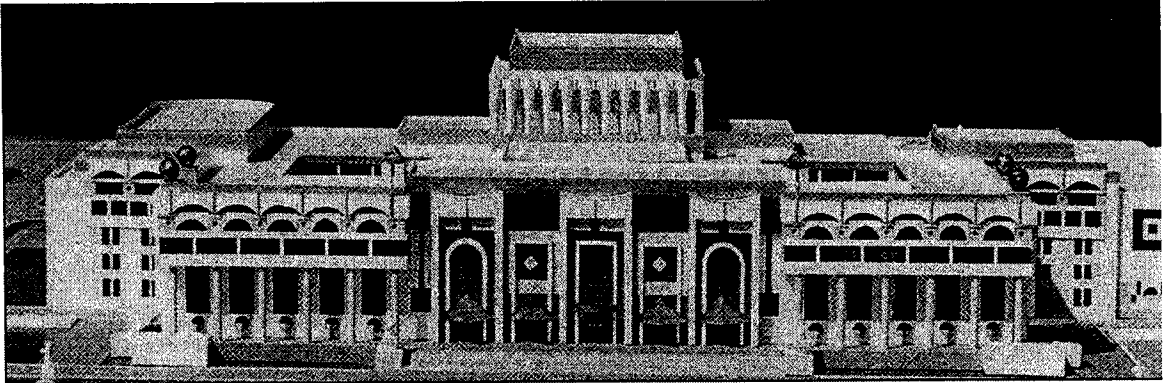


Figure 5.25: National Grand Theatre scheme, Tsinghua University, 1991

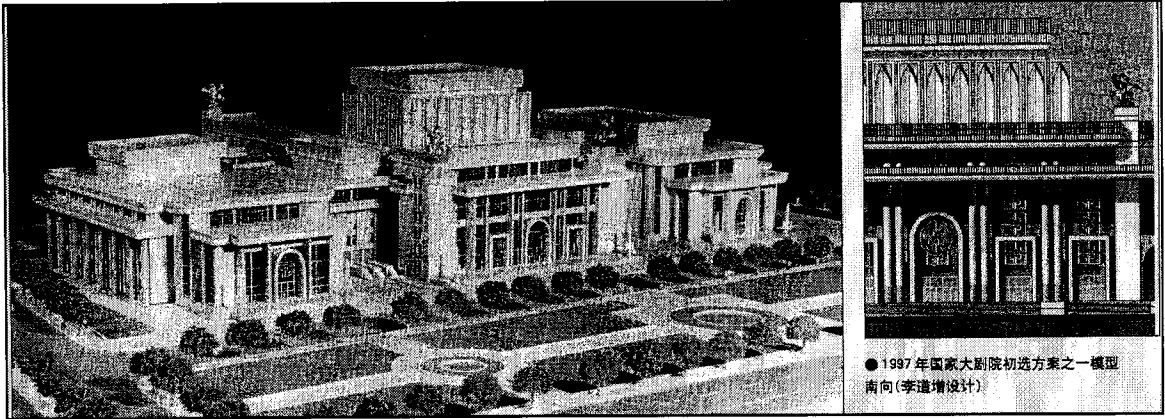


Figure 5.26: National Grand Theatre scheme, Tsinghua University, 1997

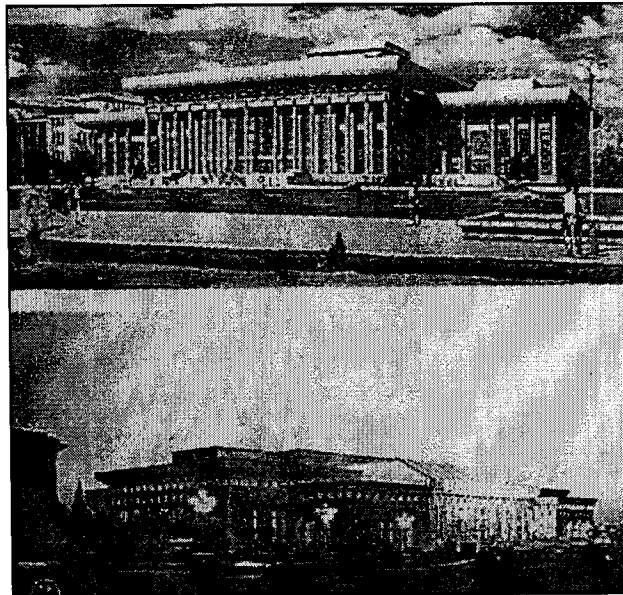


Figure 5.27: National Grand Theatre schemes (top: Beijing Institute; bottom: Ministry Institute), 1997

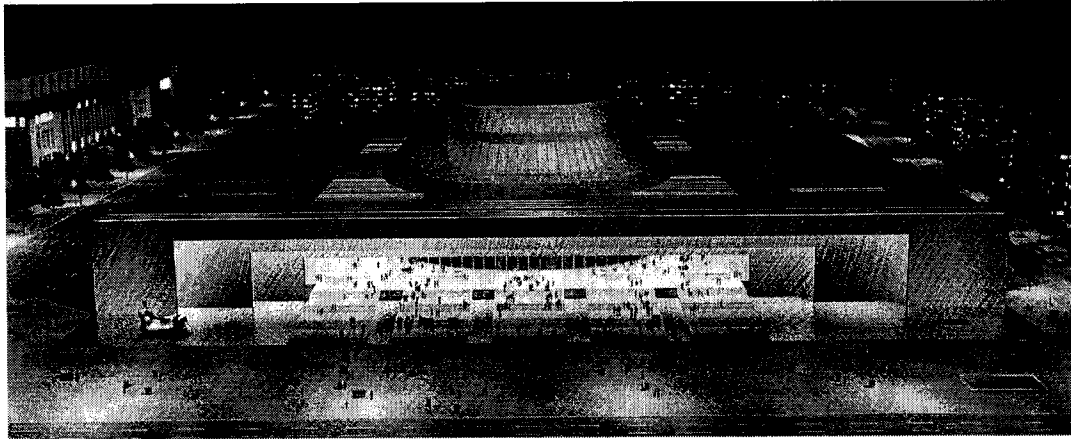


Figure 5.28: National Grand Theatre, Scheme No. 101 by ADP (Paul Andreu), April to July 1998

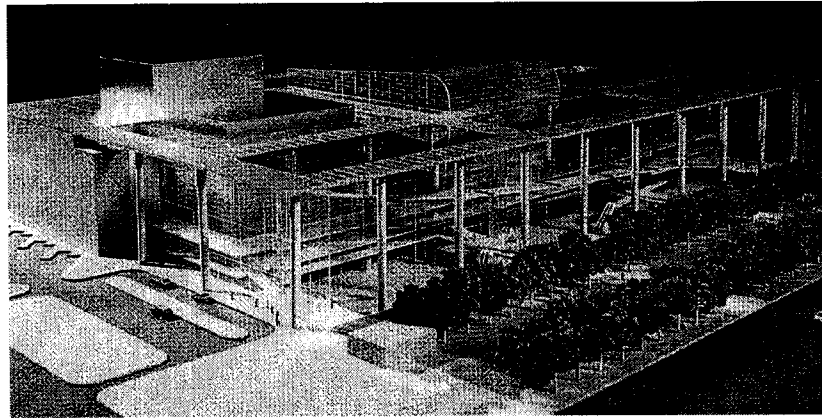


Figure 5.29: National Grand Theatre, Scheme No. 106 by Terry Farrell & Partners, April to July 1998

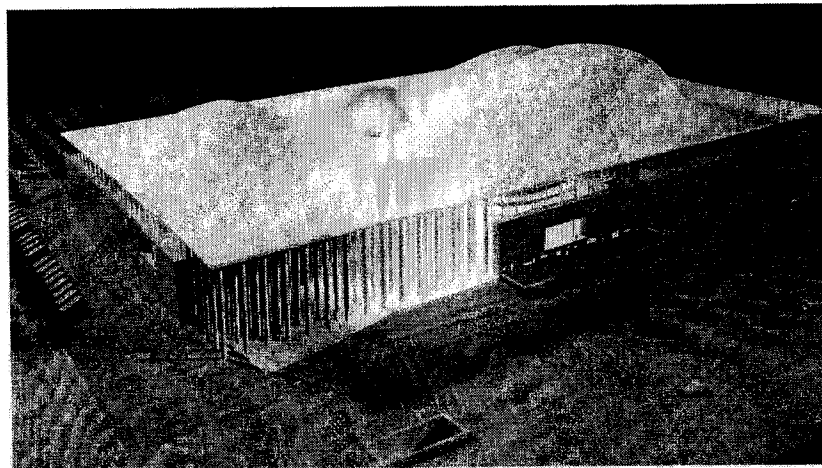


Figure 5.30: National Grand Theatre, Scheme No. 201 by Arata Isozaki & Associates, April to July 1998

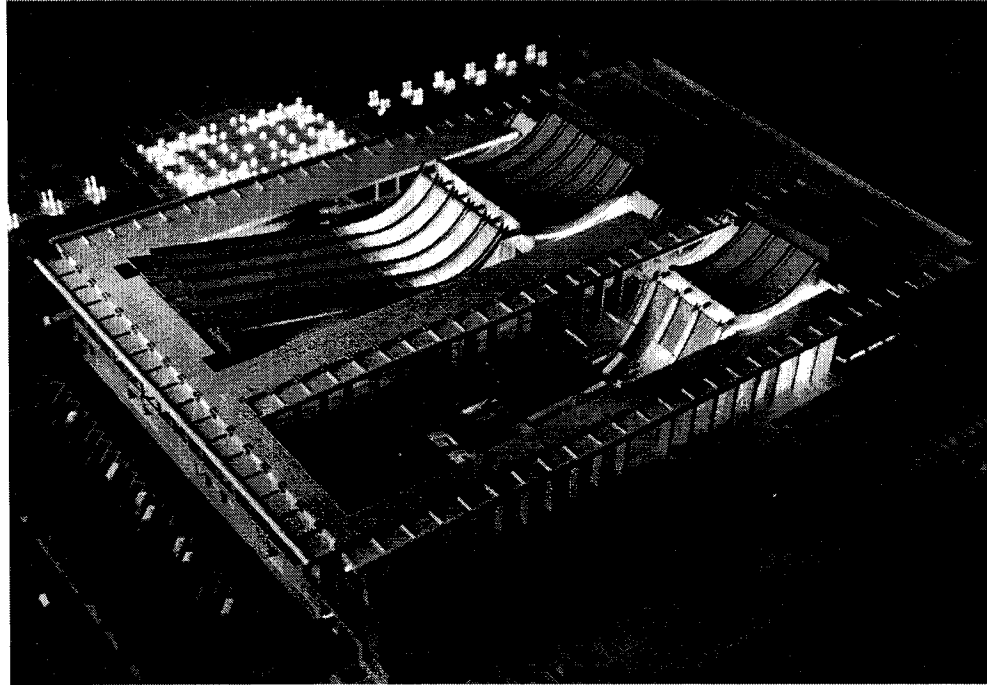


Figure 5.31: National Grand Theatre, Scheme No. 205 by Architecture Design Institute Ministry of Construction of China, April to July 1998

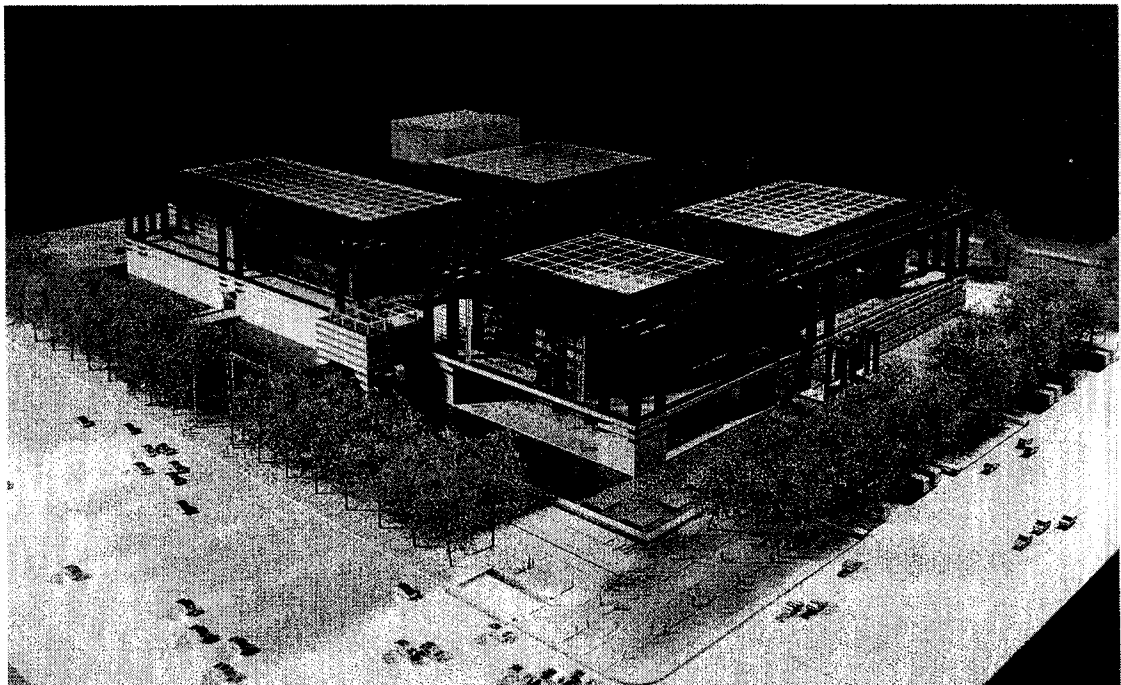


Figure 5.32: National Grand Theatre, Scheme No. 507 by HPP International Planungsgesellschaft mbH, April to July 1998

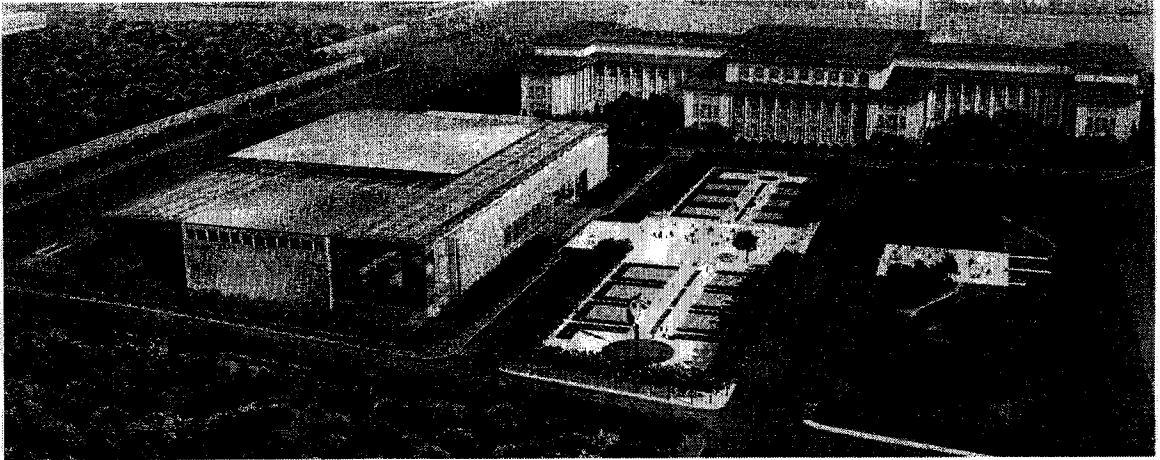


Figure 5.33: National Grand Theatre, ADP (Paul Andreu), July 1998 to January 1999

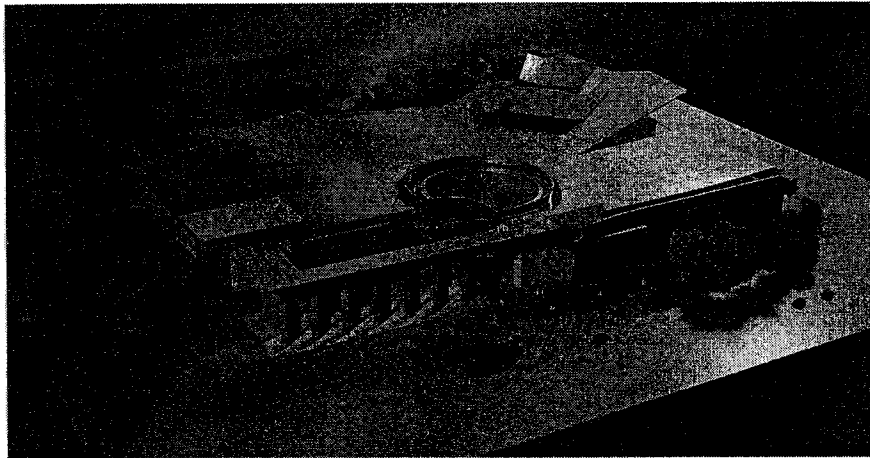


Figure 5.34: National Grand Theatre, Hans Hollein + Heinz Neumann Design Group, July to November 1998

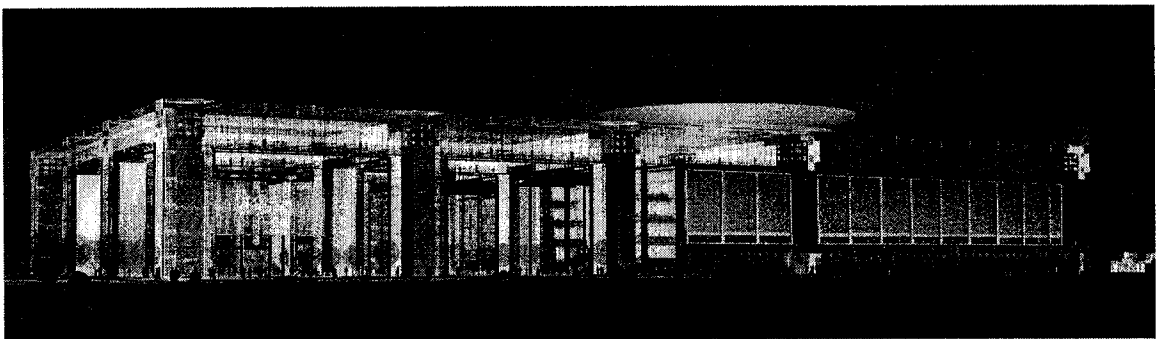


Figure 5.35: National Grand Theatre, Tsinghua University, July to November 1998

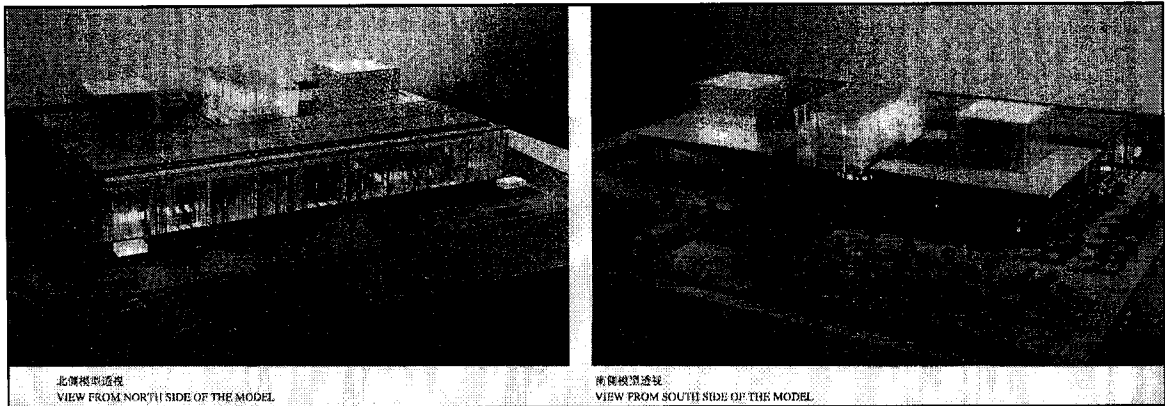


Figure 5.36: National Grand Theatre, UK Terry Farrell + Beijing Institute, December 1998 to January 1999

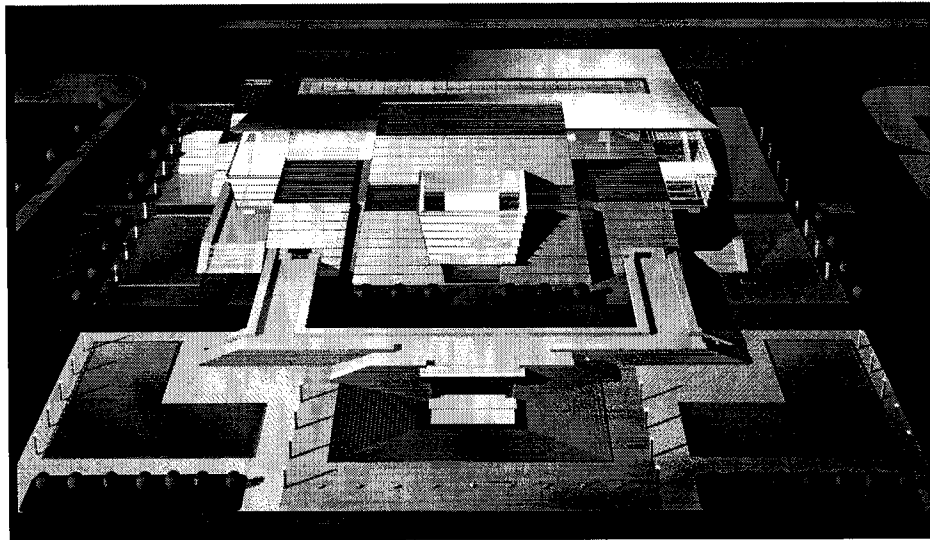


Figure 5.37: National Grand Theatre, Carlos Ott + Ministry Institute, December 1998 to January 1999

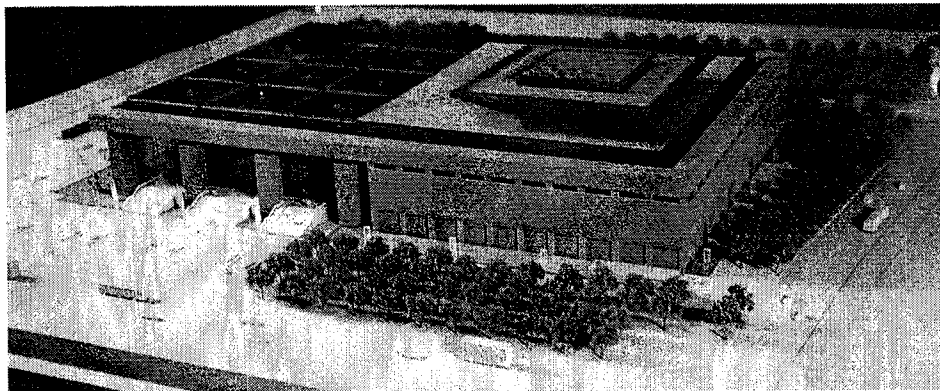


Figure 5.38: National Grand Theatre, Tsinghua University + ADP, December 1998 to January 1999

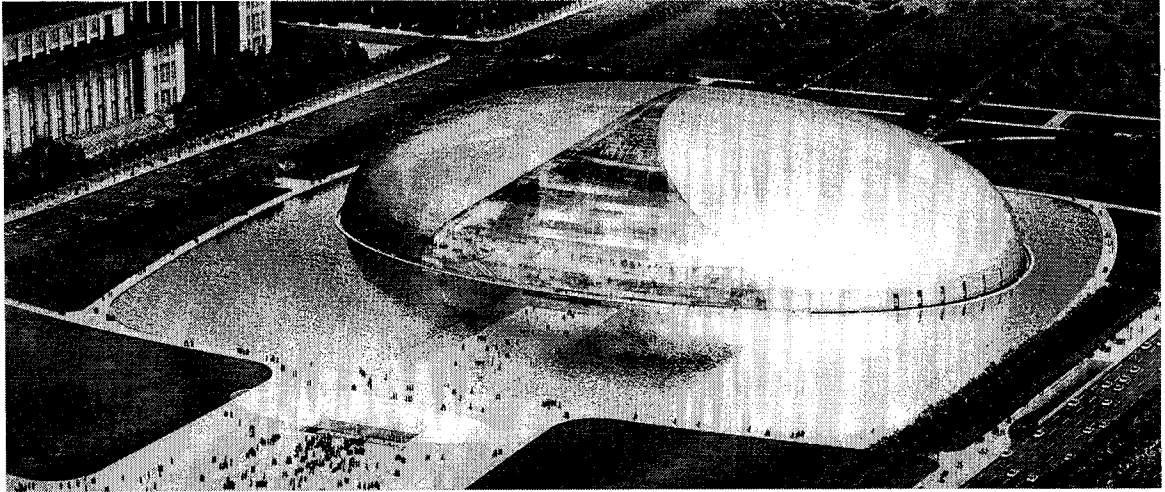


Figure 5.39: National Grand Theatre, ADP + Tsinghua University, January to May 1999

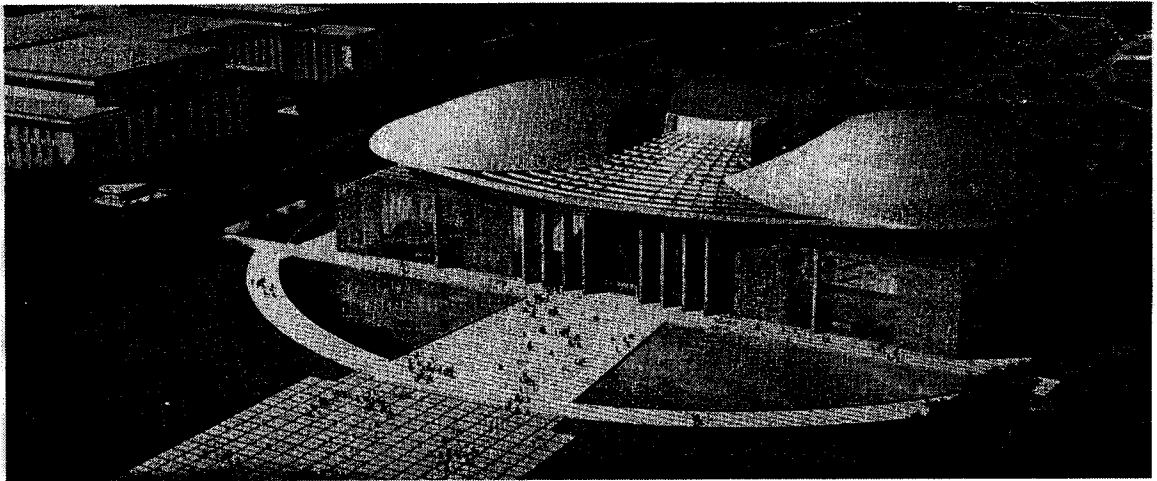


Figure 5.40: National Grand Theatre, Terry Farrell + Beijing Institute, January to May 1999

