

PLACING “ASIA” AGAINST THE “WEST”: OCCIDENTALISM AND THE PRODUCTION OF ARCHITECTURAL IMAGES IN SHANGHAI AND HONG KONG

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The paper explores the idea of architecture and Occidentalism in the writings of building journals and illustrated magazines in the early twentieth century. More specifically, it examines how images of architecture, buildings and landscapes of the “West” and the “non-West” were used as key tropes to construct particular imaginaries and moral claims at a specific time and space: republican Shanghai and colonial Hong Kong from the mid-1920s to the late 1930s. Central to these developments was the emergence of new image-making practices that were made available by modern printing technologies, which led to a surge of production and circulation of images in the popular press. As a salient representation of modernity, progress and achievements of “civilizations,” images of architecture came to capture the attention of architects and builders, cultural producers and the fast-growing middle-class reading public in these metropolises. The exploration of these representational practices raises several questions: What kinds of assumptions about the “West” and the “non-West” were associated with these architectural images at this time? What kinds of new knowledge did the authors of these articles seek to produce through their experimentation with new visual and textual strategies? How did these representations relate to and differ from those in the more authoritative architectural historiographies? Finally, if these narrative productions about the West can be seen as processes of Occidentalism, what new historical insights do they offer?

Keywords: China; Hong Kong; non-West; Occidentalism; Orientalism; Shanghai; Western Architecture

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The paper explores the idea of architecture and Occidentalism in the writings of building journals and illustrated texts in the early twentieth century. More specifically, it examines how images of architecture, buildings and landscapes of the “West” and “non-West” were used as key tropes to construct particular imaginaries and cultural claims at a specific time in two localities: Republican Shanghai and colonial Hong Kong between the mid-1920s and late 1930s. The study aims to direct attention to several peculiar aspects of image culture in Asia in this period. The first is a growing fascination with Western built forms,

which included not only modern skyscrapers emerging in metropolises in Europe and America, but also well-known architectural canons from Western civilisations, such as the ancient monuments in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In tandem with this development were two other obsessions. One was the growing interest amongst architects and builders to rediscover China's own architectural achievements in the past, which they believed were comparable with those of the West. The other was a simultaneous desire to learn about the building cultures of other "non-Western" places, including South and Southeast Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands, as well as China's own peripheral regions ranging from Tibet to Xinjiang to Taiwan.¹

Articles on these different themes often appeared in the same issue of a magazine, usually in the form of photo collections or travelogues. While these were not scholarly texts, they tended to make provocative and often poetic statements about tradition, modernity and history in their titles, suggesting that these topics were capturing the imagination of the reading public at the time. This paper argues that a closer examination of these narratives can offer new insights into the self-representation of architects and builders, as well as of the middle-class urbanites who consumed these images in Shanghai and Hong Kong, two cities that had been looked upon as the centres of modernity in Asia, but as also lying at the margins of Western modernity. In keeping with the goal of this special issue in questioning the various frames through which "Asia" has been defined, this investigation offers an example of the use of architecture as a "tactic," by elucidating how comparative architectural representations were deployed by different actors to construct new discourses of cultures amidst the accelerating circulation of images in the flourishing popular press in the early twentieth century. But before exploring the production of specific images, it is first necessary to discuss the idea of Occidentalism and the geopolitical contexts from which these materials were generated.

While Orientalism is by now a familiar concept to historians, much less attention has been paid to Occidentalism that is, the essentialist portrayals of the "West" by not only Westerners, but also members of "alien societies" outside the West.² As pointed out by James Carrier, this imbalance of attention could partly be explained by the disproportionate focus that scholars have placed on the products of Orientalism, with critiques centring mostly on specific texts and images produced by Western scholars, rather than on the ways in which these materials were generated, the processes of Orientalism.³ But as Edward Said himself recognised, processes of Orientalism are fundamentally dialectical.⁴ That is, all Orientalist constructions are produced by means of juxtaposing two entities: *the West* and *non-West*, with each being framed in essentialist terms. Seeing Orientalism as a dialectical process is useful because it helps to delineate "the interrelated understandings that people have of themselves and of others."⁵ It also forces us to consider the various ways in which "non-Western" Others construct the West and define themselves in terms of the West. These constructed categories played a crucial role in the shaping of the self-identities and political views of those living in non-Western societies and often became key components in the construction of nationalistic narratives in the struggles for decolonisation.⁶

83 Earlier discourses about the West can be found in the writings of many Asian intellec-
 84 tuals in the early twentieth century. The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, for example,
 85 posited a "soulless West" against a "spiritual Asia" and warned against uncritical emulation
 86 of Western practices.⁷ In Japan, Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed a different thesis that con-
 87 trasted an "advanced and aggressive Europe" against a "backward and passive Asia" that
 88 Japan, he argued, would need to leave behind.⁸ In China, Kang Youwei and other pro-
 89 moters of the Self-Strengthening Movement argued that a strategic combination of
 90 Chinese thought and "Western pragmatism" (also known as *ti* [essence or structure] and
 91 *yong* [application]) would hold the key to building a strong modern Chinese nation.⁹ In
 92 more recent times, new discourses about the West have been increasingly couched in
 93 terms of "the emergent Asian Century," a powerful imaginary that seeks to reverse the
 94 geopolitical dominance of the West amidst rising economic power in East Asia over the
 95 past decades.

96 What these examples illustrate is that discourses about the West have long been pro-
 97 duced by many actors outside the West, even though they may not have been formally
 98 framed as processes of Occidentalism at the time. While this recognition resonates with
 99 the post-colonial concern to "decenter the West," recent studies on colonialism have com-
 100 plicated the equation by elucidating the many overlapping interests shared by "Western"
 101 and "non-Western" agents and their frequent collaborations in colonialist capitalist enter-
 102 prises throughout much of the histories of colonialism.¹⁰ They also point to the fact that
 103 many Asian intellectuals assumed a deeply ambivalent attitude toward Western modernity:
 104 at times invoking particular Western ("universal") concepts to push for modernisation and
 105 social change, and at other times emphasising the strangeness of foreign things and people
 106 in order to affirm their own identities and cultural traditions.

107 The turn toward a more critical approach to colonial histories has been embraced by a
 108 growing number of architectural historians. Recent architectural historiographies on Asia,
 109 Africa and the Middle East have provided invaluable insights on the roles of indigenous
 110 actors in the advent of modernism and participation in the transnational exchange of
 111 knowledge in these contexts.¹¹ However, there has been limited discussion of the changing
 112 interpretations of the West or reflection on how these interpretations were utilised in the
 113 intellectual projects of architectural historians themselves. Indeed, I argue that it would be
 114 perilous to assume that the growing calls to recognise the significance of non-Western
 115 architecture inevitably help unsettle the idea of the West itself. This is because in concepts
 116 such as "non-Western modernism" and "indigenous modernism," there is a tendency to
 117 reduce the meanings of the "Modern" and its association with a generic "West" in order to
 118 qualify its Other, thus reducing modernism's own historicity, contradictions and
 119 embedded critical potentials to a dominant, hegemonic "Western ideology."¹²

120 It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the full trajectory of Occidentalism in archi-
 121 tectural writings. What I hope to offer is a more limited discussion of some of the ways in
 122 which Western architecture had been used as a means to construct particular imaginaries
 123 and moral statements about cultures, civilisations and histories in a series of mass-market

124 texts published in Shanghai and Hong Kong in the early twentieth century. By doing so, I
 125 seek to raise several questions: What kinds of assumptions about the “West” and the “non-
 126 West” were associated with these architectural images at this time? What kinds of new
 127 knowledge did the authors of these articles seek to produce through their experimen-
 128 tation with new visual and textual strategies? How did these representations relate to and differ
 129 from those in the more authoritative architectural historiographies? Finally, if these narrative
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132 WESTERN ARCHITECTURE AS A MEDIUM FOR NARRATING “NON- 133 WESTERN” HISTORIES

134 In his discussion of image-making practices in Republican Shanghai, William Schaefer
 135 argues that photography had become a crucial means through which people grappled with
 136 their changing cultural identities and relations with the past.¹³ In both Shanghai and Hong
 137 Kong, metropolises that witnessed dramatic urban transformation amidst accelerating
 138 colonial capitalist expansion in the 1920s, photographs of modern skyscrapers and iconic
 139 infrastructure proliferated in the print media.¹⁴ In mass-market journals, newspapers and
 140 illustrated magazines, familiar modernist built forms were featured repeatedly in different
 141 formats. But the new “transportability” of architecture via mass circulation of images was
 142 not confined to modern buildings alone. As Schaefer observes, discussions of Chinese
 143 modernity in such publications were often accompanied by ideas of the lingering past, in
 144 which the “old” in various guises would appear alongside the new.¹⁵ Furthermore, these
 145 images could be extracted from anywhere and from any time period. They included, for
 146 example, well-known historical monuments from China’s ancient cities of Xian, Nanjing
 147 and Beijing. But they also included many canonical buildings from far-flung locations,
 148 such as tombs from ancient Egypt, temples from the Greco-Roman era and cathedrals
 149 from medieval Europe (Figures 1 and 2).

