CULTURAL IDEOLOGY AND THE LANDSCAPE OF CONFUCIAN CHINA:
THE TRADITIONAL SI HE YUAN

By

CARMENCITA MARIANO SAMUELS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Geography)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

January 1986

© Carmencita Mariano Samuels, 1986
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representative. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Carmencita Mariano Samuels

Department of Geography
The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date: February, 1986
ABSTRACT

The cultural geography and architectural history of China has long been a subject of separate and distinguished interest and research, the one focusing primarily on the vernacular landscapes of peasants and folk societies, and the other focusing predominantly on the grand architectural monuments of empire and religious orders. Seldom has the impetus for both interests been combined so that the cultural life of the people, rich and poor, powerful and powerless alike, and the history of the architectural environment are linked as products and reflections of one another.

In the long history of the development of the built environment of China, however, at least one component of the landscape has always figured especially prominent in the interface between society and architecture, namely the vernacular and the elite courtyard compound house. The ideal and the actuality of the courtyard house reveals itself in history, in literature, and on the land as a hardened depository of the most essential values, beliefs and codes of social behavior in Confucian China. Its extraordinary durability and conformity, and its eccentricities were everywhere and almost always a statement about the integrity of the Confucian worldview. Moreover, it was a statement on behalf of an official and encoded cultural and state ideology and its essential li or "proprieties." Its durability was at one with the durability of a total Confucian and Imperial state-sponsored ideology and system. Its change and its eccentricities were, like the ideology and system it housed, grammatical conjugations on a well established and legitimate theme, filled with verve
and excitement, but always with an intrinsic order predicated on the logic of the Confucian cultural ideology and state system. It is the principal aim of this study to explore the linkage between culture and architecture in the human landscape of Confucian China as revealed by the courtyard compound. The main thesis of the study is that the built environment and the courtyard compound in particular reveals itself as a Confucian social landscape the meanings of which are apparent in its symbology, in the assignment of status places within its boundaries, and in its overall design, form and structure. In this way too, the study is a study in the social fabric and ideological commitments of a once powerful tradition whose hold on the landscape was virtually without exception, but which has now dissipated or disappeared into the furnaces and highrise structures of the industrializing and revolutionary ideologies of the twentieth century.
CULTURAL IDEOLOGY AND THE LANDSCAPE OF CONFUCIAN CHINA:
THE TRADITIONAL COURTYARD COMPOUND

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

PREFACE..............................................................................................................1

CHAPTER I.  INTRODUCTION.................................................................1

1. Purpose
2. Some Conceptual Considerations
3. Limits

CHAPTER II.  CULTURAL IDEOLOGY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT..........23

1. Continuity and Change
   Technology
   Craft Schools and Handbooks
   Guilds
   Religion
   Vernacular and Official Landscapes
2. Official Landscapes and Cultural Ideology
   Amateur Elites
   Cultural Ideology
3. Social Meaning and the Built Environment
   Basic Needs
   Family Structure
   The Position of Women
   Privacy and the Role of the Individual
   Social Interaction: Friends and Strangers

CHAPTER III. OFFICIAL LANDSCAPES OF CONFUCIAN CHINA.................63

1. Canonical Sources
2. Law and Propriety in Confucian Society
3. Codes of Social Distinction
4. Imperial Building Codes
5. Elites and Handbooks
6. Basic Structural Components
7. An Official Landscape
This study began as a term paper in a course taken at the University of British Columbia with Professor James Duncan on the cultural geography of the built environment. It grew first under Professor Duncan's tutelage and inspiration, and with the assistance of many friends and teachers at the University of British Columbia, especially Richard Copley, Graham Johnson, Terry McGee, David Ley, Nancy Duncan, Olav and Margaret Slaymaker. Later, with the help of many friends, teachers and colleagues in China, it grew into a study the ends of which were mainly to reconstruct the social meanings of the traditional Chinese courtyard house. Along the way, it became also a study in Confucianism, in the nature of the traditional scholar-official elite, in traditional literature and art, in Chinese economic and political history, and so on. One principal lesson of this study is that the built environment is a product of and has an influence upon its social and ideological contexts. Perhaps ironically, the truth of that lesson was made especially self-evident in my own attempt to complete the research for this study, research which, despite the present text, remains ongoing and, given the complexities of Confucian society and Chinese history, has no immediate end in sight.

No small part of the research for this study was accomplished in the examination of several tens of courtyard compounds in the cities of Beijing and Suzhou from 1983 to the present. The raw data collected from those courtyards figure less importantly in these pages than the experience and
insight gained in frequent and in some cases repeated exposure to the architectural world within the courtyard. Fortunately, although the traditional social life of the courtyard had long since disappeared, I had the company and the guidance of several long-time residents, scholars and friends who were most generous in sharing their knowledge and understanding of what had once been a living tradition.

There are many teachers who deserve special thanks. I was especially privileged to have Professor Hou Renzhi of Beijing University as my personal tutor and laoshi in virtually all matters concerning the historical geography of Beijing. Professor Wu Liangrong, Chairman of the Department of Architecture at Qinghua University provided much early encouragement and support. Chen Zhanxiang, chief architect and planner for the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design was (and is) a constant source of inspiration and support. The artist Wang Daguan whose long scroll painting of "Life in Old Beijing" is a special experience in itself, Zhao Guanhua, the administrator of the former Imperial gardens, Tang Xiaofang, who frequently accompanied me in my peregrinations through the hutongs of Beijing, are remembered here with deep gratitude. But, of the many others who helped me immeasurably in their own unique and oftentimes touching ways, I would like to take this opportunity to mention at least one in particular, Mr. Su Tianjun, senior archivist and architectural historian for the City of Beijing. Mr. Su not only often arranged for my visits to many otherwise closed courtyard compounds, but also welcomed me in his home and spent many hours in private discussions about the meanings of what can only be called
"his" architectural heritage. He opened his own private archives, and provided access to much that is in the public domain but not readily available. But most of all he helped provide something unquantifiable—the inspiration of someone with unlimited sensitivity and affection for the landscape. To him especially I owe a special debt of gratitude.