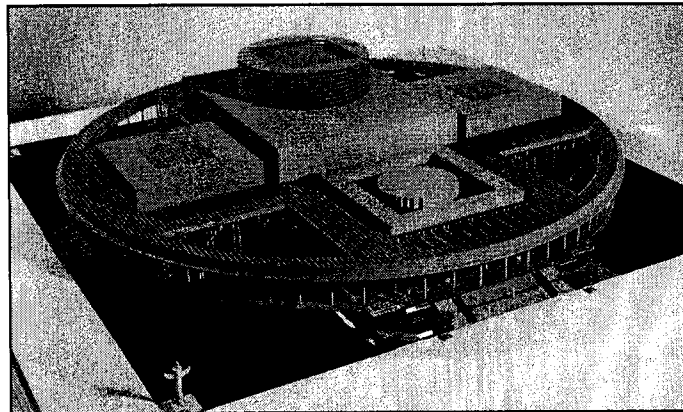


Figure 5.41: National Grand Theatre, Tsinghua University + ADP, January to May 1999

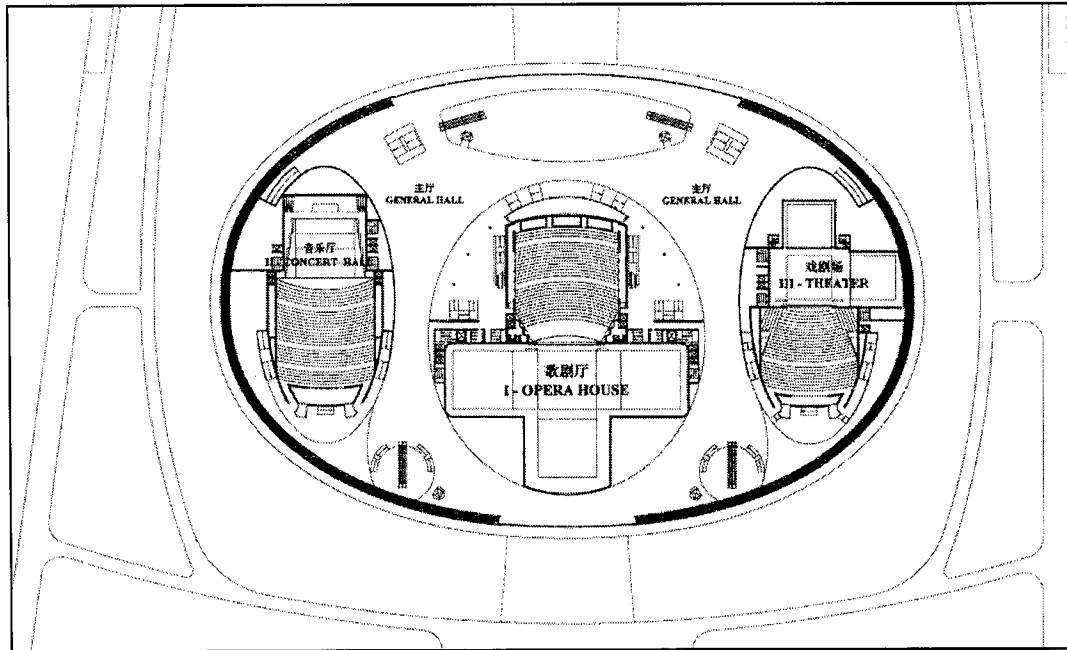


Figure 5.42: National Grand Theatre, plan, ADP (Andreu), 1998-1999

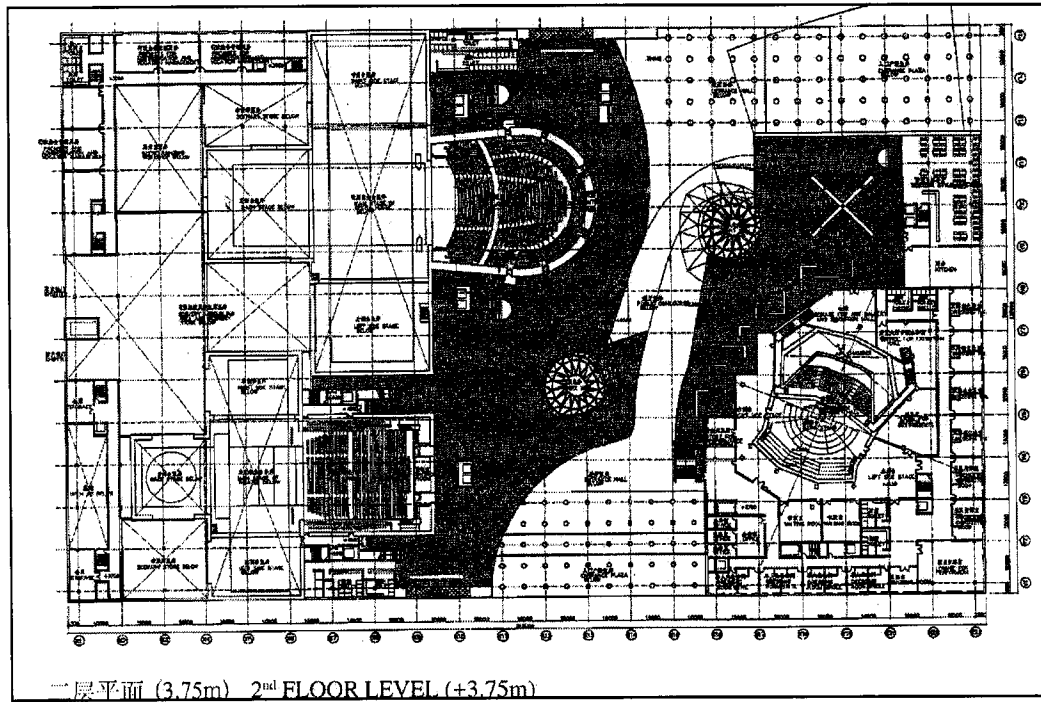


Figure 5.43: National Grand Theatre, plan, Arata Isozaki, 1998-1999

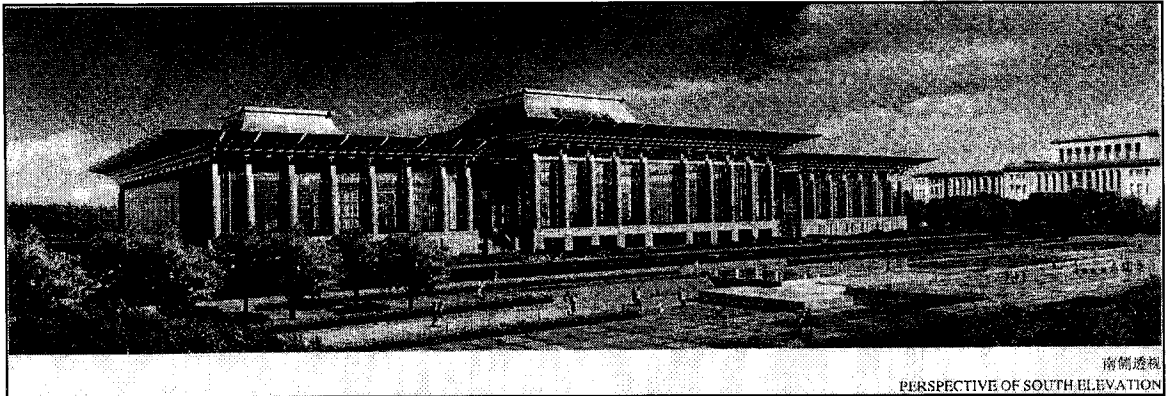


Figure 5.44: National Grand Theatre, Beijing Institute, 1998-1999

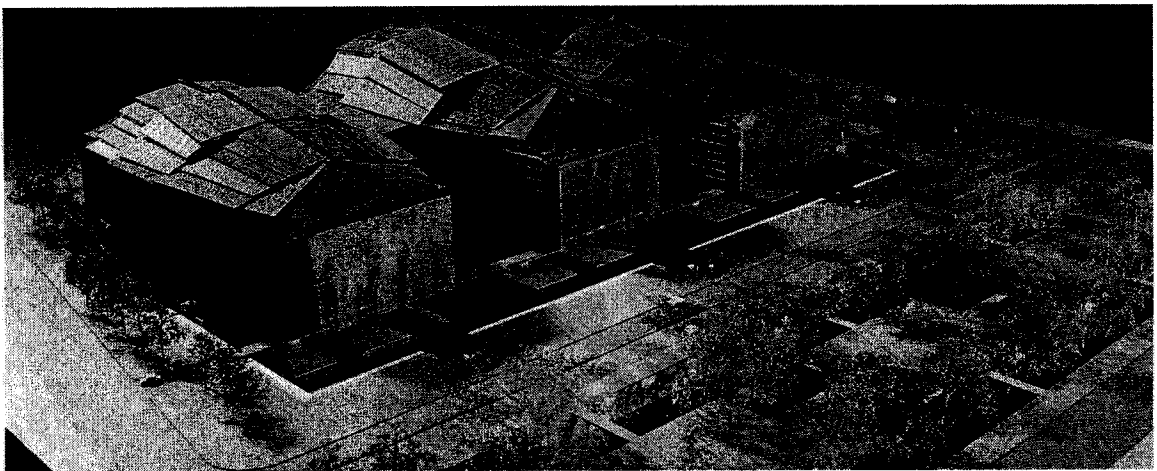


Figure 5.45: National Grand Theatre, Jean Nouvel, 1998-1999

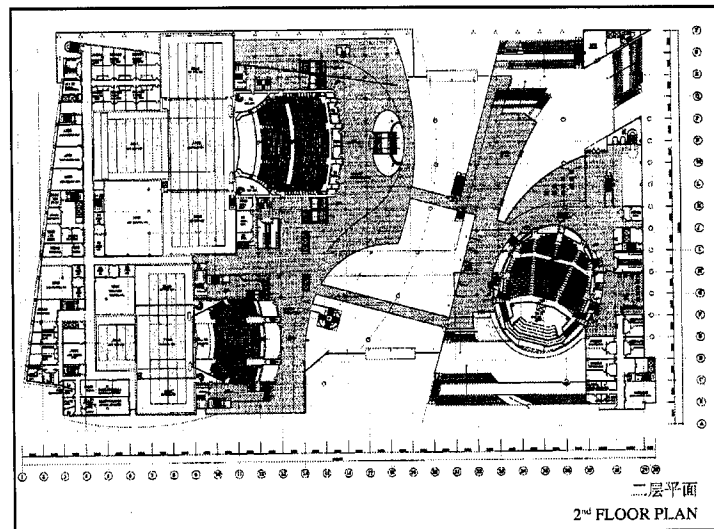


Figure 5.46: National Grand Theatre, plan, Beijing Institute, 1998-1999

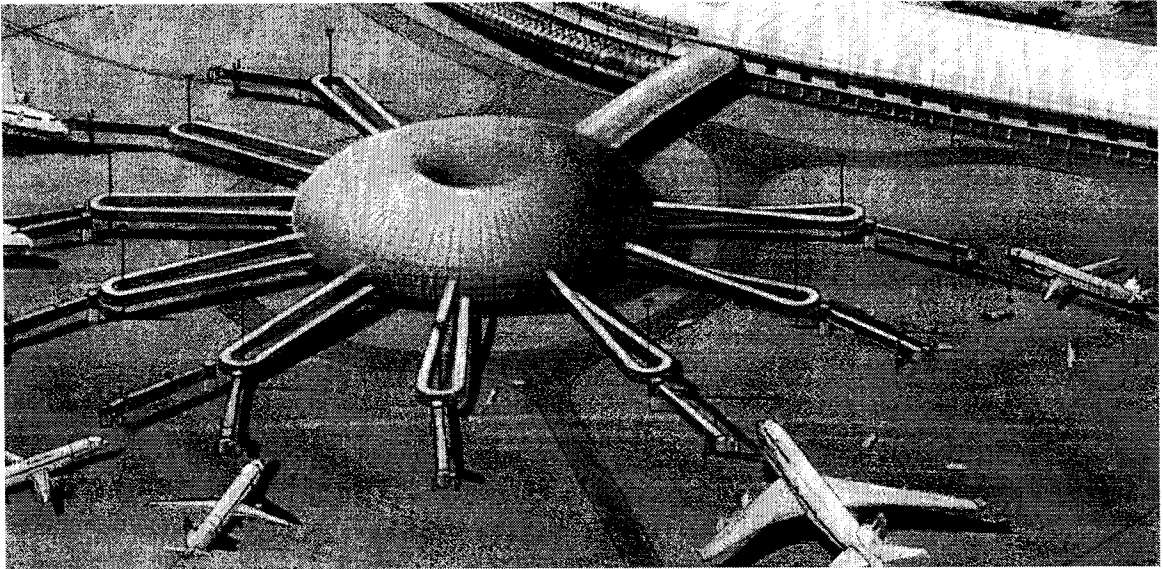


Figure 5.47: Abu Dhabi airport, United Arabian Emirates, Paul Andreu, 1982

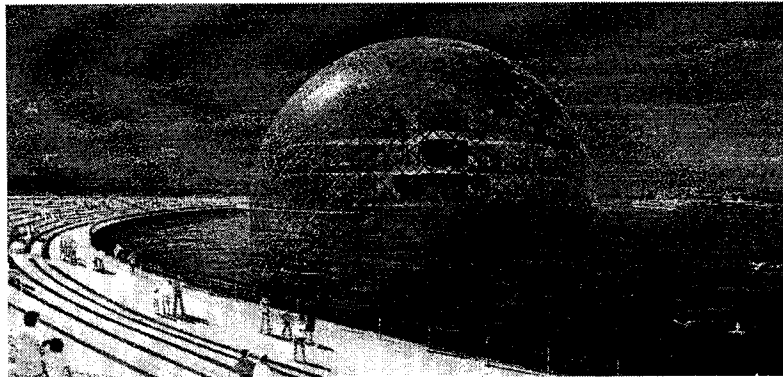


Figure 5.48: Maritime Museum, Osaka, Japan, Paul Andreu, 2000

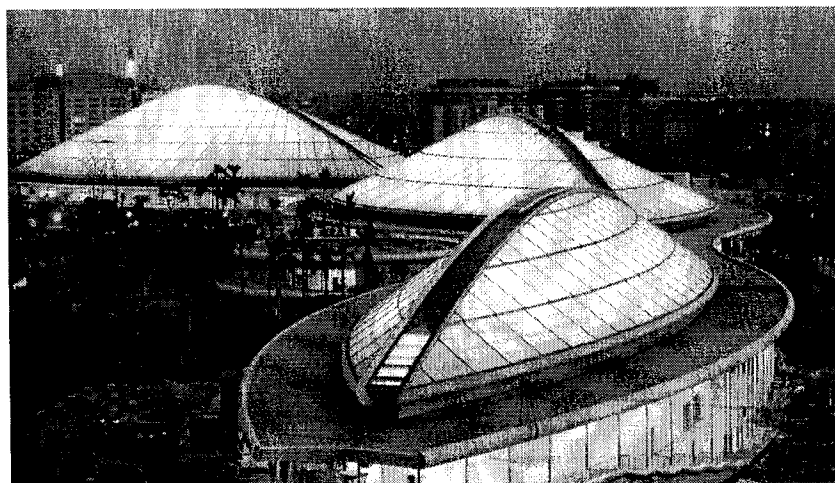


Figure 5.49: Sports Center, Guangzhou (Canton), China, Paul Andreu, 2001

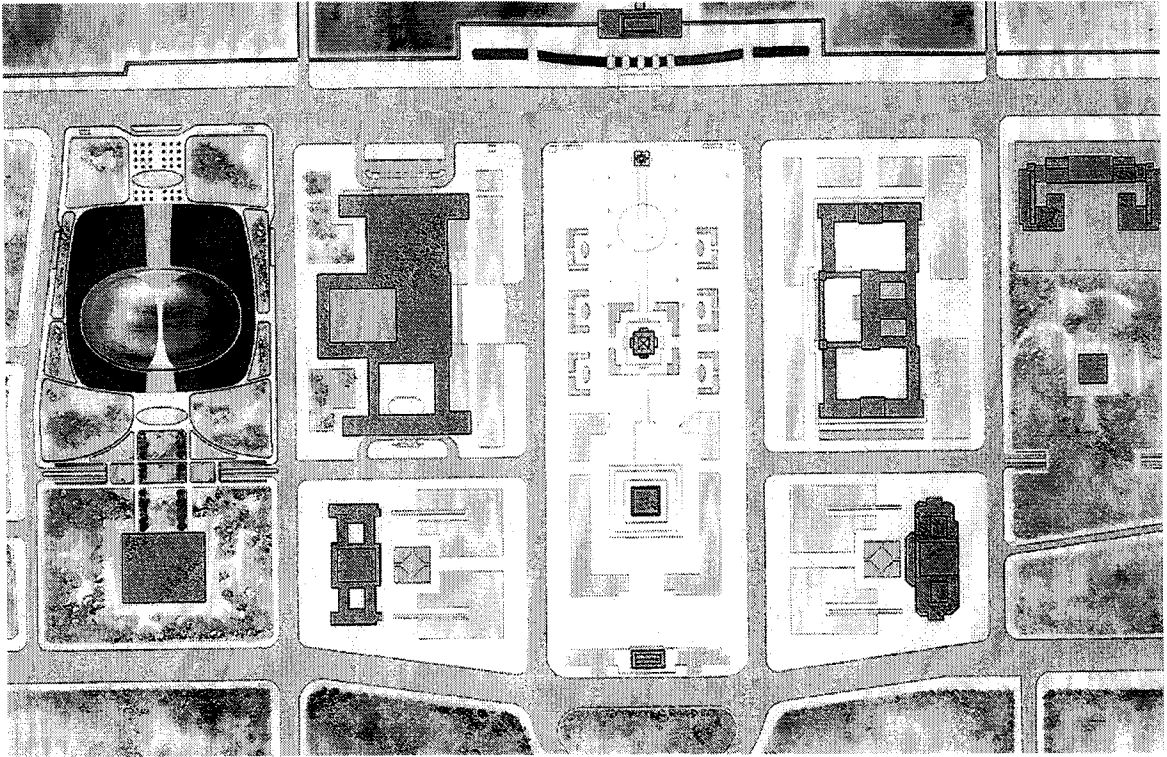


Figure 5.50: National Grand Theatre, final scheme, Paul Andreu, 1998-1999

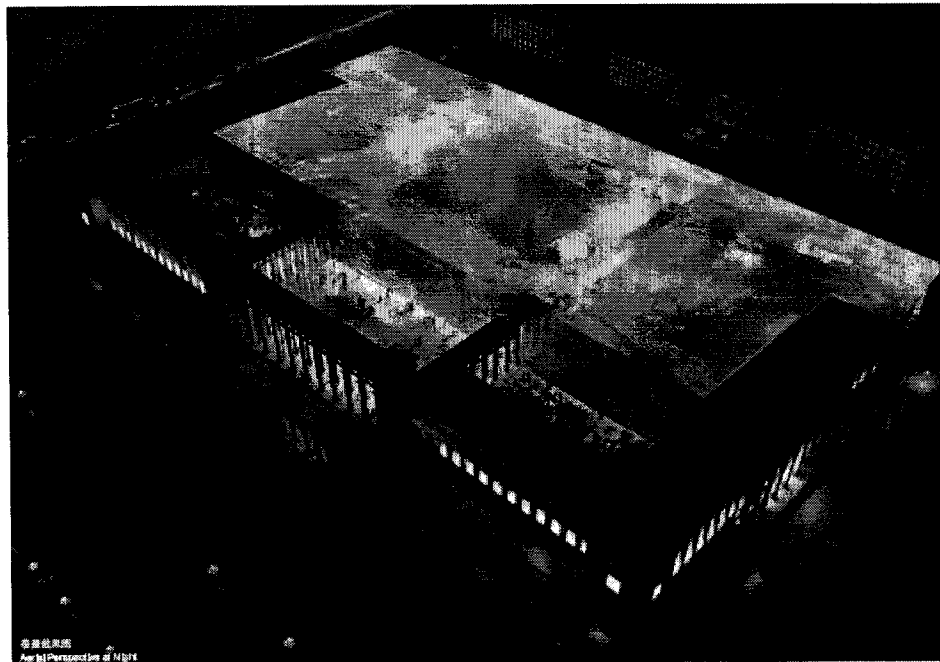


Figure 5.51: National Museum expansion project, China Architectural Design Institute, 2004

Chapter Six

Chang'an Avenue and the Axes of Beijing

For more than five centuries since the early 15th-century, the city of Beijing had been dominated by an imperial north-south axis until the mid-20th century, when Chang'an Avenue start to be constructed as the east-west thoroughfare of the communist capital. The growth of Chang'an Avenue during the early decades of the PRC soon overshadowed the north-south axis in urban fabric. While the construction of an east-west axis to compete with the imperial north-south axis was mentioned in the controversies on the reconstruction of Beijing as early as 1950, it was not certain at that time that such an east-west axis had to be Chang'an Avenue. Occupying such a critical location between the imperial Forbidden City and the communist Tiananmen Square, however, Chang'an Avenue gradually became the de facto east-west axis of the city. Although there are still professional debates about the east-west axis of Beijing, at the dawn of the 21st century, the status of Chang'an Avenue as the east-west axis was officially codified as one of the two axes of Beijing in the "Beijing City Master plan (2004-2020)." (Figure 6.1)

The north-south axis of Beijing had long been emphasized as a symbolic axis representing a centralized imperial power, while the east-west axis of Chang'an Avenue

was originally conceived mainly as a functional urban thoroughfare. However, the construction of the monumental façades and the concentration of national projects and celebrations along Chang'an Avenue transformed the functional street into a new symbolic urban space, representing the power of the new communist regime. As a result, when the nationalist fervor rose at the end of the 20th-century, both the north-south axis along the imperial monuments and the east-west axis Chang'an Avenue became the symbols of the "Great Renaissance of the Chinese Nation." The north-south axis represented China's past grandeur and the east-west axis represented the rise of "modern" China. However, at this time, the north-south axis was much shorter and less unified than Chang'an Avenue. The two axes of Beijing were unbalanced at the end of the 20th-century. New projects to expand the north-south axis were initiated at the beginning of the new millennium.

The Ancient Capital Beijing and Its Imperial North-south Axis

Beijing has served as the imperial capital of China for centuries, and its status as capital for local regimes when China was in disunion goes back for millennia.

During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (771-221 BCE), Beijing was the capital of the State of Yan under the name of *Ji*. From the 10th century to early 12th century, Beijing served as the Southern Capital – *Nanjing* – of the Liao Dynasty founded by the nomadic Khitans, a regime contemporary to the Han Chinese Northern Song Dynasty; and from 12th century to mid-13th century, Beijing

served as the Middle Capital – *Zhongdu* – of the Jin Dynasty founded by the Jurchens, a regime contemporary to the Southern Song Dynasty. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), under Mongol rule, Beijing for the first time became the national capital of a unified China. The strategic position of Beijing for their huge empire clearly was understood by the Mongols. It was an ideal place from which they could easily control China Proper, and at the same time maintain easy access to their original homeland, the endless Mongolian Prairie and Gobi Desert, to which they could retreat when the political situation was not promising, which they did in 1368 when Ming armies captured Beijing and overthrew the Yuan Dynasty.

The Yuan Dynasty capital of modern-day Beijing was called Dadu, the “Great Capital.” The Mongols abandoned Jin *Zhonggu* and built the new capital north of it, orienting it precisely according to the cardinal directions. (Figure 6.2) The city wall of Yuan Dadu was one of the most regular among all ancient Chinese capitals. It was almost a perfect square with an area of 50 km² and a perimeter of 28,600 m. The north-south dimension of 7,600 m was only slightly larger than its east-west dimension of 6,700 m. Three layers of city walls created three specific areas: the Palace City inside of the Imperial City inside of the Dadu city proper. Eleven gates protected openings in the outer-most layer of the city walls: three on each of the south, east, and west sides and two on the north side. The walls of both the Imperial City and the Palace City had 4 gates, one on each of the four cardinal directions. Major straight avenues and broad streets connected these gates and divided the city into rectangular wards and blocks. (Figure 6.3)

The entire city of Yuan Dadu could be divided into two parts along a line between the two central gates on the east and west city walls: a northern part and a southern part, each with their own north-south axis. Those two axes did not join each other, however, because the axis of the southern part was slightly to the east of that of the northern part. According Chinese architectural historian Fu Xinian, the north-south axis of Yuan Dadu had to turn at the central point because of the large bodies of water located at the center of the city. Therefore, the north-south axis to the north remained the geometric center of city, dividing the northern city into two perfectly equal halves at the east-west mid-point, but the southern part's north-south axis had to shift 129 m eastward.¹

Along the northern part's axis, the Drum Tower marked the city's geometric central point, in line with the Bell Tower to its north. The north-south axis of the southern part, however, was the imperial axis because both the Imperial City and the Palace City of Yuan Dadu were located on it. Starting with the Central Pavilion near the very center of the city, this imperial axis extended southward, linking all the main gates of the three layers of city walls and other major imperial monuments.

Throughout the Yuan Dynasty, the southern part of Yuan Dadu was populous and prosperous, while the northern part, especially the areas north of the Bell Tower, remained desolate and only sparsely inhabited. When the Ming rulers took over Yuan Dadu and renamed it first Beiping then Beijing,² the northern city walls shrunk southward

¹ Fu Xinian 傅熹年, ed., *Zhongguo gudai chengshi guihua jianzhuqun buju ji jianzhu sheji fangfa yanjiu, shang ce* 中国古代城市规划建筑群布局及建筑设计方法研究 上册 (Studies of Methodologies in Ancient Chinese City Planning, Building Group Arrangements, and Architectural Design, vol. 1) (Beijing: Jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), 10-13.

² In 1368, the Ming Dynasty founded its capital in Nanjing (South Capital) and renamed the former Yuan capital Beiping (North Pacification). In 1403, Yongle Emperor of Ming moved the capital to Beijing and

about 3,000 m in so that the defense of the city could be easier. The entire area north of the Yuan Dynasty Bell Tower was left outside of the city walls. When the Third Ming Emperor Yongle decided to move the national capital to Beijing and started the reconstruction in 1416, the imperial north-south axis of the former Yuan Dadu was maintained. Although the former Yuan Palaces were all destroyed by Ming armies after the Mongol rulers retreated from their Great Capital, the new Palace City and Imperial City of Ming Dynasty were constructed on roughly the same sites. According to the Chinese tradition, in order to completely annul the “imperial energy” *wangqi* 王气 of a former dynasty and thus prevent its restoration, the new dynasty had to demolish all the major imperial monuments of the former regime and construct new palaces on a blank sheet. Waste residue from the destruction of the Yuan palaces and construction of Ming palaces was piled into an artificial hill, located on the site of the Yanchun-ge Pavilion, the former sleeping chambers for Yuan Emperors and Empresses. The hill is known today as *Jingshan* 景山,³ Scenery Hill, but during the Ming Dynasty it was known as *Zhenshan* 镇山, which means the hill to vanquish the evil spirit. The “imperial energy” of the Yuan Dynasty along the north-south axis was not only destroyed but also buried and controlled by Scenery Hill.

