

Defining Local Heritages in Preserving Modern Shanghai Architecture

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ABSTRACT The notion that local heritage can be defined by the ‘collective memory’ of a city may be considered as being simplistic nowadays. Heritage is increasingly recognised as knowledge, a cultural product or even a political resource set within specific social circumstances. The local heritage underpins various ways of relating our past with our present and future, which are often much more complicated than we can imagine. The evolution of the conservation of Shanghai’s modern heritage architecture shows this complexity. By tracing more than 50 years’ progress in historic preservation, this paper shows how historical buildings from Shanghai’s early modern period were selected as urban heritage in the changing socio-political contexts of different time periods. Starting with how the first modern buildings were listed in a new Chinese narrative in the 1950s, this paper focuses on the great ideological changes and progress Shanghai achieved after China’s reform and opening policy since the 1980s. Emphasising the great significance of the establishment of local legislation for historic preservation as an extension of the national system, examples of the great enrichment of Shanghai’s local heritage are presented through multiple narratives and interpretations of Shanghai’s modern history. In a deeper observation of various practices and complicated contradictions, the historic preservation of Shanghai’s modern heritage architecture is shown to be a process of continuing to reconstruct the relationships between city and the State, the city and the world, as well as the city’s past, present and future in a pluralist society.

KEYWORDS local heritage, modern architecture, built heritage conservation, value assessment, Shanghai

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Shanghai has experienced unprecedented socio-economic development over the past 40 years as the ‘head of the dragon’ in the modernisation of China under the reform and opening policy. It has been also the most international city in China and opened the country to the outside world. While the new construction and tremendous alterations in the urban fabric and cityscape have vividly illustrated this development, the conservation of local heritage has also become important and played a significant role in Shanghai’s progress over more than 30 years¹.

Like many Chinese cities, historic preservation in Shanghai has encountered many challenges. While it is an important resource for preserving Shanghai’s cultural identity, it is also simultaneously seen as an obstacle to urban economic development. However, unlike most Chinese cities, the complexity of this issue in Shanghai does not just come from the competition between the

old and the new, or between the ‘backward past’ and the ‘progressive future’. The reality is much more complicated. Preserving Shanghai’s heritage also depends on the different ways of defining these historical buildings as heritage sites. They were mostly built during the late 19th to the early 20th century when Shanghai experienced its first era of urbanisation and prosperity with the establishment of foreign settlements after the Opium War, e.g., the International Settlement and the French Concession. Studies of Shanghai during this historical period are currently very popular. While social scientists and historians revealed the many different aspects of ‘old Shanghai’, not only as a ‘quasi-colonial city’, but also as ‘a key to modern China’², architectural historians have increasingly discovered more historical buildings in Shanghai’s built environment to vividly show how this first Chinese modern city and its urban life have evolved and transformed³.

The various characteristics of old Shanghai are still being rediscovered; thus, the recognition of Shanghai's modern heritage has experienced its own specific trajectory and processes. Although Shanghai's urban heritage genealogy has been richly and systematically constructed following the great efforts and contributions from the management bureaus of the local government⁴ and experts from different fields, the transformation of the ideas on how to define local modern heritage, or the ambiguity and conflicts underpinning progress in its historic preservation have been little reviewed, discussed or reflected upon (Zhou 2016). The rediscovery and reworking of Shanghai's history not only results from the multiple narratives of the city's modern history, but also underpins the idea of continuity and its modernist ethos of progressive, evolutionary social development⁵.

With some representative events and cases, this paper traces several decades of progress in Shanghai's heritage conservation to show how the historic preservation of modern architecture has been accepted and developed through a specific process. The great complexity of this experience emerges not only from Shanghai's own modernisation strategies, but also from the continual alterations in its cultural identity as it searches for appropriate ways to relate itself as a city both to China and to the globalised world.

Before beginning this retrospective review, the year 1991 must be addressed to understand the notion of 'local heritage'. In 1991, after repeated efforts to preserve these buildings, the Shanghai municipal government issued local legislation for the conservation of historical architecture built from the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century. Once this legislation was passed, 61 historic buildings were nominated and approved as the first buildings listed as 'excellent modern architecture' to be protected by this regulation, including banks, hotels, offices, apartments and villas. This was the first time that this kind of local legislation was added as a supplement to the national law in China for the protection of cultural heritage, which began in the early 1960s and was revised and officially established in 1982. Thus the question became, how can the promulgation of this local legislation be recognised as a new agenda for historic preservation not only for Shanghai, but also for China? Was it the influence of this international city in sharing its architectural values with the outside world and widening heritage conservation to include not only ancient and traditional buildings but also 20th century heritage architecture⁶? To better understand this process, we must return to 1950s when the new socialist China was just established.

Defining the Heritage Architecture of the 20th Century by Tracing Its Revolutionary Pace

Although the conservation of Shanghai's modern architectural heritage began no earlier than the beginning of the 1990s, as mentioned above, listing buildings constructed in the early 20th century as historical monuments is not actually a new practice in Shanghai. At the beginning of the 1950s, soon after the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded, a national system for protecting the cultural heritage of individual cities and regions began to be enacted, which resulted in the establishment of a regulation in 1961 for the management of the protection of cultural heritage. It was not surprising to see that the first listed monuments in Shanghai under this regulation were dominated by those from ancient history and related to traditional culture. However, exceptions can be found among the first listed monuments of Shanghai, e.g., more than half of the first 28 sites were built in the early 20th century and even in Western-influenced styles. These sites were all places where Chinese revolutionary history could be traced in Shanghai. The most important building among these modern sites was an ordinary *lilong* house built no earlier than the 1910s in the former French Concession, which was protected as the birthplace of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Although after more than 30 years, it was difficult to recognise this building as the location of the party's first meeting in 1921, the building was quickly rediscovered in 1949, restored and the preparatory office for the Shanghai Revolutionary History Museum founded at the same time (Yang 2008) (Figure 1, Figure 2).