In the case of Suzhou and other cities in Jiangsu Province, the Jiangsu Province Capital Construction Commission, Jiangsu Classical Garden Administration, and the Suzhou Classical Garden Construction Corporation were all instrumental in providing essential assistance, even to the extent of allowing me to spend many hours alone and with my family in some of the most beautiful of Suzhou garden compounds. Of those associated with these institutions, special thanks is owed three people in particular: Wang Chubing, former Director of the Jiangsu Capital Construction Commission; Wu Zongjun, managing director of the Jiangsu Classical Garden Administration; and Wang Zuxin, chief architect of the Suzhou Classical Garden Construction Corporation. Each of these teachers and friends played (and continue to play) an essential part in the development of my own better understanding of the architectural and social history of the residential-garden compounds of the Jiangnan Region.

Two people who have helped me beyond measure and who deserve special mention are my husband, Professor Marwyn S. Samuels, and my son, Haim-Dovid Rizal Samuels. Both of them, together and separately, were and remain fundamental supports in this and all other efforts I have made to better understand China and the Chinese landscape.
From all of these teachers and friends I gained much of what herein constitutes only a beginning, a start toward some greater understanding. That there is much still to learn goes without saying. Clearly, whatever its other pretensions, this study is but a prolegomenon to a deeper and more studied analysis of the social meaning of the traditional landscape of China.
Beijing: The Classical Siheyuan or Four-Sided Courtyard House.
DEDICATION

To my husband, Marwyn Samuels, who opened my heart and mind to a whole new world of learning, and to the view that whatever the mafan, one must approach the world with a you banfa attitude, this work is dedicated with a deep and abiding love.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.

Winston Churchill

The principal inspiration for this study arises from a special concern for the modern fate of the traditional Chinese _si he yuan_ or "four-sided courtyard house." In part, that concern is due to the rapid disappearance of the _si he yuan_ from the landscape of contemporary China. As Chinese cities now undergo "modernization," their older and now largely dysfunctional traditional built environments undergo abandonment and demolition. One casualty of this process is the traditional, indeed "classic" Chinese courtyard house. Unfortunately, the history and social meanings of the traditional Chinese courtyard house have not been well recorded. Hence, this study is motivated in part by a desire to help record the meaning of the _si he yuan_ before it goes the way of the society it once so adequately housed. In part too, therefore, the modern fate of Confucian China is a concern and interest lying just beneath the surface tension of the main topic of this study.

1. **Purpose.**

Still, however much I may be inspired by that question, the modern fate of the traditional landscape is not the topic of this study. Rather, the main topic of this study is the social meaning of the _si he yuan_ and its Confucian underpinnings. The central conceptual interests
of this study can, therefore, also be traced to concerns that extend far beyond the boundaries of China and the walls of its si he yuan. Its roots stretch far into the intellectual frontiers of an issue centered around the relationship between society and the built environment—most especially around the ways in which the house everywhere reveals itself as a "social unit of space" whose positive purpose is to create, to entertain, to sustain and to sanction the way of life of the people it houses.

By itself, that conceptual issue incorporates a wide range of more specific questions including the ways in which individuals, groups and collectives of all kinds, relations among the sexes, family life, social hierarchy and status, and so on influence the form, structure and design of the built environment in general (the landscape) and the house in particular. These, in turn, raise other questions about how elites, heads of households, males or females, elders or children, certain classes, eccentrics and so on define and shape the landscape. Ultimately, these too can be made more specific, rendering the particular case either archetype or idiosyncracy.

What then, if anything, holds all of these elements together, aside from some arbitrary scale of investigation? In one sense, what holds them together is the particular view of the beholder, whether the "looker" be someone within the society itself or an outside observer. In that sense, all landscapes are "authored." (Samuels, 1979.) In another sense, however, what holds these diverse elements together—if and when they are held together—is the more specific conceptual concern of this study. Suffice it to say here, borrowing from but applying some license
to Clifford Geertz's *Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973), that the glue holding these and most other elements of society together as a coherent "system" of relationships is what I will define as the "cultural ideology."

As I shall attempt to show, this "cultural ideology" is complex and powerful, sometimes rigid, sometimes flexible, and sometimes merely implied, hence "hidden" behind the symbols of social proprieties. Sometimes too, as in modern political ideologies, it appears to substitute disingenuous slogans or at least oversimplified platitudes for substantive truths. But, at bottom, it is also almost always formal and institutional, somewhere codified, rendered as canonical text and in the regulations and laws of society. Insofar as it functions to sanction, it is a reflection and tool of society. Insofar as it generates, perpetuates, and sanctions, it is one principal origin and cause of society. And, in all of this, it too has an impact on the built environment through its definitions and its delineation of "official landscapes," by which I mean to include all manner of construction and buildings, and specifically the house.

These two phrases, "cultural ideology" and "official landscape," lie at the conceptual core of this study. To be sure, they require much further definition, some of which I shall attempt in Chapter Two of this study, and some of which will become clear in the body of the subsequent substantive chapters. For my purposes here, however, it suffices to say that together they constitute the principal theoretical or conceptual proposition--hence universal issue--that this study raises. Simply put,
I propose to show that much, and indeed perhaps all of the built environment of man, including the house is a product of and a kind of hardened depository for the principal social values and institutions in society--values and institutions which are almost everywhere articulated in the symbolic language of cultural ideologies. The resulting landscape, furthermore, is almost always an "official landscape"--to one degree or another. At the very least, I propose to show that this was indeed the case in traditional China where a state-sponsored and highly articulate cultural ideology called Confucianism produced and sanctioned an official landscape, one major component of which was the si he yuan.