150 Why such fascination with these built forms and landscapes at this moment in time?
 151 One may argue, of course, that interest in the past was hardly a phenomenon unique to
 152 modern China, for, after all, nostalgia has always been felt the greatest during times of
 153 rapid urban change. But the examination of cases in Shanghai and Hong Kong also reveals
 154 the novel connections that architectural images have helped create; namely, connections
 155 and relations between these cities and other localities in China with the “West” and the
 156 rest of the “non-Western” world. What might these building-centred narratives inform us
 157 about the contestations entailed in the cross-cultural translation of architecture amidst
 158 ongoing colonial capitalist expansion? And what were the new meanings and values being
 ascribed to specific built forms?

159 This paper begins by focusing on three types of architectural narrative medium in this
 160 period. The first is articles in the general-interest Chinese illustrated magazines, which
 161 became immensely popular by the mid-1920s, with circulation in major urban centres
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Figure 1. A page in an illustrative magazine showing images of "great buildings" from different places being juxtaposed against each other, 1935 (Source: *Wanxiang*, 3, 1935).

including Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. While these magazines for the middle-class reading public tended to cover a wide range of topics, architecture was featured regularly, often in the form of photo series or montages in which foreign buildings and landscapes of various kinds were placed against familiar ones taken from China and other parts of Asia. The second type of medium is articles authored by professional architects, surveyors and builders. The earliest of these appeared in Hong Kong and Shanghai's English-language newspapers in the form of "supplementary trade sections." Although their primary purpose was to promote local building trades, they also included discussions of the architecture and cultures of different countries. Like those in the illustrated magazines, reports on building projects from around the world were typically placed alongside each other. But instead of focusing on their differences, the emphasis tended to be on their "equivalence"; that is, the idea that these projects together presented compelling evidence of universal human progress both in the West and in Asia. Lastly, I review several Chinese building journals that began to be published in Shanghai and Hong Kong in the 1930s. While the writing styles and visual strategies of these publications were not dissimilar to those in their contemporary English-language counterparts, a closer look at their content indicates that they assumed positions that departed significantly from the latter and from each other in regard to architectural and cultural histories, the ethics of the profession and conceptions of (Western) modernity.

MAKING PLACES COMMENSURABLE: ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES IN CHINESE ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINES

It is now commonplace for architectural historians to speak critically about the limit of the canon and its associated Eurocentric narratives in conventional architectural history texts. As Donald Preziosi has noted, art and architecture began to acquire a new function in the nineteenth century as indicators of a universal history of development—a phenomenon that went hand in hand with the advent of European colonialism and global capitalist expansion.¹⁶ Implicit in this perspective is the idea that changing forms of buildings and cities can be seen as evidence of an overall evolution of cultures. Architecture came to be treated as a transparent medium of communication, with its intrinsic values, intentions and political messages to be discerned through images of buildings.¹⁷ Although historians might disagree amongst themselves about which buildings were catalysts of social and cultural change, their key concern was to place architecture within a common analytical frame such that their relationships with each other could be specified. In a related discussion on the pedagogy of art history, Robert Nelson points out that a key instrument that enabled the construction of this universal knowledge was the comparative slide lecture, a technique of visual presentation first pioneered by the German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, which was later firmly institutionalised in Western art and architectural education.¹⁸ Crucially, the power of the slide lecture lay in its ability to allow the viewer to simultaneously see a range of images, thus enabling buildings from different spaces and times

to be compared in an instant. This kind of comparative strategy would be further developed in various mass media outlets in the early twentieth century. Amongst these was the illustrated magazine, which became immensely popular not only in Europe and America but also in Asia, used by ambitious cultural producers eager to exploit new photographic techniques to enlist a reading public curious about foreign architectures and cultures.¹⁹

A striking example that deployed this kind of comparative narrative technique is a 1930 article in *Liangyou Huabao* (also known as *The Young Companion* in English), a widely distributed illustrated magazine with its headquarters in Shanghai and branch offices in Hong Kong and Hangzhou.²⁰ The article, titled “Ancient Eastern Civilization and Modern Western Civilization,” consists of a pair of full-page photographs: one of the Great Wall of China and the other a contemporary cityscape of New York composed of modern skyscrapers (Figure 3).²¹ Despite the vast difference in their forms and contexts, the images were made “commensurable” by being framed within two similarly shaped archways, which offered viewers a sense of seeing through the picture panes into the depth of the scenes beyond. As Andrew Jones explains in his analysis of the images, this framing device was essential in enabling the two sets of built forms to speak to each other and to a larger discourse of development: the Great Wall representing a declining and passive East and the American skyscrapers an advancing and progressive West. Like the comparative slide



Figure 3. An article in *Liangyou Huabao* in which a photograph of China’s Great Wall was paired up with one of a contemporary cityscape of New York (Source: *Liangyou Huabao* 46, 1930).

lecture, the pairing of the two images effectively screened out all relations between the buildings and their historical, cultural and political contexts, in turn leading to an interpretative transformation of them from specific sites into a synecdoche of the cultures that built them.²² The binary construction of the “East” and the “West” was further reinforced by the accompanying Chinese texts beneath the images, which underscored the difference between the ruinous state of the ancient Great Wall and the dynamism of modern skyscrapers.

While such framing of the “East–West” divide via architectural images was common in this period, the intentions of their authors and the moral claims they sought to make often varied. Some, like the author of the article in *Liangyou Huabao*, were urging the Chinese to leave their traditions behind in order to catch up with the modern West—a call that resonated with many intellectuals associated with the New Culture Movement and the belief that the wholesale adoption of Western knowledge would be necessary for transforming China into a modern nation.²³ However, there were also many others who utilised the category of the “West” as a means either to reappraise the values of Chinese architecture and culture or to prompt reflections on how China could learn from the West in order to rescue its own cultural tradition in the modern era.²⁴

An example of this latter aspiration can be seen in a 1925 article in the magazine *Gongxian* under the title “Leifeng yu Bisha” (The Leifeng Pagoda and the Tower of Pisa).²⁵

The article, which was written by a French-trained Chinese architect named Liu Jipiao, was a commentary on the recent tragic collapse of Leifeng, an ancient pagoda in Hangzhou that had been left in a state of neglect for many years. Liu began by mourning the loss of this almost thousand-year-old structure, whose level of cultural achievement was said to be no less than that of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The comparison was made explicit by the inclusion of two full-page photographs of the buildings (Figure 4). Here, the commensurability between the two was achieved not by utilising the framing device, as seen in the *Liangyou Huabao* article, but by accentuating their physical similarity as monumental towers. Indeed, this visual strategy based on architectural typologies was also one that was most frequently used in the comparative slide lecture, which allowed readers to establish connections between buildings belonging to the same type from distant realities for comparison purposes.

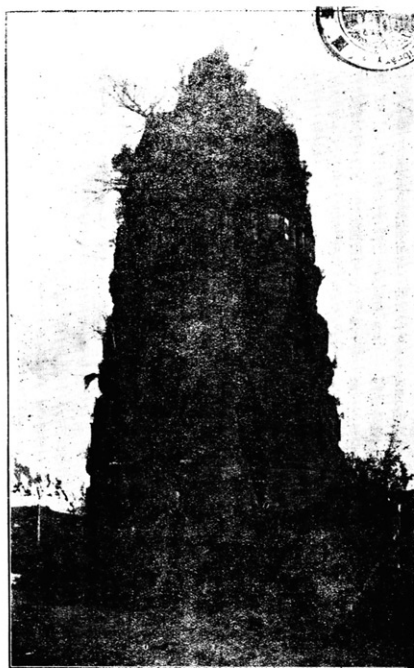
As with the Great Wall and American skyscrapers, Leifeng Pagoda and the Leaning Tower of Pisa were presented here as representative of the Chinese and European civilisations. But instead of constructing a simplistic “East–West” dualism, Liu’s focus was on the discrepancy between how Chinese and Europeans treated their great architectural heritage.

Lamenting the loss of his beloved pagoda, Liu wrote:

Alas! No matter what greatness Leifeng had achieved in the past, all will soon be forgotten by everyone Sadness overwhelms me every time I think about the building. But I feel even sadder when I think about the Tower of Pisa, which, despite leaning toward collapse for centuries, remains in perfect



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Figure 4. The pairing of an image of *Leifeng* with the Leaning Tower of Pisa in *Gongxian Zazhi*, 1928 (Source: *Gongxian Zazhi*, 3, 6, 1928).

condition to this day, allowing the world to appreciate its history, its legend, and its artistic achievements.²⁶

This emphatic passage, which dramatised the different statuses of the two monuments, represents a more complex play of similarity and difference underpinned by a pointed political critique: notwithstanding the construction flaw of the Tower of Pisa, which caused it to lean toward collapse, it still remained intact thanks to the great care given to it by the Europeans. In contrast, *Leifeng*, which was built to perfection by the ancients, was left to deteriorate and finally crumble due to the gross ignorance of the Chinese people who did not appreciate their own history.