These 22 historic buildings or sites in the first list (28 in total)⁷ provided vivid evidence for tracing the history of the revolutionary CPC and the remarkable events, activities and figures of Shanghai, such as the conflicts with 'the feudalists' of the Qing Dynasty, the 'imperialist invaders' during the quasi-colonial period and the 'reactionary Kuomintang' before 1949. Apart from the humble *lilong* house where the CPC was born, other buildings were also protected by this national regulation, such as the residences of the first Chinese president Sun Yat-sen and the well-known left-wing writer Lu Xun. These efforts were also parallel to the execution of a national project for reconstructing the complete history of Chinese architecture by a well-organised group of nearly 100 scholars and historians across China, which began in 1958, the year of the Great Leap Forward. In correspondence with the great ideological change of the Great Leap Forward and to meet the needs of the establishment of a new China,



Figure 1 National monument, the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party. The National Museum after restoration (Source: Xu, Weng and Ma 2009, 141).

Figure 2 The original building when rediscovered in early 1950 (Source: *Wenhui bao*, June 14, 2011).

an architectural history was composed for three historical periods: the ancient (before the 1840 Opium War), the modern (1840–1949) and the contemporary (after the establishment of the PRC in 1949). As the most important treaty port developed after the 1840s, local scholars were certainly greatly interested in Shanghai as the key location for evidence of the history of modern architecture in China. Different types of buildings were constructed for the first time in the foreign settlements in China, exactly when Shanghai experienced rapid urbanisation and prosperity. Thus, it can be understood that the first documented historical heritage buildings were built relatively recently. However the architecture of the banks, hotels, offices, apartments and even churches in all kinds of Western styles, such as classical, Art Deco, and other regional styles, were not highly valued and were instead considered witness of ‘the base of the Western imperialists aggressions in China’ (ECC 1963, 277).

The cultural identity of Shanghai shifted tremendously in the new socio-political climate of the 1950s to the 1960s. Shanghai was still a leading industrial city of China and retained its position as the location of the struggle of the working class against capitalist culture, but it was no longer ‘a metropolis of the Far East’ where modern life in China first began and the latest fashions could be found. In 1960, a popular film called *Sentinels under the Neon Lights* that was promoted by the national government vividly showed this ideological change. The film described how the first group of soldiers from the People’s Liberation Army arrived in Shanghai and performed the task of clearing away the remaining enemies of China in the city after the liberation. A substantial proportion of the movie described how these young soldiers from rural areas

succeeded in preventing themselves from being polluted by the bourgeois lifestyle of the old capitalist Shanghai. The film presented Shanghai’s scenery as being dangerously seductive, such as the buildings and neon cityscape along Nanjing Road, which was the most popular commercial street in the former International Settlement. In contrast with the new construction of 10 monumental buildings in Socialist Realist style, such as the People’s Congress Hall, National History Museum and the Beijing Railway Station in Beijing for the celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the PRC in 1959, the historic buildings in Shanghai that were taken back from the imperialists and capitalists remained no more than functional spaces, such as the luxurious mansion of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (HSBC) on the Bund, which was given back to the people and transformed into a municipal hall for the local Shanghai government (Figure 3, Figure 4).

Unsurprisingly, some buildings were damaged during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). For example, the spirals, windows and sculptures of Xujiahui Cathedral and the other churches in old Shanghai built by foreign missionaries. The interior decorations and outside façades of commercial and entertainment buildings were also damaged by revolutionaries because they were all striking evidence of ‘the imperialist invasion’. Ancient temples and houses built in traditional Chinese styles were also destroyed because they were considered ‘symbols of the ancient feudal system’. Nevertheless, most buildings remained in use in Shanghai’s daily life, but many were abused or damaged by the increasing density of living conditions and Shanghai’s growing population.



Figure 3 The former Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Building on the Bund. Now it is used as headquarters of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank (Source: Yan-ning Li).

Figure 4 The mosaic ceiling of the octagonal entrance hall of the bank building (Source: Chen 2007, 43).

Local Heritage Conservation Consciousness between the Local and National Levels

A new agenda for historic preservation in China began after the Cultural Revolution. In the early 1980s, China restarted its economic development under the central government's reform and opening policy. It not only brought many cities into rapid development, but also caused ideological changes and the willingness to share common values in protecting the rich regional cultures and their architectural heritage. This great progress was symbolised by the establishment in 1982 of the first National Law on Protection

of Historic Monuments of People's Republic of China based on the former regulation and the announcement of the first list of 24 cities crowned as 'National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities' by the central government. We should not be surprised that Shanghai was absent from that list of 24 cities. Although Shanghai was still recognised as an important place in China's revolutionary history, it was difficult to find reasons to protect Shanghai's historical buildings from the early 20th century. They were considered too recent historically and the official narrative understood their presence as representing Shanghai as a forcibly opened treaty port by the Western imperialists after the Opium War⁸.

Nevertheless, the local officials and experts never stopped making efforts to protect more buildings from Shanghai's modern history as essential elements in the city's identity. In 1983, the first master plan for Shanghai after the Cultural Revolution was completed by the municipal government, which established a strategy for protecting 11 historic areas, including not only several quarters in the former International Settlement, such as the Bund, the commercial centre along Nanjing Road and the residential blocks in the former French Concession, but also the municipal centre and its 'Grand Shanghai' urban structure planned and constructed by the reactionary Kuomintang government in the early 1930s, which was distant from the city centre.

Finally, in 1986 Shanghai was included in the second list of the National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities. Although Shanghai was still celebrated for its dominant role in the revolutionary history of China, an additional identity emerged in the nomination text, i.e., 'the centre of science and technology and culture of modern China'. It concluded with a description of its architecture: 'Shanghai's modern architecture in different Western styles is also of important value in our architectural history'⁹. Following the changing cultural politics in China, a book titled *Manuscript on the History of Shanghai Modern Architecture* was published (Chen and Zhang 1988) that began its investigation from the end of the 1950s. However, it remained difficult to protect more historical buildings from the early 20th century as cultural heritage under the national law, such as the high-quality buildings along the Bund. In 1991, therefore, the local Shanghai government finally established legislation to protect the city's historical architecture built from the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century. This legislation initially covered 61 protected buildings, which quickly expanded to include more than 400 buildings in 1996. The Shanghai legislation significantly influenced other cities, such as Tianjin, Qingdao, Harbin as well as Xiamen, and resulted in the establishment of local heritage protection systems in these cities. It also gave impetus to the protection of 20th century heritage sites at the national level. The difference between the nomination criteria in the local legislation and that in the national law was quite clear: while the former emphasised the importance of buildings representing local architectural aesthetics and culture, which implied a variety of architectural designs, the latter still focused preferentially on ancient relics or traditional cultural architecture, or on more recent buildings and sites related to 'important historical events, the revolutionary movements

and figures, and the buildings, ruins and monuments of great monumental or educational significance'¹⁰. Even the high-quality architecture of the buildings along the Bund, which form the most representative and expressive historic façade of Shanghai were not accepted as heritage architecture under the national law until 1996. Furthermore, the notion of modern architecture as cultural heritage for its aesthetic value was not found in the criteria of the national law until 2002. At that time, the national law was amended to widen the scope of cultural heritage so that the increasing number of 20th century architectural heritage buildings that were already protected by local legislation could be accepted under the national law.