Therefore, it is the intention of this study to examine (1) the issue of the social meaning of the built environment in light of cultural ideology, (2) the way in which cultural ideologies create and sanction official landscapes, and finally (3) the traditional elite Chinese si he yuan as a product of and a depository for Confucian ideology. In broad conceptual terms, in other words, the si he yuan and the case of traditional China serve to illustrate and demonstrate the proposition that much, if not all of the built environment of man is an "official landscape" impregnated by cultural ideology.

2. Some Conceptual Considerations.

Clearly, by seeking to "explain" the built environment in light of the concepts of cultural ideology and official landscape, a host of questions arise concerning the "explanatory model" adopted here. Many of the most relevant and important of these will be treated at length in page 4
Chapter Two, "Cultural Ideology and the Built Environment." However, some of these questions are more correctly described as basic conceptual and methodological considerations or constraints arising partly out of the subject matter and partly out of the body of literature I have employed to fill the texture of this study. Therefore, before proceeding, it is perhaps only prudent to identify and briefly explain some of the methodological considerations and tactical constraints employed in this study.

As will become abundantly clear, I have in fact borrowed conceptual inspiration from several interrelated intellectual traditions. Perhaps most obviously, I have drawn heavily from the architectural and anthropological analyses of Amos Rapoport, and in particular his study of the cultural origins and meanings of the vernacular house, *House Form and Culture*. (Rapoport, 1969.) Along similar lines, I have also derived conceptual inspiration from the writings and lectures of James S. Duncan on the cultural and geographical interpretation of the built environment, and in particular from the collection of essays he brought together under the title *Housing and Identity*. (Duncan, J. S., 1981.) Furthermore, the conceptual basis for this study can also be traced to the literature of "humanistic geography" and its concerns with the value-laden links between man and landscape. (Ley and Samuels, 1979.) Were those not sufficient, many of the fundamental concerns identified in this study can also be traced to the literature of cultural geography and history, most notably perhaps to the work of David Sopher on *The Geography of Religions* (1967), Yi-fu Tuan on *Topophilia* (1974), Mircea Eliade on
The Sacred and the Profane (1959), and many others.

Although each of these sources offer differing perspectives, they all underscore the fundamental epistemology of this study—that the built environment of man is a cultural and intellectual reservoir which, on the one hand, contains and reveals its value-laden contents and, on the other hand, helps sustain and condition the form and meaning of everyday life. The built environment is here both active and reactive, a force that has an impact on the forms of daily life and a mirror that reflects the values and concerns that dominate the social life of man. With this in mind, one principal methodological inference to be drawn here is that to better understand man in society, one needs learn how to "read the landscape". (Meinig, 1979.) In learning how to "read the landscape," however, there are any number of semantic traps along the way. Many of these will be encountered in my discussion of cultural ideology, the issue of continuity and change, the question of physical environmental impact, and in other issues touched upon in Chapter Two of this study. But others also still lie hidden here in the explanatory inferences employed to uncover the meaning of the landscape.

Not the least of these inferences is the fact that in seeking to uncover the social content of the landscape I have adopted a kind of modified structuralist mode of interpretation. (Keat and Urry, 1978; Nagel, 1961; Berger and Luckmann, 1966.) Taking lead in part here from Christopher Alexander's attempt to follow the "pattern language" of the built environment to its structure ("grammar"), I have looked, as it were, for the underlying grammar of the Confucian landscape—for the rules that transcend the individual and the particular, for the structure
that worked toward a coherent whole. (Alexander, 1964, 1977, 1979.)

Even allowing for diversity of form and function, it is the conformity, the routinization, and the reification of norms, values and designs that will appear most prominently in these pages.

There are, of course, certain dangers associated with this approach. Perhaps most of all, in the description of Chinese culture or the Confucian genre de vie, the temptation to resort to Parsonian mechanisms or the jargon of "social systems" is difficult to avoid, save by some equally dangerous resort to what James Duncan described elsewhere as "superorganic" analogies and holistic paradigms. (Duncan, J. S., 1980). Similarly, it is difficult to avoid the temptation to speak of Confucian norms and values except in holistic fashion as if they were entities or forces independent of individuals. Just as Rapoport spoke of "socio-cultural forces" that constitute and shape the symbolic character of the house, so too is it tempting to speak of the Confucian ethic as if it existed apart from anyone in particular. The same is true with the landscape. As Rapoport put it, "the forms of primitive and vernacular buildings are less the result of individual desires than of the aims and desires of the unified group. . . ." (Rapoport, 1969, p. 47.) In a similar vein so too will I speak of the traditional Chinese courtyard house as a product and mirrored image of Confucian ideology.

There are several clear dangers in this approach. For one, it tends to pit issues of "freedom" and "choice" against any number of determinisms. Along the way, it also tends to reinforce a much overworked debate among social scientists about "consciousness" versus "structure." (Duncan, N., 1981.) Or, it tends to reinforce an even more
overworked debate among Marxists and anti-Marxists about structures and superstructures, and in the process tends to reinforce the so-called "dominant ideology thesis." (Abercrombie and Turner, 1978.)

Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, by emphasizing what I call "cultural ideology," this issue arises because I do not intend to focus sharply here on the "consciousness" side of the equation linking man-the-individual to man-in-society. Rather, by focusing on "ideology," I intend to stress the role of formal code, regulation and law, which is to say the role of legal or other sanction-defining institutions in society. In many respects, defined in this way, "ideology" is not only coterminous with a particular set of legal institutions or structures, but is also the intellectual, religious, social and political framework for those "structuring relations which set much of the context for action" in society. (Duncan, J. S., 1981, p.40.) Without wishing to give rise to a whole new debate about structural functionalism, by focusing on the role of cultural ideology I nonetheless wish to leave the impression that ideology is the structure,—the social and political glue—that holds society together. This is not to deny the importance of individual consciousness or choice. Indeed, it allows room for individual opinion, choice and attitude. After all, in actual practice, the codes, regulations and laws of almost all societies are open to interpretation, and even in the most rigid of political systems the issue of individual freedom of choice is defined by law as matters of responsibility and accountability. But, if the issue of consciousness and choice are not denied in the approach taken here, they are also not emphasized.
In part, I have expressly chosen this approach because it accords well with Confucianism—the ideology and with Confucian society, for the Confucian "model of man" also presented a theory that asserted the supremacy of society—the whole—over the individual, and similarly laid claim to (as well as promulgated) the notion that there is indeed a "social system" worthy of maintenance and protection. Here too the individual is seen primarily as an agent of the system, more as a transmitter than as a creator. Hence, the vocation of the Confucian individual was to live in harmony with society through a prescribed and highly ordered body of behavioral principles (li, or "proprieties").

This is not to suggest that Confucianism and structuralism are synonymous. There are, of course, important differences between the two, one of which being that structuralism presents itself as a theory or a set of theories aimed to explain society, whereas Confucianism is a cultural ideology that sought not only to explain but also to control society. Moreover, the model of man presented by Confucianism did not reduce the individual or man sui generis to a mere cog in the organism or machine of society. On the contrary, as a social ethic, secular Confucianism insisted that the individual remained fully responsible for as well as to society. Indeed, the ideal Confucian individual, the junzi or "gentleman," was no mere cog. He (and it was always a male) had often to choose between social obligations and personal preferences, between serving in office and retirement, or between conflicting commitments to society, family, and self.

Still, it would be vastly mistaken to interpret the Confucian gentleman as anything like some existential figure filled with angst and
alienation or consumed by self-realization. He was not a Job or even a
Sartre. While sharing some common ground with the philosophers Plato and
Aristotle, he had more in common with the Prophet Samuel and the Disciple
Peter, except that his was almost entirely a secular ethic and he was
also responsible to a government. As William de Bary and others
have noted in their examinations of "self and society" in late medieval
China, with all due allowances for ancient (mainly Daoist) traditions of
eremitism in China, most of the Confucian gentleman's choices—and by
extension most elites in Confucian society—were not about
self-discovery, freedom and deliverance, but rather how best to
interpret, serve and observe the codes of social responsibility handed
down for centuries. (de Bary, 1970.) In that respect, the Confucian
individual was and remains an ideal figure for structuralist analysis.

With respect to our concerns here, furthermore, such structuralist
analysis is also appropriate to Confucianism-the-ideology because both
share a common and essential historical conservatism, the one projecting
a kind of cyclical view of historical repetitions, the other a kind of
ahistoricism. In both cases, change, or at least legitimate change, is
conjugation, not revolution. In both cases, innovations or inventions
are "acceptable" only insofar as they are absorbed into the nexus of the
cultural tradition or the structure—to serve that tradition or be put
aside as mere curiosities.

Clearly, one danger in such conservatism is that it tends to give
history a kind of unforgiving and necessary look which, against the
day-to-day world of diverse and practical human activities, presents an
image of totalitarian sameness and immutability. In the case of China,
it also reinforces an already high degree of reification evident in the literature about "unchanging" Confucian society. (Wittfogel, 1957.)

Yet, such conservatism is not inappropriate to the history of Confucian China. The already high degree of reification in the literature about unchanging China and its symbolic forms exists partly because, simply stated, it presents a reasonably accurate description of traditional Chinese society. (Dawson, 1964; Wright, 1965, pp. 667-79.) Like most traditional societies, though not unchanging, Confucian China was extremely slow to change. Moreover, change in its cultural ideology was, until the modern era, virtually glacial. Momentous social and economic changes did undoubtedly occur, as in technological, commercial, and urban growth during the middle ages. (Elvin, 1970 and 1973; Hartwell, 1962.) However, the Confucian social system was able to assimilate these without fundamental ideological transformation. (Kracke, 1955; Eberhard, 1965; Gernet, 1962.) Change occurred, but again it was more in the nature of conjugation than revolution.

In part, of course, the issue of immutability is a function of how one defines "tradition." For example, it is frequently claimed that Americans have a tradition of change or mobility, hence "fashion" and innovation are essential ingredients in American culture. Whether this is true or not, the image and the concept are there to influence interpretations of American society. Whatever the reality, I would submit, the issue here is indeed the way in which we indulge historiographic analysis.

In this too, I have to some extent, at least by inference, drawn some historiographic conservatism from the material studied. That is to
say, as the central focus of this study is the traditional Chinese
courtyard house, it is first and foremost an exercise in historical
reconstruction and interpretation. In this, it derives some of its
conceptual inspiration from the heritage of historical geography,
especially that associated with the work of J. K. Wright (1966).
Similarly, it also borrows part of its method from the field of
"historical archaeology" (Deetz, 1977), and from such architectural
historians as Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980), Osvald Siren (1930, 1949,
1970), and others.