As in many other writings in the period, Liu was utilising an architectural image from the West to mediate China's own cultural past. It should be noted that Liu, who was educated at L'Ecole Nationale Des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was extremely knowledgeable about Western architectural history.²⁷ Like many other foreign-trained architects, he believed that China should not blindly follow the design of foreigners, but must develop its own

411 architectural culture. This position was not dissimilar to that of his more well-known
 412 counterpart Liang Sicheng, who saw traditional Chinese architecture as a potent resource
 413 for design innovation.²⁸ Despite their very different approaches to design and aesthetic
 414 preferences, the perspectives of Liu and Liang, and indeed of many other young Chinese
 415 architects, were strongly influenced by their exposure to architectural culture in the West.
 416 Whether the attempt was to reappraise or critique China’s architectural tradition vis-à-vis
 417 Western architecture, these Occidentalised narratives were prompted by a growing anxiety
 418 to secure a cultural identity in the face of foreign imperialist aggression toward China. At
 419 the same time, they were increasingly mediated by the accelerating global circulation of
 420 architectural images.

421 As mentioned earlier, the advancement of photography and printing technologies in the
 422 1920s had helped propel new desires amongst the Chinese reading public to learn more
 423 about foreign places and people. Among those that received most attention were well-
 424 known cultural icons such as the ancient tombs and temples of Egypt, Mesopotamia and
 425 Greece, as well as modern architectural innovations such as the Eiffel Tower in France, the
 426 Crystal Palace in London and skyscrapers in America. This development was paralleled by
 427 a simultaneous growth of interest in the Other; that is, the “less developed” societies out-
 428 side the West. A quick survey of the illustrated magazines in this period shows that there
 429 was an increasing number of feature articles on places in Africa, Southeast Asia and the
 430 Pacific Islands, as well as in China’s own peripheral regions, ranging from Tibet to
 431 Taiwan.²⁹ The language of these pieces was sometime overtly racist, tending often to con-
 432 fute people of different ethnicities and from different cultures. At other times, it was
 433 mixed with a sense of wonder at the strange and exotic and even of longing for a “lost
 434 nature” or “lost past.” Architecture, whenever featured, was often accompanied with
 435 images of the “native people” with which it was associated (Figure 5). Indeed, in many
 436 ways, these narratives seem to mirror the Orientalist renderings of the “non-West,” only
 437 constructed from within the non-West itself.

439 Schaefer argues that obsession with images of the natives—or what he refers to as the
 440 “savage”—was part and parcel of the ongoing negotiation of cultural identity amongst
 441 Chinese urbanites in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁰ More than simply satisfying a
 442 curiosity about the foreign, representations of “primitive people” enabled the Chinese to
 443 position themselves as the more “civilized” and dissociate themselves from these people.
 444 Compared with the Orientalist representations produced by Westerners, these pieces
 445 seem able to elucidate even more clearly the dialectic between the Orient and the
 446 Occident, for both the producers and consumers of these images were constantly
 447 engaged in defining themselves in terms of the West and the non-West.³¹ While these
 448 processes of identity negotiation played out fully in the montage images in the illustrated
 449 magazines, they were also present in other narrative mediums. These include the news
 450 articles that sought to promote modern (Western) architecture and local building trades
 451 in the Asian region.

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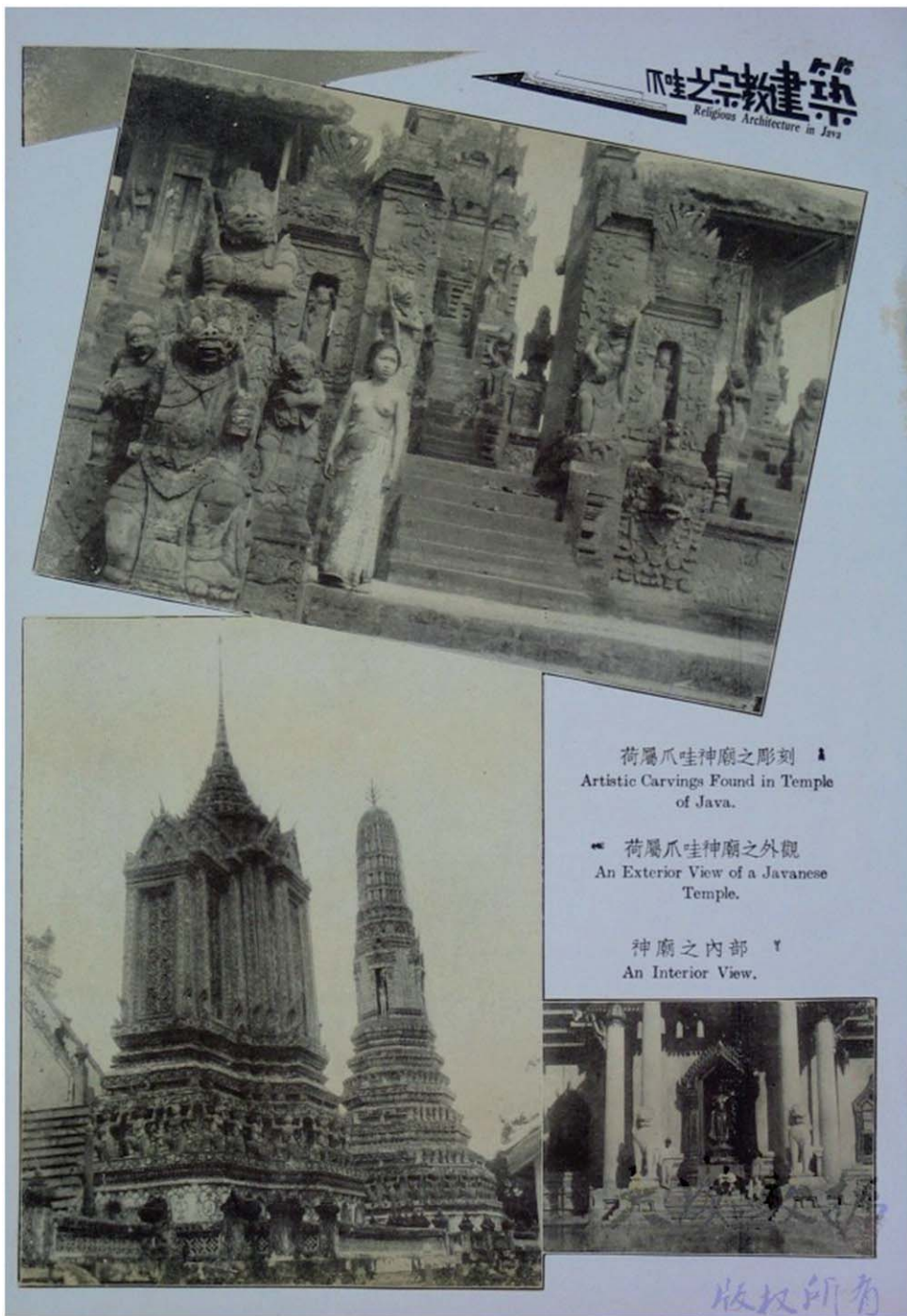


Figure 5. Images of Javanese religious architecture featured in the illustrated magazine *Wenhua* in 1934, with the top photograph showing a native woman standing in front of a temple (Source: *Wenhua*, 45, 1934).

ARCHITECTURE AS UNIVERSAL PROGRESS: NARRATIVES OF THE "EAST"
AND THE "WEST" IN BUILDING TRADE NEWS

Although professional trade journals on architecture had existed in Europe and America since the nineteenth century, they did not arrive in Asia until the 1920s. The earliest ones seem to have appeared mostly in the form of supplementary trade sections in Hong Kong's English-language newspapers. One of these was a section entitled "The Builder" in the *South China Morning Post*. The section began in 1925 and lasted for over a decade until the first professional trade journal with the same title was published in 1936.³² In its early years, the section reprinted many articles from overseas journals and mostly carried reports of the latest construction technologies and architectural projects abroad. Over time, it saw a steady increase of articles on local building schemes, especially those in Hong Kong, Shanghai and other urban centres in Southeast Asia, as well as on topics relating to professional ethics and architectural history. Authors of these columns were for the most part British architects and builders operating in Hong Kong, with occasional pieces by contributors from Britain and the United States. As a supplementary trade section whose primary aim was to promote construction businesses, these writings tended to adopt a positivist language in which architecture was consistently hailed as a catalyst of universal progress and modernisation. While one cannot expect to find the kind of competing narratives that existed in illustrated magazines such as *Liangyou Huabao*, an examination of the textual and visual strategies of these pieces and their approaches to "Eastern" and "Western" architecture nonetheless indicates how architectural images were deployed to do particular ideological work.

