Features of the Development of Mansions of Chinese Officials and Merchants in Guangzhou in the First Half of the 20th Century

A A Kim\textsuperscript{1} and T A Smolianinova\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Department of Architecture and Urbanistics, Institute of Architecture and Design, Pacific National University, 136, Tihookeanskaya St., Khabarovsk, 680035, Russia

E-mail: ant.kim@mail.ru, design.total@yandex.ru

Abstract. The article examines the development of one of the least studied types of Chinese-Western architecture of Guangdong province, Guangzhou that is called yanglou. The premises of their appearance are analyzed in the framework of the integration of European culture in China that is especially strongly manifested in the province. The examples of the first yanglou in the historic district of Xiguan are considered. They are dating back to 1900–1910s and still trace the connection with the traditional architecture of the region. The genesis and development of the Dongshan district in 1920–1930s is considered separately. The district is a local rethinking of the “garden city” concept and was created as a model district for the further development of Guangzhou. The Dongshan district presents the greatest number of yanglou, which made it possible to study the change in their stylistic orientation that corresponded to the trends of world architecture.

1. Introduction

The key role in the formation of the eclectic architecture of Guangdong province was played by its geopolitical position. The southern provinces were the first zones of maritime contact between China and the Western world. This was due to the proximity to the colonial possessions, trade outposts and bases of representatives of European states, primarily Portuguese, Dutch, British and French. In addition, the province was located in the zone of maritime trade routes that had arisen before the arrival of the Western colonialists [1].

At the same time, if the process of European integration in most regions of China began after the First Opium War, then in Guangdong the first and only Macao colony appeared in 1557. However, the port of Guangzhou remained to be the main trade gate of China that received the status of the only port of the Great Qing open to international trade in 1757. A small coastal strip was allocated for European representatives to conduct commercial trade. A few buildings of trading companies were located there. Subsequently, this area was expanded, and in the middle of the 19th century it was moved to the island territory [3].

The beginning of the active phase of the cultural influence of Western countries began only after the opening of the country's borders, when open cities and leased territories began to appear in the province. The center of their development was Hong Kong that passed into British possession in 1842. Being one of the largest ports of China and not submitting to the Chinese government, it quickly
overshadowed Guangzhou and Macao, becoming the center of international trade in southern China. It was second only to Shanghai in terms of turnover [4].

By the beginning of the 20th century, three colonies and leased territories, five open ports, eight zones of British influence, represented by customs, ports, post offices etc., located in the territory of Chinese cities, appeared in the province [1]. All this has strengthened the integration of Western culture that was ultimately reflected in the rapid development of Sino-Western directions of architecture. However, most of it represented the transformation of traditional types of buildings. One of the few examples of Sino-Western architecture formed on the basis of European buildings were the mansions of major Chinese officials and traders located in Guangzhou.

2. Literature review
The works of Q. Lou, V. I. Luchkova, C. B. Malon [5–7] and many others are devoted to the history of traditional Chinese architecture. They focus on the analysis of the development of palace and park and cult architecture of the ancient world and the Middle Ages. Due to the fact that in the majority of these works the analysis of the development of the architecture of the 19th–first half of the 20th century is almost absent, their main value for this study is the descriptions of development patterns of Chinese architecture.

The works of H. Huang, R. G. Knapp, D. Shan [8–10], etc. are devoted to the problems of traditional residential architecture, including its manifestations in the period of the 19th–early 20th centuries, as well as the regional peculiarities of its development. The materials presented in the studies provide an opportunity to analyze mass architecture of China that often differed significantly from palace and park complexes and monasteries, while becoming the basis for the formation of Chinese-Western types of architecture.

The works of J. A. Farris, A. P. Ivanova, N. E. Kozyrenko, N. P. Kradin, T. A. Smolianinova, H. Yang [3, 11–13] and many other examine the development of the colonial architecture and the background to its emergence. Characteristic of the influence of architectural directions of the metropolis in the development of the architecture of the settlements is given. At the same time, little attention is paid to the analysis of the transformation of European buildings under the influence of local culture, as well as its impact on the development of architecture and urban planning in China of this period.