Since Scenery Hill occupied the central position of former Yuan palaces on the imperial north-south axis, the new Ming palaces had to be constructed further south. As a result, the area directly to the south of the Palace City and Imperial City became packed.

renamed it Beijing (North Capital). See the section “Chang’an Avenue during the Imperial Periods” in Chapter One for detail.

³ The site was used for storage of coal for Ming-Qing imperial families and Scenery Hill was thus also known as *meishan* 煤山, the Coal Hill.

The southern walls of all the three cities, Beijing city proper (future Inner City), Imperial City, and Palace City, were relocated about 800 m further south. (Figure 6.4) The imperial north-south axis followed to extend southward. The Bell Tower and the Drum Tower, previously 129 m west of the imperial axis during the Yuan Dynasty, were now relocated on the imperial north-south axis. Since much of the north part of the former Yuan Dadu was abandoned, most of its north-south axis disappeared, whose remaining part with Bell Tower and Drum Tower joined the imperial axis. Thus, the two north-south axes of the Yuan Dadu were united into one dominating imperial axis in the Ming Beijing. In 1553, an Outer City was added to the south of the former Beijing city, now known as the Inner City, with the imperial north-south axis also extending beyond the former city's southern boundary. (Figure 6.5)

The following Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty did not make any major physical changes to the Ming capital. They were one of the few rulers of China who did not burn the palaces of the previous dynasty. Thus from 1553 to mid-20th century, the imperial north-south axis of Beijing remained more than 7,500 m long, running from the Bell Tower north of the Inner City to the Gate of Permanent Peace (Yongdingmen 永定门) at the south end of the city. Lining up the main gates of the Outer City 外城, Inner City 内城, Imperial City 皇城 and Palace City 宫城, and other major imperial monuments, including the Forbidden City 紫禁城,⁴ this north-south axis was referred to by many Chinese as the “dragon vein” (*longmai* 龙脉) of Beijing.⁵

⁴ “Forbidden City” is another name for the Ming-Qing Palace City in Beijing.

⁵ Wang Qiheng, ed., *Research of Fengshui Theory* (Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 1992), 26-32.

According to the *fengshui* 风水 theory, a “dragon vein” (*longmai*) is the north-south mountain range due north of a good dwelling site that helps to keep auspicious energy in the site (*juqi* 聚气). In a city, the “dragon vein” refers as well to the auspicious continuity of geographic or man-made elements running from north to south. Although Beijing, as a dwelling site, does not have the north-south mountain range prescribed by *fengshui* theory, as a city it has the important north-south axis “dragon vein.” (Figure 6.6)

Fengshui geomancy considers the natural and constructed environment as a macrocosm of the human body. “*Mai*” is originally a Chinese medicine term, referring not only to the physical arteries and veins, but also the channels through which energies travel in the bodies. *Longmai*, the “dragon vein,” suggests that the north-south axis of Beijing was the channel where the imperial energies traveled, because a dragon is the symbol for the “Son of Heaven.”

The significance of the north-south orientation in a Chinese city also comes from associations with the human body. In the Chinese concept of orientation, south is referred to as “the front,” north as “the back,” east as “the left,” and west as “the right.” Such an orientation concept with its reference to the human body was codified as early as the first millennium BCE in the Zhou Dynasty (1046 – 221 BCE) document “Record of Craftsmanship” from the Confucian classic *Rituals of Zhou* 周礼, which reads:

When the master craftsman constructs the state capital, he makes a square nine *li* on each side. Each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine north-south and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. The court is located in the front (south) and the

markets in the back (north). On the left (east) is the Ancestral Temple, and to the right (west) are Altars of Soil and Grain.⁶ (Figure 6.7)

A similar perception about the north-south orientation can also be observed in individual buildings. In China, whenever possible, the main façades of major buildings in a complex always face south. The emperors were referred to as facing the south to rule. While the status of east and west represented by “left” and “right” is equal, starting from the center and extending outward, the statuses of north and south are not. The orientation of north-south is directional, beginning in the north and extending southward endlessly, like the gaze of the emperor.

The history of a north-south axis running through the center of the imperial capital and lining up major national monuments could also be traced back to the *Rituals of Zhou*. In the famous section about the capital for the “Son of Heaven” from the chapter “Record of Craftsmanship” cited above, a north-south axis is implied though not explicitly named. Three gates on each side of the city walls and nine streets in each orientation suggest the existence of a central north-south way as well as an east-west one. The following descriptions suggest that this north-south way is an axis while the east-west one was not, because the symmetrical elements – the “left” Ancestral Temple and the “right” Altars of Soil and Grain – are arranged in east-west direction while the asymmetrical elements – the “back” markets and the “front” courts – are lined up from north to south.

⁶ From the section on “Record of Craftsmanship,” *Rituals of Zhou*. 匠人营国，方九里，旁三门；国中九经九纬，经途九轨；左祖右社，面朝后市；市朝一夫。（《周礼·考工记·匠人》）

Although not even one ancient Chinese city has been discovered to completely follow the Zhou Dynasty orthodoxy, this early classic had tremendous influence in capital building during China's 2,000-years imperial history. During the Age of Disunion (220-589), both the Northern Wei capital Louyang (493-534) and the capital for the southern dynasties Jiankang (modern day Nanjing, capital for Eastern Jin, Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen, 317-589) had a long Imperial Way stretching southward from the Imperial Palace in the northern part of the city. Government ministries were organized mainly along this Imperial Way, with the Ancestral Temple to the east and Altars of Soil and Grain to the west side as required by the "Ritual of Zhou." Such a strong imperial axis also characterized the Sui-Tang Dynasty capital Chang'an (589-907) and the Northern Song Dynasty capital Bianliang (960-1127). (Figure 6.8, 6.9) This defined axis, however, is not found in Chang'an and Louyang of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), when there had been no dispute about which regime was to carry on the orthodox Chinese imperial line. The first clear and explicit formulation of the imperial north-south axis was made during the Age of Disunion, which might suggest that it was used to justify the regimes as the legitimate carrier of Chinese tradition.

While the imperial north-south axis in the capitals of the Age of Disunion, Sui-Tang, and Northern Song mainly formed the Imperial Way in front of the Palace Complex, the imperial north-south axis in Ming-Qing Beijing was primarily an axis of monuments. In total, there were more than 10 gate towers and 7 major imperial halls directly located on this north-south axis, as well as the Drum Tower and Bell Tower at its north end. Located on the east and west sides of this imperial axis were such significant

sacrificial and government centers as the Temple of Heaven, the Altar of Agriculture, the Six Ministries *Liubu* 六部, the Five Departments *Wufu* 五府, the Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altars of Soil and Grain, etc. The large-scale monuments with their brilliant colors of golden yellow, red, and blue-green along a long imperial north-south axis contrasted strongly with the rest of the city, which was mostly filled with human-scale courtyard dwellings of grey bricks and grey roof-tiles. The imperial north-south axis in Beijing formally emphasized the supreme status, paramount authority and absolute power of the “Son of Heaven.” (Figure 6.10)

The formal dominance of such an imperial north-south axis in the city of Beijing survived the ROC era (1912-1949). When Mao announced the founding of the People’s Republic of China in the rostrum of the Tiananmen Tower on October 1, 1949, he was stood in one of the many ceremonial gates along the north-south axis, which was soon to be transformed into a façade for the east-west axis Chang’an Avenue.

The Liang-Chen Scheme

After the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, the imperial monuments and sacrificial centers in Beijing along the imperial north-south axis were opened one after another to public. In 1912, the outer layer of the vast land in the Temple of Heaven became a forestry research institute and in the following year the central part became a park open to public, and also in 1913, the doors in the gate towers around the imperial Tiananmen Square were removed and the walls connecting these gate towers were demolished. In

1914, the Altar of Soil and Grain became “Central Park.” The protection walls *wengcheng* 瓮城 of the southern gate of the Inner City Zhengyangmen, as well as the “Thousand-pace Corridor” *Qianbulang* 千步廊 surrounding the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square, were demolished in 1915, and in 1924, the Imperial Ancestral Temple was opened to the public as the “Peace Park.” Part of Altar of Agriculture became a sports school and the main sacrificial hall was used for memorial services for the 72 heroes who died in one of the uprisings against the Qing regime. In 1928, the imperial garden Scenery Hill also became a public park.

Although such functional transformations during the ROC era did not cause large-scale physical changes to the imperial north-south axis, a dramatic physical transformation was impending at the beginning of the PRC era. Such a threat to the imperial axis of “old Beijing” was keenly felt by some Chinese scholars and architects. Debates were initiated regarding whether the “old Beijing” should be preserved. Some schemes to protect “Old Beijing” with its imperial north-south axis were proposed. The one called the Liang-Chen Scheme is the most famous one.

The Two Approaches and Three Proposals

In September 1949, Beijing was designated as the capital of the future PRC⁷ during the First Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held in

⁷ After the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, Beijing, which means “North Capital,” served as the capital of China until 1928, when Chiang Kai-Shek moved the capital of the Republic of China (ROC) to Nanjing. Between 1928 and 1937, it was a special administrative city under the former early-Ming Dynasty (1368-1420) name “Beiping,” which means “North Pacification.” In 1937, the puppet government under the Japanese occupying forces restored its imperial name “Beijing” and made it the capital of the “Provisional Government of the Republic of China.” In 1945, after the Japanese surrendered, Nanjing became the national capital again, and Beijing again had the name of Beiping, until 1949. See: *Beijingshi*, 427, 436-7.

Zhongnanhai.⁸ While this designation did not meet with any major opposition, the location of the new administrative center became an issue for heated debate. In general, there were two major approaches in handling the relationship between the new government center and the historic Old City.⁹ One approach was to insert the government offices in the Old City; the other was to construct a brand new center in a suburb west of that traditional site of central power.

In December 1949, Soviet specialists presented their “Report on the issues of Beijing city’s future developmental planning 关于北京市将来发展计划的问题的报告” and “Proposal on the improvement of the municipal works of Beijing 关于改善北京市市政的建议” (hence referred to as “Soviet proposals”) during the urban planning meeting organized by the municipal government of Beijing and chaired by Mayor Nie Rongzhen 聂荣臻.¹⁰ Soviet specialists proposed to locate the administrative center in the Old City of Beijing and opposed the development of a new government center in the western suburb, which they considered as uneconomic. They also pointed out that the best strategy would be to rebuild a major avenue or a major square and develop the new government center around it. Their drawings indicate that the avenue they had in mind was Chang’an Avenue and the square was Tiananmen Square.¹¹ Such a proposal on the location of the administrative center by the Soviet specialists was probably already

⁸ Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 64-65.

⁹ The “Old City” of Beijing in this dissertation refers to the areas previously inside of the city walls of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

¹⁰ Wang Jun, 82.

¹¹ Beijing jianshe shishu bianji weiyuanhui bianjibu, ed., *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di I juan: chengshi guihua* 建国以来的北京城市建设资料第一卷: 城市规划 (Urban Construction Data of Beijing City after the Founding of PRC) (Beijing, 1995), 147-169.

generally agreed upon, in general, by the municipal government of Beijing in 1949.¹²

(Figure 6.11)

Most of the leading Chinese scholars and practitioners in the field of architecture and urban planning attended the December 1949 meeting. Two months later, in February 1950, Liang Sicheng, the most renowned Chinese architectural historian of the twentieth century, and Chen Zhanxiang, a British-trained urban planner invited to Beijing by Liang¹³, together proposed a different capital plan for the newly born People's Republic entitled, "Proposal for the location of the Central Administrative Area of the People's Central Government 关于中央人民政府行政中心区位置的建议." In this plan, better known as the Liang-Chen Scheme, the new administrative center would be located in the western suburb of Beijing with a new north-south axis parallel to the imperial north-south axis along the Forbidden City.¹⁴ Such a proposal was rejected by the communist authorities. In April, two Beijing-based architects Zhu Zhaoxue and Zhao Dongri proposed another general plan for the capital city, in which the new administrative center would remain in the Old City and face the Imperial City of the Ming-Qing dynasties across from the Chang'an Avenue.¹⁵ It was this proposal (referred to here as the Zhu-Zhao Scheme) that the future development of Beijing would mostly conform to, but the

¹² Wang Jun, 86.

¹³ Liang Sicheng, "Zhi Nie Rongzhen tongzhi xin (Letter to Comrade Nie Rongzhen)", in *Liang Sicheng wenji (4)*, (Beijing: zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1986), 368.

¹⁴ Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang, "Guanyu zhongyang renmin zhengfu xingzheng zhongxinqu weizhi de jianyi (Proposal for the location of the Central Administrative Area of the People's Central Government)", 1950, in CAATU.

¹⁵ Zhu Zhaoxue and Zhao Dongri, "Dui shoudu jianshe jihua de yijian (*Proposal for the Urban Planning of the Capital*)", 1950, in CAATU Tsinghua.

Liang-Chen Scheme is worth examining closer because of its great exposure and profound influence in the current discourse on Beijing. (Figure 6.12, 6.13)

The Liang-Chen Scheme and Its Two Authors

The two authors of the Liang-Chen Scheme were both trained abroad, though they brought to this project two very different backgrounds. Liang was born in 1901. His father, Liang Qichao 梁启超, was a leading philosopher and social reformer during the late 19th and early 20th century. Liang studied classics in traditional Chinese scholarship under his father's guide between 1915 and 1923 while also a student at Tsinghua School, the predecessor of today's Tsinghua University and at that time, a very Westernized institute preparing students for studying abroad. In 1924, Liang went to the University of Pennsylvania in the United States to study architecture, where the French architect Paul Cr  t was developing an American version of Beaux-Arts education in architecture. Liang received his Master's degree from U Penn in 1927. He returned to China in 1928 and founded the architecture department at the Northeast University in Manchuria. In 1931, Liang joined the Institute for Research on Chinese Architecture (Yingzaoxueshe 营造学社) and started his odyssey in search of ancient Chinese structures.¹⁶

While Liang was trained as an architect in the Beaux-Arts tradition, Chen specialized in urban planning. Chen went to England in 1938 to study architecture in the University of Liverpool. After five years of undergraduate study, he got his Bachelor's

¹⁶ Lin Zhu, *Jianzhushi Liang Sicheng* 建筑师梁思成 (Architect Liang Sicheng), (Tianjin: Tianjin kexue jishu chubanshe, 1997).

degree in 1943 and continued to work on his Master's degree in urban design in the same school. In 1944, Chen entered the University College at the University of London to pursue his doctoral degree in urban planning under Patrick Abercrombie.¹⁷

It is not entirely clear about who contributed what in the Liang-Chen Scheme. According to Chen in an interview in 1994, Liang was responsible for the article (texts) and he himself was mainly responsible for the planning (drawings).¹⁸ This means that although Liang and Chen might have shared similar views on the future development of Beijing and exchanged opinions on the planning issues, the specific wording, and possibly the entire reasoning behind the Liang-Chen Scheme for the construction of a new government center, was mainly Liang's.

The Liang-Chen Scheme of 1950 was a reaction to the Soviet proposals to insert the government offices in the Old City. Instead, it proffers two arguments in favor of moving the new government center to the western suburb. The first one argues that a location in the Old City of Beijing would limit the development of the new center; the second is that the traditional character of the ancient capital should not be harmed.¹⁹ Although the proposal's first point pays lip service to the priority of developing a new center, the real emphasis, on which much of the proposal's text focuses, is on the latter, namely, to maintain the capital's traditional character. And the defining character of traditional Beijing, according to the Liang-Chen Scheme, was its imperial north-south axis.

¹⁷ Zhu Qiqian, etc., *Zhejiang lu (Records of Sage Architects)* (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2005), 292-293.

¹⁸ Wang Jun, 86.

¹⁹ Liang and Chen, 1-3.

The Old and New North-South Axes in the Text of the Liang-Chen Scheme

At the very beginning of its text, the Liang-Chen Scheme proposed a new north-south axis in the western suburb of Beijing for the new administrative. In fact, Liang and Chen took for granted that the new administrative center had to have a north-south axis.

The proposal reads,

The only large area (in the Old City), which has both the potential to be a center and a north-south axis, and at the same time with an entrance open to a major avenue, is Zhongnanhai, which is now the seat of the central government. ... The other place, though smaller, that also meets the requirements of having a north-south axis and facing a major passageway, is occupied by the seat of the municipal government of Beijing. It is not accidental for these two sites to be chosen as government locations.²⁰

It is obvious that for Liang and Chen, an administrative center was unimaginable without a north-south axis to emulate the Forbidden City model. In fact, in the Liang-Chen Scheme, the imperial north-south axis of Beijing was extolled with the most enthusiastic language. The experience of spatial change from the long and narrow Thousand-pace Corridor (qianbulang 千步廊) to the sudden openness in front of the Tiananmen Tower was praised as a “masterpiece with the highest perfection 登峰造极的杰作;” and the centralized order imposed upon color and form created a timeless and unchangeable structure of unity. The Forbidden City embodied so completely the technological and artistic essence of the nation, and the purity and monumentality of the

²⁰ Liang and Chen, 9. (Author’s translation)

north-south axis loomed so large in the minds of the people, that according to the proposal, “no one will be so heartless or dare to change its original appearance.”²¹

More over, it was precisely because of the existence of the north-south axis that the old city had to be preserved as a whole. Liang argued that, on one hand, the symmetry of the old city created by the north-south axis left no room for the construction of a new government center;²² on the other hand, the absolute order with the imperial north-south axis as its backbone made the Old City of Beijing a work of art, beautiful and perfect.²³ It would be impossible to change any part of the Old City without ruining the perfection of the entire work:

A building in a city always has an impact on other buildings and thus must be in harmony with its environment. Our new buildings are different from the traditional ones in terms of the lives they serve and the materials and technologies they apply. As a result, the form must be very different. If they are constructed along streets or around the Tiananmen Square, Beijing will immediately lose its original style and be in the same troublesome position as what Europe is now trying to correct. They will ruin the purity of the traditional historical buildings no matter how majestic and beautiful they are, due to the disharmony they spread among the historical buildings. ... We should not ruin the beauty of old Beijing with 6-10 square kilometers of new buildings.²⁴

The perfection of the old city in individual buildings and in their layout created an environment that, according to the proposal, was cherished by the people of Beijing and was already part of their lives. Such perfection found in the old city, Liang and Chen

²¹ Liang and Chen, 15-16.

²² Liang and Chen, 8.

²³ Liang and Chen, 3.

²⁴ Liang and Chen, 27. (Author's translation)

believed, also had immense value because the city had been carefully thought out from its beginning and carefully maintained for hundreds of years.²⁵

The tone of the Liang-Chen Scheme with its emphasis on the preservation of the old city of Beijing corresponds more with Liang's professional experience as an architectural historian before the communist victory in China than with Chen's educational background as a city planner. These experiences include the traditional and patriotic education received from his father, Beaux-Arts architectural training in the West, and the survey and recording of ancient structures in north and southwest China when he was a leading member in the Institute for Research on Chinese Architecture. With his thorough, classical Chinese education combined with the new modern ideas gained from his American education, Liang developed a keen sense of national honor, one of the most crucial motivations behind Liang's research on traditional Chinese. During his years in the West, he saw the systematic studies of the architectural traditions in the United States and European countries. He was ashamed by the lack of written architectural history in China, and a lack accentuated by the strong traditions in other areas of Chinese scholarship. He said,

Only China, our ancient eastern country, has no architectural history of her own! Western scholars have not paid much attention to the development of Chinese architecture and its technology yet. However, I realize that some Japanese scholars have already started working on traditional Chinese architecture and its arts. I believe if we do not start sorting out and researching the architectural history of our own, sooner or later, this

²⁵ Liang and Chen, 26-27.

field will be occupied by Japanese scholars. As a Chinese architect, I cannot tolerate such things happen.²⁶

The sense of national pride and patriotism led Liang to embark on a justification of the position of Chinese architecture in the world by writing a history. Traditional Chinese architecture was just as rich, good, and progressive as architectural traditions in the West, if not better. This was the tone – besides the detailed technological and stylistic analyses – of Liang’s writings in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Liang-Chen Scheme was also imbued with such a tone, sometimes not without contradiction. According to the Liang-Chen Scheme, traditional Chinese architecture and city planning offered better solutions to contemporary Chinese cities than the foreign cities’ experiences in urban planning. However, in order to justify the preservation of old buildings in Beijing, it also argues that traditional Chinese city planning principles were similar to the most advanced modern city planning principles in the West; and traditional Chinese structure and methods conformed to the most advanced modern architectural structure and construction.²⁷ Such contradiction can also be found in Liang’s justification of the Chineseness of Chinese architecture in his early writings. On one hand, Chinese architecture was a unique system of building, which was characterized by the courtyard in spatial organization, wooden frame in structure, and bracket system in construction. On the other hand, Chinese architecture was advanced and progressive

²⁶ Lin Zhu, 23.

²⁷ Liang and Chen, 21-22.

because of its conformation to such “universal” values as technological integrity and scientific modern frame structure.²⁸

Both the nationalist tone and the contradiction in Liang’s Chinese architecture project were underlain by a profound sense of nostalgia. According to David Lowenthal, nostalgia was a mechanism to enjoy the sadness of loss, in which the past was idealized and yearned for only because it was irredeemable.²⁹ Beijing was both uniquely Chinese and universal for Liang just like the past was lamented but insincerely wanted in nostalgia. However, the nostalgia in the Liang-Chen Scheme was more than an empty sentiment about the past but an active effort to preserve it for the future. In this sense, the mechanism of nostalgia in the Liang-Chen Scheme confirms more to Madeleine Yue Dong’s concept of “recycling” than Lowenthal’s description. As Dong pointed out, “Recycling kept the past alive in the present in a concrete material way and thus created a tangible basis for nostalgia.”³⁰ Such a tangible basis for nostalgia was precisely what the Chinese communists wanted to destroy. It was said that one day Liang and Premier Zhou Enlai talked for two hours regarding the demolition of *pailou* (memorial archways) in Beijing. After Liang had described the beautiful scene with *pailou* during sunset in a poetic mood, Zhou replied by citing a Tang Dynasty poem, “For all his glory and endless beauty, the setting sun is to be buried by the coming night.”³¹

²⁸ Liang Sicheng, *Treatises on Ancient Chinese Architecture*, (Macao: Shenzhou Book Company, 1975).

²⁹ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4-7.

³⁰ Madeleine Dong, 304.

³¹ Wang Jun, 175. The poem Zhou cited was written by Li Shangyin (813-858) – 夕阳无限好，只是近黄昏，English translation by the author.

The Old and New North-South Axes in the Drawings of Liang-Chen Scheme

While the text and tone of the Liang-Chen Scheme was mainly Liang's, Chen was responsible for its drawings. It seems that the professional training he received abroad played an important role in his planning of the new government center. Chen's doctoral advisor in England, Sir Abercrombie was Britain's leading academic planning theorist in the early twentieth century. He was also a practitioner whose urban planning schemes were a major contribution to the 1944 Greater London Plan, in which the main approach for the reconstruction of the postwar British capital was to found satellite new towns outside of London.³² This approach to the development of a historic city might have inspired Chen in the planning of new administrative center for Beijing.

The drawings of the new government center as proposed in the Liang-Chen Scheme, however, bear strong resemblance to the old administrative center complex in front of the Forbidden City. (Figure 6.14) The administrative center of the Ming and Qing dynasties was located around the T-shaped imperial Tiananmen Square on Beijing's north-south axis. The headquarters of the Six Ministries (liubu 六部) and other major government agencies were grouped on the east and west sides of the Thousand-pace Corridor, which was the southern part of the square. On the west side of the Thousand-pace Corridor, the Ming Dynasty built the headquarters of the Five Armies 五军都督府 and the secret police force Jinyiwei 锦衣卫, and the Qing Dynasty built the Ministry of Punishment (Xingbu 刑部), Imperial Procurate (Duchayuan 都察院), and the Imperial

³² Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Scout, eds, *The City Reader* (London and New York: Soutledge, 2000), 311.

Prison (Qintianjian 钦天监); on the east side of the Thousand-pace Corridor, both Ming and Qing dynasties built the Ministry of Rites (Libu 礼部), Ministry of Revenue (Hubu 户部), Ministry of Civil Office (Libu 吏部), Ministry of Public Works (Gongbu 工部), and the Imperial Hanlin Academy (Hanlinyuan 翰林院).³³ The new government center in the Liang-Chen Scheme was also located on a north-south axis, with headquarters of different ministries and state commissions on the east and west sides of it. The new north-south axis, like the imperial north-south axis along the Forbidden City, was characterized by the alternation of empty space and monumental structure. The only difference is, while in the imperial north-south axis the empty space was enclosed courtyard, in the plan for the new north-south axis, it was replaced by open square.

Further analysis shows that the locations of the monuments on the north-south axis of the new government center in the Liang-Chen Scheme follow the composition of the monuments on the imperial north-south axis, with the Forbidden City as the center. There were four monuments on the new north-south axis. Three of them have their specific function identified. In the south is the headquarters for the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) 全国人民代表大会和中国人民政治协商会议³⁴. It was followed, to its immediate north, by the State Council 政务院, which was followed in turn by a third monument that occupies the

³³ Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 6-7.

³⁴ For a more succinct narrative and analysis, this monument will be referred to as the People's Congress in this paper.

very center of the plan but is not identified in the proposal.³⁵ Based on the power structure of the communist regime, this structure should be the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC).³⁶ The structure at the north end of the new north-south axis was the Central Military Commission (CMC), which was called People's Revolutionary Military Commission 人民革命军事委员会 at that time.³⁷ The relationship between the buildings for the People's Congress, the State Council and the Party headquarter, and the Military Commission in the Liang-Chen Scheme resembled the relationship between the Tiananmen Tower (Tiananmen 天安门), the Meridian Gate (Wumen 午门) plus the Forbidden City (Zijincheng 紫禁城), and the Scenery Hill (Jingshan 景山) on the imperial north-south axis. (Figure 6.15) The status of the State Council in the new north-south axis was very similar to the status of the Tiananmen Tower in the imperial north-south axis. This was reinforced by the two government complexes behind it – the Commission of the Overseas Chinese Affairs on the west side and the Supreme Procurate on the east side, which framed the axis just like the Altar of Soil and Grain and the Imperial Ancestral Temple did on either side of the imperial axis above the Tiananmen Tower. (Figure 6.14)

The architectural ensemble of the State Council, the Party headquarter, and the four commission headquarters in between resembled the Forbidden City not only in its position on the axis, but also in scale. The whole group was just slightly bigger than the

³⁵ Was the identity of this structure deliberately omitted by Liang and Chen? Did it show that Liang and Chen were not endorsing the one-party system of the new communist regime? Did this have anything to do with the government's eventual rejection of the Liang-Chen Scheme? These are the questions that cannot be addressed here.