Whereas images of buildings in the illustrated magazines were often presented in a creative manner, their appearances in the trade sections were comparatively conservative. Up until the late 1920s, images in The Builder section were mostly confined to drawings supplied by architects and engineers. But with the advent of photography and new printing technologies that began to be widely adopted in newspapers in the late 1920s, eye-catching photographs of prominent architecture from different cities began to appear regularly in the section. These were typically arranged with a single large image placed at the top of the page. One striking example is a 1933 section that features a spectacular photograph of the Cities Service Building, a newly completed skyscraper in New York (Figure 6).³³ The image, which was displayed under the title "Colossus of Concrete," was not supported by any other text aside from its short caption, suggesting that it was used by the editor simply as a visual ploy to capture readers' attention. But a closer analysis of this and other page layouts of the section indicates there architecture more to what the image actually did.

Although the photograph of the skyscraper stood as a spectacle in its own right, its rhetorical power was acquired from its strategic positioning against other articles flanking the image. The piece on its left was an announcement of a new modern brick factory in Hong Kong, and the one on its right was of Shanghai residents claiming payments from local and foreign insurance companies for rebuilding their homes after the war. Below it was a third article on the latest experimentation with concrete by the Ministry of

ING POST. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1935.

THE BUILDER.

S.C. BRICKWORKS.

OPERATIONS SOON AT CASTLE PEAK.

MODERN BUILDINGS NOW READY.

QUALITY PRODUCT.

SOUTH China Brickworks Ltd. is a private limited Co., incorporated in the winter of 1931 with its registered office in Hongkong, 2nd Floor, Gloucester Building, with the intention of building a modern brickworks in the Colony.

Land up to 45 acres has been acquired for the purpose, and the site is situated at San Hu, Castle Peak, New Territory.

It took 18 months to complete the construction of the factory, and the buildings consist of Power Room, Fabrication Room, Drying Chambers, Behrer's Kiln, Office and Coal Bunker.

These buildings occupy about 90,000 sq. ft. of ground. The two complete sets of Brick-making Machines are most up to date, electrically driven. Three miles long light railway racks have been laid to facilitate the handling of raw materials and finished products, and a stone bunding of about 300 ft. built for lighters to be alongside.

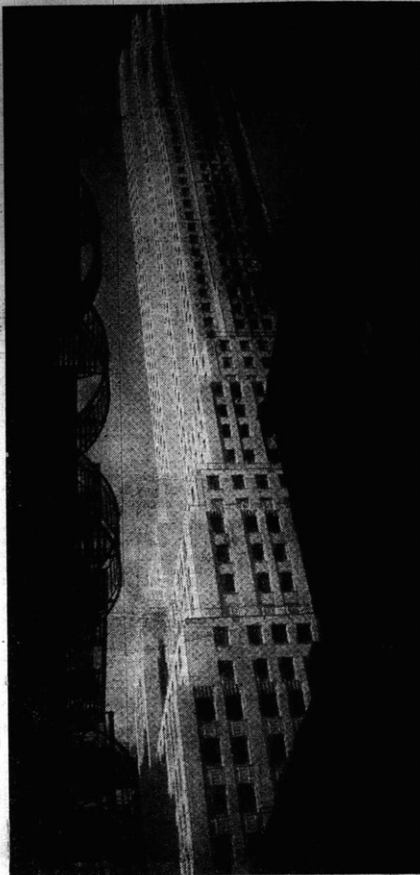
Deposits of various kinds of clay are found at the spot suitable for a fine mixing for fabrication of bricks and tiles, and it will take many years before the raw material will be used up.

With the right kind of material, modern ways of fabrication and proper supervision, it is believed that the Company's production will be of high quality bricks and tiles. It is also understood that it is the intention of the Company to try to meet the local demand of facing brick, which is more preferably adopted than any form of plastering for exterior walls, because a face brick, properly laid, is weather-resisting as well as decorative.

Mr. Jackson Lao is the Managing Director of the Firm, and Mr. Charles Gehring, Chief Engineer, is responsible for the designing of the plant and fabrication of goods.

LONDON FACTORY.

COLOSSUS OF CONCRETE.



A striking photograph of the Cities Service Building, one of the newer skyscrapers in down-town New York. The photograph displays the modified "zoning" or "cut-back" style of architecture that has been rendered obligatory by law — thus giving the maximum of light to itself and its neighbours.

ROADWAYS AND SCIENCE

IMPORTANT TESTS WITH NEW CONCRETE SECTIONS FOR TOP DRESSING.

The Secretary to the Ministry of Transport announced recently that the Third Report of the Technical Committee appointed by the Minister of Transport in

WAR AFTERMATH

SHANGHAI RESIDENTS WANT REPARATION.

MARCH ON INSURANCE COMPANY'S OFFICE.

ENORMOUS CLAIMS.

After several months' silence, approximately 300 members of the Chapei War Zone Fire Insurance Claimants' Association revived their activities last week and laid siege to the Sincere's Life and Fire Insurance Department, demanding immediate payment for the fire damage they sustained during the Sino-Japanese hostilities. When no definite settlement was obtained they declared that their "begging programme" would be continued today.

The association started to function more than year ago under the direction of its legal adviser, Mr. Tang You-wei. Its purpose is to persuade over 200 local foreign and Chinese fire insurance companies to pay approximately \$50,000,000 in claims.

While the Chinese insurance companies have expressed their willingness to work out a relief plan by which the Chinese government will issue public bonds, the foreign companies have refused to pay asserting that the damages were caused by war not fires, as stipulated in their insurance policies.

Last week the fire insurance claimants, mostly merchants under whom hundreds of employees had been eking out a living prior to the Shanghai Sino-Japanese conflict, gathered on Chiao Tung Road, Chapei, preparatory to marching to the various insurance companies. Previous to their departure to the Settlement they notified the Municipal police and when they went to the Sincere Company no disorder was witnessed.

Although they proceeded to the Company en masse, only a few delegates secured entrance to its

Figure 6. The City Service Building featured in The Builder section of the *South China Morning Post* in 1935 (Source: *South China Morning Post*, 3 October 1933).

575 Transport in Britain. While these news items came from far-flung places and were unre-
 576 lated to each other, they were united in making reference to a modernising and globalising
 577 construction industry.³⁴ Despite the economy being weak at the time amidst a global
 578 recession, what the section portrayed was an unmistakably optimistic picture of a thriving
 579 international building trade, whose transnational credentials were further reinforced by
 580 regular reports of exciting new architectural projects in both Asia and the West.

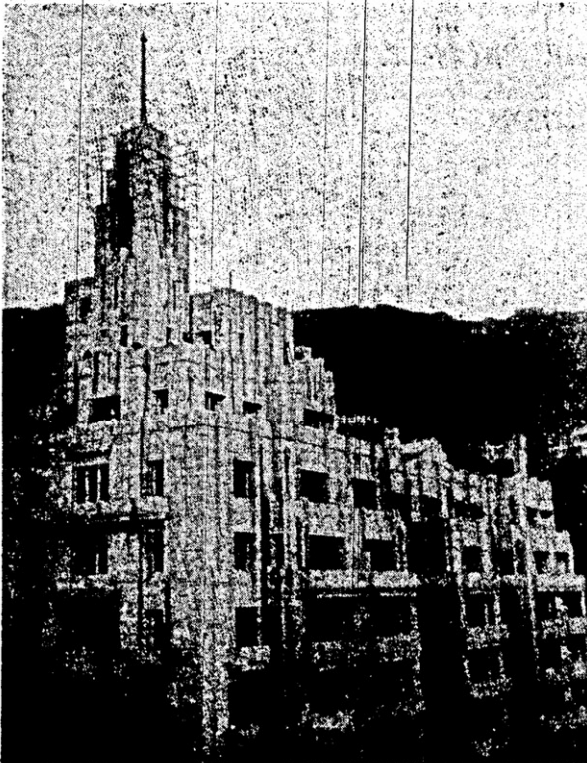
581 By the mid-1930s, The Builder section began to include an increasing number of local
 582 and regional architectural and development schemes in East Asia, particularly the fast-
 583 growing metropolises of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong, whose economies were
 584 performing better than their counterparts in the West. A striking example was the new
 585 headquarters for the Bank of East Asia, which was owned by a Hong Kong-based
 586 Chinese syndicate and was completed in 1935. News of the building’s completion first
 587 appeared in the section in early June, with a large photograph of the Bank being placed
 588 under the title “New Chinese Bank Premises” (Figure 7).³⁵ This was immediately fol-
 589 lowed by a second, much longer article a week later. In this second piece, which was
 590 entitled “Hong Kong Skyscrapers,” the earlier photograph was replaced by one with a
 591 scaled model of the bank (Figure 8).³⁶ Remarkably, the project was featured for a third
 592 time in early July (to mark the opening of the Bank), with the same image of the bank
 593 model being placed at the centre of the page (Figure 9).³⁷ It is worth noting that the
 594 composition of the page was almost identical to the one featuring the Cities Service
 595 Building of New York in 1933, except that the geographical references around the image
 596 were now reversed, with the Chinese-owned bank being placed at the centre and flanked
 597 by building news from the West.