In doing so, the study shares with each of these a kind of
materialistic bias in its focus on the built and, in this case, the
architectural remains of society, while at the same time being concerned
to interpret the material conditions in light of their social and
cultural shadings. The built environment is in this regard the object of
analysis and interpretation—the independent variable about which we seek
definition and explanation from a variety of sources. By inferences
drawn from its material form, location, size and shape, the landscape
helps provide its own partial explanations.

Indeed, no small part of the approach employed in this study arises
from extensive field observations of remnant courtyard houses in the
cities of Beijing and Suzhou. During the period 1983 to 1985 (and
continuing to the present) I have explored approximately seventy large
traditional courtyard houses in these two cities, many of which had not
previously been visited by foreigners. Although they no longer provide
housing for Confucian families and, therefore, could only provide a
surrogate against which to measure meanings derived elsewhere in the literature and landscape of China, they nonetheless provided essential insight for the effort to verify the interpretations and claims of historians, anthropologists, geographers and others. Although they do not constitute in themselves sufficient material upon which to base this study, they provided an essential means for its author to better measure the complicated meaning of the courtyard house in the Confucian tradition. (The detailed rendering of the interiors of these houses will be the subject of another study.)

One advantage of this approach is that it takes notice of the fact that the organization of space or place is itself a non-verbal language the meanings of which can be analyzed and interpreted in terms of culturally and biologically conditioned behavior patterns. (Hall, 1961 and 1966.) But equally, and perhaps even more importantly, by focusing first and foremost on the built environment, a wide range of empirical data that may have escaped the attention of historians is at least potentially included. Much "history," after all, has been made by non-literate societies and illiterate peoples in historic as well as pre-historic times. Taking lead from the eclectic geographer, historian, archaeologist and folklorist, Henry Glassie, and his seminal study of Folk Housing in Middle Virginia, one can say of many different peoples that they "left no writing, but they did leave all those houses." (Glassie, 1975, p. 178.) In other terms, this is only to say that, assuming one is literate, the built environment is its own book or text from which to read. In short, by this means, we gain access to a world of vernacular traditions which, except as was sometimes recorded by
contemporary elites, might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

At the same time, however, by adopting the historian's craft we also enjoy access to the historical record and to a wide range of literature and art that allow reasonably direct access to the specific content of contemporary values, concepts, beliefs, and behavior patterns that were conversant with and that gave color to the landscape. One of the principal advantages of an historical approach to the study of the built environment is that, while the built environment itself provides empirical verifications against which to measure the chroniclers of society and with which to fill in the gaps of their mentionings, the written record, broadly conceived, provides bountiful evidence with which to interpret the meanings of the landscape. One need not be confined in this regard to the formal or official histories and chronicles of a place. Rather, if by the written record one means all manner of recording, including poetry, literature, art, as well as diaries, inventories, religious tracts and so on, then the sources of interpretation and analysis are virtually limitless. By this means too, one need not only indulge the inferential logic of behavioral scientists, or the creative guess work of archaeologists in attempting to understand the meaning of the built environment. The literature of a time speaks reasonably well for itself.

To be sure, there are any number of methodological problems associated with the use of the written, historical record for the interpretation of the built environment. For one, such records are made by and usually for elites alone. For another, the value and accuracy of any one record must be pitted against others. For still another, the
recorded intentions of a writer or a builder need not actually coincide with the perceptions and understandings of the readers and users of that which was written or built. Adding comment to Winston Churchill’s famous line, we not only shape our buildings, and our buildings then shape us, we also often engage in the process of reshaping our buildings according to meanings and uses not originally intended. No one in traditional China, at least to my knowledge, for example, ever built a si he yuan, or a temple or a garden with the intention that it might be used as a public museum.

However, of the conceptual problems associated with the historical-geographical method, two are perhaps most problematic. The first of these is the problem of historical-geographical relativity, which, if taken to extremes permits few if any comparisons. The second and more difficult problem is the historian’s and the geographer’s shared tendency to see the world in terms of spatial and temporal wholes. In part, this is simply a function of the practical need to carve space and time into digestible units—eras and places. Hence, historians and geographers impose order on time and place, just as others in society impose such order in the name of empires, kings, gods, nations, and so on, (and often with similar intentions in mind). Like the latter, these units often take on the character of living things, or "forces" independent of their creators. Thus, for example, we speak in these pages of China or the pre-industrial era as if they were "things" or "beings" which have or had an existence apart from us, often forgetting that those who lived prior to the seventeenth century in Europe or the nineteenth century in China never suspected that they were living in a
"pre-industrial era," anymore than those who lived in the "Central Kingdom," at the core of the universe, could have thought of themselves as living in a mere "China," just one nation and culture among any number of others.

In part, of course, this is the problem of intervening anachronisms, i.e., the misappropriation of historical events and terminologies. In part too, it is the conceptual problem of intervening "holisms" akin to or synonymous with the problem of structuralist determinism discussed earlier. (Duncan, J. S., 1980.) Similarly, this is also a problem of historical conservatism, a way of looking at the past and the present in the light of traditions that are somehow fixed in time and space. But most of all, this is a problem of awareness--of being aware that the units are our own, that they are useful because in the final analysis they provide a way for us to understand the past (or the present) in comparison with ourselves, that they are fixed not only in the real world of the past, but also in our own minds as central reference points for our understanding. In using them, and in seeing them in the times and places we explore, we render those times and places intelligible. In a Confucian way, we absorb them and make them relevant to our world, or otherwise render them mere curiosities when they are not. Such, I would submit, is the stuff of art or, at least, the art of history and geography.