³⁶ This unidentified monument will be referred to as the Party headquarters from here on.

³⁷ Identified from here on as the Military Commission.

Forbidden City. The form of the State Council complex, which was the southern entrance of this architectural ensemble, was very similar to the Meridian Gate, which was the southern entrance of the Forbidden City. They both had a central structure with two embracing arms on the east and west sides of it. (Figure 6.16) Finally, at the north end of the new axis, the Military Commission complex mimicked the Scenery Hill behind the Forbidden City on the imperial north-south axis. They were both smaller squares attached to the major rectangular architectural ensembles. (Figure 6.15)

The arrangement of the four major communist government agencies on the new north-south axis in the Liang-Chen Scheme was not accidental, but deeply imbedded in the time-honored power structure and its architectural expression in imperial China. According to the *Rituals of Zhou* 周礼 from the Zhou Dynasty (1045 – 256 BCE), the palace for the “Son of Heaven” should have three main courts 三朝: from south to north, the outer court 外朝, the inner court 内朝, and the banquet court 燕朝.³⁸ The outer court was mainly used for the most important ceremonies; the function of the inner court was for the daily operation of the government affairs; and the banquet court was for the “Son of Heaven” to discuss official business or have banquets with his officials or other members from the royal family. From the outer court in the south to the banquet court in the north, privacy became greater and greater with the publicity functions gradually diminishing. While the southern outer court was for ceremonies to show off the power, the real source of power was the royal family located in the very back, hidden and

³⁸ Liu Xujie, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture (Volume One: Primitive Society, Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han Dynasties)*, (Beijing: China Building Press, 2003), 239-40.

invisible from outside. No matter whether or not the original intentions of Liang and Chen, the arrangement of the People's Congress, the State Council, the Party headquarter, and the Military Commission in the Liang-Chen Scheme was very similar to the three courts described in the *Rituals of Zhou*. The People's Congress, like the outer court, was mainly of ceremonial significance in the power structure of the communist regime, while the real power was controlled firmly by the Chinese Communist Party, whose power again originated from its full control over military affairs of the nation. The latter two – the Party headquarter and the Military Commission – were like the banquet court of the imperial periods. The State Council, like the inner court in the *Rituals of Zhou*, held the daily government operations, and was located between the public ceremonial complex and the private source of power.

Such an ideal power structure from the *Rituals of Zhou*, while being carried out in many imperial capitals throughout China's more than two thousands years of imperial history, was best illustrated by the Forbidden City of Beijing.³⁹(Figure 6.17) The Meridian Gate was used for various ceremonies during the Ming (1420-1644 CE) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties⁴⁰ and can be compared to the outer court of the Zhou dynasty. During the Ming dynasty, the Fengtian Gate (Fengtianmen 奉天门), where Ming

³⁹ During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the imperial palace was no longer strictly following the trinity of outer, inner, and banquet courts. However, the complexes on the north-south axis from the Tian'anmen Tower to the Three Outer Hall were referred to as outer court (waichao) and all the other complexes inside of the Forbidden City belong to the inner court (neiting). See: Pan Guxi, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture (Volume Four: Yuan and Ming Dynasties)* (Beijing: China Building Press, 1999), 108-9. Comparisons made in this dissertation between the complexes in the Forbidden City and the three courts in the *Rituals of Zhou* are mainly based on real functions rather than formal titles. The function of the same complex kept changing, thus the locations of the three courts in the Forbidden City were not fixed.

⁴⁰ The ceremonies at the Meridian Gate include those for promulgation of imperial edicts, for departing on expeditions, for receiving captives in wars, etc. The officials also stood in line waiting for court hearing in the Meridian Gate courtyard during the Ming dynasty. See: Pan Guxi, 108; and also: Sun Dazhang, *History of Ancient Chinese Architecture (Volume Five: Qing Dynasty)* (Beijing: China Building Press, 2002), 46.

emperors held their daily offices, functioned similar to the Zhou dynasty inner court; the Outer Three Halls 外三大殿 – Fengtian Hall 奉天殿, Huagai Hall 华盖殿, and Jinshen Hall 谨身殿 – were places for imperial court meetings and banquets, functions served by the banquet court during the Zhou dynasty; and the Inner Three Halls 内三大殿 – Qianqing Hall 乾清宫, Jiaotai Hall 交泰殿, and Kunning Hall 坤宁宫 – were formal sleeping chambers for the emperor and empress,⁴¹ the hidden site where imperial power resided. During the Qing dynasty, the emperor's sleeping chamber Qianqing Hall was formally changed into an imperial court. The emperor no longer held daily office in the Fengtian Gate, which was renamed the Gate of Supreme Harmony (Taihemen 太和门) and became a ceremonial site for issuing imperial edicts, like the function of the Meridian Gate.⁴² The entire courts moved back one layer further. The four major monuments on the north-south axis in the Liang-Chen Scheme, namely, the People's Congress, the State Council, the Party headquarter, and the Military Commission, thus were comparable to the Meridian Gate, the Fengtian Gate, the Outer Three Halls, and Inner Three Halls of the Ming dynasty in terms of their places in the power structure. They bear some formal similarities too. The central courtyard of the State Council and the Party headquarter was preceded by the People's Congress and followed by the Military Commission, just like the main courtyard of the Fengtian Gate and Outer Three Halls was preceded by the Meridian Gate and followed by the Inner Three Halls.

⁴¹ Pan Guxi, 108-9.

⁴² Sun Dazhang, 37-52.

The arrangement of the four monuments on the new north-south axis in the Liang-Chen Scheme, therefore, bears a two-fold resemblance to the imperial north-south axis in Beijing. On a formal level, it resembles the spatial procession from the Tiananmen Tower, to the Meridian Gate, to the Forbidden City, to Scenery Hill; on the symbolic and functional level, it resembles the power pyramid of outer court, inner court, and banquet court as represented in the Meridian Gate, the Fengtian Gate, the Outer Three Halls, and Inner Three Halls in the Forbidden City. It is this close parallel with the spatial and ideological scheme of China's imperial power that doomed the Liang-Chen Scheme to failure during the time of revolution.

This is not to say that communist leaders in the 1950s rejected Liang-Chen Scheme because they recognized the profound resemblance between its new government center design and the imperial city of Beijing. Rather, it was the nostalgic nature underlying the Liang-Chen Scheme that prevented the authors to come up with a stronger statement than developing a new east-west axis to compete with the traditional north-south axis.

Chang'an Avenue and the East-west Axis

When the debate about the location of the central administration center in the socialist capital was going on in the year 1949 and 1950, the main opposition to the Liang-Chen Scheme was the Soviet specialists' proposal, which was supported by the

government officials and allegedly by Mao.⁴³ The Soviet proposal, however, remained sketchy both in text and plan drawings. Some texts were mostly arguments against Professor Liang's reasoning for building a brand new government center in the western suburb, supported by economic calculations based on the experience of Moscow. On the cultural level, while the Liang-Chen Scheme tried to preserve the Old City of Beijing by leaving it alone, the Soviet specialists considered such a strategy as an abandonment of the historic city. They argued that "one should give up reconstructing and reorganizing the Old City only when Beijing was considered as valueless in history and architecture."⁴⁴ If the application of Liang-Chen Scheme was made impossible by the Soviet proposal, it was the Zhu-Zhao Scheme that offered a formally concrete alternative to it.

The Zhu-Zhao Scheme and the New Axes of Beijing

While the Liang-Chen Scheme preserves, mimics, and strengthens the time-honored north-south axis of Beijing, the Zhu-Zhao Scheme transgresses and weakens it. Although the Liang-Chen Scheme suggested establishing a new north-south axis for the new administrative center parallel to the imperial axis 5.2 kilometers to its west, that new axis in scale and status could never have compared favorably to the old one. It was much shorter and less symmetrically framed than the one along the Forbidden City. In the plans, it looks like a descendant of the old imperial axis, or a younger brother at most. The Liang-Chen Scheme not only does not acknowledge the need to challenge the past, but

⁴³ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 166.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

actually follows in the past's footsteps. The Zhu-Zhao plan, however, not only breaks with the past, but does so in a way that would also clearly make a formal and symbolic challenge to the past. (Figure 6.13)

Zhu and Zhao clearly stated that their new scheme was meant to create a new east-west axis to compete with, if not to dominate, the north-south one. The east-west axis in the 1950 Zhu-Zhao Scheme, however, was not Chang'an Avenue, but the entire strip of land with new socialist monuments between Chang'an Avenue and the southern wall of the Inner City of Beijing.⁴⁵ Zhao also explained later in 1993 that what they proposed as the east-west axis in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme was an axis of monuments to the south of the Chang'an Avenue instead of the empty avenue itself.⁴⁶ (Figure 6.18)

In the Zhu-Zhao Scheme, Chang'an Avenue was planned as a border between the old and the new. To its north was the Forbidden City and to its south was located the new administrative center. The entire area inside of the Inner City of Beijing between Chang'an Avenue and the south city wall was reserved for the central government along a east-west axis: in the center directly facing the Imperial City was the administrative center; on the west side were cultural, educational, and political-legal branches; and on the east side were departments of finance and economics. The arrangement of the central government institutions along Chang'an Avenue to its south and the confrontation between the old and the new on the two sides of Chang'an Avenue, however, disconnected the imperial north-south axis. The future development of Beijing was also envisioned to follow the Chang'an Avenue. An Eastern Center and a Western Center

⁴⁵ Zhu and Zhao, 4.

⁴⁶ Wang Jun, pp. 234-35.

were planned, which would join the central new government center through the Chang'an Avenue.⁴⁷ Bisected by such a long avenue running from the eastern border of Beijing all the way to Babaoshan area in the west suburb, the imperial north-south axis would be totally overshadowed.⁴⁸

Closer observation of the drawings in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme shows that Chang'an Avenue was not exactly the border between the old imperial center and the new government center. The central part of the long strip reserved for the central government just to the south of the Forbidden City was specifically defined like a new Forbidden City with a new secondary north-south axis. (Figure 6.19) The new secondary north-south axis, however, was not along Tiananmen Square, where it would have been merged into the imperial axis and thus strengthened it, but slightly off the old north-south axis to its west. This new north-south axis was secondary because it was much shorter than both the traditional imperial north-south axis and the east-west axis they proposed. However, it posed a great impact for the traditional north-south axis. While the Liang-Chen Scheme put the new north-south axis outside of the Old City of Beijing and left the entire Old City with its imperial axis alone, the new north-south axis in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme was so close to the traditional north-south axis that its development would certainly conflict with and require alteration of the monuments along the traditional north-south axis.

The secondary north-south axis in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme was aligned with the former Altar of Soil and Grain 社稷坛, the sacrificial complex on the west side of the imperial north-south axis. On its west side, Zhongnanhai – the middle and southern parts

⁴⁷ Zhu and Zhao, 3.

⁴⁸ Zhu and Zhao, 5.

of the former imperial garden in the Imperial City – was already designated as the residential area for the communist leaders; on its east side, the former Imperial Ancestral Temple 太庙 was renamed the Cultural Palace for the Laboring People 劳动人民文化宫. The site of the former Altar of Soil and Grain thus became the center of the new spatial-power framework. When the living quarters for those in power moved westward from the Forbidden City to Zhongnanhai, the north-south axis followed the move. In the Zhu-Zhao Scheme, Tiananmen Square on the traditional north-south axis was not the political center of the newly born People's Republic. There was barely a square in front of the Tiananmen Tower. The square on the new north-south axis was much larger. The drawings in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme also show that the physical environment of the Ming-Qing Altar and Temple would have been changed drastically in order to accommodate new functions, although some historical structures would be allowed to remain.

In the Zhu-Zhao Scheme, Chang'an Avenue was not yet the east-west axis. Moreover, it was not even a unified thoroughfare running through the central administrative center. The main traffic would have to go around the new center to the south of the Forbidden City. Like its counterpart to the north, the new government was also blocking the east-west communication in the center of Beijing.

The merging of Chang'an Avenue and the east-west axis

The visual power of the long wide Chang'an Avenue in the drawings of the Zhu-Zhao Scheme, however, proved to be fundamental for the future planning of Beijing. In the 1953 Beijing city master plan, Chang'an Avenue is unified and running through the

center of the city. However, it did not extend much further eastward and the avenue was not completely straight. At that time, the city walls of Beijing still remained and Chang'an Avenue turned a little north at the west city wall. In the 1954 master plan, Chang'an Avenue extended further eastward, seemingly endless in the drawing, and became a thoroughfare running through the entire east-west span of the city and the turns in the previous year's plan disappeared. The width of the avenue, however, was still not consistent. Sections of the West Chang'an Avenue Extension was wider than its eastern counterparts. In the 1957 master plan of Beijing, the inconsistency in width also disappeared. The entire length of Chang'an Avenue became a straight, wide, and open thoroughfare. (Figure 6.20)

The development of the major avenue running through the city center of Beijing might have been inspired by Moscow. Beijing in the early 1950s shared many common problems with post-revolution Moscow in the 1920s. Like Beijing, Moscow had also served as the imperial capital of Russia for centuries. The city had layers of city walls with the Tsarist palace, the Kremlin, at the center. After the October Revolution in 1918, Moscow was designated as the capital for the Soviet Union and city walls were gradually demolished. A new government center for the communist regime was constructed next to the Kremlin Palace around Red Square. Tverskaya Avenue, the main avenue for parades during public ceremonies of the Soviet Union, became the most significant thoroughfare of Moscow, running between the Kremlin and Red Square. Given the close involvement of Soviet specialists in Beijing's master plan and the great Soviet influence in every field

in the early years of the PRC, the existence of such a connection seems tenable. (Figure 6.21)

While the unification and extension of Chang'an Avenue might bear some influence from the Soviet Union, the designation of it as an urban axis was deeply imbedded in the Chinese tradition. The city of Moscow was not oriented according to cardinal direction like Beijing. In contrast to Moscow, whose traditional plan was a circular shape with ring roads and avenues radiating from the center, most ancient Chinese cities were rectangular with a grid of perpendicular streets and avenues following the cardinal directions. Most local Chinese cities during the imperial time were divided into four major sectors by a cross of north-south and east-west avenues. Unlike imperial capitals such as Beijing, which had the Palace City and Imperial City at the very center, the center of such local cities was usually an open space where the two major roads met. Thus, except for Beijing, urban axes in the early 20th century were often associated with a city's main north-south and east-west thoroughfares in a city. (Figure 6.22)

For many architects and city planners in the 1950s, the axis of Beijing also meant the main urban thoroughfare running through the geometric center of the rectangular city. In the 1954 Beijing city master plan, it was stated in the section on "Road and square system" that "in order to make a convenient communication in the city center and to make a better connection between the center and other parts of the city, the north-south and east-west axes would be greatly extended in length and expanded in width, which

should be no less than 100 m.”⁴⁹ Not only Beijing’s east-west but also its north-south axis was conceived mainly as thoroughfare at the time. Seeing from such a perspective, the destruction of walls and gates along the north-south axis in the 1950s can be understood as an endeavor to transform the axis of imperial monuments into an axis of open thoroughfare.⁵⁰

Although the history of axial planning in Chinese architecture and city can be traced back at least to the Zhou Dynasty, the use of the term “axis” in the discussion and analysis of architecture and city planning is a recent phenomenon. In “History of Chinese Architecture” by Yue Jiaxiao,⁵¹ the first book (originally published in 1933) on traditional Chinese architecture by a Chinese, the author claims that “the uniqueness of Chinese architecture in the world is its exactly founded central stem and left-right symmetry 中干之严立与左右之对称.”⁵² The word “axis” is never used. Liang first use the word “central axis” 中轴线 in a 1932 article to characterize the courtyard organization in Chinese architecture, and emphasized that it was usually north-south oriented with secondary structures built symmetrically on the left and right sides.⁵³ While Yue was a literati scholar educated mainly in the Confucian classics, Liang was trained in the United States in the Beaux-Arts tradition. It is possible that the application of “axis” in the analysis of

⁴⁹ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 216, 227.

⁵⁰ The north gate of the Imperial City Di’an-men was demolished in 1954-55; the south gate of the Imperial City Zhonghua-men (Ming Dynasty Daming-men; Qing Dynasty Daqing-men) was demolished in 1959; the south gate of the Outer City Yongding-men was also demolished at the end of the 1950s. See: Wang Jun, 314-316.

⁵¹ Yue Jiaxiao (1868-1944): a traditional Confucian scholar and self-trained architectural historian.

⁵² Yue Jiaxiao, *History of Chinese Architecture* (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2005), 152.

⁵³ Liang Sicheng, “Tang Dynasty Buddhist Temples and Palaces as We Know Today,” in *Journal of the Chinese Architecture Society* 中国营造学社汇刊, volume 3-1, 1932; see also: *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng* (Beijing: Chinese Architecture and Building Press, 2001), volume 1, 135.

Chinese architecture in Liang's early writings came from his training abroad in the 1920s. Both the "central stem" for Yue and the "central axis" for Liang referred to the principle structures along the central north-south route in a traditional Chinese courtyard complex, gates, halls, pavilions, towers, etc. (Figure 6.23)

Thus, at the time of the 1950s, there were at least two different meanings for "axis." One referred to the axis of monuments that is as so common in architectural complexes in ancient China; the other referred to the axis of an open thoroughfare as seen in local Chinese cities. For the east-west axis of Beijing, some architects, for instance, Zhu and Zhao, insisted that it should be an axis of monuments like the traditional north-south axis along the Forbidden City; others, like Chen Gan, a well-known city planner in Beijing who participated in the preparation of Tiananmen Square for the founding ceremony in 1949,⁵⁴ argued that it was the east-west thoroughfare Chang'an Avenue. Chen summarized the city plan of Beijing as "one center, two axes, three rings, four-side rectangle" 一个中心，两条轴线，三圈环路，四方周正. He further proposed that the two axes represented tradition and innovation for Beijing's city planning respectively. In an early 1959 article, after discussing both the outstanding heritages and backward disadvantages of Old Beijing, he argued:

We have made use of the frameworks of the Old City and developed a horizontal axis running all the way through the city, perpendicular to the north-south central axis. The general coordinate axis system for the city planning of Beijing is thus formed. The entire layout of the city is thus stabilized in the solemn composition of both traditional and innovative.

⁵⁴ Chen Gan is one generation younger than Lian Sicheng and Chen Zhanxian. He graduated from the Architecture Department at the Central University in Nanjing in the 1940s. See: *Jinghua dasi lu*, 215-259.

In terms of tradition, it is manifested in:

- (1) Keeping the original central axis as the guiding principle of the general city layout.
- (2) Keeping the original checkerboard street system as the framework of the urban texture.
- (3) Keeping the solemn composition with the symbol of national political power at the center.

In terms of innovation, it is manifested in:

- (1) Unifying, widening, and extending the East and West Chang'an Avenues into a horizontal axis of 20 km spanning the entire east-west dimension of the city. Running from Tongxian County in the east to Shijingshan District in the west, this east-west axis would make a match to the north-south central axis and would further integrate the city and stabilize the composition. This would be a significant bold breakthrough for the Old City of Beijing. Such [an approach in] reconstruction and expansion [of old cities] is rare not only in the Chinese history of city construction but also in the world. This would be really a great and unprecedented brushwork 空前大手笔.
- (2) Moving the central point symbolizing the center from the Forbidden City and the Hall of Supreme Harmony to Tiananmen Square and the position of the national flag pole. Although the relocation would be only a couple hundred meters, it would make an unmistakable distinction between two entirely different historical periods.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Chen Gan, *Jinghua daisilu*, 23-33.

Chen later also explained that the expanded 16 km-long north-south axis and the 40 km-long east-west axis Chang'an Avenue formed two "coordinate axes" for city planning of Beijing.⁵⁶

Although Chen and Zhao disagreed with each other about whether the east-west should be Chang'an Avenue or an axis of new monuments to its south, they both designated Tiananmen Square as the coordinate origin. Future development largely followed Chen's prediction. Chang'an Avenue was constructed into the east-west axis of Beijing and many sectors to the south of Chang'an Avenue remained one-story courtyards, even today, clearly failing to be reconstructed as an axis of monuments. (Figure 6.24)

The rise of the status of Chang'an Avenue led to the construction of its monumental facades. In order to make a relatively complete façade for Chang'an Avenue, it was decided in the early 1950s⁵⁷ that construction would concentrate on one side of the avenue. The side chosen was the northern façade.⁵⁸ This might be a result of a strong convention in architectural orientation, in which facing south was considered as most formal, comfortable, auspicious, and authoritative. Thus, although the "central administrative center" was located to the south of Chang'an Avenue in the Zhu-Zhao Scheme, more monumental projects along Chang'an Avenue were constructed on its north side to acquire the best orientation, which made Chang'an Avenue the actual east-west axis regardless of the original intention of the authors.

⁵⁶ Chen Gan, 72.

⁵⁷ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 1-37, 147-233.

⁵⁸ The material I read does not specify who made these decisions.

Redefining the “nature of Beijing” and the transformation of Chang’an Avenue’s status

While Chang’an Avenue became the east-west thoroughfare and the de facto east-west axis of Beijing as early as the late 1950s, its status as a symbolic axis came much later. For decades, Chang’an Avenue served mainly as the communication channel linking the symbolic center of Tiananmen Square with the rest of the city. Since the 1980s, however, the role Chang’an Avenue has played in the city of Beijing became more and more symbolic. Such a transformation of Chang’an Avenue’s status from a functional thoroughfare to a symbolic axis coincides with the redefinition of the “nature of Beijing” after the end of Mao’s era (1949-1978).

The designation of the capital city’s nature was a major issue for every master plan of Beijing. When the seat of the communist regime moved to Beijing in 1949, Beijing was designated as a “consumer city,” which was backward, not a “productive city,” which was considered progressive. According to Soviet specialists, a socialist capital should not only be a city of culture, science and art, but also a major industrial center. The percentage of the working class represented was considered of political importance. In a late 1949 report, the Soviet specialists informed their communist officials and their Chinese colleagues that the percentage of working class in the population of Moscow was 25 percent, while that for Beijing was only 4. Thus, Beijing was still a consumer city and needed large-scale industrial construction.⁵⁹ The central

⁵⁹ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 152.

government accepted Soviet specialists' suggestions and made it a principle in urban reconstruction to "transform the consumer city into a productive city." The percentage of working class in Beijing's population had to be raised, which was the "indispensable prerequisite for a capital of a people's democratic country."⁶⁰

In the 1954 Beijing city master plan, Beijing was designated as the "political, economic, and cultural center, especially to be constructed as the strong industrial base and technological and scientific center of our country."⁶¹ The report by the Beijing Municipal Committee to the Central government condensed the definition of Beijing's nature as "political center, cultural center, scientific and artistic center, and at the same time a large industrial city."⁶² There were four major industrial areas in the 1954 plan: light industry and small to middle scale heavy industry in the eastern part; unsanitary and combustible industries in the southern part; metallurgical and heavy industries in the western part; and industries of precision instruments and precision optical machineries in the north-eastern part. The industrial areas as planned in 1954 were concentrated in the eastern and western parts of the city. Moreover, the mountainous area further west and the suburb close to Tongxian County in the far eastern areas were proposed to reserve for future industrial development.⁶³

As future industrial developments were planned mainly along the east-west dimension of the city, Chang'an Avenue became the most important functional thoroughfare to link these industrial areas with the political center at Tiananmen Square.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁶¹ Ibid., 214.

⁶² Ibid., 234.

⁶³ Ibid., 215-6.

In the 1950 Zhu-Zhao Scheme, Chang'an Avenue was only one of the three thoroughfares linking the eastern and western suburbs of Beijing.⁶⁴ In the 1954 plan, however, Chang'an Avenue was the only east-west thoroughfare planned to be about 100 m wide.⁶⁵

The nature of Beijing as defined in the 1958 plan was only slightly changed compared to that of the 1954 one. It was now designated as the “political center and cultural educational center, which will be soon constructed as a modern industrial base and scientific technological center.”⁶⁶ While the industrial areas in the 1958 plan were more dispersed all over the capital and its mountainous satellite cities due to safety considerations during wartime, which was considered as highly possible in the near future, the status of Chang'an Avenue was slightly raised compared to the 1954 plan. Ministries of the central government and significant national building such as museums, national theatre, etc. were planned to be constructed along Chang'an Avenue, which was envisioned to be roughly completed within five years before the tenth anniversary of the PRC.⁶⁷

The turning point in the definition of the “nature of Beijing” came in the year 1980. In the “Instructions about Capital Construction Principles” from the CCPCC Secretariat issued in April 1980, the characteristics of the Chinese capital were simplified into two points: “first, the capital is the national political center, the nerve center, and the center to maintain popular morale of the party and the people, not necessarily the

⁶⁴ The other two were the Guanyumen-Guang'anmen thoroughfare and the Three-front-gates thoroughfare following the southern wall of the Inner City. See: Materials, 208.

⁶⁵ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 227.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 237, 247.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 249-251.

economic center; secondly, it is China's show window to the world and the whole world looks at China through Beijing." The instruction from the party center emphasized the significance of culture, scenery, hygiene, historic heritage, science, education and public order in the capital. Economic aspects were downplayed and the development of industry, which was so ambitiously pursued during the Mao era, was carefully controlled. It specifically pointed out that "the focus in economic development of Beijing is tourism, service trades, food industry, high-technology and light industries, and electronic industry. Heavy industry was determined basically not to be developed any more. Heavy industry can be developed through exporting capital, equipments, and technical specialists from the capital to provinces, which will help to alleviate the population pressure of the capital as well."⁶⁸

The instructions from the party center about the redefinition of the Chinese capital's nature were codified in the 1982 Beijing city master plan, in which the city nature of Beijing was defined as "the capital of our great socialist country, the national political center and cultural center." The construction and development of all enterprises were required to adjust and serve such a city nature. Beijing was considered having enough industrial bases and only needed to develop light industries and traditional handicrafts in the future.⁶⁹

It was in the 1982 Beijing city master plan that the status of Chang'an Avenue as the east-west axis of the Chinese capital was first formally codified in official documents. The section on "Old City Reconstruction" stated,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 391.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 257-260.

In planning layout, we kept and developed the original north-south central axis, and unified and extended East and West Chang'an Avenues to form the new east-west axis. The two axes meet at Tiananmen Square. After various reconstructions, Tiananmen Square has become the central square for people's mass activities in the capital. The layout of the Old City with the Forbidden City at the center symbolizing the overweening feudal emperors has been changed.

... ..

We should continue completing the reconstruction of Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue. Leading organs of the party center and the nation, as well as some significant large-scale cultural institutions and other public buildings, should be arranged here to form a solemn, beautiful, and modernized central square and main thoroughfare.⁷⁰

Chang'an Avenue, instead of a functional road to connect Tiananmen Square with the capital's eastern and western suburbs, became one of the definers of the center. The narration made the origin and effect reversed, which sounds like that Tiananmen Square was significant because it was the place where Chang'an Avenue met the central axis. With the deletion of the "main industrial base" from the nature of the capital, Chang'an Avenue was planned to be filled with political and cultural institutions. The wording of "continue completing" suggests the on-going nature of the construction of Chang'an Avenue, parallel to the constantly updating process in the Chinese modernization project.