598 Why did the section’s editor decide to feature the Bank of East Asia multiple times in a
 599 short period? It should not be surprising, perhaps, that given Hong Kong’s economy was
 600 still in the process of recovering from the economic downturn, the promotion of a major
 601 new Chinese bank in the British colony was seen as a golden opportunity for boosting
 602 investment confidence.³⁸ Clearly, the effectiveness of the presentations lay in the strategic
 603 deployment of architectural images, which first showcased the bank building in a real life
 604 photograph and subsequently in the form of a model (which was presented from almost
 605 the same angle as the photograph). In the process, the bank was transformed into what
 606 Jones called a “portable monument” that could “move through space in miniature and cir-
 607 culate across distances.”³⁹ Indeed, such processes of monumentalisation and serialisation
 608 of architecture could be seen in many building advertisements in the 1920s and 1930s, in
 609 which well-known buildings were turned into stand-alone icons for the purpose of pro-
 610 moting the building trade using distant contexts (Figure 10).

611 Although most narratives in the reportage on the building trade were predicated on a
 612 discourse of universal progress via the transnational circulation of architectural images,
 613 they also involved a constant, strategic balancing act in defining the “East” and “West” in
 614 their content. At times, these materials became catalysts for new debates over the values
 615 and meanings of local building traditions. The next section discusses some of these debates

THE BUILDER.

NEW CHINESE BANK PREMISES



The finishing touches are being put to the tower of the Bank of East Asia building, as shown in this photograph. The bank's new premises are among the largest in the Colony, and the picture shows merely the upper portion as seen from the roof of Alexandra Building, itself formerly one of the tallest office blocks in Hongkong.

USE OF CELOTEX

London's Exclusive, New Hotel Building

IMPORTANT PHASE

Unique among England's apartments and hotels is London's exclusive, new Mount Royal with its 650 furnished apartments and its optional hotel service, similar to the American apartment hotel. More than half a million square feet of Celotex were used for insulation and the reduction of sound transmission in the building.

The opening of the Mount Royal was hailed by the *London Daily Telegraph* as marking a new and important phase in the development of London's housing facilities.

The eight-storey building occupies an entire block on Oxford Street near the Marble Arch and Hyde Park. The size of the building is indicated by the fact that its boiler room is the largest in any residential building in Europe.

The building contains one and two room apartments with baths and kitchenettes. The kitchenettes are equipped with a combination electric refrigerator and stove. A promenade and roof garden extends completely around the top of the building, providing a broad walk 1,000 feet long. The ground floor is occupied by shops, lounges, restaurant, dining rooms and a snack bar.

Construction Records

Architects for the building were Sir John Burnett, Tait & Lorne. The general contractors were Holland & Hannan and Cubitts, Ltd. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, "The erection of Mount Royal has proved to be one of the largest and most complex constructional jobs undertaken in London for some years past and is understood to have created several records, notably for the immensity of the electrical contract and the amount of copper piping used in the plumbing work. The entire structure is stated to have cost £1,000,000."

NEW POLICE STATION

Five Storey Building
Being Erected



Figure 7. Three articles reporting the completion of the Bank of East Asia in the Builder Section published in June and July, 1935 (Source: *South China Morning Post*, June 4, June 7, July 2, 1935).

by examining the contested views of architectural culture from the perspectives of Chinese builders in Shanghai and Hong Kong in the 1930s, a time that saw growing competition in construction businesses along with rising nationalistic sentiments across Asia.

THE BUILDER.



An excellent model of the new Bank of East Asia building, which will be opened next month. It is of eleven storeys. The architects were Messrs. Little, Adams and Wood.

Inter-communication doors will permit the formation of suites of several rooms, up to twelve in number, without any structural adjustment.

There are 115 office rooms in this building, let or reserved for important and old established firms.

The ample and large public and private toilet rooms on each floor are tiled with cream and apple-green glazes and are fitted with Shank's appliances including automatic taps to the basins.

A rather novel feature to this office building is an incinerator which will permit of the disposal at each floor level of all waste matter.

A further convenience to tenants is provided by the "mail chute" conveying correspondence from the lift lobbies on each floor to the mail box below which will be periodically cleared by the Post Office authorities.

The three Otis gearless passenger lifts, with steel mottled-bronze finished cars of over 25 sq. feet floor area, will travel with a speed of 500 feet per minute, one of them reaching the tenth floor the remaining two having their last stop on the ninth.

The enamel-sprayed metal sliding doors to the lift shaft, the flashlight annunciators, fixed in each car, the indicators of their travel are all incorporating the latest improvements in lift construction. These lifts, as also the private automatic Bank lift from basement to the mezzanine floor, and the chit-coolie lift in the service staircase have been installed by Messrs. Dodwell & Co., Ltd.

The Builders

The contract for foundations and vault was carried out by Messrs. Lam Woo & Co., and the Raymond Concrete Pipe Coy.

Messrs. Cheong Hin Coy. are the general contractors for the superstructure of this building, erected in a surprisingly short time; Mr. Raoul Bigazzi is responsible for the fine marble and bronze work. The bronze name-boards have been well executed locally by the Hongkong & Whampoa Dock Co., Ltd.

The "Richard's" ceramic tiles were supplied and laid by Messrs. Lee Yu Kee, who have also supplied and laid a large quantity of mosaic manufactured by the Chinese National Electric & Pottery Co. of Shanghai. Further Messrs. Lee Yu Kee have carried out the whole of the plumbing and drainage works, the fire installation having been provided by Messrs. Yue Sang Co.

Messrs. C.E. Warren & Co. have decorated the stairs in dove-grey and green terrazzo and Messrs. A. Vanni & Co. laid the non-slip tiles to the main roof incorporating a

HONGKONG SKYSCRAPER

NEW PREMISES FOR BANK OF EAST ASIA TO OPEN JULY 2

BUILDING OF ELEVEN STOREYS

The magnificent new skyscraper, which is to house the Bank of East Asia, Limited, situated in Des Voeux Road Central near the junction of Lee Hing Street will be opened for public

BAMBOO WATER PIPE

Remarkable Creation Of
Nagasaki Citizen

LASTS 200 YEARS

Nagasaki, May 27.

Jirozemon Kupata-san, a dignified Burgher of Dejima-cho, Nagasaki, and his deviltry in installing waterworks in this city in 1667, form the subject of an old treatise found here by local librarians.

Despite the opposition of Nagasaki's god-fearing and staid citizenry, Kurata-san began laying bamboo conduits in 1667, and after seven years' work had a web of pipes, 27.5 kilometres long, supplying 38 points in the city with fresh water.

By the end of Tokugawa regime the bamboo waterworks had proved their worth in helping to fight fires and put down epidemics, and the Nagasaki townsfolk turned their criticism into praise.

Kurata's water works served the city for more than two centuries, until 1894 when they were replaced with modern equipment by the Municipal authorities.—Kengo.

CHINA REPRESENTED

Architects for London
Conference

Nanking, May 29.

The Ministry of Interior has decided to send a number of well-known architects to represent China at the forthcoming International Architectural Conference to be held in London in July.—Central News.

when subject to abnormal heat gives off a gas similar to tear gas, and necessitates the use of up to date anti-gas equipment by anyone attempting to burn through the door.

Thirdly, 1½ inch 5 ply chrome steel hardened drill proof, is used in five layers. The steel is hardened to withstand modern drilling equipment, and tests have shown that drills break before making any impression on the steel.

An open hearth steel and a finishing plate completes the solidity of the door which has a thickness of 13 inches. The overall thickness of the door is

Figure 8. Three articles reporting the completion of the Bank of East Asia in the Builder Section published in June and July, 1935 (Source: *South China Morning Post*, June 4, June 7, July 2, 1935).

MORALISING TRADITIONS: COMPETING CLAIMS TO ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE BY CHINESE BUILDERS

In her study of Chinese architects of the early twentieth century, Vimalin Rujivacharakul notes that Chinese architectural historiographies tend to centre on the "hero-architects," referring to a small number of foreign-trained professionals who assumed key positions in the architectural profession and academic institutions in China.⁴⁰ However, these narratives have omitted many less well-known actors who played important roles in modernising China's architectural profession.⁴¹ This point can be substantiated by examining the

MORNING POST, TUESDAY, JULY 2, 1935.

THE BUILDER.