Discovered and Redefined Heritage in Shanghai's Return to the World

In 1997, the Shanghai municipal government vacated the grandest Neoclassical building along the Bund, the former HSBC building. Restoration of the building then went forward for the first time in nearly half a century.¹¹ In the case of the emerging skyscrapers of Lujiazui finance and trade zone in Pudong across the Huangpu River, this turning point on the Bund not only symbolised the economic value re-emerging in these spaces, but also reopened and presented them to the public as part of the most valuable urban heritage of Shanghai. The Shanghai Pudong Development Bank rented the former HSBC bank building from the Shanghai government and managed a high-quality restoration and rehabilitation project that was completed after years of collaboration between local senior architects, engineers and foreign conservation experts before it moved into its new premises.

The execution of this restoration attracted much attention from the media and the public. The excitement about the success of the restoration project stemmed not only from the beauty of the architectural details and spaces, but also for the discovery and restoration of the mosaic murals on the octagonal ceiling of the dome in the entrance hall. The fresco had fortunately not been destroyed, but had merely been covered for decades with plaster applied by a former official of the Shanghai municipal government. The dome was composed of eight panels with images from eight cities of the world where the bank's branches were located. Under the central government policy, Shanghai was becoming increasingly more international; thus, the city's population appreciated the opportunity to view the murals that had been completely forgotten for half a century. They represented Shanghai's emergence as a global city.



Figure 5 The Bund in the late 1930s. All the buildings were listed as Shanghai Heritage Architecture from 1989–2005, six of them were listed as Major Historical and Cultural Heritage Protected at the National Level in 1996 (Source: Shanghai History Museum 1992).

After China started minting new millionaires and took its place as one of the most vibrant global economies, an increasing number of historic buildings were restored and reused as a symbol of this opening era of Chinese urban development. It was a source of great pride for these new millionaires to possess architecture in various styles from the outside world built during the early modern period. Thus, Shanghai regained its fame of ‘a city as a fair of world architecture’. This era of architectural renovation not only summoned the memory of Shanghai’s modern historical townscape but also made these buildings and historic districts into internationally popular spots and places for both residents and visitors.

Thus, Shanghai’s architecture became the focus of tourism industry. For example, the former Sassoon House built in 1929 along the historic Bund by one of the most powerful Jewish developers, Victor Sassoon, is now renamed the Peace Hotel and attracts thousands of visitors. They come to see its Art Deco façade and the lobby, atrium and guest room interiors, including nine special suites decorated in individual exotic styles, as well as its restaurant on the top floor facing the river. The former French Concession including housing types of various quality was becoming the most popular area for Western people working in Shanghai, which harkened back to its historic legacy (Figure 5).

In 2003, when the famous Shanghai writer Lihong Zhao suggested to the government that the building group along the Bund should be nominated as an UNESCO

World Heritage Site, a vigorous debate began immediately. Zhao suggested that:

Buildings on the Bund compose part of the highlights of the world architecture ... They gather diverse styles from Western architecture as well new styles mixing the East and the West. Such a splendid collection of architecture in waterfront is rarely seen indeed. These buildings, although being the result of the ‘quasi-colonial and quasi-feudal’ time period, a witness of our humiliation experience in China, are the fruits of human wisdom and culture, having formed such unique scenery in the history of world architecture so that their historical value and cultural significance can never be ignored ... The building collection in a so large scale has been performing as the landmark and symbol of this city since they were built, expiring such upheaval of its history but little changed and damaged, which can be hardly found a competitive one even in the cities of the Western world¹².

This suggestion drew unexpected attention from the public. Many Shanghai newspapers and even newspapers in other cities such as Xiamen joined the discussion. While critical voices complained that Zhao had too easily forgotten that ‘buildings along the Bund are evidence of the crime of the colonists exploited China as well as traces of the humiliation of Chinese people’¹³ some others questioned how such Western-influenced architecture could

be valued as representative of China's national heritage to the world. Although this debate ended with a question as to whether the witnesses of the humiliation left by the Western colonial invaders during the Opium War could be presented to the world as a representative of cultural heritage in China, the work on the restoration and rehabilitation of these buildings, and the presentation and lighting of the buildings together as an historic cityscape never stopped. With the increasing recognition of the historical and architectural values of these buildings, together with the elegant waterfront redesigned as public space, the floor area prices for these historic buildings shot up to unimaginable heights.

Shanghai's historic preservation and urban development reached a new stage in 2003. This year was significant for the development of local laws expanding the earlier legislation on preserving urban heritage to protect both historic buildings and historic areas more comprehensively. Naming and zoning 12 historic areas as protected districts of historic and cultural townscapes covering more than 27 km² in the city centre reflected a new definition of Shanghai's cultural identity for both China and the world. From an area of the old Chinese town with over 700 years of history, where traditional life is preserved, to that of the Bund where the most magnificent Western-style buildings can be found, from the district of the former French Concession with its high-quality residential buildings, to that of the housing community where Jewish refugees settled during the Second World War, Shanghai has never been so comprehensively narrated and represented by so many rich historic layers and cultural diversity.