In this, while using the language of social science--of architectural anthropology and cultural geography--and while employing the techniques and data of archaeology, history and geography, as well as those of folklorist and literary scholar, what is attempted here in the way of an explication of the traditional Chinese courtyard house is
perhaps more in the nature of art than science, more in the nature of an
essay in geographical aesthetics than geographical explanations. If so,
then at least I shall be in good company. If not, it is only because I
have not been able to convey the meaning of the Chinese courtyard house,
its landscape and ideology fully enough, or with the richness of language
and insight that Donald Meinig recently demanded of those who would seek
to indulge or explore the "art" of geography. (Meinig, 1983.)

3. Limits of the Study.

Despite such aspirations, there are of course many limits imposed on
the scope of this study. Some of these have already either directly or
indirectly been treated in the foregoing. Some of them arise out of
the body of resources that I have used. Others arise out of the simple
necessity of carving time and space into digestible units. Still others
are a function of preference.

At the outset, there is the basic issue of time-frame. What does
one mean by "traditional" China? In one popular sense, traditional China
means everything that occurred prior to the Western impact, and in
particular prior to the massive penetration of the Chinese Empire by
Western armies, missionaries, businessmen, architects and others in the
wake of the Opium Wars of 1839-40. In many ways this is as good a
designation as any, and better than most insofar as it intends to point
to the growth of an industrial society in China.

There are, of course, important exceptions to be made about that
designation, not the least of which is that Chinese traditions lasted
well beyond the mid-nineteenth century and, indeed, continue today in
China, in Taiwan, in Hong Kong, and in the many Overseas-Chinese communities around the world. Furthermore, China has long been the object of Western and other foreign attentions. The impact of foreign imports on China in the past has not been small, as in the case of Buddhism and the many early medieval fashions that, while derived of Central Asia, have long since become Sinified. (Schafer, 1963.) To be sure, it is also the case that through contact with foreign cultures many traditions have now mutated or conjugated beyond easy recognition, and what passes for Chinese tradition in some instances is an ersatz invention more suited to the tastes of Madison Avenue and Hollywood, or for that matter to the propaganda mills of Beijing and Taipei than to the demands of ancestral China. However, traditions formed through centuries of social programming die hard, and even as they die, their death throes are usually accompanied by any number of attempted revivals, restorations, or preservations.

A more problematic question about the designation of an 1840's era-divide is that it tends to exaggerate, rather than to illuminate the "changelessness" of the traditional side of the divide. In the light of the Western impact, and by reference solely to Western historical comparisons, "unchanging China" is perhaps less a "fact" than an image projected by such Western thinkers as Montesquieu and Karl Marx, aided and abetted by Jesuit-transmitted versions of the Confucian historiographic ideal of cyclical repetition. (Wittfogel, 1956; May, 1957.)
Still, whatever its faults, the 1840's divide between "traditional" and "modern" China is also more than a historiographic convenience. The Opium Wars period is a particularly appropriate divide because along with the foreign impact came the beginnings of industrialization, and with it too the seeds for such ideologies as nationalism and socialism. Perhaps ironically, Western imperialism carried with it the seeds for the destruction of all imperial ideologies. In the case of China it succeeded in bringing about the collapse of the Confucian imperial order and, with it, the death throes of the official landscape and its ideological underpinnings. If for no other reason, therefore, "traditional China" effectively ends with the mid-nineteenth century.

Unfortunately, the beginnings and evolution of "traditional China" are not so easily dealt with. With a written history extending some 2,000 years, and an archaeological history extending some additional 3,000 years into the past, the beginnings and middles of Chinese history are far too extensive to permit casual treatment. Nevertheless, for my purposes, certain objective limits are thankfully imposed by the subject under consideration. Not the least of these is the fact that, although I employ a combined archaeological and historical method, the issue of primordial origins is not of special interest here. As noted earlier, it is the social meanings, not the origins of the *si he yuan* that constitute the primary focus of this study. And, while origins and meanings are sometimes the same, they are not synonymous.

Moreover, although I will discuss various theories or views about the origins of the Confucian ideology and its landscape, as well as the *si he yuan* in primordial and early historical times, the historical
focus of attention here is more narrowly defined by the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. This is partly necessitated by the fact that few buildings, let alone si he yuan, have survived earlier periods. It is also due to the fact that the architectural literature of China (i.e., pattern books, texts on design principles, histories of particular buildings, and so on) either derive from these periods, or the available editions are limited to these periods. And, even as I draw from a literature and archaeological resource base that extends well into ancient times (as in the example of the Confucian canon), the fact remains that the bulk of the available data about the traditional built environment derives from late medieval and early modern periods. Fortunately, however, this poses few problems, for the continuity of the Chinese landscape is such that, with some exceptions, the architectural landscape of the Ming and Qing periods, including the si he yuan, is derived from and therefore highly representative of earlier periods.

In addition to historical limits, there are also some geographical limits imposed by the data and the subject. Fortunately, in the case of the si he yuan these pose few serious difficulties. Geographical distinctions as between northern, central and southern China, or coastal and inland China did play a role in the determination of the form and design, though rarely the structure, of the si he yuan. For example, southern residential compounds were often larger than those of the north, reflecting the greater importance of the extended family system and the clan in the south, as well as greater concentrations of wealth. Similarly, well into the late Qing period, southerners favored designs and decorations more befitting Ming styles. This was likely due to the
greater concentration of Ming loyalists in regions south of the Yangtze River for many decades beyond the Qing conquest. Still, for the most part, the form, structure and design (hence meanings) of the *si he yuan* remained virtually the same over space. More often than not, change in place meant differences in elaboration and execution, but not changes in meaning. Hence, the examples employed in this study arise from many regions, though perhaps most emphatically from the north and from that part of southern China lying in the Lower Yangtze Basin or Jiangnan Region.