STANDARD METHOD OF MEASUREMENT

Reinforcement Included
In New Edition

BUILDING SCIENCE

The third edition of Standard Method of Measurement of Building Works (Chartered Surveyors' Institution, London 7/8), is to hand. It is a valuable compilation and removes many of the anomalies of measurement which had not been dealt with in former editions. The acceptance of the "Method" by agreement with the Chartered Surveyors' Institution, the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, and the Institution of Builders, stamps it immediately as a reliable reference work.

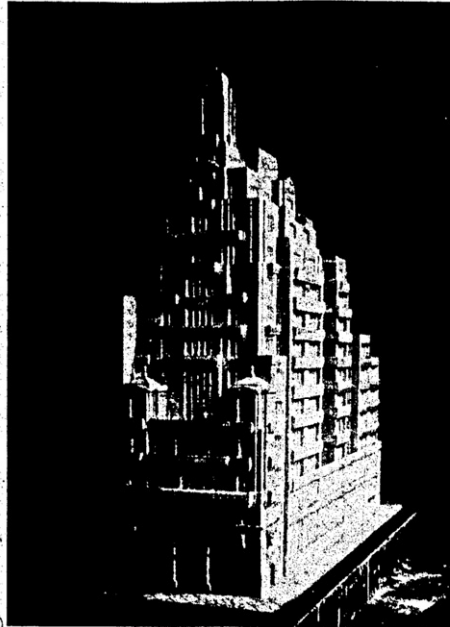
The building world to-day embraces so many trades and specialists that it would be well nigh impossible to fix standard measurements in every branch, but in the case of the present edition the trades covered are certainly less sketchy than in former editions, and the grouping of the "Concrete" alone under one section and to include "Reinforcement" is a happy departure and a great boon to those called upon to take measurements.

In the past many things have conflicted the measurer, whether he be the taker off for the quantity surveyor or the clerk of works on a job—as to what trade to classify certain works, particularly in the case of the "romonger" and the "smith and founder." These difficulties are now removed by the new section "Steel and Iron Worker" and the comprehensive section "Plumber, Gas and Hot-water Fitter, Zinc worker, Copper smith and Wire worker" with the much needed subdivisions for internal and external plumbers.

The Editors still evade, however, a very controversial point in the measurement units, which it was hoped that this edition would clear up. To what limits of sub-division is the measurer entitled to take a unit? In the case of concrete in floors and roofs the measurement is in yards superficial and the thickness is stated in inches. Presumably the unit is the inch and the question now arises: Can the inch be sub-divided or are measurements to be taken to the nearest inch?

Formwork is now clearly defined as to measurement and only that surface actually in contact with the concrete is to be measured.

An omission that will be felt more as time goes on is that of an "Electrical Section." This is very



The new building housing the Bank of East Asia, Limited, situated in Des Voeux Road Central near Ice House Street, which is being officially opened at 9 a.m. this morning. The building has eleven storeys and the architects were Messrs. Little, Adams and Wood.

AMERICAN HOUSES

New Mortgage System For
Improving Them

BUSINESS BETTER

Business in the United States is improving generally, although it suffered a severe shock as a result of the Supreme Court's decision against the N. R. A. This is the opinion of Mr. James A. Moffett, Federal Housing Administrator under the National Housing Act and one of America's leading authorities on business conditions, who is now visiting Shanghai. As Federal Housing Administrator since June 8, 1934, it has been Mr. Moffett's duty to stimulate the modernization and repair of homes through the medium of government insurance on loans made, and to establish a new mortgage system to replace the old and thus make it easier for the average American to own his own home. Mr. Moffett explains the working of this system thus:—

"The old mortgage system in the United States was short term, three to five years, with 50 to 60 per cent. on first mortgage and with high interest rates prevailing on the second mortgage and high renewal charges every three to five years. This new system provides for mortgages up to 20 years, with 80 per cent. first mortgage at low interest and amortized in monthly payments. The purpose of all this is to stabilize the existing mortgage system on a sounder basis to the home owner and at the same time to stimulate the construction of new homes."

Successful Programme

Prior to the depression, Mr. Moffett explained, there were about 600,000 homes built each year. This number dropped to less than 40,000, but since the inauguration of this new programme, a decided upturn has been noticed and figures show a marked increase throughout the country.

According to a cable received by Mr. Moffett on his arrival in Shanghai, loans in the modernization division totalled \$4,100,000 U. S. currency, and under the mutual mortgage insurance for construction of new homes the Housing Administration received 8,800,000 applications. This means that the country is spending from five to seven times that amount of money.

SHANGHAI BUILDING

American Government
Activities Housed

TO COST \$750,000

Washington,

The House of Representatives Appropriations Committee recently recommended \$750,000 for the construction of a new Government building for Shanghai. The report said the

NOISE ABATEMENT

Room with "Floating
Floor"

EXHIBITION OPENED

The Prime Minister opened a Noise Abatement Exhibition on May 31 at the Science Museum, South Kensington, to promote the elimination of

Figure 9. Three articles reporting the completion of the Bank of East Asia in the Builder Section published in June and July, 1935 (Source: *South China Morning Post*, June 4, June 7, July 2, 1935).

rich sets of writings published in Chinese trade journals by local builders. A notable example was *Jianzhu Yuekan* (also known as *The Builder* in English), a widely circulated architectural journal founded in 1930 in Shanghai by Du Yangeng.⁴² Du was a former building contractor with extensive experience in working with foreign architects in China. Although he was self-educated, Du was an articulate writer and was strongly committed to

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OCEAN BUILDING, SINGAPORE.
Erected for Messrs. Alfred Holt & Co.
One of the many buildings in Singapore constructed
with
GREEN ISLAND CEMENT.
It is also being used by the British Government
in the construction of the Singapore Naval Base
and Dockyards.
By the Hongkong Government in the construction
of their large Public Works, Reservoirs,
Reclamation Walls, etc.
By the leading Architects for Dockyards,
Hospitals, Commercial buildings, etc.
Because
it never varies —
it is always reliable.
When building,
Insist on
GREEN ISLAND CEMENT
Issued by the Green Island Cement Co., Ltd.,
St. George's Building, Chater Road.

Figure 10. An advertisement for the Green Island Cement Company in *Hong Kong Daily Press* in 1933 (Source: *Hong Kong Daily Press*).

educating his fellow builders about architectural knowledge and professional ethics. Under his editorial direction, *Jianzhu Yuekan* quickly became an important forum for disseminating not only the latest ideas and projects of modern architecture, but also historical knowledge of past architectural achievements in different cultures.

A salient example of such efforts at knowledge dissemination was Du's translation of Sir Banister Fletcher's 1897 text, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, which was published in Chinese as a special series in *Jianzhu Yuekan* between 1934 and 1937.⁴³ While Du largely followed Fletcher's points of discussion in his translation, he also modified the format of his presentation by significantly condensing the original text to make space for accompanying architectural images within the journal's limited pages (Figures 11 and 12). This layout not only offered readers a visual feast, but also made it much easier for them to digest the content. At the same time, the inclusion of high-quality colour photographs and line drawings depicting close-up architectural details provided Chinese builders a set of readily available design references that could be quickly applied to their projects. Indeed, the high demand for such sources prompted Du to create an illustrated English-Chinese dictionary of building terminologies, which was published in *Jianzhu Yuekan* concurrently with his translation of *A History of Architecture*.

It is somewhat ironic that the popularisation of Western architectural history was being led by a self-educated Chinese builder. While Du and his fellow authors of *Jianzhu Yuekan* did not engage in the kind of meticulous architectural research carried out by "hero-architects" such as Liang Sicheng, they were adamant that Chinese builders must equip themselves with more knowledge and elevate their professional ethics. Such a view may have been shaped by their own subordinate positions in the architectural world of

COLOR Online / B&W in Print



Figure 11. Sample pages taken from the series, entitled "Jianzhu Shi" [History of Architecture], which was published in *Jianzhu Yuekan* in 1934 (Source: *Jianzhu Yuekan*, 1934).

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B&W in
Print



Figure 12. Sample pages taken from the series, entitled "Jianzhu Shi" [History of Architecture], which was published in *Jianzhu Yuekan* in 1934 (Source: *Jianzhu Yuekan*, 1934).

semi-colonial Shanghai, where they had to constantly negotiate their professional identities in terms of their Western clients and a large number of foreign-trained architects.⁴⁴ Although Du's faithful translation of a Western architectural text might have come across as derivative and uncritical in the eyes of contemporary critics, it was grounded in a firm belief that the acquisition of Western knowledge was a key patriotic move for China in its efforts to catch up with the West. Like the earlier promoters of the Self-Strengthening Movement, such engagements were also seen as part and parcel of a larger nation-building project.