While the banks, hotels and villas in old Shanghai are increasingly recognised as part of the city's indispensable urban heritage, with their preservation and rehabilitation well integrated into urban development planning, the acceptance of some special kinds of historical buildings into the urban heritage conservation program is still needed. These include buildings influenced by Western religions. Xujiahui at the southwestern end of Shanghai's city centre received its name from the settlement of the high official Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), who settled there with his family at the end of the Ming Dynasty in the 17th century. Xu was the first practicing Chinese Catholic and started a cultural exchange between Chinese and the West through his great friendship with the Italian Jesuit, Mateo Ricci (1552–1610). This previously rural area was resettled by a group of French missionaries in the middle of 19th century, which established one of the largest Catholic communities in China as well as an important centre for importing

art, science and technology from the West. Its grand cathedral, convent, library, observatory and orphanage have mostly survived after more than a century of tremendous change¹⁴ and all are listed as local heritage. Although the Xujiahui Cathedral has been returned to religious activities, well restored and even becoming a popular site for young couples to take their wedding photos, the urban historical layer that these buildings formed in Shanghai was becoming less visible in the shadow of the increasingly taller commercial towers neighbouring the district. The Christian religion had previously been criticised as the 'mental opium delivered by the Western imperialists.' Therefore, identifying this group of buildings with such historic value and cultural significance has not been easy for either the municipal government officials or the public.

Officials in charge of the heritage management of Xujiahui district had made efforts in rehabilitating the Orphelinat de *T'ou-Sè-Wè* into a museum to present its significant influence in the city. But how to tell the story of this religious school and the related history of this historic area in this museum was still a dilemma. Then the 2010 Shanghai World Expo brought a chance. An official happened to discover some fragments of a traditional timbered Chinese pailou gate (decorated archway) made by the orphans in 1912 and first exhibited in the 1915 Panama–Pacific World Expo in San Francisco and reused in two other World Fairs. So why don't we relate this rare Chinese contribution to the World Expo of the past to the historical event of the country nowadays? The gate was elaborately restored soon and returned to the Orphelinat building. With the beautiful arts and crafts work exhibited in the middle of the entrance hall, and more documents and replicas of ancient Chinese pagoda models also made by the orphans and delivered to the 1915 World Expo presented on both sides, the *T'ou-Sè-Wè* Museum was finally opened, not only telling the story of this Orphelinat and the historic area, but also becoming part of the celebration of the 2010 World Expo held in Shanghai¹⁵ (Figure 6, Figure 7).

Memory Reconstructed and Renegotiated: Using the Past to Illuminate the Future

Shanghai pioneered the use of real estate as a major strategy for both economic development and urban renewal in China at the end of the 1980s. The city's built fabric was transformed over the following decades. New buildings rapidly appeared on the skyline, including many skyscrapers, and presented a vivid image of Shanghai as a symbol



Figure 6 Pailou exhibited in the entrance hall of the T'ou-Sè-Wè Museum (Source: http://bbs.zol.com.cn/dcbbs/d17_4404.html).



Figure 7 Xujiahui Observatory built in 1907 (started in 1872) restored and rehabilitated as the Observatory Museum (Source: Shanghai Xuhui District Archive 2009).

of China's modernisation and global presence. However, the awareness of the need to protect more urban heritage sites was also growing under the new local law for both historic buildings and districts that was amended from the earlier local legislation.

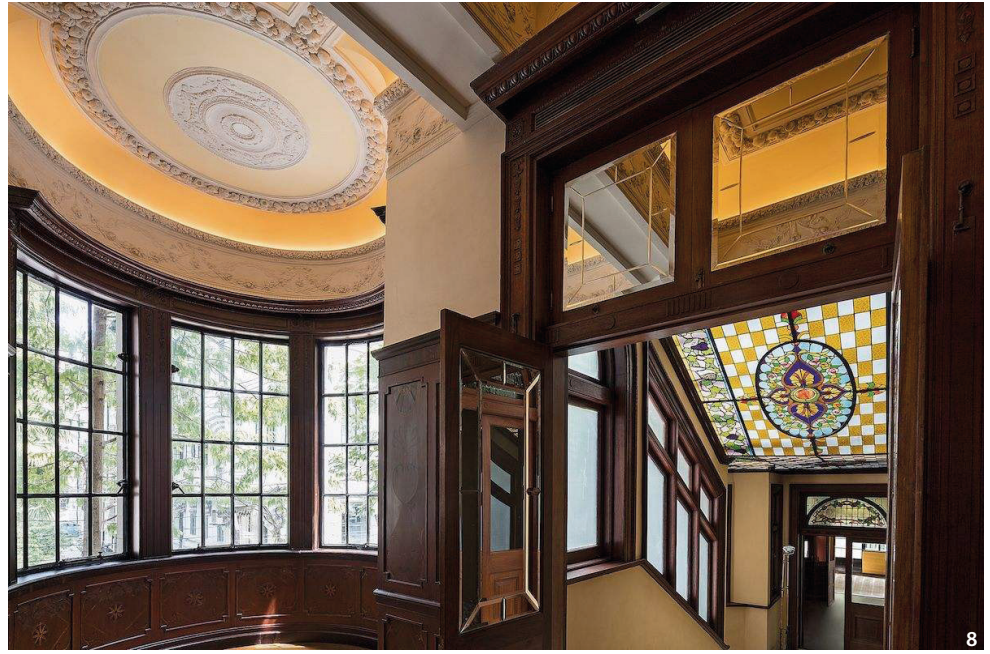
Rapid urban development also led to an even more intense juxtaposition between the city's old and the new architectural styles. While there is great regret for the loss of so many historical buildings¹⁶, a new relationship between Shanghai's past and present was explored in this new era, both in reality and in the imagination. With the boom in construction altering the cityscape and the increasingly international flavour of urban life, old Shanghai as 'a key to modern China', as 'the greatest metropolis in the Far East' and as the 'Paris in the East' increasingly became a reminder of 'looking forward to the past' (Abbas 2002, 38).

A passion for republishing and re-evaluating earlier literature about 'modern Shanghai' ('modern' also refers to 'fashionable') began so that the left-wing writers' works, after nearly half a century, were no longer the dominant. A school called the Shanghai New Perceptionist¹⁷, which

displayed the feelings and lifestyles of men and women living in the metropolitan city of Shanghai and its emerging modernity in the 1920s to 1930s. In 1994, a new literature journal, *Shanghai Culture*, published an article with the title, 'Rebuilding the Image of Shanghai Metropolis'¹⁸. From late 1990, histories, novels, literary critiques and architectural studies about modern Shanghai were frequently published. Shanghai's past was retraced and rediscovered from various perspectives. Hence, Shanghai's revolutionary history was no longer considered the authorised narrative. In the criteria listed in the local law amended in 2002, the types of historic buildings and structures specially mentioned are not related specifically to revolutionary history, but instead to those structures that reflect the local historical and cultural characteristics of Shanghai.