The "nature of Beijing" as defined in the 1982 planning was further modified in the 1992 master plan. "World-wide famous ancient capital and modern international city" were added to the "great socialist Chinese capital and national political and cultural

⁷⁰ Ibid., 270-1.

center.”⁷¹ Chang’an Avenue’s status as the east-west axis of Beijing was confirmed. However, in order to be in harmony with the new ambition to be a world metropolis, in addition to political and cultural institutions, commercial and service facilities were allowed to be built on Chang’an Avenue.⁷² Another major change in the 1992 Beijing city master plan compared to the 1982 version was the revived emphasis on the north-south central axis and historic preservation for the future development of the capital,⁷³ which would be further strengthened in the 2005 planning.

From the very beginning of the PRC era to the early 1990s, the city planning of Beijing was characterized by the gradual elimination of “industrial center” in the definitions of Beijing’ nature and the gradual increase of Chang’an Avenue’s symbolic significance as an east-west axis.⁷⁴ Such a correspondence was not accidental. When the Chinese modernization project became less and less functional, Chang’an Avenue’s role in the city grew more and more symbolic accordingly.

The “Solid” Axis and the “Void” Axis

The imperial north-south axis is referred to as *shizhou*, or the “solid axis,” for the monuments located directly on the axis; the new east-west axis of Chang’an Avenue is referred to as *xuzhou*, or the “void axis,” because it is an empty thoroughfare framed by but not consisting of monumental façades. If the north-south axis of Beijing with its

⁷¹ Ibid., 302.

⁷² Ibid., 309.

⁷³ Ibid., 313.

⁷⁴ Zhang Jinggan, *Beijing guihua jianshe wushi nian* (Fifty Years of Planning and Construction for Beijing), 52-56.

numerous ceremonial gates and imperial monuments represented the national identity of imperial China, Chang'an Avenue was developed after 1949 as an opposition to it. The continuous addition of government buildings and national cultural projects with the highest political significance made Chang'an Avenue the primary showcase for socialist achievement in China. The construction of Chang'an Avenue represented the on-going construction of the national identity of PRC.

The character of the Chang'an Avenue contrasts with the north-south axis in many different ways. First, although both the north-south axis and Chang'an Avenue are passageways, the latter is a real one while the former is mainly symbolic. Before 1912, most of the central gateways on the north-south axis were reserved for the emperors and kept closed most of the time. For example, the central south gate of the Inner City Zhengyangmen was reserved for the emperor to pass through while he was alive; after he died, his body had to leave the city through other gates.⁷⁵ The Damingmen (Qing Daqingmen, Republic Zhonghuamen) on the south end of the Tiananmen Square was only to be opened for national ceremonies and daily access to the Imperial City was through Left and Right Chang'an Gates.⁷⁶ In fact, all the important gates on the north-south axis had specific ceremonial functions: the Tiananmen Gate was for issuing imperial edicts, the Duanmen Gate was just a ritual or ceremonial gate (*yimen*) without any practical function as a doorway, the Meridian Gate (Wumen) was for departing on expeditions and for receiving captives, the Taihemen Gate was for imperial banquets and

⁷⁵ Gao Wei, *Manhua Beijing (Casual Words about Beijing)*, (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2003), 108.

⁷⁶ *Beijingshi (History of Beijing)*, 226.

congratulation receptions (*chaohe*), etc.⁷⁷ Chang'an Avenue, in contrast, is a modern boulevard lined with trees and without any gates. Second, the straightforward egalitarian passageways on the Chang'an Avenue differ from the passage in the north-south axis, which is highly hierarchical. The use of the five archways in the Tiananmen Gate, for instance, was governed by strict rules: the central one was restricted to the emperor's use, the two immediate side archways were reserved for princes, dukes, and officials higher than rank three, the two further side archways were for officials of ranks four and lower, other servants were only allowed to use the simple entrances in the walls on either side of the Tiananmen Tower.⁷⁸ (Figure 6.25)

The design of the monuments on the solid north-south axis was also governed by hierarchical rules. The most significant imperial monument Taihedian, for instance, has a double-eave *wudian* (hip roof) style roof, which was the highest grade in traditional Chinese roof types, while the Taihemen in front it is topped with a double-eave *xieshan* (hip-and-gable roof) style roof, the roof style of secondary significance. The gate behind the Taihedian Complex (Three Outer Halls), Qianqingmen, only has a single-eave *xieshan* style roof, which is yet lower in the roof grade. Taihedian has nine bays plus a all-way-around corridor, while Taihemen has seven bays with corridor, and Qianqingmen is a five-bay structure without corridor. Taihedian is located on a three-layer *ximizuo* (terrace), while Taihemen is on a one-layer *xumizuo*, and Qianqingmen is without *xumizuo*. In terms of details and decorations, Taihedian has the most elaborate bracket

⁷⁷ Sun Dazhang, *Zhongguo gudai jianzhushi: Qingdai jianzhu* (*History of Ancient Chinese Architecture: Qing Dynasty*), (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2002), 46.

⁷⁸ Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 15.

sets, while Taihemmen and Qianqingmen have simpler versions of the same structural detail. All the structures on the imperial north-south axis, however, are covered with glazed tile of the imperial yellow color, which contrast with the rest of the city's gray-tiled roofs that are sporadically dotted by princely compounds with glazed-tile roofs of blue and green colors.

The ways that space is revealed are also different. The space along the north-south axis is closed and opaque. It is concealed by layer after layer of walls and gates. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the only place to see this imperial axis was from the top of Scenery Hill (Coal Hill, *Jingshan*), which was the backyard of the Imperial Palace and not open to the public. Common Beijing citizens had no opportunity to go through this axis. The only chance for them to experience the existence of the north-south axis was through the inconvenience it brought to their daily lives when they had to make a detour around the imperial walls and gates in order to get to the east part of the city from the west, or vice versa. For common people, the opportunity to go through or even just have a look at the inner parts of the north-south axis was associated with extremes of officialdom – either supreme honor, for instance passing the highest level of imperial examination, or lowest humiliation, such as the annual trials and proclamations of decapitation.⁷⁹ However, no matter what people were going to face on the north-south axis, the paramount presence here was imperial dignity and authority.⁸⁰ The space along the Chang'an Avenue, on the contrary, is open and transparent. Standing on any point of

⁷⁹ Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 27-29.

⁸⁰ Stories tell of some modern reformers during the late Qing period, who were influenced by western thoughts, but still couldn't help kneeling down in front of the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihedian) after walking through the imperial north-south Axis. See: Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 12.

the avenue, a road leading to infinite distance is revealed in front of the viewer. As a passage, it is clear and definite. A bright, straight, and wide road had symbolic significance in modern China. In 1954, Mao Zedong wrote, “let there be an apparent track for all the people of our country, let all the people of our country feel that there is a clear and definite and correct road for them to follow.”⁸¹ Such a road as Chang’an Avenue was leading not just to a spatial but also a temporal distance, an arduous but promising future.

Both Chang’an Avenue and the imperial north-south axis are ceremonial. The ceremonial procession along Chang’an Avenue, however, challenges the authority of the north-south axis. Significant political events staged in Beijing after 1913 were dramatically displayed by protest marches or mass parades along the Avenue.⁸² All these pre-1949 parades along the Chang’an Avenue were protests against the authorities behind the red wall on the north side of the passageway; however, after the founding of the PRC on October 1st 1949, Chang’an Avenue was developed by the communist authorities as an avenue to display power, especially during the annual PRC anniversary celebrations on October 1st. The most important anniversary celebrations mobilized by the communist authorities include: the founding celebration in 1949, the first anniversary in 1950, the tenth anniversary in 1959, the 35th anniversary in 1984 celebrating the new communist regime under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership, the 40th anniversary in 1989 shortly after the June Fourth bloodshed, and the 50th anniversary in 1999. The communist regime in

⁸¹ Mao Zedong, “On the Draft Constitution of the People’s Republic of China,” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong: Volume Five*, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1977), 129.

⁸² Wang Yushi, *Tiananmen*, 37-60.

Beijing not only continued the pre-1949 transgression of the north-south axis, but also made it an official behavior. This is a forceful declaration of the new national identity as a revolutionary one directly opposite to the traditional identity. The open and egalitarian character of the east-west axis contrasts dramatically with the enclosed, private, and obstructive imperial axis; its revolutionary ceremonies contrast with the ritual processions enforcing time-honored dynastic rule. Periodic performances of government-sponsored national ceremonies, with mass parades along Chang'an Avenue, strengthen the visibility of the new, broad, long thoroughfare, and the symbolic role of the east-west axis.

The ceremonial activity along the Chang'an Avenue after 1949 was much more time-honored than that on the Tiananmen Square. The post-1913 activity on the Tiananmen Square, namely "jihui", which means mass assembly, was quite foreign for traditional Chinese ceremonies. The only precedent in history might be the mass gathering during the peasant uprising. Traditional Chinese ceremonies mainly proceeded along a passageway, as can be seen in the 17th century hand-scroll "Emperor Kangxi's Inspection Tour to the South (*Kangxi nanxuntu*),"⁸³ which takes place along the north-south axis of Beijing. (Figure 6.26) Procession was an important part of traditional ceremonies such as those for enthronements, marriages, funerals, and sacrifices to the Heaven, Earth, Mountain, and River.⁸⁴ The difference between these traditional

⁸³ "Emperor Kangxi's Inspection Tour to the South," (Episode Twelve of a hand-scroll, color on silk, 67.8 x 2612.5 cm), Wang Hui & others, 30-33rd Year of the Reign of Kangxi (AD 1691-1694), Qing dynasty, Beijing Palace Museum.

⁸⁴ The modern word for parade or procession "you-xing" and the traditional word for practicing ritual "xing-li" share the same character "xing," which means walking. This indicates that walking along an axial route might have been the major format of earliest Chinese ritual performance. The earliest appearance of the word "xing-li" is in the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 9 CE) collection of Zhou Dynasty (11th century BCE – 256 BCE) Confucian works *Liji: Quli (The Book of Ritual)*. See: Wang Mengou, annotate,

ceremonies and modern ones is that while traditional rulers actively participated in the procession along the north-south axis, modern leaders simply stand on top of the gate at the intersection of the two axes and watch the mass parade along the east-west axis. If the source of the gaze in the traditional processions was from Heaven, constantly watching the behavior of the “Son of Heaven,” and thus requiring those ceremonies, in the parades of communist China, the source of the gaze was from the leaders on Tiananmen Tower.

According to Michel Foucault, the source of gaze is the source of power and those who are under constant gaze are disciplined and powerless.⁸⁵ The new east-west axis Chang’an Avenue, and the revolutionary gesture it posed to the traditional order of Beijing, rather than making political power less centralized than in the imperial era, instead, strengthened the authority of the new national leadership.

The Return of the North-south Axis

The 1992 Beijing city master plan signaled the revival of the north-south central axis. Many factors contributed to this critical change in the developmental strategy of the Chinese capital.

One of the most important factors was the rise of historical preservation in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1982, the “Protection of Historical Relics Law of the PRC” was

Liji Xuanzhu (Book of Ritual Annotation), (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1968), 26. For detailed Qing Dynasty description of imperial “xing-li”, see: *Qingchao tongdian*. For original and extended meanings of the word “xing,” see: Luo Zhufeng, ed, *Hanyu dacidian (Chinese Dictionary)*, (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 2001), 884-885, 922.

⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, Alan Sheridan trans., *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

issued. In the same year, Beijing was declared one of the 24 “National Historical and Cultural Famous Cities” 国家历史文化名城. The second group of 38 cities was announced in 1986 and the third group of another 37 cities was announced in 1994. In 1987, five sites in China were classified as World Cultural Relics by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), in which the Forbidden City in Beijing was one of them. This was the first group of UNESCO World Relics from China. While in the 1982 master plan, there was still no section on historical preservation and the part dealing with the Old City was titled “Old City Reconstruction,” in the 1992 Beijing city master plan, a specific section of “Protection and Development of the Historical Cultural Famous City” was added. The north-south axis was singled out for special emphasis as the most significant character of the city’s layout:

Protect and develop the traditional central axis of the city. The traditional features and character of the Ming-Qing Beijing central axis from the Gate of Permanent Peace to the Bell and Drum Towers must be carefully protected. The central position of Tiananmen Square in the north-south axis should be preserved, and the expansion and reconstruction of it should add more green areas and improve the facilities. The street in front of the Drum Tower Gulouqianjie and the street between the Gate of Permanent Peace and the Front Gate Qianmendajie (on the north-south axis) should be built as commercial streets with traditional characteristics.

... ..

Pay attention to absorbing the characteristics in the color scheme of traditional dwellings and city. The traditional color tone of the Imperial City with blue-grey vernacular buildings setting off by contrast the

brilliant red walls and yellow roofs of the palace complex should be preserved.⁸⁶

In order to protect the prominence of the imperial north-south axis, the heights of new buildings were strictly controlled according to their proximity to this traditional axis. The closer to the Imperial City, the lower the building height was required to be. The closest building could be at most 9 m high (within 250 m to the walls of the Forbidden City and Scenery Hill), then 12 m, then 18 m. No new buildings were allowed to be more than 18 m inside of the Imperial City. Outside of the Imperial City but inside of the Inner City, building height was required to be mostly less than 30 m, with some exceptional areas of 45 m height limit. Outside of the Old City, buildings were also required to be generally no higher than 60 m. Buildings along major roads, for instance, Chang'an Avenue, could be relatively higher.⁸⁷

Thus, according to the 1992 Beijing city master plan, the city center should remain low to highlight the imperial north-south axis. This contrasts sharply with the height scheme of the capital in the 1950s. According to the 1954 Beijing city master plan, new buildings should be no less than four to five-stories high. Around Tiananmen Square and along major avenues, building should be seven or eight stories or higher if possible. Building height could be lowered to three stories or less at the peripheral areas of the city.⁸⁸ The height scheme was totally reversed in the later plan. While in the 1950s, building height was a symbol of modernity and large-scale buildings were put in the city center to display the power of the new regime, in the 1990s, the priority of the traditional

⁸⁶ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 jian: chengshi guihua*, 313.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

north-south axis would make the skyline of future Beijing like the “bottom of a cooking pot.”

The return of the north-south axis was also a result of tourism and nostalgia. With the ban of heavy industry and most other industries in the capital, tourism and its associated services and traditional handicrafts became the main industry of Beijing, the “industry without smoke.” Imperial palaces, gardens, temples, and altars became the main tourist sites.⁸⁹ The rise of tourism stimulated a strong mood of nostalgia for “Old Beijing.” Numerous books about the life of “Old Beijing” appeared in the 1990s, filled with black and white photos of vanished old buildings, city gates, pailou, city walls, siheyuan courtyard quarters, etc. With the entire city walls and most of the city gates gone, the imperial north-south axis appeared to be the best physical carrier of such a cultural nostalgia. Survey and measurement of every building along the imperial axis were carried out and long hand-scroll paintings depicting the central axis were created.

The central north-south axis, however, was not just to be preserved. In the 1992 Beijing city master plan, it was to be extended both northward and southward. Such an extension, however, was also envisioned as following the traditional character of the imperial axis:

The southern extension of the central axis should represent the image of the city’s “main south gate” 南大门. The northern extension of the central axis should have broad green belts. The buildings on its sides and at its north end should be the climax and termination of the urban axis,

⁸⁹ Anne-Marie Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004).

emphasizing the embodiment of the new style and feature of a 21st-century capital.⁹⁰

Like the imperial axis starting with the Bell Tower in the north and extending southward, the extended north-south axis was also planned as having a north end, which would be the climax of the new north-south axis. (Figure 6.27)

The revival and extension of the north-south axis was an effort to balance the new east-west axis Chang'an Avenue and the old imperial axis. By the 1990s, Chang'an Avenue had already been filled with monumental façades. Compared to its east-west counterpart, the central axis now seemed undeveloped. In the most recent Beijing city master plan of 2005, the two axes are envisioned as forming a balanced framework for the entire city. The new master plan covers the "Larger Beijing Area" 大北京地区, which includes both Beijing city proper and many satellite cities. Former Beijing city – including both the Old City and its modern expansion of the past 50 years – was called the "Central City" of Beijing. The new framework was summarized as "two axes, two belts, and multi-centers" 两轴, 两带, 多中心. The "two axes" are the traditional north-south axis and new east-west axis Chang'an Avenue; the "two belts" refer to the "Eastern Development Belt" comprising the former Tongzhou County, Shunyi County, Yizhuang Township, Huairou County, Miyun County, and Pinggu County, and the "Western Development Belt" comprising the former Daxing County, Fangshan County, Changping County, Yangqing County and the Mentougou District; the "multi-centers" means that instead of having a comprehensive center, the city of Beijing in the future will have many

⁹⁰ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 juan: chengshi guihua*, 313.

centers specialized in different urban functions, high-technology, sports, business, manufacture, service, etc.:⁹¹

The Central City will be centered with the Old City, which inherits and develops the cross-shape spatial framework of the traditional central axis and the Chang'an Avenue axial extension.

- (1) The central axis is mainly of cultural function, with its central historic cultural district, northern physical cultural district, and the southern new urban district as the nucleus, representing the perfect combination of ancient capital character and modern city. The central district assembles the essence of Beijing as a famous historic cultural city and should be strictly protected; the north district has the Olympic Center as its main stem and should be constructed as the internationally first-class cultural district of sports, exhibition, and conference functions; the southern district should be guided to develop the comprehensive functioning of commercial culture, administration, and offices, driving the development of the south city.
- (2) Chang'an Avenue and its extensions form an important axis representing the function of Beijing as the national political, cultural center. In the plan, the nucleus is the central historical cultural district and central government district; the eastern part will be constructed as the Central Business Center (CBD); and the western part will be constructed as a comprehensive cultural amusement district. The cultural function of Chang'an Avenue axis will be improved.⁹²

⁹¹ "Beijing City Mater Plan (2004-2020), 2005.1," in *Beijing City Planning & Construction Review*, 2005/2 (101), 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 17-18.

If the words “political” and “industrial” represent the spirit of China during the 1950s and 1960s, since the 1980s, “culture” has become the most fashionable word. In the 2005 Beijing city master plan, everything is considered cultural, which renders the word “culture” virtually meaningless in the context of city planning. The indiscriminate usage of “cultural,” however, signals a significant ideological shift since the 1980s. Tired of the endless political movements during the Mao era, Chinese society had been dominated by a craving for culture in the 1980s, when material from both China’s long past and abroad became newly available for the Chinese intellectuals. The “cultural fever” and various new movements in art and literature of the 1980s created a yearning for both the traditional, as in the “searching roots” literature, and the modern, as in various new Chinese “avant-gardes.” Such a cultural mood prepared the ground for the rise of neo-nationalism in the 1990s, which combined political power with historical glory, commercial success, and cultural nostalgia.

To some extent, the designation of different functional districts along the north-south and east-west axes of Beijing embodies the ideology of neo-nationalism as a combination of history, politics, and commerce. The drawings of the 2005 Beijing city master plan provide a clearer and more concise representation of the two axes than the texts do. (Figure 6.1) In the drawing of “Central City Functional Structure Plan,” the north-south axis was divided into three parts: the central part is named “Traditional central axis: Historical cultural nucleus district;” the northern part is called “Northern central axis: Physical cultural district;” and the southern part is named “Southern central axis: Commercial cultural comprehensive district.” The western part of the east-west axis

is titled “Chang’an Avenue: Political cultural nucleus district;” and the east part includes the Central Business District (CBD).⁹³

Different from the previous relationship between the north-south axis and east-west axis, in which the north-south axis had a clear start and an end point, in the 1005 master plan, the relationship is reversed. While the east-west axis of Chang’an Avenue is planned as having a western starting point 西起点 – the Yongding River – and an eastern starting point 东起点 – the Grand Canal, the north-south central axis extends from Tiananmen Square endlessly in both directions.

With the rise of nationalism, the north-south axis has truly come back. While the 1964 Chang’an Avenue planning was a nation-wide effort, the urban design for the “Central Axis” in 2002 developed through an international scheme collection process. The scheme provided by the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design named the northern part of the central axis “Time Axis” 时代轴线, the central part “Tradition Axis” 传统轴线, and the southern part “Future Axis” 未来轴线. The central “Tradition Axis” represents history and commemoration, the northern “Time Axis” represents contemporary and celebration, and the southern “Future Axis” represents future and the rise of China.⁹⁴ (Figure 6.28)

The 2002 international competition for “Conceptual Planning and Design of Beijing Olympic Green” was part of the preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The

⁹³ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁴ Beijingshi guihua sheji yanjiuyuan, ed., *Jingxin xihui jingcheng lantu: Beijingshi guihua sheji yanjiuyuan youxiu guihua sheji zuopin ji* 潜心细绘京城蓝图: 北京市规划设计研究院优秀规划设计作品集 (Carefully and Delicately Delineating the Capital’s Blue-prints: Excellent Planning and Design Works of the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning & Design) (Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 2004), 77.

Olympic Center constructed for the 1991 Eleventh Asian Game had been located to the east side of the northern central axis. Although it was not clear whether the design of the that Olympic Center in 1984-90 was conceived as part of the construction of Beijing north-south axis, in the 1992 Beijing city master plan, the northern extension of the central axis was required to be constructed with carefully selected contents.⁹⁵ The scale of the 2002 competition for Beijing's central axis was much larger than the 1998-99 competition for the National Grand Theatre. More than 100 institutes from 21 countries throughout the world had participated in the competition, and more than 90 schemes were initially selected. The central north-south axis was the most important issue addressed in the competition program.⁹⁶ The extension of the imperial central axis has just begun (in 2006 when this dissertation is written), shouldering the new historic task of the "great renaissance of the Chinese nation." (Figure 6.29)

The Chang'an Avenue myth has come to a full stop. But constant modernization, the task it once shouldered before, has not. The task has now been passed on to the north-south axis.

⁹⁵ *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao di 1 jian: chengshi guihua*, 310.

⁹⁶ Beijingshi guihua weiyuanhui and Beijing shuijingshi shuzi chuanmei, eds., *2008 Beijing aolinpike gongyuan ji wukesong wenhua tiyu zhongxin guihua sheji fang'an zhengji* 2008 北京奥林匹克公园及五棵松文化体育中心规划设计方案征集 (International Competition for Conceptual Planning and Design of Beijing Olympic Green & Wukesong Cultural and Sports Center) (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2003).

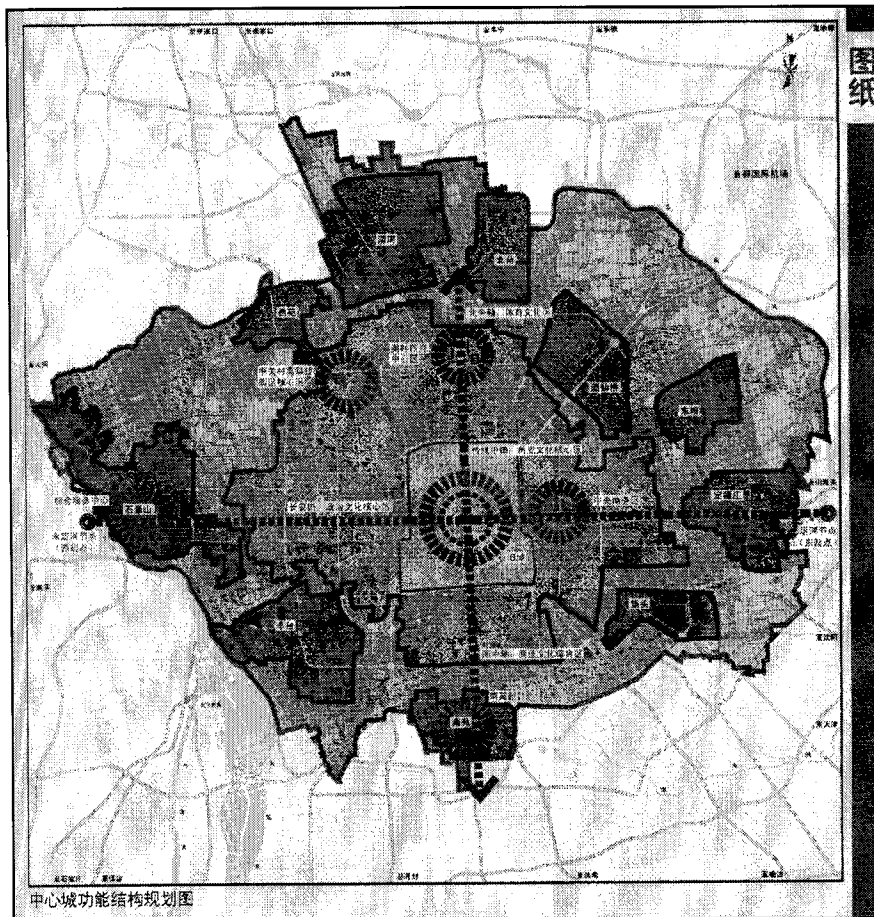
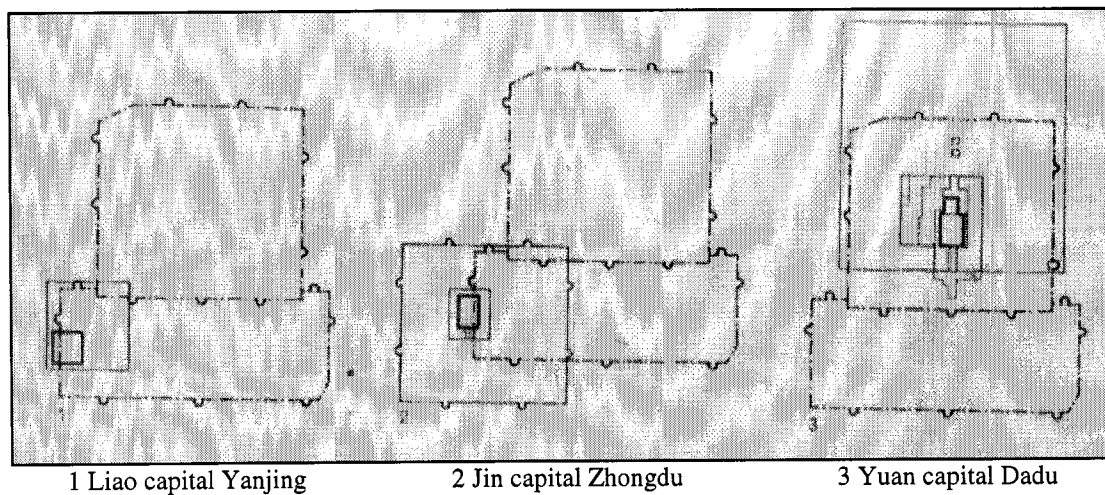