Seeing such conviction partially helps to explain why, throughout the existence of *Jianzhu Yuekan*, there were few articles that discussed "Chinese architecture," a situation that contrasted sharply with the nascent academic research on this subject led by more established architectural scholars in China.⁴⁵ However, this seeming lack of interest in local architectural traditions was certainly not shared by all Chinese builders at the time. A different position can be seen, for example, in the writings of another trade journal published by the Chinese Contractors' Association in colonial Hong Kong.⁴⁶

At first glance, the journal *Jianzao Yuekan* was similar to *Jianzhu Yuekan* in its layouts and coverage of topics, which included a mixture of articles on building technologies and prominent architectural projects from different parts of the world (Figure 13). But a closer reading of the content suggests that the authors of the journal, who were mostly local

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Figure 13. A cover page of *Jianzao Yuekan* (*The Building Contractor's Association Monthly*) (Source: *Jianzao Yuekan* 1, 7, 1940).

builders based in Hong Kong and South China, differed significantly from their counterparts in Shanghai in their interpretation of the meanings and values of Chinese architecture, which they believed was in many ways superior to those of Western civilisations. This view was evidenced in the journal's regular inclusion of articles that discussed the artistic merits of Chinese design and craftsmanship. At times, it also published pointed critiques of writings by Western scholars, who were said to have incorrectly (and ignorantly) assumed Chinese architecture to be unchanging in nature and thus demonstrably incapable of innovation.⁴⁷ That said, authors of the journal were not against the mastery of Western technologies. But they strongly believed that modernisation should not abandon local traditions, but saw them instead as a valuable resource.

Authors in this journal too made strategic use of architectural images to support their points of view. An example is an article published in 1940 by one Li Wengong on the design of parks and gardens.⁴⁸ At the centre of the page was a pair of photographs: the Wanshoushan Garden near Beijing on the right, and an unnamed park in Rome on the left (Figure 14). Li began the article by historicising the evolution of Chinese landscape design and highlighting its intrinsic poetic quality. He then turned to explain the growing need for public parks in the modern city for the improvement of health—a view he claimed was in line with that of the European master architect Le Corbusier.⁴⁹ But the main point of the article was that despite their excellent theories, Western architects had

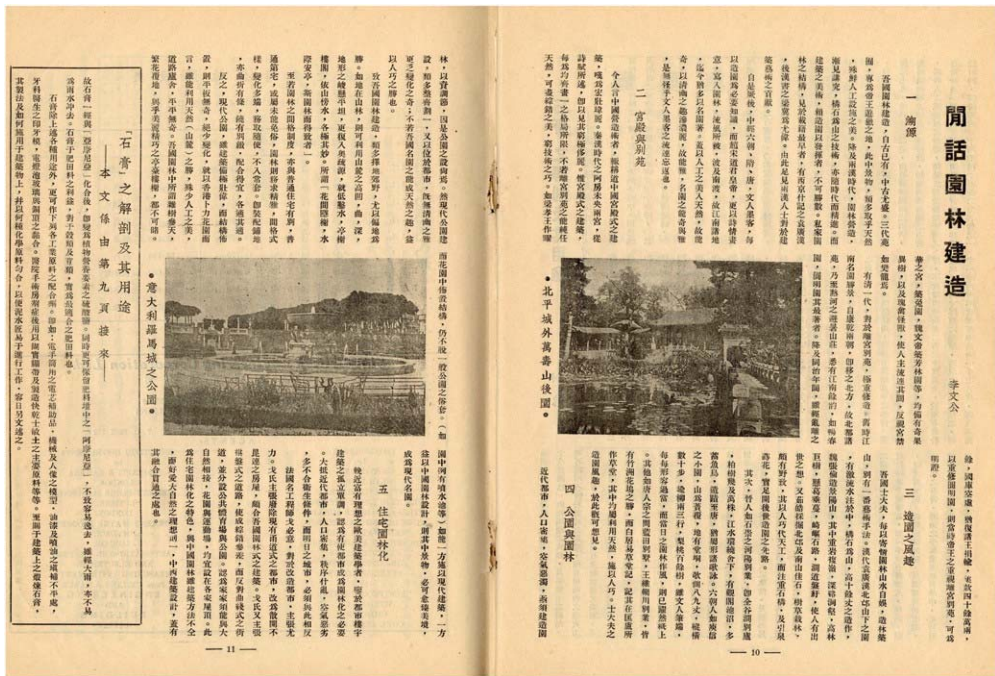


Figure 14. A 1940 article in *Jianzao Yuekan* in which an image of the Wanshoushan Garden near Beijing was paired up with an unnamed park in Rome (Source: *Jianzao Yuekan*, 1940).

thus far failed to deliver good park designs in the modern era. Referring to the image of the park in Rome, he asserted that the typical elements of Western parks, such as fountains and planters, were “rigid, boring and unsophisticated” when compared to those of the Chinese landscape gardens. Li concluded by insisting that the integration of Chinese design knowledge was essential in the production of better environments in the ongoing process of modernisation.

Unlike their counterparts at *Jianzhu Yuekan* who repeatedly encouraged the application of Western knowledge as a central move to strengthen the Chinese nation, authors in *Jianzao Yuekan* were keen to remind readers of the importance of retaining Chinese traditions. To these builders, who operated within a colonial context where they prospered and moved up the social ladder under British tutelage, the key concern regarding modernisation was not so much to “save” the Chinese nation but to reaffirm their pride as Chinese builders under colonial rule. Indeed, this sense of pride in tradition was reflected in the repeated references in the journal’s editorials to Lu Pan, the legendary Chinese master of carpentry and masonry, as a source of inspiration and strength for those working in the building industry. The important role of Lu Pan as an anchor of Chinese identity could also be seen in the annual rituals organised by all Chinese construction companies that paid tribute to the master-god—a practice that has long disappeared in China but, remarkably, still continues in full force in Hong Kong in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This paper begins by asking about the kinds of assumptions regarding the “West” that were associated with architectural images circulating in “non-Western” territories in the early twentieth century, and the kinds of new knowledge that were produced in these representational practices. Through an analysis of the content, formats and visual strategies of a number of mass-market magazines and trade journals published in Shanghai and Hong Kong, I show how “Western architecture” was used to construct competing truth claims about cultures, traditions and histories by different social actors. A strategy many of these publications shared was the selective pairing of buildings and landscapes of the Orient and Occident, which was a technique first deployed by European art historians in their effort to produce a discourse of “world development.” In such presentations, architecture was transformed into a synecdoche of the civilisations that produced them. Although this technique was widely adopted in the Chinese press by the 1920s, the intents of articles and the basis of their arguments were not uniform. As I have shown, these were strongly shaped by the educational backgrounds and political positions of the narrators, with some seeing Chinese traditions as obstacles to modernisation, and others pledging to retain them as the latter’s necessary components. While many narratives about “Asia” and the “West” were couched in essentialist terms, there were also some that used these pairings to instigate more critical reflections. This can be seen, for example, in Liu Jipiao’s article on the Leifeng Pagoda and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, where he directed readers’ attention to the

985 drastically different circumstances of two equally magnificent ancient monuments, and
 986 thereby highlighted the urgency for China to protect its own architectural heritage.

987 Fascinations with the West and engagement with its representation cannot be separated
 988 from the geopolitical contexts within which these practices took place. Both Shanghai and
 989 Hong Kong in the 1920s and 1930s were contradictory spaces of modernity; that is, they
 990 were both seen to be outside of Western modernity, but at the same time the centres of
 991 modernisation in Asia. In these contexts, the increased circulation of local and foreign
 992 architectural images offered a means for Chinese urbanites to grapple with their changing
 993 identities by defining themselves in terms of places in the West and the non-West.
 994 Meanwhile, cultural producers eager to promote local building trades sought to utilise the
 995 same geo-historical categories to accentuate the "rise" of Asia in positivist terms.
 996 Like other comparative images in the illustrated magazines, architectural works were taken
 997 out of their existing contexts and reframed as "portable monuments." Although these nar-
 998 ratives tended to emphasise modernist aspirations towards universal progress, the inten-
 999 tions behind them were nevertheless always specific and local.

1000 In contrast to established historiographies that approach architecture as a distinct form
 1001 of cultural production, this paper places architecture within a broader arena of cultural
 1002 practices in which a wide range of actors and institutions participated in the production of
 1003 architectural discourses. Crucially, this approach elucidates how "Western architecture"
 1004 was a heuristic category constantly being subjected to reinterpretation. Despite the turn
 1005 toward a more critical reading of colonial histories and growing attempts to "pluralize"
 1006 modernities in recent academic writing, the "West" remains an a priori reference in popu-
 1007 lar discourse to describe the emerging geopolitical relations in the so-called "Asian cen-
 1008 tury." By revealing the contradictions and inconsistencies in the Occidentalists narratives of
 1009 the past, it is hoped that a critical distance can be created to resist attempts to reduce the
 1010 meanings of the West, for one cannot understand the modernity of any place without con-
 1011 sidering how discourses of the West have been constructed and interpreted.
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1014 NOTES

- 1015 1. This point is made with reference to William Schaefer's work on image culture in
 1016 Republican Shanghai. See William Schaefer, "Shadow Photographs, Ruins, and Shanghai's
 1017 Projected Pasts," *PMLA* 122, no. 1 (2007): 124–34; and *Shadow Modernism: Photography,
 1018 Writing, and Space in Shanghai, 1925–1937* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University
 1019 Press, 2017).
- 1020 2. James Carrier, "Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-down," *American Ethnologist*
 1021 19 (1992): 195–212; Stephen N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics
 1022 in Japan, China, and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).
- 1023 3. Carrier, "Occidentalism," 196.
- 1024 4. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
- 1025 5. Carrier, "Occidentalism," 179.