The modern history of Shanghai was greatly enriched with stories about Chinese families, Western adventurers and famous figures from writers, artists to politicians, businessmen, industrial capitalists, and even Kuomintang high officials. They revealed Shanghai as a global city, a city of migrants, of opportunities and of socio-cultural

Figure 8 The house of Rong Family after restoration and rehabilitation as a Prada showroom (Source: http://www.sohu.com/a/203356650_167429).



inclusiveness. Shanghai's heritage management bureaus expressed great enthusiasm for exploring old Shanghai's districts to rediscover hundreds of old houses, villas and apartments. Most of the old gardens, lanes and some street corners in the former foreign settlements were finally listed as historic buildings¹⁹. Containing a multitude of personal stories, these houses were not only built in different styles, but also fed the imagination and legends of the successes achieved by an individual or a family. The fabulous lives that some of these houses once accommodated became mythical and increasingly attractive to the public.

A number of these houses have been protected under the local law and are now being restored to repair damage and return them to their original condition as much as possible. As an alternative, some are being transformed into small museums. Once obscure gardens and lanes could now be visited by the public. While the buildings with legendary histories and fables about their original families have drawn greater affection, they have also helped to revitalise their urban surroundings. Then more commercial opportunities can also be sought in these heritage houses. A recent example is the restoration and rehabilitation project for the house of the Rong Family, one of the richest Chinese families in the first half of the 20th century in China, with their hand in a multitude of industrial and commercial ventures. Having been used as a government office building for decades after 1949, the Prada company purchased this house and transformed it into a Prada showroom (Figure 8). On the other hand, this 6-year-long, highly elaborate restoration of a private

house did bring new employment opportunities to heritage professionals in Shanghai, and also became a symbol of luxury. .

These changes in the narratives and interpretations of these old houses has not only wakened the memory of their famous residents, but also of those who designed the buildings- the professional architects. László Hudec (1893–1958), a Hungarian architect who spent most of his legendary career in Shanghai, is well known as one of the most popular architects tightly linked to the old metropolitan city of Shanghai. He contributed a series of outstanding architectural projects to the city during the 1920s–1930s (Figure 9, Figure 10). Thus, the third criteria for nominating historic buildings under the local law is seen in emphasising the value of 'those buildings as the representative designs of well-known architects in the history of Shanghai'. This notion was rarely considered in the earlier socialist period when building projects were always recorded as collective contributions.

Now almost all the buildings designed by Hudec have been rediscovered and listed as heritage architecture. Many other foreign architects also had successful practices in Shanghai, such as the English architectural firm Palmer and Turner, which designed most of the commercial Neoclassical buildings along the Bund, including Sassoon House and the HSBC headquarters. The French architectural firm A. Leonard, P. Veyssyere & A. Kruze Architects gave the former French Concession high-quality residential spaces with a cornucopia of architectural designs. Among all the professionals, Hudec remains the



Figure 9 László Hudec (Source: Johnson 1993, 227).

Figure 10 The Wu House designed by Hudec in 1935 (Source: TJUPDI, SXDAD and CAUP 2014, 24).

most familiar architect in the mass media, not only for his fashionable Art Deco designs such as the Grand Cinema and the Park Hotel that still shine as Shanghai landmarks, but also for his persistence and ambition in this ‘paradise for the adventurers’, which was full of opportunities as well as uncertainties and struggles. A biography of Hudec revealed that as an Hungarian rather than an Englishman or a Frenchman, he escaped from a Russian camp to Shanghai after the First World War and started his career in an American architectural office. He later established his own agency and designed mostly for Chinese clients. His creative talent made Shanghai into a modern cityscape rivalling that in cities in the Western world (Poncellini and Csejdy 2013). Hudec’s career is perhaps the best example of Shanghai as a cosmopolitan city.

Scholars from both China and overseas have rediscovered old Shanghai and brought multiple perspectives on the city’s forgotten past. A series of photography books published by collaboration of Tess Johnston and Deke Erh should be particularly mentioned because they were the very first books for showcasing a great variety of architectural images of Shanghai as an international metropolis. The authors managed to collect old photos, rare documents and even oral histories from the former Western families and their descendants who once lived in Shanghai. There are fewer things that could more vividly represent the lived experiences in these houses, schools, clubs and related community spaces than the dignity of their architecture. These scholars might feel some sense of nostalgia for the atmosphere of modern Shanghai in

the 1920s and 1930s, as did many contemporary writers (Figure 11a, Figure 11b). This implies in some way that more things can be discovered about old Shanghai, which was already being integrated into the city’s imagery of a prosperous future in the globalising world. The many old Art Deco buildings captured by Deke Erh’s (1993) camera illustrate Shanghai as ‘a city with the most Art Deco style buildings in the world’ (see Rosemary Wakeman’s article in this issue). This widely studied architectural style has become a symbolic urban element not only for recalling Shanghai’s metropolitan character from its past, but also as a reference in the search for a ‘Chinese Deco’, a complex architectural style as ‘old rhythms with new melodies, harmonious but distinctive’ for the new commercial buildings in the former Walled City of Shanghai (Chang 2017, 31).