However, as in the case of chronology, such geographical issues are also not so much an issue of accurate placement or spatial differentiation as they are issues about locational and socio-geographical contingencies. In light of these contingencies, various more problematic geographical issues arise, as in how the built environment was affected by the spread of empire, overland versus oceanic influences, the rise of particular political, economic and cultural cores, the historic tension between center and region, the spatial diffusion of ideas and things, and so on. In each of these cases, however, the geographical issues rightly converge with issues of historical context. Therefore, the constraints here are virtually synonymous with those considered earlier.

Still, of the various geographical contingencies implied here, one may be particularly relevant to this study, namely the social and economic distinction between rural and urban contexts. As will be discussed at greater length in Chapters Two and Three, this study focuses attention primarily on the residential contexts of elites, which
means a dominant, though by no means exclusive, urban focus. The principal architectural tradition treated in this study is an elite urban tradition, and cases of rural peasant homes are treated only incidentally. Fortunately, this distinction poses few conceptual difficulties for a study of China. In Confucian China, vernacular and elite residential traditions were so closely allied as to be identical save in elaboration and execution. Nevertheless, however else it might further be defined, this study is aimed toward an understanding of the social meanings of the form, structure and design of the traditional, mainly late medieval and early modern elite courtyard house in China.
CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL IDEOLOGY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Because building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs... If provision of shelter is the passive function of the house, then its positive purpose is the creation of an environment best suited to the way of life of a people—in other words, a social unit of space.

(Rapoport, 1969, p. 46)

Having a certain necessary durability, even in an age of restless change, the built environment of man is an enduring artifact of culture—a hardened depository of some of the most fundamental needs, desires, beliefs, and values of society. And, this is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the case of that quintessential architectural feature of all cultures and societies, the "typical" vernacular house.

Partly for this reason, in dealing with the form and content of late medieval and early modern European houses, Fernand Braudel added in broader, more universal terms that:

... Houses are built or rebuilt according to traditional patterns. Here more than anywhere else the strength of precedent makes itself felt... The influence of custom and tradition is always present for (the building crafts) are ancient legacies that can never be discarded... The force of tradition is ever more present in the case of country-dwellers throughout the world. To have seen a very poor peasant's house being built from its frail wooden frame in the region of Vitoria north of Rio de Janeiro in 1937 is to possess an ageless document, valid for centuries before the present day. The same applies to the simple nomad's tent: it has come down through the centuries without change, often woven on the same primitive loom as in the past.

In short, a "house," whatever it may be, is an enduring thing, and it bears perpetual witness to the slow pace of civilization, of cultures bent on preserving, maintaining and repeating.

(Braudel, 1981, pp. 266-67.)
A similar view was expressed by Amos Rapoport in his seminal study of *House Form and Culture* when he noted that:

... Primitive and vernacular buildings are distinguished by lack of change, differing in this respect from the more 'normal' historical material. These buildings are, therefore, basically non-chronological in nature. In fact, originality and innovation in primitive and vernacular buildings are frowned upon and often condemned. (Rapoport, 1969, p. 15.)

In short, the built environment of man, and perhaps most especially his residential landscape tends to change only slowly over time. It has a kind of fixity, durability and immutability which by another name we also call "tradition." To what can one attribute such continuity amidst the apparent changes of history?

1. Continuity and Change.

Immutability in the form and structure of traditional, and especially vernacular house types has typically been attributed to a number of factors, among which the physical environment figures prominently. To one degree or another, but especially insofar as the "house" is defined primarily in terms of its function as a "shelter," the physical environment has long been regarded as the principal source of continuity in the design and structure of houses everywhere. (Rapoport, 1969, pp. 18-24.)

To be sure, the natural setting into which the built environment fits obviously affects the form and structure of houses, if only because it also helps define the minimum "needs" of society. Similarly, especially in pre-industrial societies, the "stuff" of the construction crafts is, after all, largely determined by what is readily available in nature. Hence, for example, lightly fabricated, airy bamboo and thatch cottages address the needs of peasants in sub-tropical Southeast Asia for much the same reason that heavier, better insulated log cabins address the needs of the peasants.
of sub-arctic Siberia. Each resonates reasonably well with the climate and materials readily available to their respective regions. In this respect, the durability of form and the continuity of materials are easily associated with the geological time frame of natural history.

Still, climate and natural settings are only clues to the purposeful continuities of design and structure in the built environment. On the one hand, a variety of forms and structures can be found in the same or like natural settings. (Rapoport, 1969, pp. 83-103.) On the other hand, moreover, "needs" can be addressed by a wide range of "means," and it is perhaps only in the most extreme cases that the environmental argument can hold against all others. Using the examples cited earlier, if it is true that the peasants of Siberia would find the use of bamboo cottages both irrelevant and impossible to their setting, the peasants of Southeast Asia would not find log houses to be an especially irrational response to the need for shelter. With reference to traditional Chinese houses, insofar as timber is available, the structural technique is such that, as China's foremost architectural historian, Liang Ssu-ch'eng noted:

"(it) permits complete freedom in walling and fenestration and, by simple adjustment of the proportion between walls and openings, renders a house practical and comfortable in any climate from that of tropical Indochina to that of subarctic Manchuria. Due to its extreme flexibility and adaptability, (the traditional) method of construction could be employed wherever Chinese civilization spread and would effectively shelter occupants from the elements however diverse they might be. (Liang, 1984, p. 8.)"