6. For a critical discussion of these constructions, see Laura Nadar, "Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Control of Women," *Cultural Dynamics* 2 (1989): 323–55; Alastair Bonnett, "Asian Occidentalism and Rediscovered Modernities," in *The Struggle for the West: A Divided and Contested Legacy*, eds. Christopher S. Browning and Marko Lehti (London: Routledge, 2009), 201–18; Nicholas Thomas, "Anthropology and Orientalism," *Anthropology Today* 7, no. 2 (1991): 4–7; and Carrier, "Occidentalism."
7. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West*; Alastair Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
8. Bonnett, "Asian Occidentalism."
9. The phrase in full is *zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*. The concept would later be applied widely in architectural design by many Chinese architects. For a discussion of the use of this concept in architecture, see Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan, *Architectural Encounters with Essence and Forms in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
10. See, for example, discussions in Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795–1895* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Wing Sang Law, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
11. See, for example, Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); Jyoti Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernity: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London: Routledge, 2005); Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, eds., *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (London: Routledge, 2007).
12. For related critiques that focus specifically on architecture, see Hilde Heynen, "Engaging Modernism" (paper presented from the conference, "Team 10—Keeping the Language of Modern Architecture Alive," Delft Faculty of Architecture, 2006); and Mark Crinson, "Modernism Across Hemispheres, Or, Taking Internationalism Seriously," in *Non-west Modernist Past: On Architecture and Modernities*, eds. William Lim and Jiat-hwee Chang (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2012) Also see Cecilia Chu's review of Lim and Chang, "Non West Modernist Past: On Architecture and Modernities," in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 23, 2 (Spring 2012): 90–91.
13. Schaefer, "Shadow Photographs," 124–22.
14. A well-known example was the *Far Eastern Review: Engineering, Finance, Commerce*, a Shanghai-based publication which it regularly featured articles on the latest architectural and engineering achievements in China and the East Asian region. The journal, which was established in 1906 in Manila and was later relocated to Shanghai, had a strong interest in promoting trade and development in the region.

15. Schaefer, “Shadow Photographs,” 128.
16. Donald Preziosi, “Art History: Making the Visible Legible,” in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 15.
17. Preziosi, “Art History,” 15.
18. Robert S. Nelson, “The Slide Lecture: or The Work of Art ‘History’ in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Critical Enquiry* 26 (Spring 2000): 414–34.
19. Also refer to Schaefer’s insightful analysis in his book, *Shadow Modernism*. For a further discussion on the use of new photographic techniques and visual and textual strategies in this period, see Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1875–1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); and Cynthia Brokaw, *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, 1900 to 2008* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
20. For a discussion of the significance of *Liangyou Huabao*, see Paul G. Pickowicz, Kuiyi Shen and Yingjin Zhang, eds., *Liangyou: Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis, 1926–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
21. “Gudai de dongfang wenming, xiandai de xifang wenming” [Ancient Eastern Civilization; Modern Western Civilization], *Liangyou Huabao* 46 (1930): 22.
22. See Andrew F. Jones, “Portable Monuments: Architectural Photography and the ‘Forms’ of Empire in Modern China,” *Positions* 18, no. 3 (2010): 599–631. Also see the reference to Jones’ discussion in William Schaefer, “Photography’s Places,” *Positions* 18, no. 3 (2010): 560; Schaefer, *Shadow Modernism*, 86–88, also refers to Jones’ analysis.
23. For a discussion of the New Culture Movement and the intellectual positions of its supporters, see Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
24. In architecture, this approach was best exemplified in the work of Liang Sicheng, who saw in Chinese building tradition a source for innovation that would allow the development of an authentic Chinese architectural culture. See Wilma Fairbank, *Liang and Lin: Partners in Exploring China’s Architectural Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Rowe and Kuan, *Architectural Encounters*, 83–88.
25. Jipiao Liu, “Leifeng yu Bisha” [Leifeng and the Tower of Pisa], *Gongxian Zazhi* 3, no. 6 (1928): 43–44.
26. Liu, “Leifeng yu Bisha,” 43 (translation by author).
27. For a discussion of Liu’s career and educational background, see Jennifer Wong, “The Chinese Art Deco Architect of the 1925 Paris Expo’—My Grand Father,” *The Newsletter* 65 (Autumn 2013): 6–7, International Institute of Asian Studies. Also see discussion of Liu’s work by Cecilia L. Chu, “Constructing a New Domestic Discourse: The Modern Home in Architectural Journals and Mass-market Texts in Early Twentieth-century China,” *Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 6 (2017): 1074–78.
28. Rowe and Kuan, *Architectural Encounters*, 83–85; Fairbank, *Liang and Lin*, 10–12.
29. Many of these can be found in the most popular magazines, such as *Liangyou Huabao*, *Dongfang Zazhi*, *Wenhua* and *Shanghai Manhua*.

- 1108 30. William Schaefer, "Shanghai Savage," *Positions* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 91–118.
- 1109 31. Schaefer, "Shanghai Savage."
- 1110 32. This refers to the journal titled *The Hong Kong and South China Builder*, which was
- 1111 first published in 1937 in Hong Kong. It was renamed *The Hong Kong and Far East*
- 1112 *Builder* in the 1940s and subsequently *Asian Building and Construction* in the 1950s.
- 1113 33. "Colossus of Concrete," The Builder section, *South China Morning Post*, October
- 1114 3, 1933.
- 1115 34. For a discussion of the globalisation of architecture and the construction industry, see
- 1116 Jeffrey Cody, *Exporting American Architecture, 1870–2000* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- 1117 35. "New Chinese Bank Premises," The Builder section, *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 1935.
- 1118 36. "Hong Kong Skyscraper," The Builder section, *South China Morning Post*, June
- 1119 11, 1935.
- 1120 37. The Builder section, *South China Morning Post*, July 2, 1935.
- 1121 38. This could also be substantiated by the publication of a similar series of images of
- 1122 another major bank, the HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), only
- 1123 several months later in the same section. The HSBC Building was completed in the
- 1124 same year.
- 1125 39. Jones, "Portable Monuments," 599–602.
- 1126 40. Vimalin Rujivacharakul, "Architects as Cultural Heroes," in *Cities in Motion: Interior,*
- 1127 *Coast, and Diaspora in Transnational China*, eds. Sherman Cochran and David Strand
- 1128 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2007), 133.
- 1129 41. Rujivacharakul, "Architects as Cultural Heroes," 134.
- 1130 42. *Jianzhu Yuekan* was published in Shanghai from 1930 to 1937. It was also known as
- 1131 *The Builder* in English. But this should not be confused with the supplementary trade
- 1132 section with the same title published in the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong.
- 1133 43. Yengeng Du, "Jianzhu shi" [History of Architecture], *Jianzhu Yuekan* (1934–1936).
- 1134 44. This was reflected in numerous articles by Du in which he discussed the importance
- 1135 for Chinese builders of upholding professional ethics. See, for example, "Tougong jian liao
- 1136 yu chuimao qiubi" [Jerry Building and Nitpicking], *Jianzhu Yuekan* 3 (1931): 28–31.
- 1137 45. The most notable researchers include Liang Sicheng and his partner Lin Huiyin. See
- 1138 Fairbank, *Liang and Lin*.
- 1139 46. *Jianzao Yuekan*, also known as *The Building Contractors Association Monthly* in
- 1140 English, was first published in Hong Kong in 1940. The publication was terminated in
- 1141 1941 with the onset of World War II.
- 1142 47. An example is an article written by Ershui, "Zhongguo jianzhu fangfa zhiyi" [
- 1143 Questions of Chinese Architectural Methods], *Jianzao Yuekan* 1, no. 4 (1940): 1–3. It was
- 1144 written as a critical response to another article published in the English journal *The*
- 1145 *Builder*, which alleged Chinese architecture to be unscientific and stagnant.
- 1146 48. Li Wengong, "Xianhua yuanlin jianzao" [Discussion of Garden Design], *Jianzao*
- 1147 *Yuekan* 1, no. 2 (1940): 10–11.
- 1148 49. Li, "Xianhua yuanlin jianzao," 2.