Although books exhibiting Shanghai as a ‘World’s Fair of Architecture’ have identified the main architects of historical building styles, the great contribution by Chinese professional architects of the first generation to modern Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s was not recognised by the public or even by professionals (Zheng 1995)²¹. In 2018, an exhibition entitled ‘The Rise of Modernity’ was held at the Power Station Museum of Modern Art in Shanghai, which focused on the most important architects of the first generation who all received their architectural education at the University of Pennsylvania. The curators were from the architecture schools of Tongji University and Southeast University and professionals of the Shanghai Architecture Association. While the study and practical experiences of these early architects had been

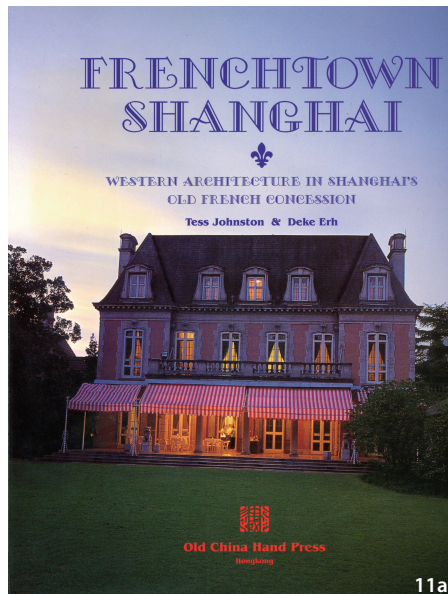


Figure 11a and 11b Publications for presenting the old houses and communities for recalling the lives of quality and international in the city's past (Source: Johnston and Erh 2000).

traced one by one, a great number of their high-quality architectural projects were presented for the first time in this exhibition in such a collective way, with nearly half of them found in Shanghai. This gave the public a strong impression of the important role these Chinese professionals played in constructing the modern city of Shanghai (Figure 12, Figure 13).

In addition, the contributions by Chinese clients and builders, once called 'national capitalists' are now actively integrated into narratives about Shanghai's historical buildings, such as those of the four famous department stores along Nanjing Road, the Park Hotel and the Green House Villa. Although all these re-evaluations are inevitably coloured by particular experiences, perspectives and imaginations, the answer to the question of who built modern Shanghai has been increasingly enriched along with the interpretations of Shanghai's architectural heritage.

Shikumen lilong: Opportunity and Challenges in Protecting the Urban Heritage of Daily Life

As Shanghai merges into an increasingly globalised world, the city has clearly been reconstructed by many historians that go beyond the former revolutionary frame of the national narrative. While all of the histories about the most important public buildings reflecting modern Shanghai have been discovered, the histories of buildings housing ordinary people beyond the neon lights have also attracted the attention of historic preservationists. The most representative and widely known example is no doubt the *shikumen lilong*, a special housing type in the

form of a mixture of an English terraced house and the traditional Chinese courtyard house. Hundreds of blocks in the centre of Shanghai are filled with such *lilong* of different scales, that were largely built in the first 30 years of the 20th century for Chinese families and migrants living and working in Shanghai. Listing such kinds of houses as urban heritage is not new, but only those that were related to important moments in the CPC's revolutionary history were protected before the 1990s. In the beginning of the 1980s, architectural typology studies began exploring *shikumen lilong* as one of the most specific housing types of this city, which also resulted from the local government's investigation of housing conditions (Shen 1993). As more studies by architectural historians revealed the continuity of the traditional Chinese way of life in the spatial structures of this housing type, including a strong sense of community among neighbours, rich details of the variety of experiences could be found in the lanes of these brick buildings. Even a destitute writer's life in a *shikumen* attic recalled 'open the small window, found the poem'²². Thus, the notion of *shikumen lilong* as part of Shanghai's urban heritage has become widely recognised.

However, it is still challenging to protect these *lilong* houses in practice. The problem is not only how many *lilong* houses should be finally protected, but also, more paradoxically, how their residents can continue their life in the *shikumen lilong* while also preserving its built structure. Who should pay for the restoration of most of these houses? Since they became a kind of social housing after 1949, the majority were in poor condition, with a poor population living in dense spaces with a shortage of modern facilities and a lack of maintenance. Only a few



Figure 12 The Sun Department Store building completed in 1934, designed by the Kwan, Chu and Yang Architects. All the four partners Kwan Sung-sing, Chu Pin, Yang Tingbao, and Qua Ling Young were graduates from leading universities in the United States (Source: Cai 1998, 57).



Figure 13 Poster of the exhibition 'The Rise of Modernity' about the Chinese architects from U penn (Source: Tong Ming).

examples of *shikumen* renewal projects have been considered as significant pioneers, especially the Xintiandi and the Tianzifang blocks, which are the two most well-known *lilongs*.

These two projects have received both positive and negative assessments about their estimated value. The Xintiandi project was planned and realised by the Hong Kong developer Shui On Land at the end of the 1990s. It was a renovation project for a *lilong* block that included the birthplace of the CPC's s in the first row. While respecting the national monument and retaining the original spatial structure and fragments of the old buildings, this *lilong* block was reconstructed and transformed into public space with restaurants, bars and boutiques. It showed that people could change their minds and act to 'preserve' and revitalise poor *shikumen* by using an alternative approach. It represented Shanghai's cultural identity and created urban spaces for commercial activities that were even more attractive than any new centre with its modern skyscrapers. However, this project has also been criticised for totally losing its community life and thus its historical authenticity (only a small museum called A La Wolixiang in one bay of this *lilong* remains that includes furniture and furnishings from a typical family's living space and daily life). By comparison the preservation and rehabilitation of Tianzifang *lilong* has been much more

appreciated because not only did the renovation use a bottom-up approach, starting with some artists' activities in the abandoned 'lane factory', but also all the original buildings and spatial structure, and even a part of the residents' daily life, have been preserved. However, disappointment is still evident after 10 years of transformation in this neighbourhood. Bars, boutiques and restaurants have been increasingly introduced into the lanes and houses (Figure 14). This *lilong* block is now more of a spectacle on an urban stage to create nostalgic imagery for tourists and for consumption. It has also forced the artists to move out of the block.

Thus, as this international city makes greater progress in a growing pluralistic society in the globalising era, *shikumen lilong* gain more opportunities to be presented as heritage sites to the outside world. They represent Shanghai's unique built heritage and embrace of the life of its ordinary residents. At the Expo of World Architecture in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, the red China Pavilion was built with a strong nationalist image, and it incorporated the *shikumen* gate, which was a favourite symbol representing Shanghai. More voices appealing for the protection of *shikumen* were heard during this time period at academic conferences as well as from reports in the press. Through the efforts of some local scholars and Luwan District officials, the 'Construction Technique of Shanghai



Figure 14 Chengzhifang in the Tianzifang neighbourhood (Source: Yanning Li).

Figure 15 Lilong house in No.119 block of the former Luwan District, not far from Xintiandi, already disappeared. Photo taken in 2006 (Source: Yanning Li).