The following works are devoted directly to the study of various directions of eclecticism in the period under consideration. Chinese baroque is analyzed in the works of C. Cao, A. P. Ivanova, N. E. Kozyrenko, Q. Li, D. Liu, S. Xu, H. Yang, D. Zhang, I. Zhang [12, 14, 15] and others. Longtang and lilong houses, including the Shanghai shikumen, are considered by N. Arkaraprasertkul, X. Ren, F. Wang [16–18] and others.

The eclectic architecture of South China, in particular the Guangdong province, is discussed in the following papers. Diaolou and luju were analyzed by P. R. S. Batto, H. Jin, K. E. Kuah-Pearce, J. Tan [19–21] and others. Qilou and tonglau are described by C. Chu, W. Hu, G. Pan, H. Yang, J. Zhang [22–24] and others. Weilou are considered in the works of S. Jiang [25]. A comprehensive analysis of yanglou yet has not been conducted, information on this topic is fragmentary [23, 26, 27].

3. Research results
As European centers developed, cross-cultural communication intensified that, in addition to eclecticization of traditional types of architecture, led to the emergence of Europeanized mansions belonging to major Chinese officials [26, 27]. Their planning structures and spatial solutions were no longer a consequence of the transformation of the existing typology of national architecture, but became an example of direct imitation of Western models. The stylistic features of such constructions vary considerably, as well as their planning setting. Usually they are two or three-storey mansions made of brick or reinforced concrete. The Chinese names of these objects are yanglou, yangfan or elu.

The most famous objects are the mansions located in the Xiguan district and constructed in the 1900–1920s on the border with the former “Thirteen Factories” territory, which was turned into a park.
zone after a fire [23, 26]. The Pan’s mansion ‘Figure 1’ and the residence of Jiang Guangnai ‘Figure 2’
that had asymmetrical non-orthogonal planning solutions can also be considered as examples of
transitional architectural images where the influence of traditional architecture is evident. They almost
completely lacked a backyard territory, as well as a courtyard. Compositional division and entrance
groups are weakly highlighted, the level of decoration is low. At the same time, lazed bas-reliefs and
galleries of the inner courtyard typical of the national architecture are used. However, the mansions of
Chen Lianzhong ‘Figure 3’ and Chen Lianbo ‘Figure 4’ have a large decorative elaboration, a
articulated entrance area and large residential yards with gardens. The facades are asymmetrical,
which is not common to traditional Chinese architecture. A distinctive feature of these structures was
the use of accessible roofs in the form of terraces that were used extensively in the eclectic Chinese
architecture of the beginning of the 20th century.

Figure 1. Pan’s mansion. Source: Kim A.A.

Figure 2. Residence of Jiang Guangnai. Source: Kim A.A.

Figure 3. Mansion of Chen Lianzhong. Source: Kim A.A.

Figure 4. Residence of Chen Lianbo. Source: Kim A.A.

As previously noted, the economic importance of the Xiguan district began to decline gradually in
the middle of the 19th century, and most of the commercial buildings began to be concentrated in the
Changhua, Huangsha and Qingping areas. In the meantime, major merchants, politicians and the
military ceased to build their mansions in places of economic activity and began to settle in the eastern
part of the city, the Dongshan district.