Figure 6.1: Beijing City Master plan (2004-2020), 2005



1 Liao capital Yanjing

2 Jin capital Zhongdu

3 Yuan capital Dadu

Figure 6.2: Locations of Liao, Jin, and Yuan capitals in relation to Ming-Qing Beijing

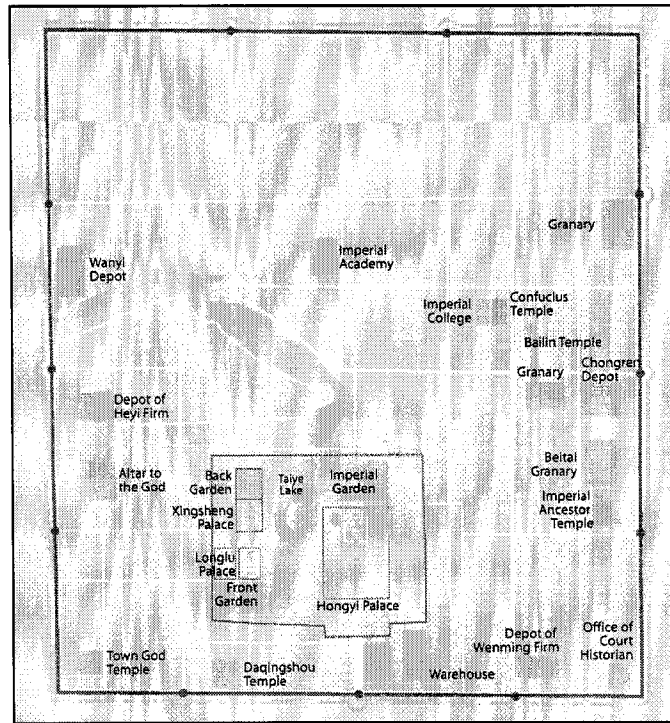


Figure 6.3: Yuan Dadu

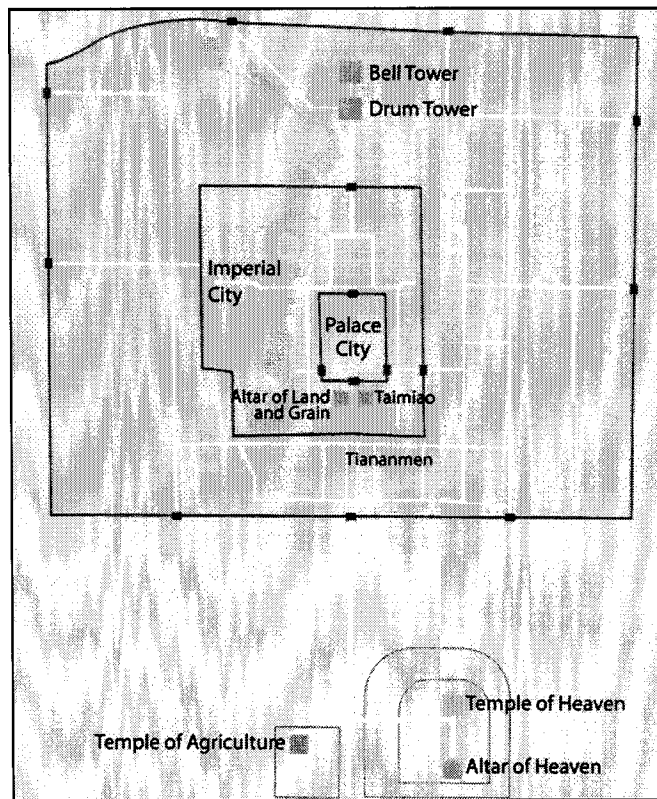


Figure 6.4: Ming Beijing before 1553

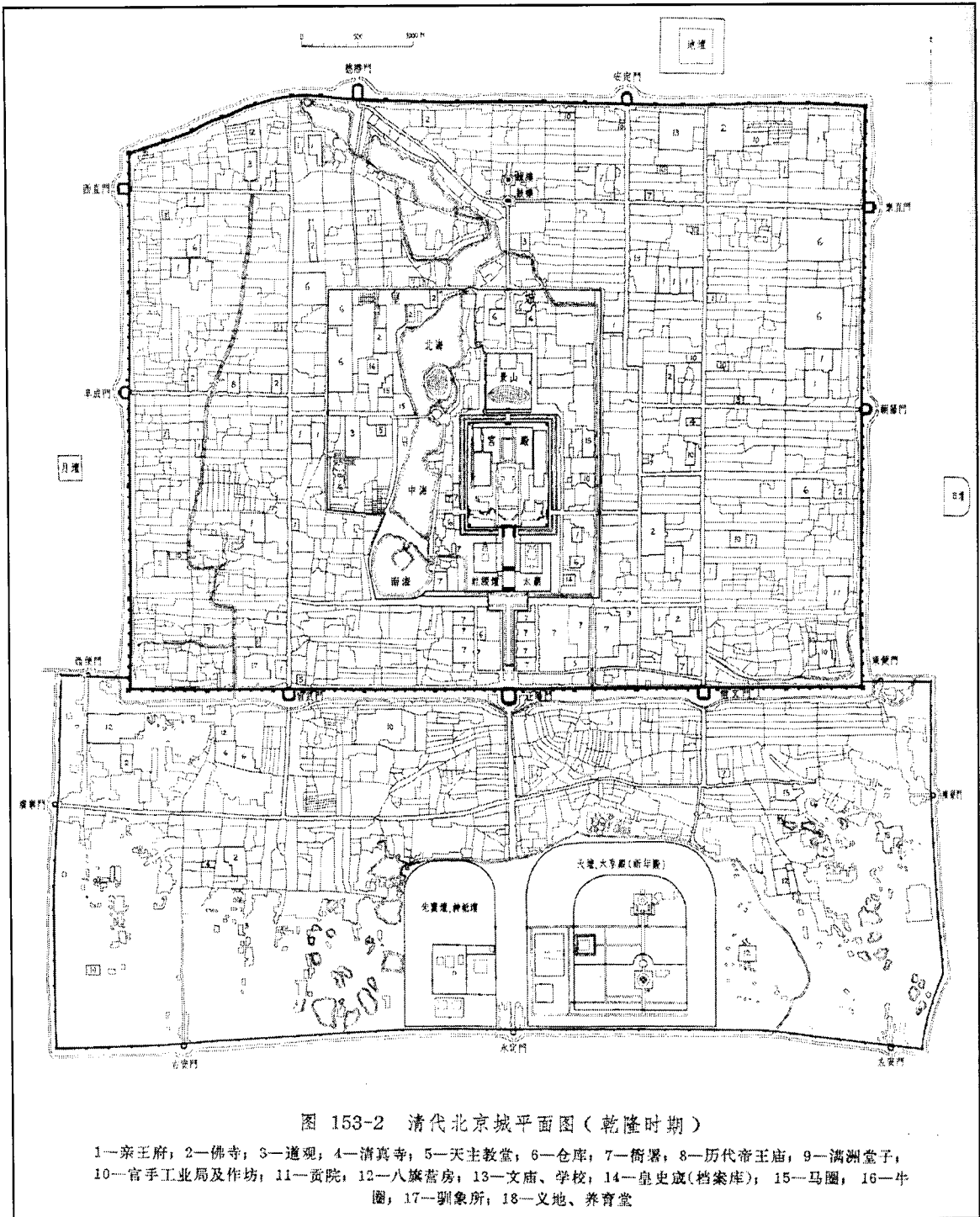


Figure 6.5: Ming-Qing Beijing after 1553

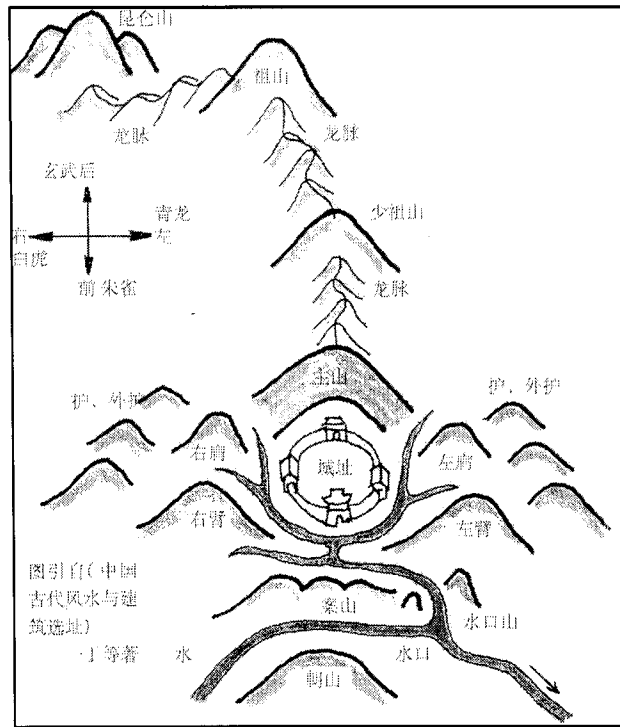


Figure 6.6: “Longmai” (Dragon vein) in *fengshui*

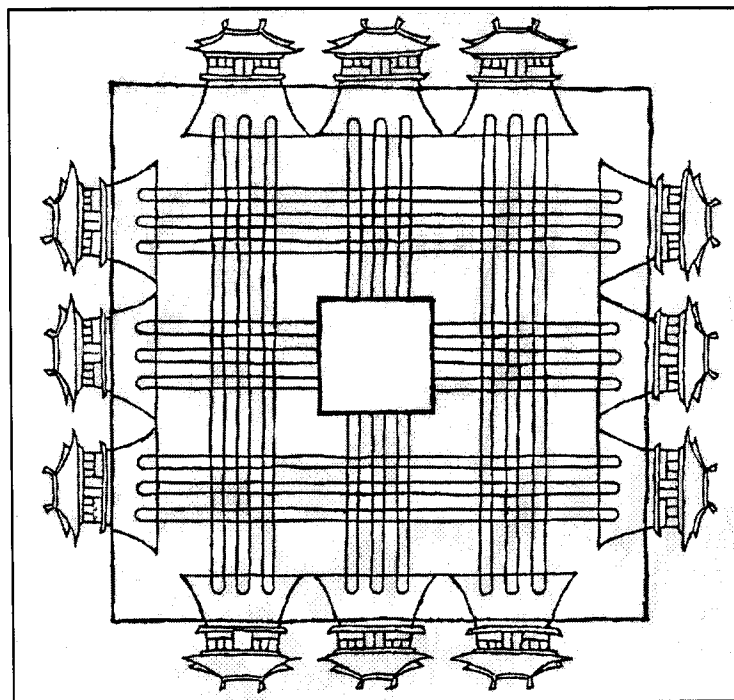


Figure 6.7: Wangcheng diagram from *Ritual of Zhou*

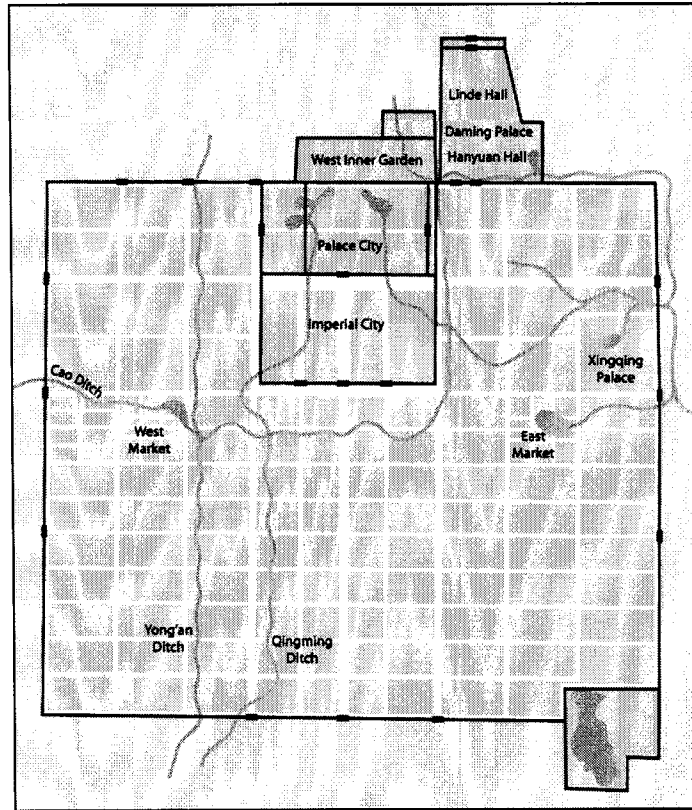


Figure 6.8: Tang Chang'an

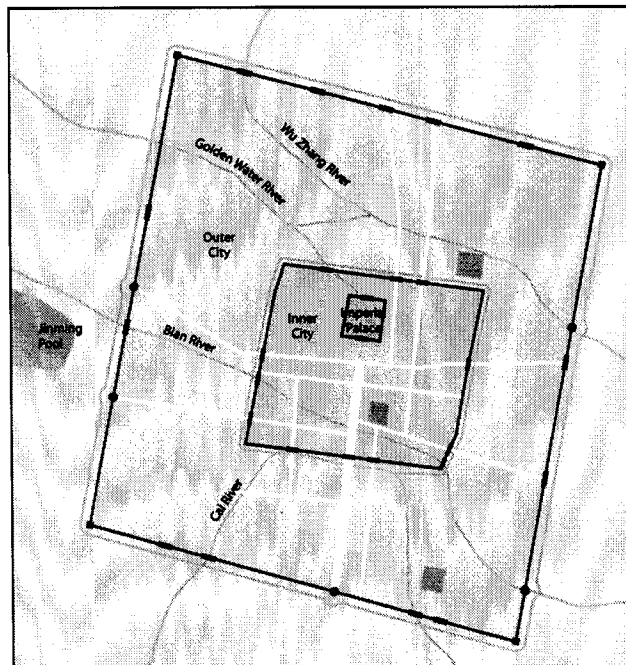


Figure 6.9: Northern Song Bianliang

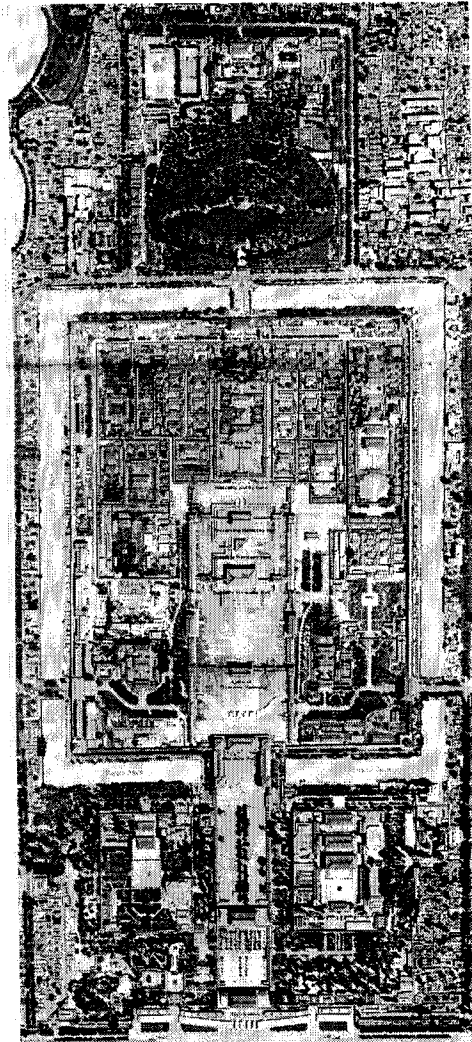


Figure 6.10: Part of the north-south axis of Beijing

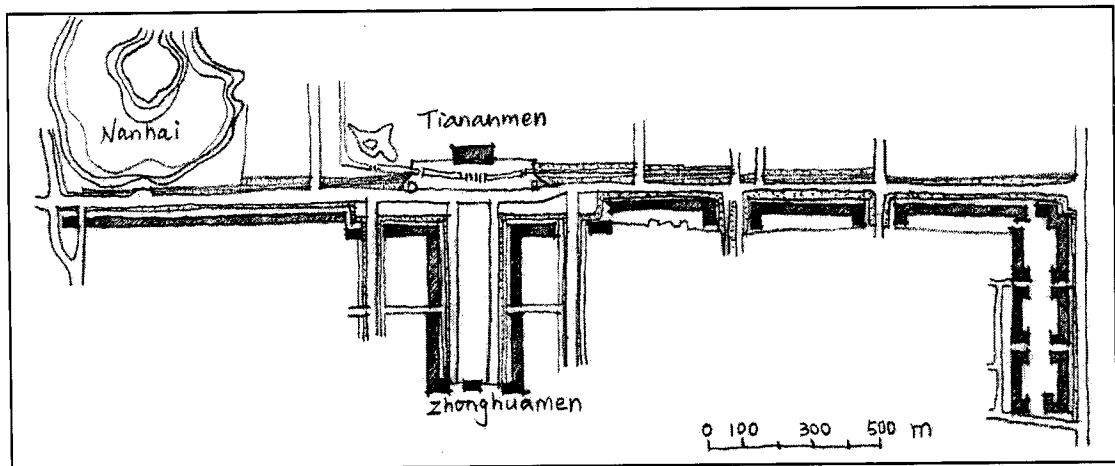
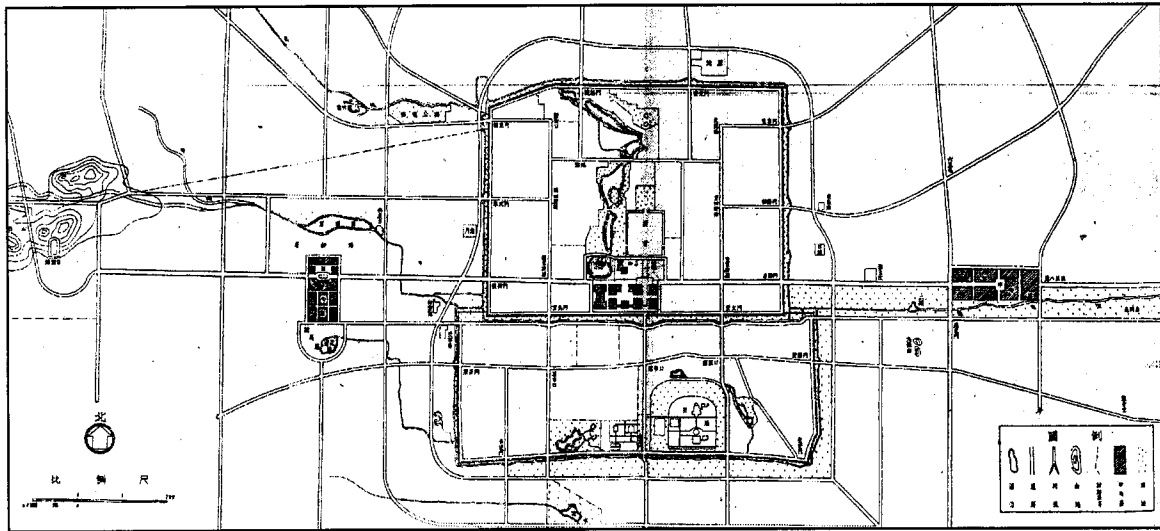
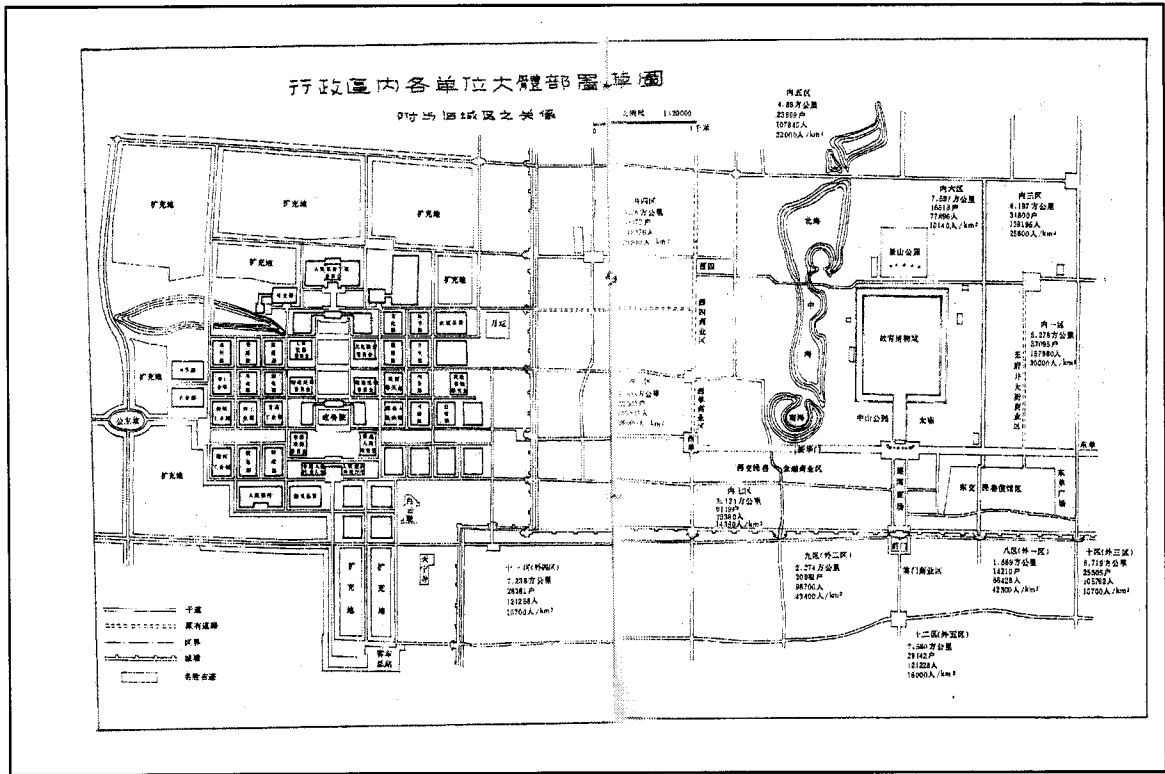
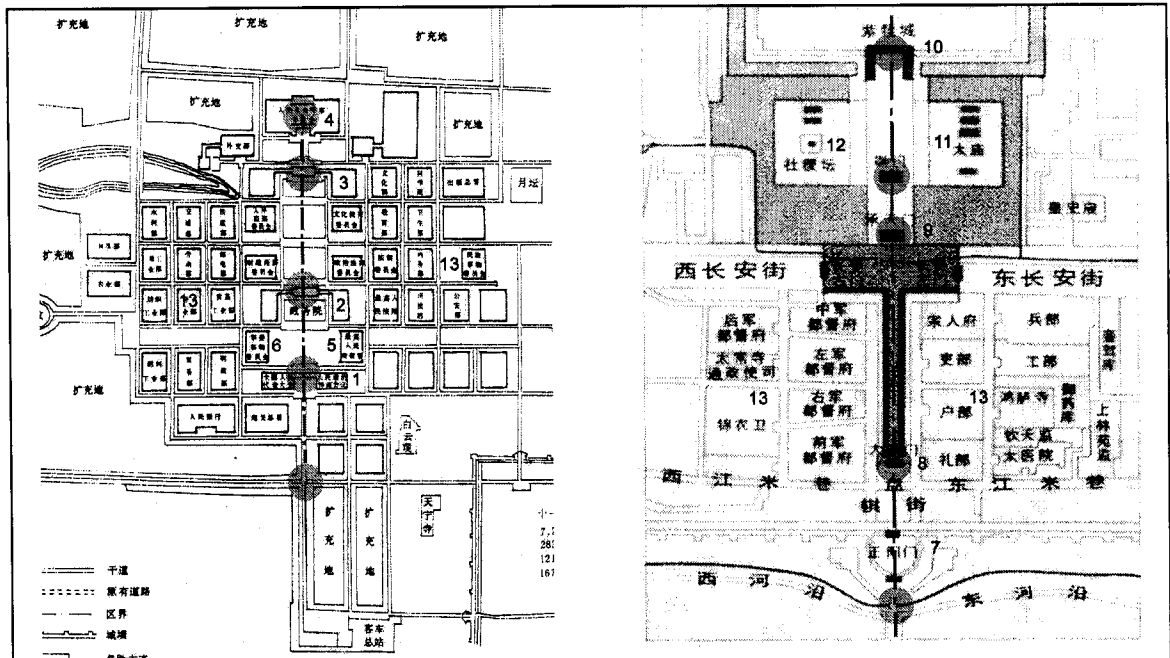


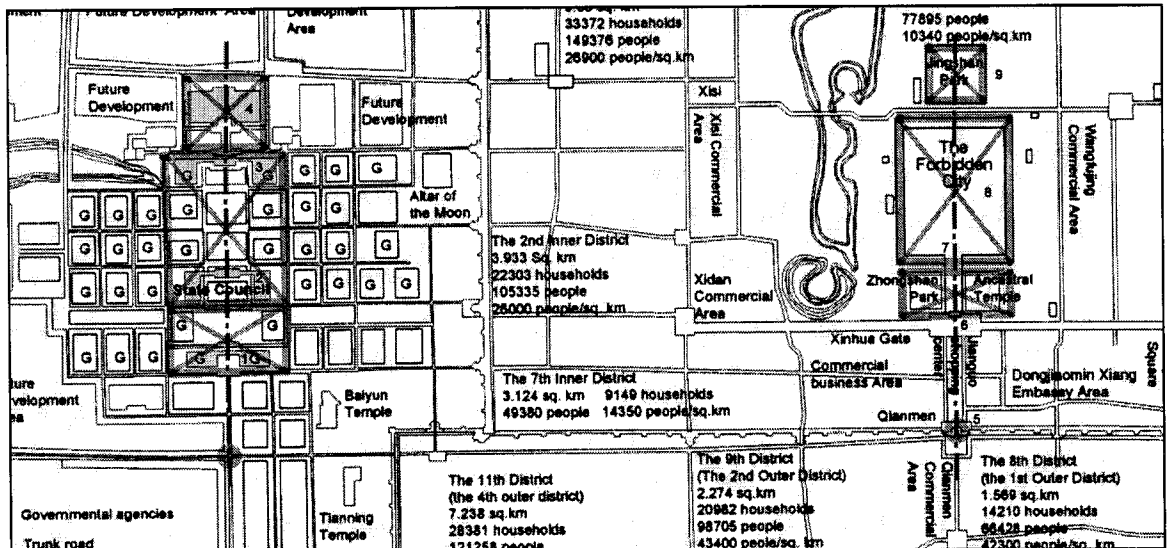
Figure 6.11: Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square in the Soviet Proposals