Shikumen Lilong was nominated as intangible heritage at the national level in 2010. It is not a coincidence that this eagerness for heritage protection came from this central district of Shanghai because all the *shikumen* cases mentioned above are within this district, including the birthplace of the CPC (Figure 15).

In reality, the challenge is no less great than before in protecting *shikumen lilong*. The situation is complicated. On the one hand, erasing and reconstructing the poor lilong blocks is still a highly efficient strategy for urban renewal and real estate development in the city centre²³. On the other hand, the inhabitants' evaluation of their houses is frequently very different from that of scholars and heritage professionals because they suffer from such poor living conditions. Perhaps no one could so deeply describe this complicated juxtaposition more than the famous writer Anyi Wang in her novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, which revealed the psychological complexity long hidden in Shanghai:

Every *longtang* in Shanghai is steeped in an atmosphere of gossip, where right and wrong get twisted and confused. In the elegant apartment-style *longtang* on the west side of town, this atmosphere is free of clouds, refreshing and transparent as a bright autumn day. Moving down among the modern-style *longtang* neighbourhoods, the atmosphere becomes a bit more turgid and turbulent, blowing to and from like the wind. Lower down still is the fractious atmosphere of the old-style *longtang* neighbourhoods with the stone

gates. Here the wind has died, replaced by the vapour of a humid day (Wang 2008, 22).

In 2015, a group of local historians and experts in architecture and historical cultural cities headed by influential conservator Professor Yisan Ruan²⁴, proposed that Shanghai list *shikumen lilong* as World Heritage sites²⁵. This idea came in part from regret that Shanghai does not appear on the list of World Heritage sites and is not thought of as competitive as 'an outstanding global city'. Even more urgently, the push for *lilong* to be considered as World Heritage sites came from the continuing erasure of these houses by rapid urban development. The proposal was later expanded into a slogan 'From *Shikumen* to Tian'anmen'²⁶, which emphasised the importance of *shikumen lilong* as both community space for Shanghai's daily life and as symbolic places in the CPC's revolutionary history. Nevertheless, great challenges remain in the conflicts between historic preservation and urban redevelopment. After making some great efforts, the Urban Planning Management Bureau of the local government announced that 250 historic blocks outside the 12 historic areas would be protected in 2017. A large section of these blocks comprise different scales of *shikumen lilong*. In practice, the difficulty of how to achieve both historic preservation and urban renewal targets, especially how to redefine these residential blocks after more than half a century's tremendous social change, is still a big challenge that Shanghai has yet to confront.



Figure 16 The Sino-Soviet Friendship Mansion, renamed as Shanghai Exhibition today (Source: Chen 2009, 144).

Epilogue and Discussions

When the legislation was amended and enacted as a local law in 2002, a special note spelled out the adjustment to the legal provision for the age of a nominated historic building. It changed from ‘before 1949’ to ‘built for more than 30 years’. This was a significant sign that a more recent historical layer formed by buildings constructed during the era of the new socialist China had come into view as part of the country’s urban heritage. This was not merely normal progress for enlarging urban heritage to encompass the history of the immediate present, but implies another ideological transformation. When the early metropolis of Shanghai was rediscovered in many ways as a prologue to the current modernisation of China, the construction during the early socialist period revealed a history of uncertainty, criticism or even neglect. While the Sino–Soviet Union Friendship Mansion (Shanghai Exhibition Centre that was built in 1955 in a high Stalinist style) was listed without any hesitation because of its strong memory of the young socialist China, listing the humble Caoyang New Village (built in 1951 as the first workers’ residential area in the new China) as part of Chinese architectural heritage in 2005 was still a breakthrough (Figure 16, Figure 17). In comparison, the protection and rehabilitation of Shanghai’s industrial buildings and sites as urban heritage has become one of the most successful conservation practices in the entire country.

Shanghai was not alone in achieving progress when China entered the era of new millionaires. There are 36 national monuments and relics declared World Heritage sites found in the country in 2018. However, it is often the most active city in China, which can, despite its complicated past, find its own way in responding to global

forces. In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping set out his intentions for ‘well protecting cultural heritage, just like safeguarding our lives’ by encouraging the nation’s culture’s self-confidence and redefining Shanghai’s identity more authoritatively through local government. While the number of protected buildings had already increased to over 1000 in 2018, a more comprehensive definition of Shanghai’s cultural identity was presented using three characteristics, ‘the Red Culture, the Jiangnan Culture and the Haipai Culture’²⁷.

This new definition of Shanghai was undoubtedly designed to remind the globalising city not to ignore the city’s important role in the revolutionary history of China. The celebration of the centennial anniversary of the CPC’s foundation in 2021 is approaching. Thus, a ‘Map of Red Culture’ was published with the guidance of the local Communist Party Committee to link more than 300 sites related to revolutionary activities, events and figures for visitors, tourists and local residents and to explore more of the hidden stories in Shanghai’s architectural heritage. Meanwhile, the Shanghai History Museum opened in 2018 after many years of preparation. The building is originally the Shanghai Race Club built during the 1920s in the International Settlement, which now forms the west end of the People’s Park. Shanghai’s history has been proudly displayed from a 5000-year-old archaeological exhibits to the development of the Pudong area in the 1990s. While the period from the 1840s Opium War to the Liberation of Shanghai in 1949 is still the major period in the narrative of Shanghai, the most important layer of Shanghai’s revolutionary history also must be clearly visible. Therefore, the museum eventually received a second name, and is known as both the Shanghai History Museum and the



Figure 17 Caoyang New Village, a workers' new village built in 1950s as one of the first historic buildings after 1949 listed as local heritage. (Source: Cai 1998, 133).