The idea of a fundamental change in the urban planning policy of China belonged to the son of Sun
Yat-sen Sun Fo (Sun Ke), who received secondary and higher education in the United States. While
studying at the University of California Berkeley (1911–1916), he got acquainted with the work of
E. Howard’s «Garden Cities of To-morrow» [28]. The eastern suburb of Guangzhou—Dongshan,
which became part of the city only in 1928, became an experimental platform for testing a new urban
planning concept. Its location was due to the low development of the eastern part, while the western
part at this point almost depleted its resources and was limited by the Pearl river. The project envisaged the creation of a modern residential city with a combined radial and free layout, the center of which was supposed to be the central park. Differentiated street network, the division of the plots, as well as the number of floors and the style of the buildings constructed were subject to regulation. The new district provided for construction with courtyard areas and the lack of commercial function, in contrast to the streets of qilou, that are distinguished by high density and commercial focus. As a result of the humanization of the environment, as well as the project’s oversight by the country’s leadership, high-ranking Chinese officials, military and major businessmen, began to settle in this area. In 1928, a model project for an urban area was created based on the Dongshan district. Further development of Guangzhou was to be carried out on its basis [23]. Despite the fact that such a planning structure did not find wide distribution, there is a tendency of further humanization of public spaces.

In process of its development there was a transformation of stylistic orientation of constructions. In the initial stages, it was modern, mostly based on the British architecture of Hong Kong. Almost all the houses were built of red brick, uncharacteristic of the national architecture of China in the late 19th–early 20th century, where gray brick was used. The houses at 13 and 15 Songgangdong St, 9 Xuguyuan St, 26 and 28 Xuguyuan St. ‘Figure 5’ built in 1910–1920 are the examples of such constructions. Unlike other types of Sino-Western architecture, these constructions almost completely lack the stucco decoration. The composition of the facades is achieved by rhythmic division, that is supported by corbel courses and emphasis on the entrance group. Flanking bay windows, porticos, that were complemented by terraces, were extensively used. Despite the Europeanized look, the accessible roofs were still used, and the traditional Chinese ornament was employed in decoration.

As the influence of modernism and Art Deco in the architecture of America and Europe increased, the appearance of Dongshan buildings began to change. At the initial stages there was a change in the composition of the facade, in which vertical division began to prevail, and a few decorative elements almost completely disappeared. The objects of the transition period include the houses at 19 and 20 Sibeitonjin St. ‘Figure 6’ built in the early 1930s. Further development led to the abandonment of brick structures in favor of reinforced concrete. The style completely moved away from the British villas and presented a composition based on geometric elements, the conjugations of which were emphasized by little decor. An example would be the house at 8, 9 Peizheng St. ‘Figure 7.’

![Figure 5. 28 Xuguyuan St. Source: www.lifeofguangzhou.com.](image1)

![Figure 6. 19–20 Sibeitonjin St. Source: www.macaulifestyle.com.](image2)

Besides the mansions that belonged to the upper class, simpler forms of yanglou began to develop, which are presented in almost all big open cities. Their three-dimensional composition and stylistic features are in many respects similar to luju. Usually they have the form of a square or rectangular house with a height of two to three floors, located outside terraced house development of qilou, usually at the back of a block. These kind of settlements belonged to merchants and were concentrated in commercial areas. They were built both from reinforced concrete and gray brick. They were
distinguished by the abundance of stucco decoration that imitated European style decoration but were based on Chinese semantics. One such an example is the house at 45 Baoqingxinzhouyue St. ‘Figure 8’ in Guangzhou as well as Jian’s villa in Foshan.

Figure 7. 9 Peizheng St. [29].

Figure 8. 45 Baoqingxinzhouyue St. Source: Kim A.A.

4. Conclusion

The formation and development of yanglou is a nontypical example of the Europeanization of Chinese architecture of the late 19th–first half of the 20th century, in which the development of the space-planning solution lacked a genetic link with traditional typology. Such constructions were an example of China’s new architecture that was focused on Western designs not only in terms of borrowing facade decoration but also in using European examples of functional and space-planning solutions, as well as urban planning. This approach required a good knowledge of Western culture and large financial investments in projects, which limited their use by major Chinese merchants and officials, who often had American education. Samples of yanglou, that belonged to ordinary merchants, differ little from those of luju and are based on traditional functional planning schemes. The development of this type of structures in the 1930s, characterized by stagnation in the economy and military conflicts in China, as well as the change of political regime in 1949 did not allow yanglou to become widespread and be a model for the subsequent Europeanization of residential buildings in China.

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