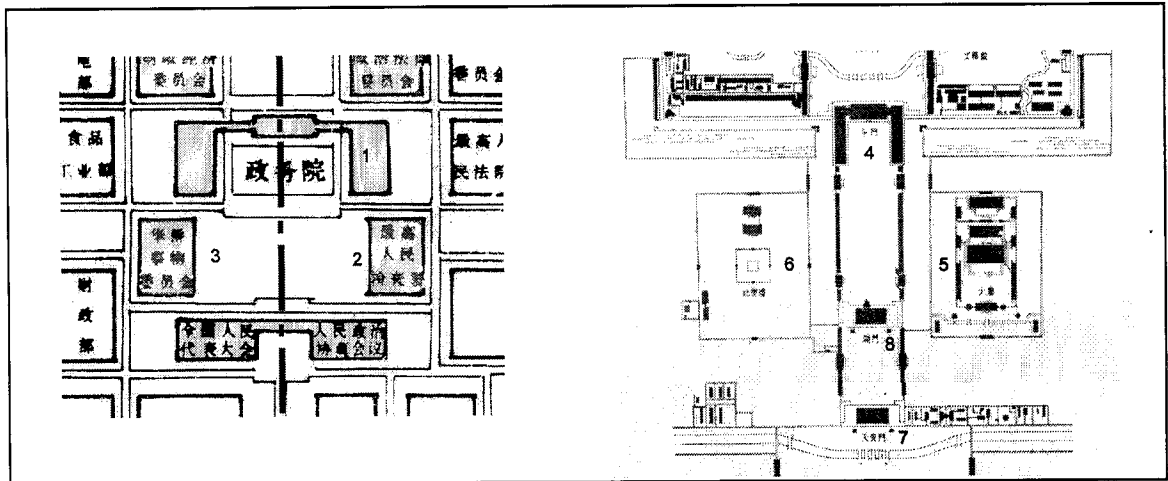
- 1 National Congress 2 State Council 3 Party Headquarter 4 Military Commission
- 5 Supreme Procurate 6 Oversea Chinese Affairs 7 Zhengyangmen 8 Zhonghuamen
- 9 Tiananmen 10 Wumen 11 Imperial Ancestral Temple
- 12 Altar of Soil and Grain 13 Government agencies, ministries, & committees

Figure 6.14: New government center in the Liang-Chen Scheme (left) and the administrative center in front of the Forbidden City (right)



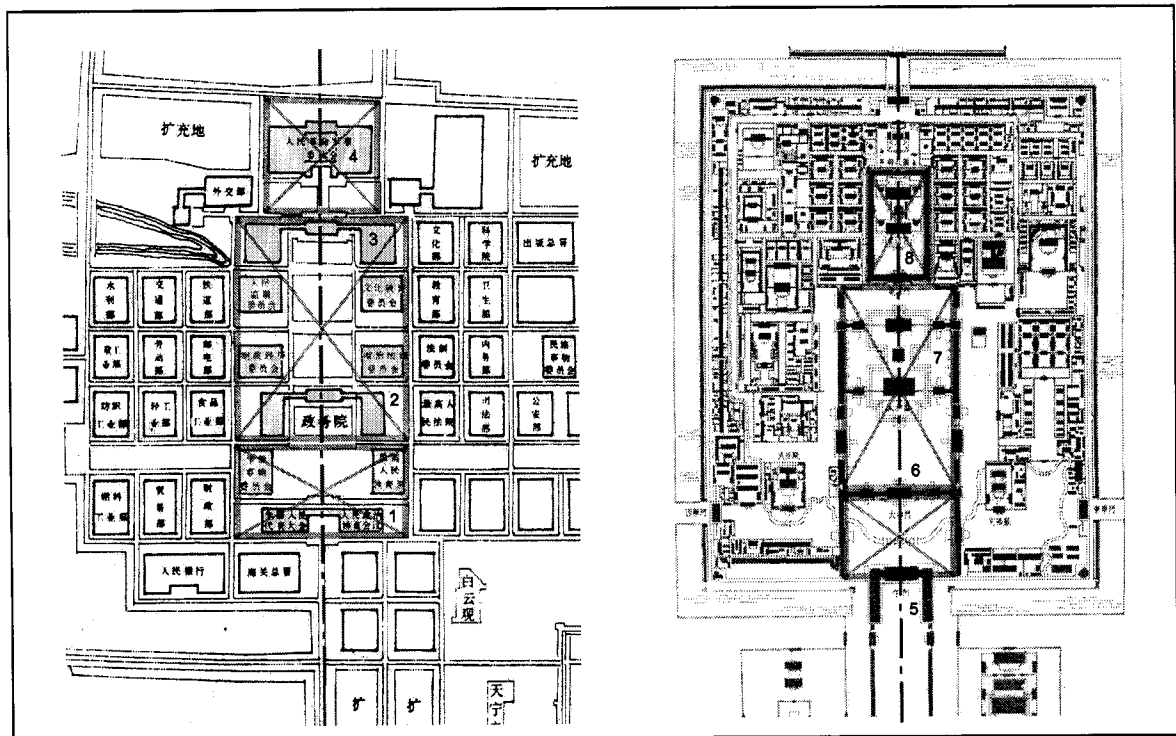
- 1 National Congress 2 State Council 3 Party Headquarter 4 Military Commission
- 5 Zhongyangmen 6 Tiananmen 7 Wumen 8 The Forbidden City
- 9 Scenery Hill

Figure 6.15: Analysis of the compositional relationship between the new government center in Liang-Chen Scheme and the monuments on the imperial north-south axis



1 State Council 2 Supreme Procurate 3 Overseas Chinese Affairs 4 Women
 5 Imperial Ancestral Temple 6 Altar of Soil and Grain 7 Tiananmen 8 Duanmen

Figure 6.16: Analysis of the compositional relationship between the State Council in Liang-Chen Scheme and the Meridian Gate in the imperial north-south axis



1 National Congress 2 State Council 3 Party Headquarter 4 Military Commission
 5 Women 6 Fengtianmen/Taihemmen 7 Outer Three Halls 8 Inner Three Halls

Figure 6.17: Analysis of the formal similarities between the new government center in Liang-Chen Scheme and the Forbidden City

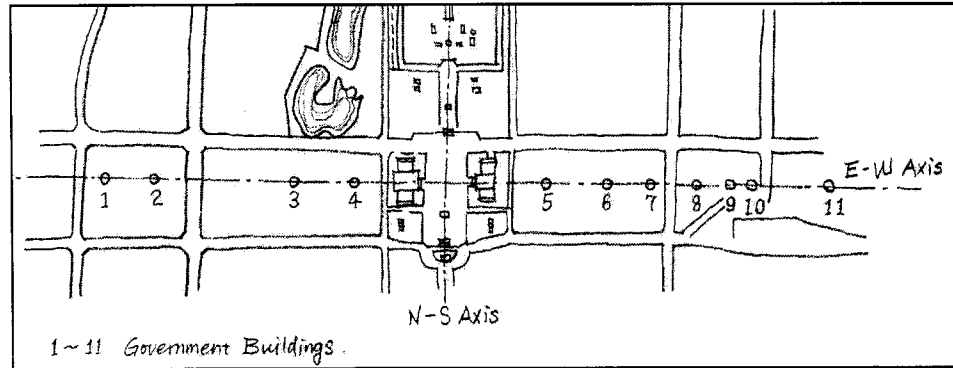
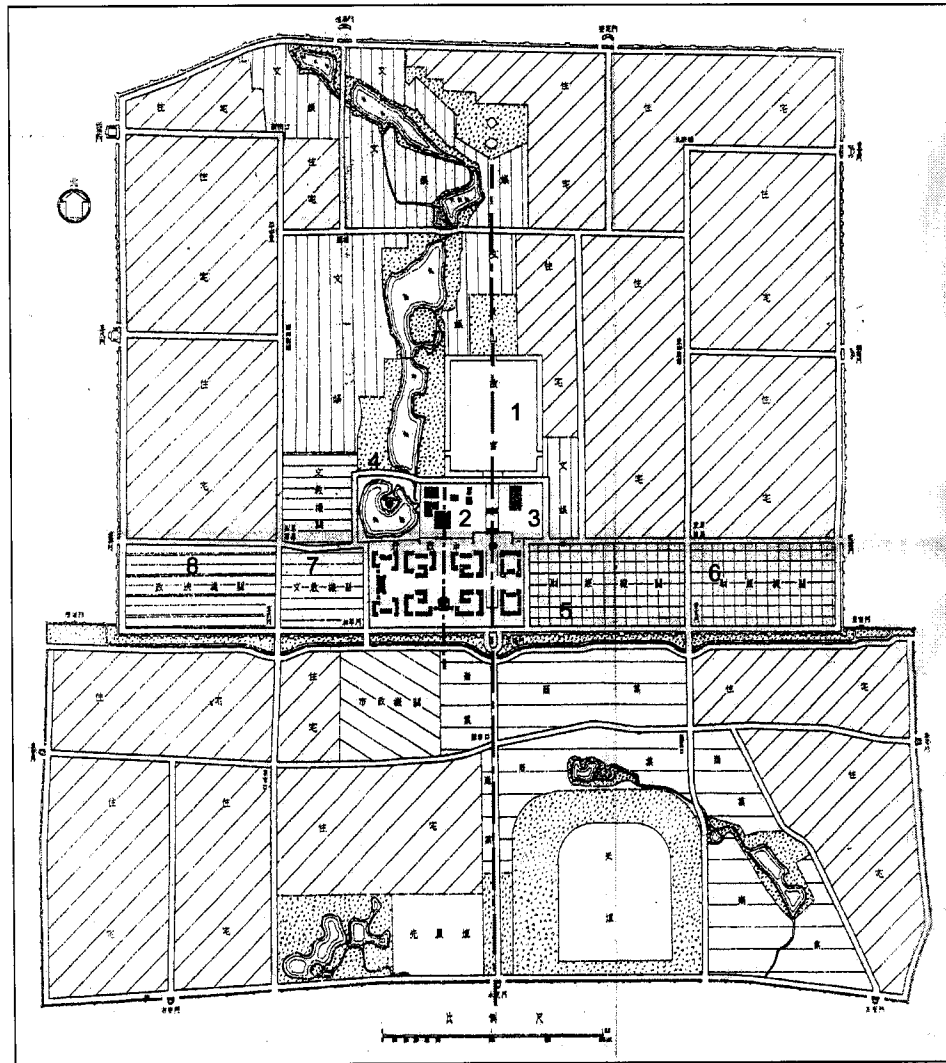


Figure 6.18: Zhao Dongri's east-west axis of monuments



1 The Forbidden City 2 Altar of Soil and Grain 3 Imperial Ancestral Temple 4 Zhongnanhai
 5 & 6 finance and economics agencies 7 Culture and education agencies 8 Political legal agencies

Figure 6.19: Central area, Zhu-Zhao Scheme

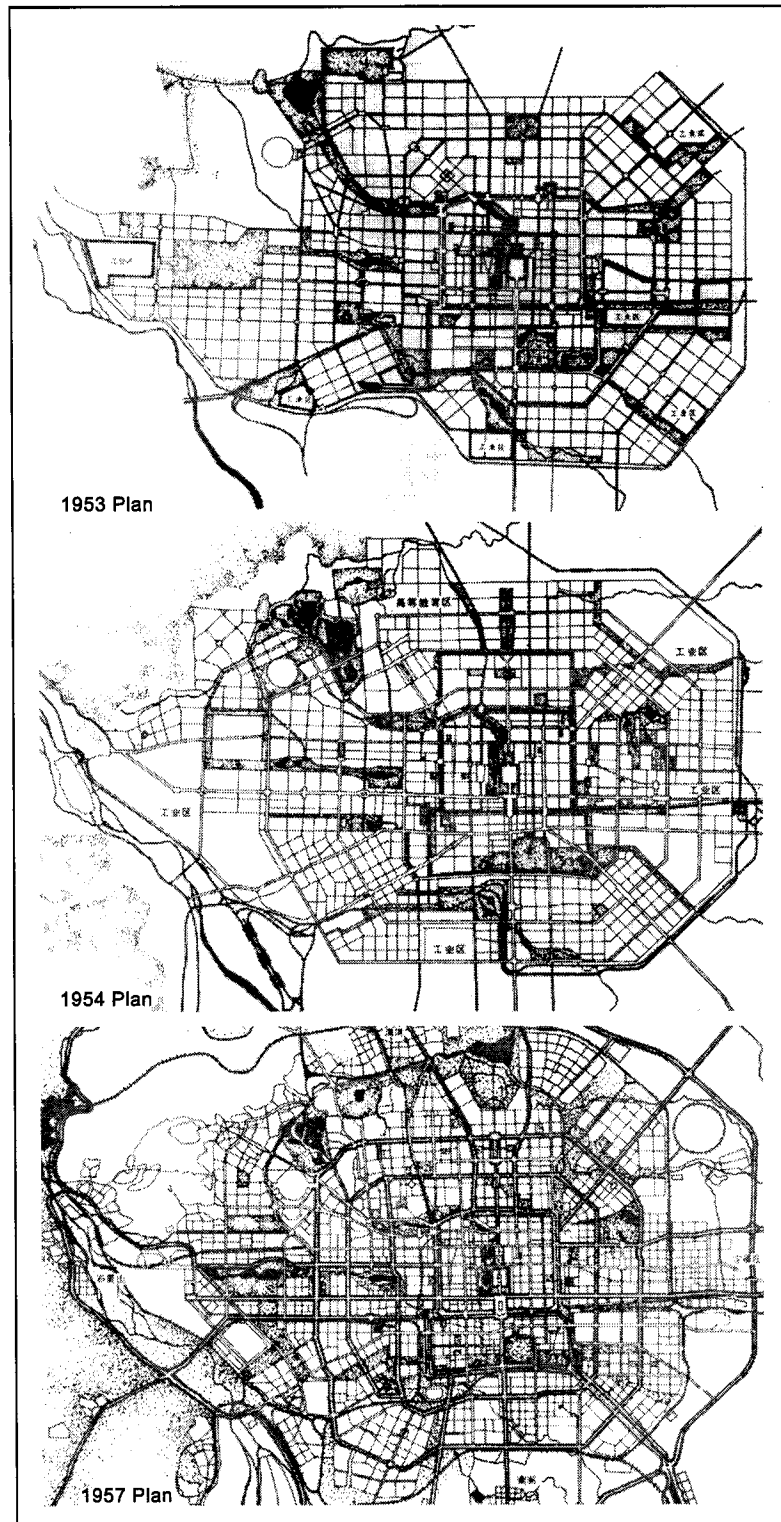


Figure 6.20: Master plans of Beijing in the 1950s

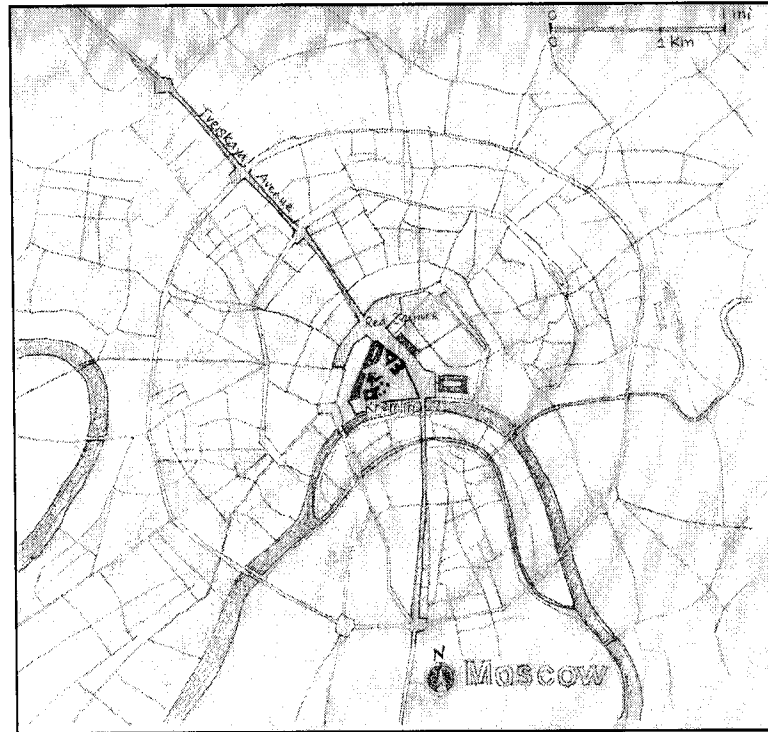


Figure 6.21: The Kremlin, Red Square, and Tverskaya Avenue in Moscow

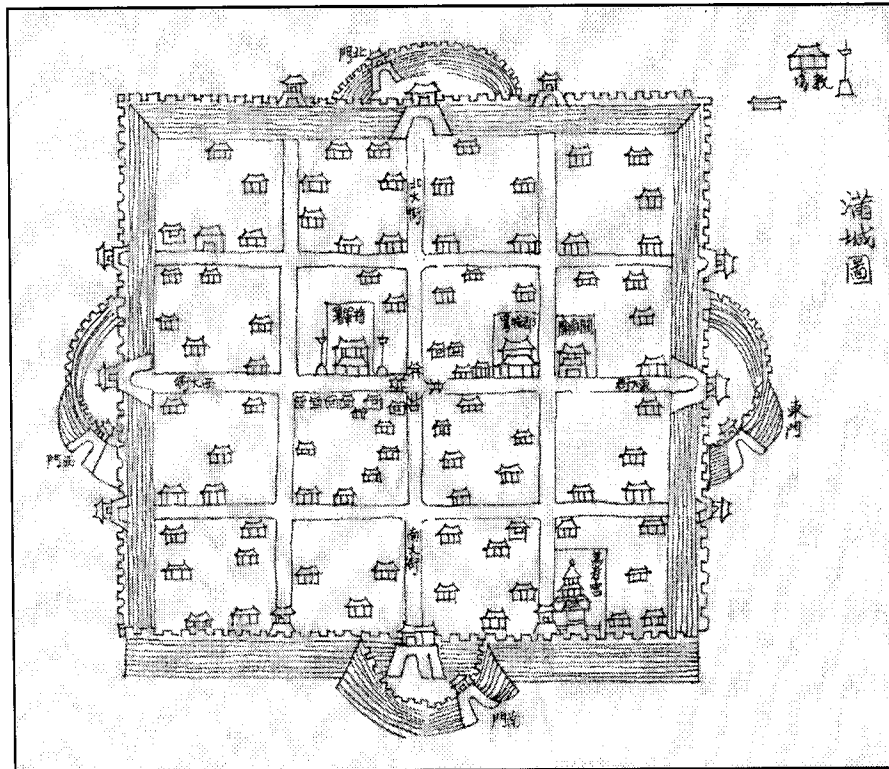


Figure 6.22: The city of Ningxia Prefecture in Qing dynasty with its urban axes of streets

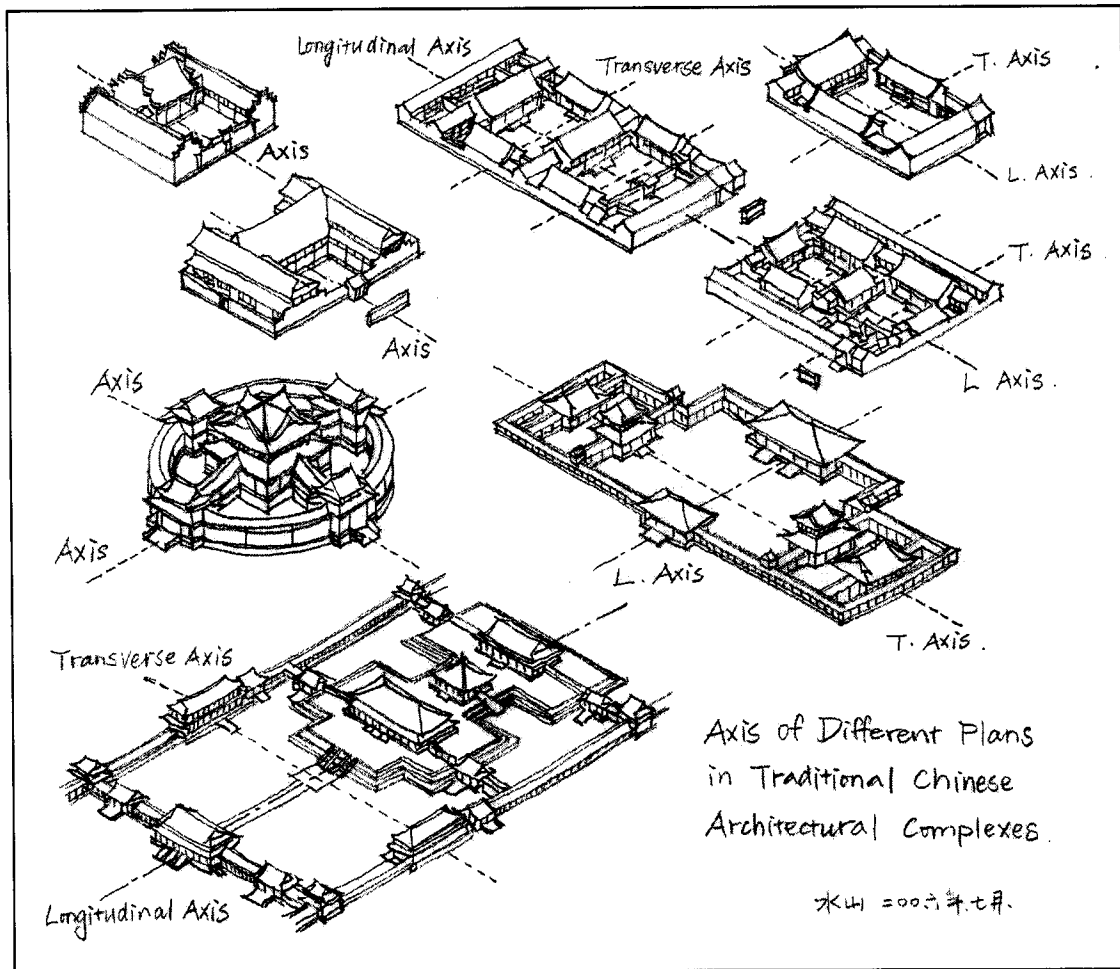


Figure 6.23: Axes of buildings Chinese architecture

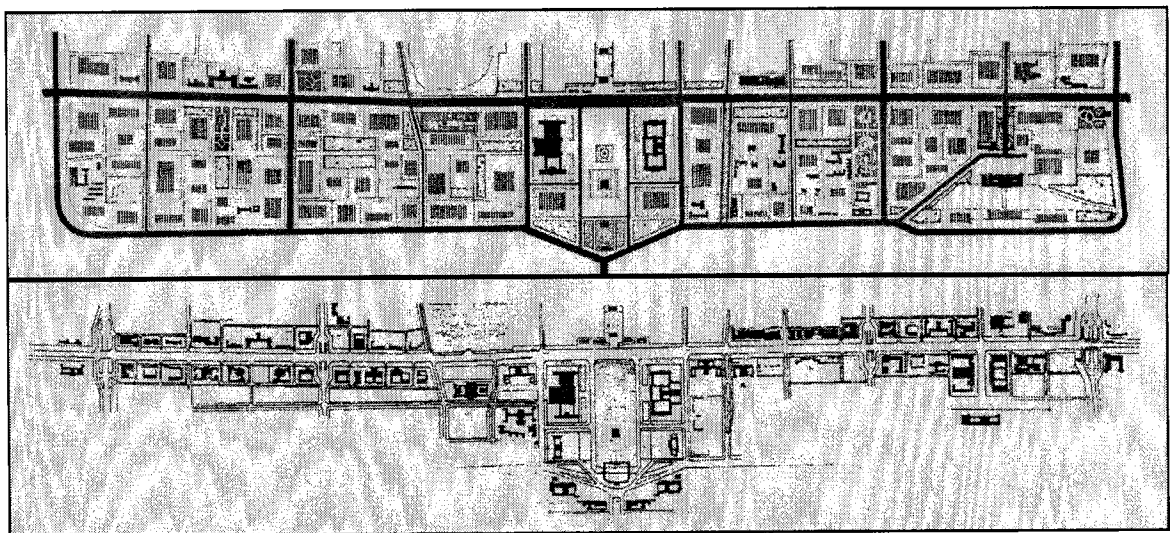


Figure 6.24: Different designations of the east-west axis



Figure 6.25: Contrast between the north-south axis and east-west axis



Figure 6.26: Wang Hui and others, *Emperor Kangxi's Inspection Tour to the South* (*Kangxi nanxuntu*) (sections), hand-scroll painting, 17th century

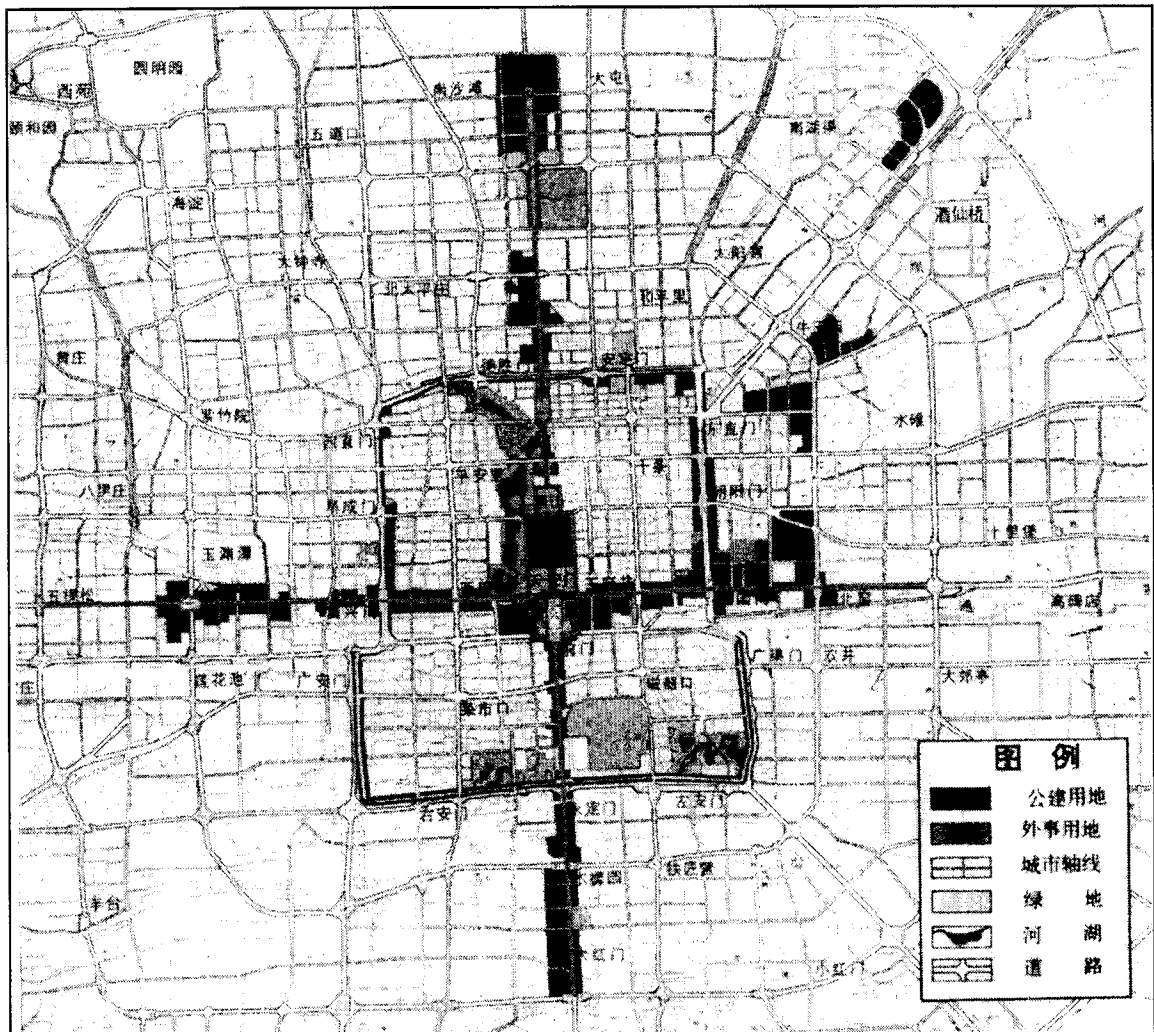


Figure 6.27: The north-south axis in the 1992 Beijing Master Plan

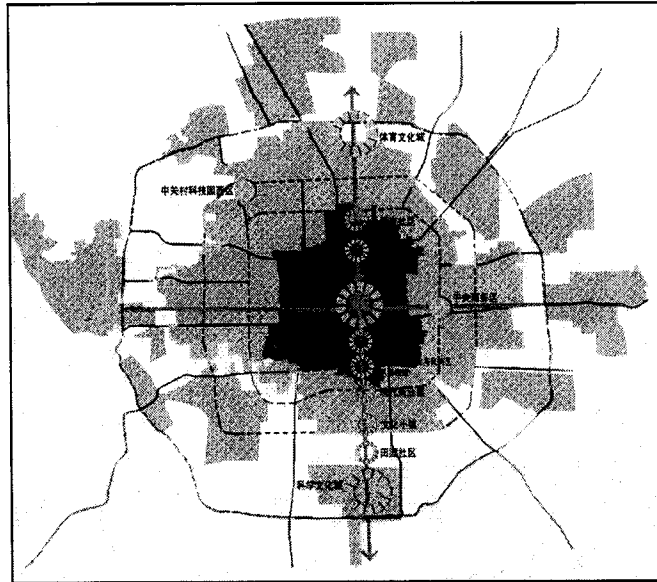


Figure 6.28: The design of the north-south axis in early 2000s



Figure 6.29: The Central Axis of Beijing for the 21st century, models in the Beijing City Planning Exhibition Hall

Conclusion

Chang'an Avenue is not the only great avenue that defines the urban fabric of a great city in the world. Many metropolitans in other countries have a major avenue or boulevard as the axis of the city. Compared with its counterparts in other capitals, however, certain characteristics of Chang'an Avenue make its status more prominent in the urban fabric of the city and the cultural political life of the country. No other street or boulevard, be it the Champs Elysees in Paris, Tverskaya-Lyusinovskaya in Moscow, or Via dell'Impero in Rome, for instance, runs through the entire urban area of the city with such a consistent and visually powerful form like Chang'an Avenue does. The significance of Chang'an Avenue, of course, is not simply a matter of scale and geometric regularity, but comes from its close engagement with Chinese history, modernity, and national identity.