Shanghai Revolution Museum. In contrast, the former walled city of Shanghai Town (*laochengxiang*) with the longest history rooted in traditional Chinese culture is still in a marginalised condition. Local residents find that the old town seems much more remote than the French Concession. Except for a very few tourist hotspots such as the Yu Garden and the Temple of City God, its many streets, blocks and residential buildings- even listed buildings and sites- await renovation and need to be restored,

Despite Lowenthal revealed five valued attributes of the past, that is, antiquity, continuity, accretion, sequence and termination, to present the complexity in defining certain heritage, it was still considered not comprehensive enough (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000, 18)²⁸. Observations from these scholars' nevertheless enable a deep review of the ideas and practices of conservation progress in Shanghai. Every city has its own history and it is only when we get down to the city's own history in its specific context that the complexity can be deeply revealed and understood. It is appropriate to say that Shanghai's past became foreign, but it was already initially 'foreign'. The conservation practices of recent decades have vividly shown that 'we are in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered. A period not so much as a great way of life destined to grow in time but as a net that links points together and creates its own muddle' (Foucault 1997). But the specific complication for Shanghai's historic preservation is that the urban heritage of the city has remained a rich resource for the reconstruction of its society by integrating a combination of its multiple positions and identities, and ultimately by taking a leading role in China. And the biggest

challenge for this cosmopolitan city is the need to explore approaches to bring the 'otherness' 'back home', a dynamic process in reconstructing a relationship between Shanghai and China, and between Shanghai and the world, as well as the relationship between the city's past, present and the future in its pluralist society.

Notes

1. A comprehensive introduction of this achievement can be found in Zheng (2016) and Chang (2017).
2. These historians were mostly from the Shanghai Academy of Social Science, Shanghai History Museum and Fudan University. For example, Mr. Xiong Yuezhi from the Shanghai Academy of Social Science has edited or written many books and papers on Shanghai, including the 15 volumes of *A General History of Shanghai* (1999), *The Eastward Dissemination of Western Culture and the Social Changes in Modern China* (2019).
3. Generations of professors from Tongji University, including Chen Congzhou, Luo Xiaowei, Zheng Shiling, Wu Jiang, Chang Qing and Qian Zonghao have contributed many books and articles, such as Zheng (1995). Meanwhile, architectural historians from outside China have also published special perspectives and thoughtful books through collaborations, such as Balfour and Zheng (2002), Denison and Guang (2006) and Warr (2007).
4. Including local government bureaus for urban planning management, historic building management and relics protection management.
5. In the discussion on the valued attributes of the past, Lowenthal (2015) notes that 'Antiquity roots

- credentials in the past; ancestral possession makes things our own, valorising claims to power, prestige, property, propriety.' The modern history of Shanghai of the late 19th and early 20th century is not so far but still presenting what he argues, as the paper will reveal in the following paragraphs.
6. According to the official definitions of Chinese history, modern China (*jindai*) refers to the time period between 1840 and 1949, i.e., between the end of the Opium War when China was forced to open five treaty ports to the West, including Shanghai, and the founding of the new socialist China after the triumph of the revolutionary CPC.
 7. The remaining six sites include ancient wall ruins and different kinds of temples.
 8. As found in a search for 'Shanghai' in the 1989 edition of *Cihai* (Dictionary).
 9. Xia Zhengnong, *Cihai*, Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 1989.
 10. Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People's Republic of China, 2002.
 11. The HSBC's neoclassical mansion was built in 1923 and taken over by Japanese in 1941. After World War II, the building was returned to the bank. In 1955, HSBC moved out and the building was then used as the Shanghai government's town hall until 1997.
 12. At the first session of the 10th Shanghai Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Zhao Lihong submitted Proposal No. 0078, 'Proposing to Apply the Bund Building Group to the UN World Cultural Heritage'.
 13. 'If the Bund Applies for World Heritage Site Status, We should First Review Chinese History.' *Workers' Daily*, July 8, 2003.
 14. The Cathedral was built in 1910, but two tower spires were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The spires were restored and religious activities returned to the building in the early 1980s.
 15. Another successful case is the observatory, construction of which began in 1872, which has been well restored recently and turned into a museum to show the first place where weather broadcasts served the city for more than 100 years without interruption.
 16. In his article, Zheng Shiling (2016) criticised that the recognition of the importance and significance of protecting Shanghai's urban heritage has come at the cost of 30 million square metres' destruction of historical buildings.
 17. Liu Naou and Mu Shiying's novels are representative of Shanghai Modernism literature in the 1930s.
 18. Wu Liang, chief editor, *Shanghai Culture*. Shanghai, no. 1, 1994.
 19. Publishing books like *Shanghai's 100 Former Residents of Celebrities*. (*Baichu mingren guju pinjian*) becomes popular.
 20. Tess Johnston, working for American consulate in Shanghai for decades, and Deke Erh is a famous photographer, collector and writer. They have published a series books from late 1980s on modern Shanghai with rich images, which helped more western people to know the history of the city.
 21. Lai Delin (2006) has given a very comprehensive collection of names and works of the first modern professionals in the book he edited, but still far from being sufficiently related to the protection of historic buildings. The past decade sees more and more studies on these Chinese architects, architectural firms and their works by scholars both from architectural schools and design institutes. And the re-publishing of the old magazine the Chinese Architect (established in 1931 and lasting until 1937) by Chinese Architect Association (founded in 1927) has greatly enlarged our knowledge about the contributions of the Chinese professionals at that time.
 22. Referring to the *tingzijian* in a unit of *lilong* houses, a small space beside the staircase, between the first floor and the second floor, where poor students or writers often rented to live at that time. Architectural historian Xiaowei Luo borrowed the 'Tingzijian Literature' to make the *lilong* better understood in its historical and cultural significance. Luo Xiaowei (1989; 1996, 25).
 23. More than two thirds of *lilong* blocks in central Shanghai have disappeared to be replaced by new constructions and the *lilong* are still disappearing.
 24. Professor Ruan Yisan from Tongji University works as a promoter and conservator with wide influence in the protection of historical Chinese cultural cities.
 25. Basic information about this proposal was provided by Professor Ruan Yisan and other scholars and historians.
 26. Tian'anmen, i.e., the Heavenly Peace gate of Tian'anmen Square in Beijing, the centre of the national country, where the CPC announced the foundation of a new China on 1st October 1949.
 27. The Red Culture refers to the revolutionary history of modern China, mainly that of the Chinese Communist Party. The South of Yangtze River Jiangnan Culture refers to the city as part of the Yangtze Delta, rooted in

the traditional culture of this region before the Opium War. And the Haipai Culture refers to a Shanghai Style formed in the early modern period, mainly the period of foreign settlements with special opening and inclusive characteristics of opening and inclusive.

28. Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) argue that Lowenthal ignored social-political functions as well as some economic value of the past. Mason (2006) has given a very comprehensive discussion on the multiple values of heritage in the contemporary practice of historic preservation.

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