Chang'an Avenue is also not the only urban thoroughfare in the world that engages a nation's history, national identity and modernity. The Athinas Street in Athens and the Unter den Linden in Berlin were both meant to convey a new national identity by their inclusion of selective sections of the nation's past. Chang'an Avenue, however, was not intended to be a symbolic center in the beginning when the two Chang'an Avenues were joined to form a unified avenue, but was supposed to modernize the ancient capital

through a reorganization of the road system for more efficient communication. As one of the major steps in the architectural modernization of Beijing, Chang'an Avenue was planned and re-planned to meet the changing modernization ideals of different periods during the PRC era. Each period claimed to "roughly complete" Chang'an Avenue according to its own modernization ideal. Each period filled in monuments and at the same time left "gaps" along its ever-changing façades. The "gaps" were not as much physical gaps as symbolic ones left by the discrepancies of the Chinese modernization project. When Chang'an Avenue finally became a symbolic axis in the urban framework of Beijing, it was designated as the new axis representing "modernity." As a counterpart to the north-south central axis representing "tradition," the symbolic nature of Chang'an Avenue is imbedded not in its static physical or spatial existence, but in the dynamic process of its evolution.

Avenue des Champs Elysees and Paris

Unlike Chang'an Avenue, whose status as an axis of the capital was a modern creation, Avenue des Champs Elysees in Paris functioned as the main axis of the French capital in both the imperial periods and the modern era. As Lawrence Vale had rightly pointed out, royal sections merged seamlessly into modern and commercial sections along Avenue des Champs Elysees, continuously displaying the history of France.¹

Different from the imperial Chinese ceremonial procession during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which was performed along the north-south axis of Beijing penetrating

¹ Lawrence J Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), 20.

layers after layers of walls and gates, ceremonies in Paris were proceeding along the great boulevards, especially the Champs Elysees. During the Franco-Prussian War, in March 1871, the occupying Prussian troops marched back and forth along first the Avenue de la Grande Armee, and then down the Champs Elysees in celebration of their victory.² Sixty years later, Hitler's Nazi troops repeated this parade along the same avenues.

Grand boulevards lined with trees and monumental façades are a modern product of the West. In 1646, Louis XIV of France authorized the destruction of the defensive walls and fortifications of Paris and their replacement with the first tree-lined avenues. These avenues eventually became the most animated thoroughfares in Paris known as interior boulevards or *les grands Boulevards*. Ringing the interior boulevards were the exterior boulevards, connected in the mid-19th century when Baron Georges-Eugene Haussmann added a series of diagonal avenues. Haussmann's new street system created two new axes for Paris, two thoroughfares that intersect at the center of the city. The east-west axis was established by joining the Rue de Rivoli with the Rue Saint Antoine, which then continues to the east to connect the Rue Saint Antoine with Palace de la Bastille, Rue du Faubourg Saint Antonine, Place de la Nation, and Cour de Vincennes; and to the west to connect Rue de Rivoli with the Champs Elysees, Palace de l'Etoile, and Avenue de la Grande Armee. The north-south axis starts with Porte d'Orlean in the south; it then follows Avenue du General Leclerc, Avenue Denfert-Rochereau, Boulevard Saint Michel, and Boulevard du Palais, and reached Palace du Chatelet where the two axes meet; from here, it continues northward through Boulevards Sebastopol and Strasbourg, reaching its

² Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 8.

north end at Gare de l'Est.³ The proposal of 1903-09 by Eugene Henard widened (to 49 meters for his new major streets) and extended the streets of the north-south axis and at the same time, added a parallel thoroughfare to Haussmann's east-west axis.⁴

The axes of Paris are different from the axes of Beijing in three ways. First, while the two axes of Paris were created simultaneously in the 19th century, the east-west axis of Beijing was created more than 500 years after its north-south axis. Second, while both axes of Paris are streets open for public transit, the north-south axis of Beijing is not primarily for transportation but comprises of historical monuments. Third, unlike Paris's axes, the axes of Beijing are much more regular and straight, oriented according to the cardinal directions of north-south and east-west. The directions of Paris's axes follow not the cardinal directions but already existing streets. Zigzagging in the city and visually tying the city together, they are, however, weaker as a formal axis than Chang'an Avenue in Beijing, which bisecting the entire city into two halves and intersecting the north-south axis at the very center of the city. Paris's axes are created by connecting some pre-existing streets to make a smoother traffic, while Beijing's Chang'an Avenue cuts into the historical fabric of the Old City and destroys imperial monuments that once stood in its way of expansion. (Figure 7.1)

The urban axis of Paris comparable to Beijing's Chang'an Avenue is the Champs Elysees. Straight, wide, and lined with trees and monumental buildings, the physical appearance of the Champs Elysees and its prestigious status for the entire city are similar features to Chang'an Avenue in Beijing. The cultural and functional contexts of these two

³ Evenson, 15-19.

⁴ Evenson, 26.

avenues, however, are very different. While the Champs Elysees was initially created (in 1667) as an ornamental promenade rather than a utilitarian thoroughfare for traffic like other boulevards in Paris,⁵ Beijing's two Chang'an Avenues remained two minor streets separated by the city's central imperial axis for 500 years until recently joined and made into a prominent modern avenue. Champs Elysees has a clear beginning, the Louvre, and extends in one direction, to the west. Chang'an Avenue also has a starting point, Tiananmen Square, but then extends both westward and eastward, making it visually and virtually infinite in extension for future urban planning. Most importantly, while the Champs Elysees starts with traditional historical monuments and smoothly merges into modern sites, for instance new area of La Defense and beyond. Its starting point was historically created and existed long before the creation of the axis itself. The starting point of Chang'an Avenue, namely the communist Tiananmen Square, however, was a modern creation. Although the name Tiananmen Square, as well as the name Chang'an Avenues, are as old as Beijing as a national capital – in fact, these names are older than the Ming-Qing imperial capital Beijing since the names and layout of Ming Beijing were after the previous Ming capital Nanjing in modern day Jiangsu Province – the modern Tiananmen Square bears little resemblance to the Imperial Tiananmen Square of the Ming-Qing dynasties. Instead of embodying a continuous transition between past and present, as the Champs Elysees does, Chang'an Avenue represents an abrupt change with a clear-cut boundary between past and present, old urban fabric and new development, and memory and a longing for a brighter future.

⁵ Evenson, 38.

The inefficient flow of traffic through Beijing was the initial impetus for joining the two Chang'an Avenues, similar to the transportation problems that were the driving force behind the development of the Parisian street system.⁶ The horse-drawn omnibus had served Paris since 1661 and had survived as late as 1913. However, by the 1870s, the tramways had become an important part of the transportation system and the omnibus began to lose its popularity. In 1929, decisions were made to replace the trams completely with buses. In the 1960s and 1970s, buses start losing passengers every year due to the rise of the more convenient private car and to the faster and more regular Metro.⁷ The debates on whether subway or viaduct among the Parisians were more about aesthetics, ideology, and spirituality rather than pure utilitarian or economic considerations. The Metro was compared with tomb and catacomb and referred to as "anti-national, anti-municipal, and anti-patriotic, and detrimental to the glory of Paris." Advocates for elevated transportation system acclaimed its economy and the joy it would bring to life. It was the monorail rather than the Metro that was first brought into reality in Paris.⁸ The Metro was not constructed until the 1900 Exposition. The first segment of the Metro followed the east-west axis of the grande croisee, extending about 11 km between Porte de Vincennes and Porte Maillot.⁹ Since then, the Metro system in Paris has developed steadily and has become the very symbol of modernity. At the turn of the 20th century, the railway station became the most conspicuous new building type, whose technical innovation in metal and glass construction and symbolism as a gateway to the

⁶ Evenson, 76-122.

⁷ Evenson, 81-86.

⁸ Evenson, 91-105.

⁹ Evenson, 105-107.

city made it another primary symbol of modernity.¹⁰ Similarly, it was such transportation efficiency that inspired the first stage of the development of Chang'an Avenue in Beijing before the communist revolution.

In 1925, Le Corbusier proposed his Visionary Plan for Paris to revise the historical center according to his modernist vision, in which the entire historical urban fabric would be erased and replaced with gigantic modern structures located on huge empty abstract gardens.¹¹ His plan was never instituted because people did not want to lose the historical city to a modernist utopia. This modernist type of revision of a city's historical center is what Liang criticizes with his 1950 Liang-Chen Scheme; the Liang-Chen Scheme failed.

The Eiffel Tower has long been a model for those who want to construct an audacious structure confronting a historical urban context.¹² The Centre Georges Pompidou of 1969-1976 is the most striking structure after the Eiffel Tower in Paris to assert a departure from the prevailing urban fabric in the midst of the historic center of the city.¹³ If the Centre Pompidou shocked the conservative Parisians with its style, the Maine-Montparnasse tower of 1969-1973 aroused controversies for both its style and its height.¹⁴ President Pompidou himself was among the modernist proponents who welcomed this new urban element as an enrichment of old city. In justifying his vision for a modern Paris, he argued,

¹⁰ Evenson, 139-41.

¹¹ Evenson, 52-53.

¹² Evenson, 133.

¹³ Evenson, 184.

¹⁴ Evenson, 192.

The modern architecture of the big city leads to tower. The French prejudice, and particularly that of Parisians, against height is, to my eyes, completely retrograde. ... One cannot be mired in the past. Paris is not a dead city; it is not a museum to maintain. ... We are the guardians of civilization. The difficulty is to be at the same time the creators. ... I love art, I love Paris, I love France. I am struck by the conservative character of French taste, particularly of those who call themselves the elite, I am scandalized by the policies of the public powers in matters of art for a century, and that is why I seek to counteract it, with a mitigated success.¹⁵

This is the same motivation behind the expansion of Chang'an Avenue in the 1950s. Beijing was not a dead city. The best strategy to keep Beijing alive was to develop it according to the new vision of a modernized China. In the 1990s, supporters for Paul Andreu's National Grand Theatre project pointed to the success of both the Eiffel Tower and the Centre Pompidou to justify the confrontation the theatre's design presented to the 1959 Great Hall of the People and the centuries-old Imperial City.

Via dell'Impero and Rome

The construction of a symbolic street at the expense of historic buildings, as happened with Chang'an Avenue, has its parallel in the Via dell'Impero in Rome. While new urban life created modern boulevards in Paris, the Via dell'Impero in Rome was intended as a display of the power of a new empire. It was constructed to link the present and past empires, connecting the Piazza Venezia (in front of the Victor Emmanuel Monument) with the Coliseum and cutting through the imperial fora. Like Chang'an

¹⁵ George Pompidou, "Le president de la Republique definit ses conceptions dans les domaines de l'art et de l'architecture," *Le Monde*, October 17, 1972. In Evenson, 190-91.

Avenue of Beijing, the Via dell'Impero was meant to be a showcase. It was constructed as the main axis of EUR (Esposizione Universale di Roma), Mussolini's ambitious plan for the 1942 event to celebrate the achievements of fascism. The new capital complex was located on this axis. In 1934, the twelve-hundred-room national Fascist party headquarters was designed to be located at the midpoint of this avenue. Fifty-five hundred units of housing were destroyed to expose the ruins of the Ancient Roman's imperial fora.¹⁶ Unlike Chang'an Avenue's history, however, in the Fascist Italy, instead of challenging the imperial past, the demolition of old buildings of the recent past was to reveal a more remote and more powerful ancient glory. (Figure 7.2)

The parade of military triumph has a long history in Rome. During the Republican period from 508 to 44 BCE, triumphal processions lasting for several days frequently energized the city. While the triumphs in Republican Rome served other time-honored ceremonial functions as well, for instance to ritually purify the troops and citizenry contaminated by war, or to appease and honor the gods responsible for their victories, the purposes of these ancient celebrations, like their later versions in Rome, Beijing, and other cities, were to justify their military campaigns, show the power of the empire, and intimidate their enemies.¹⁷ Although Roman triumphs made strong impacts on the city's urban fabric, for instance with the construction of commemorative arches and the development of fora and theaters, there was no fixed itinerary for the ritual parades and

¹⁶ Vale, 30-32.

¹⁷ Diane Favro, "Rome: the Street Triumphant: the Urban Impact of Roman Triumphal Parades," in Zeynep Celik, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll, Eds, *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (1994), 151-164.

no single street was designated for these ceremonies.¹⁸ Compared with their ancient counterpart, the impact of 20th-century ceremonies on urban development was much more self-conscious.

A comparison between what Mussolini had done to the historical center of Rome in the 1930s and what Mao had done to the historical center of Beijing in the 1950s reveals only superficial similarities. Both chose to have the new power center located in the cultural center of an imperial capital full of historical memories, and both cleared huge amounts of old housing to make way for big avenues for ceremonial parades. While Mussolini's Via dell'Impero linked the imperial Piazza Venezia with the ancient Roman Coliseum overlooking the imperial fora,¹⁹ Chang'an Avenue cut the imperial city off from the imperial administrative Tiananmen Square and turned it into a vast public square for mass assembly. While Mussolini's various archaeological projects tried to isolate the monuments of the Roman Empire and put them on display in the centers of urban squares, the new communist Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Avenue marginalized the Forbidden City and the soaring front gates of Imperial Beijing, turning them into mere backdrops. What Mussolini had tried to do was to legitimize the Fascist regime by establishing associations with a past golden age, namely the ancient Roman Empire. His archaeological projects on the imperial fora (especially the Forum of Augustus), the mausoleum of Augustus, the Ara Pacis Augustae, etc., were undertaken to equate Fascist Italy with the ancient Roman Empire, and Mussolini the Duce with

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Vale, 30.

Augustus.²⁰ In China, however, instead of trying to resurrect a past golden age of the Chinese empire, Mao was more concerned with creating an entirely new society, something never attempted by any previous ruler of China, as prophesied in his famous 1936 poem “Snow.”

Alas, emperors Qin Shihuang and Han Wudi
Were not men of letters;
Sovereigns Tang Taizong and Song Taizu
Were short of cultural genius.
The great monarch
Genghis Khan was
Only capable of shooting the big eagles with his bow.
They are now as nothing:
Greater and more noble heroes
Are coming up today.²¹

The propaganda plans for Mussolini’s Italy aimed to create “a didactic display of the achievement of the Roman Empire to bolster national pride in the past and inspire loyalty for the present custodians of this exalted tradition.”²² But no regimes in the past four thousand years of imperial tradition match Mao’s vision for the future of China. Comparing the future development of Beijing with the Fascist refashioning of Rome proves that Mao’s scheme was much more forceful and efficient than Mussolini’s in terms of the degree to which it fulfilled the political need for a regime. Spiro Kostof comments of the Mussolini project of the mausoleum of Augustus that the

²⁰ Spiro Kostof, “The Emperor and the Duce: The Planning of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore in Rome,” in Henry A Millon and Linda Nochlin, eds, *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1978), 270-325.

²¹ Translated by Zhao Hengyuan and Paul Woods. See: Zhao Hengyuan, *Mao’s Poems* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubabshe, 1993), 69.

²² Kostof, 287.

Piazzale Augusto Imperatore lacked conviction in its own term; as a consequence, it is unable to impress us today. Its aim as political art had been to use relics of the Augustan age to lend authority to Fascist achievement. The contest, at least in the visual sense, was never really joined. The Fascist side of the balance is too weak: what we are conscious of is the Augustan substance. Our opinion of Augustus is not affected by his association with Mussolini, and our opinion of Mussolini is not enhanced. The Duce yields to the emperor and is lost. The Piazzale, in the end, remains a colossal mistake.²³

While the glory of ancient Roman Empire eclipsed Mussolini's Fascist achievements in Via dell'Impero, the development of Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square disconnected and overshadowed the imperial axis and created a socialist showcase to display the power and achievement of "New China."

Athinas Street and Athens

Similar to Chang'an Avenue in Beijing, the construction of Athinas Street in Athens was also a government gesture for specific official ideologies of nation construction. Immediately after Greece freed itself from the Ottoman control and became an independent nation in 1832, a master plan was made to construct Athens as the capital of the newly independent republic. An axis to link the King's Palace and the historical monument Acropolis, the Athinas Street, was created to give the long abandoned capital a new national identity.

Starting from the hill foot of the ancient Acropolis, Athinas Street is the main north-south axis of the city, cutting through the old city of Athens. Instead of making a

²³ Kostof, 322.

borderline between history and modernity as the Chang'an Avenue did to the Forbidden City of Beijing, however, Athinas Street works more as link between past, present, and future. Originating from the historical Acropolis, it connects the Omonia Square, which is surrounded by elegant hotels, and extends onward from there.²⁴ (Figure 7.3)

Unlike Chang'an Avenue in Beijing, the Athinas Street is not the only dominating street of the new urban fabric of Athens. It is one of the three major streets, each representing different aspects of the official ideologies and national aspirations of the new country. The Athinas Street was designed to make a strong connection with the classical past. Panepistimiou Street initiated the architectural transformation of Athens into a European-style capital with the so-called Athenian Trilogy of the university, the academy, and the national library. And Mitropoleos Street aimed for internal political and cultural unity and national identity with the erection of the new cathedral and royal palace. All three streets were designed and constructed in the 1830s shortly after Greece was freed from the Ottoman control.²⁵ All the national aspirations represented by these streets in Athens were about trying to forget and to cut off ties with recent Ottoman history in order to construct a new national identity. On this aspect, they served a very similar mission as Chang'an Avenue did for the Chinese capital, as the embodiment of modernization for a new country with a recent unpleasant history.

²⁴ Vale, 39-41.

²⁵ Eleni Bastea, "Athens: Etching Images on the Street: Planning and National Aspirations," in Zeynep Celik, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll, Eds, *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (1994), 111-124.

The unachievable completion of Chang'an Avenue and Chinese modernization

Chang'an Avenue shoulders a Trinitarian task in the modernization project of Chinese architecture: as an urban thoroughfare to serve the communication function in a modern city like the Avenue des Champs Elysees in Paris; as a national showcase to display the power of a regime, similar to the Via dell'Impero in Rome; and as an urban spatial expression to articulate a new national identity, similar to the Athinas Street in Athens. While these tasks are distributed among different urban elements and even among different cities in other countries, they are crowded on Chang'an Avenue. The best example is the designation of Beijing as the center for everything. Even after the "industrial center" was deleted from the "nature of Beijing" in the 1990s, such a megalomania for center persists. Why should the main site for 2008 Olympic in China have to be in Beijing? Are there other justifications, for instance traffic, environment, facilities, etc., other than political consideration for such a decision? In this sense, the construction of the socialist capital concentrating on Chang'an Avenue and Tiananmen Square continue the millennia-long Chinese tradition of building the symbolic center of "all under the sky."

While each period claims to "roughly complete" Chang'an Avenue according to the targeted "modernity" of the time, the changing and shifting of modernization ideologies constantly create "gaps" for the future "completions" to fill. The gaps are measured between the Chinese reality and the Western reference. The Chinese reality is articulated with the terms, examples, and theoretical frameworks generated in the Western context.

For the Chinese modernization project, the origin is the West, whose modernity is called, by Chinese scholars, “early and interior-generated modernization” 早发内生型现代化. The Chinese modernity, meanwhile, is named by Chinese scholars as the “postponed exterior-generated modernization” 后发外生型现代化, which means that it was delayed because of some historical mistakes and remained immature ever since.²⁶ But what are these historical mistakes? What if history is entirely without mistakes? The Chinese modernization process 现代化转型 was also called staggering and twisted.²⁷ But what is the normal and smooth modernization process? With a universal framework of modernization project, Chinese architecture was for ever looking to the West for future directions.

The post-modernist and post-colonial theories recently introduced into China, instead of challenging the sub-structure of the modernization project in Chinese architecture, were mostly mobilized by Chinese architects to compete with foreign companies in the design market. The recent rise of nationalism and regionalism is as much a shadow of the Western dominated international structure as the socialism was in the early decades of the PRC.

Similarly, the recent movement to restore the character of the ancient capital was as much a response to the Western dominant culture as the industrialization of Beijing was in the 1950s. On one hand, old style streets were built and proposals were raised to erase the “ugly” concrete buildings constructed during the early decades of the PRC and

²⁶ Pan Guxi, ed., *Zhongguo jianzhushi*, 299.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

to restore the old city gate towers in their places; on the other hand, many old style housing was, and continue to be, torn down to make ways for new urban developments of shopping malls, aristocratic housings, and company headquarters. The former is the erasure of the recent socialist memory in order to restore a fake “old Beijing” for tourism; the latter is the erasure of the memory of an “authentic” older Beijing for the entry of the world market. While the loss of the latter erasure of memory can be easily felt today, the former is not considered a loss at all. Nostalgia and nationalism have made it a blind-spot. The enthusiasm for the north-south axis has also come back to life. The Liang-Chen Scheme had proposed to preserve the imperial axis by leaving the old city intact and construct a new parallel north-south axis for the new administrative center. In the most recent city planning proposal for Beijing, however, the original north-south axis is to be strengthened and extended, just as what had been done with Chang’an Avenue in the 1950s.

The surface changes should not blind us from seeing historical repetitions. A Russian commentator recently declared that “China was still just an imitator despite its success in economic fields and rise in international status.” For me, this is very true. Far from the optimistic, or pessimistic, prophecy that the 21st century will be a Chinese century, the modernization project for Chinese architecture will remain unachievable as long as there is a modernization project at all. To some extent, the modernization project overemphasizes the significance of our contemporary time, which we can experience directly, establishes a definite boundary between past and present where one cannot exist,

and thus overlooks the continuity of history – the very driving force for the Chinese civilization.

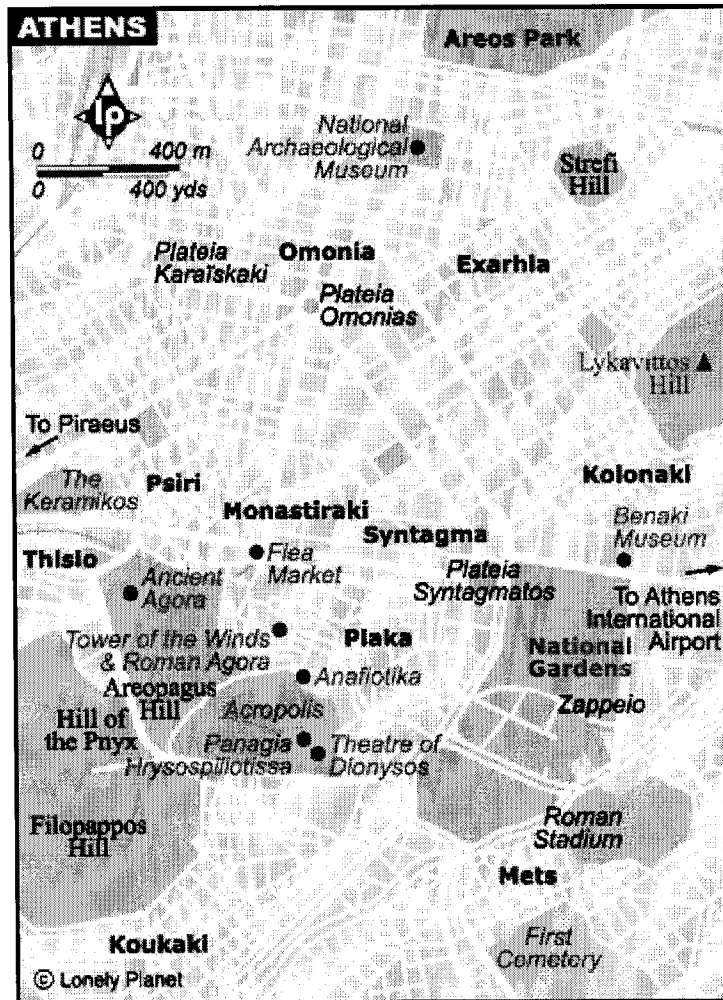


Figure 7.3: Athens and its three major avenues

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