In short, the continuity of building materials and forms are conditioned not only by nature and the availability of certain materials, but also and often more importantly by other considerations, not the least of which are those associated with technology.
That continuity (and change) in house form and structure is partly a function of technology is also perhaps self-evident. In part, this is a question of the tools of the extractive industries and the building trades. Relatively simple devices such as the wooden dowel, the iron nail, the corbel bracket, the hinge, the door jamb, fired brick, glaze, the double-bladed axe, the two-man saw, the level, and so on have all shaped the continuity (and change) of building form and structure. Similarly, the ways in which roof is attached to wall, whether the ceiling is barrel-vaulted or not, the degree of roof projection and pitch, the type of flooring and whether the floor is suspended and attached or simply acts as foundation, the number and size of windows and other openings, and so on are not only matters of style or taste, but also of mathematical calculation dependent on techniques of precision measurement that have persisted for centuries.

Once customary, such devices and building techniques also have a way of enduring and lending form to the built environment well beyond their immediate practical necessity and origin. For example, the longitudinal corrugated tile roof of many traditional Chinese buildings can probably be traced to the primordial use of split bamboo, laid longitudinally in alternate convex and concave rows providing both protection from and run-off channels for rain. As one can see from the miniature clay tomb houses of the Han Dynasty (B.C. 206-220 A.D.), the tiled version of this roofing technique is itself one of the oldest features of Chinese architecture. (Needham, 1971, p. 134; Liang, 1984, p.26-30.) Though only speculation, one can perhaps also surmise that herein may be the reason why, typically, traditional Chinese buildings lack gutters and downspouts, and rely instead on extended roof overhangs for protection against inclement weather.
Craft Schools and Handbooks.

Such continuity of building form and structure is here also largely determined by the means whereby craft knowledge and skills (technology) are passed from one generation to the next, giving rise to craft traditions that become customary. For the most part, in pre-industrial societies, this meant learning through apprenticeship, the basic goal of which was replication. Indeed, if, as Rapoport notes, "originality and innovation in primitive and vernacular buildings are frowned upon and often condemned," the reason is at least partly associated with primitive, ancient and medieval pedagogic methods. Learning from a "master" was learning by rote and by schooled replications. In China, for example, as Su Gin-djih described it:

Architects. . .were master builders trained and raised through years of apprenticeship, by memory work and practising the rules of the treatise. They belonged to individual groups and their skill was taught to them by masters, and they in turn imparted their knowledge to their own apprentices. To join one of the guilds, they had to go through elaborate ceremonies and years of labour without payment. They had also to serve as attendants to their masters. (Su Gin-djih, 1964, p.131.)

This relationship between "master" and "student" not only entailed a relation of "superior and subordinate," but also "teacher" and "disciple," often cast in enduring, quasi-familial bonds extending through generations, clans, and guilds, encompassing all such disciples into an extended craft-school family. Hence, for example, it was and to some extent remains the case in China that the master was known as shufu (literally, "book father"). Next to the biological family itself, one of the most important categories of social identification was known as tongxue (literally, "of the same schooling"). Innovation or change would, in these circumstances, be tantamount to a cataclysmic irruption in kinship ties.
Not until long after the invention of the printing press, and the wider dissemination of craft handbooks would apprenticed replication diminish as the only mode for the transmission of craft knowledge and skill. Even then, craft traditions died hard. Indeed, since the earliest handbooks served to strengthen and expand the influence of particular craft techniques (and masters, or schools), they also served to promote the greater continuity and ossification of building form and structure.

One of the earliest examples of a detailed craft handbook in world history can be found in China. Three centuries before anything of its kind can be found in Europe, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi* ("Treatise on Construction Methods"), was written by Li Jie about 1100 A.D. and printed three years later. An extraordinarily detailed official compilation and synthesis of oral craft traditions and practices garnered by Li Jie for use by the Song Dynasty Bureau of Imperial Sacrifices and the Directorate of Buildings and Construction, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi* became the *sine qua non* of handbooks for the construction of offices, palaces, gates, gate-towers, ancestral temples, Buddhist temples and, by extension, virtually all elite, urban residences and buildings. (Needham, 1971, pp. 84, 107; Liang, 1984.) For centuries thereafter, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi*, or one or another variant, such as the Qing Dynasty's *Kung-ch'eng Tso-fa* ("Structural Regulations") printed in 1734, guided the hands of carpenters, brick layers, and craft-architects to form and structure buildings throughout China. (Liang, 1984.)

**Guilds.**

Moreover, once such craftsmen were organized into craft guilds, it was also in the interest of the guild to perpetuate itself and its talents, including its schooled techniques. As John Burgess found in his famous 1928 study of *The Guilds of Peking*, craft guilds were intended to protect and...
perpetuate the professional interests of their members, as well as their economic interests. Based on his interview of the foreman of the carpenters' guild (which included house builders and wood carvers, but not furniture menders who had a guild of their own), Burgess reported that the stated purpose of the guild was not only to discourage competition and standardize wages, but also "to worship the master and thus express gratitude to the founder for originating the craft," and "to secure united good feeling and to unify the body of craftsmen." Although the "master" in this instance was the mythic figure of Lu Ban (in the traditional Confucian-Taoist pantheon of quasi-mythical quasi-historical deities, Lu Ban was the patron of all carpenters and wood-workers), by emphasizing and indeed worshipping its links with the ancient mythopoeic past, as the guild foreman put it to Burgess, the guild promoted "a sincere belief in the master, strict adherence to traditional custom, and a sense of unity among the members." (Burgess, 1928, pp.91-102.)

The "test" of the carpenters' guild's purpose as an essential arbiter of technique and structure came at the end of the nineteenth century when Western missionaries opened a school near Beijing to train carpenters in the methods of constructing foreign houses and buildings. As demand for the latter increased during the early twentieth century, the carpenters' guild had to adapt to its methods. But, in the process too the guild's very existence was threatened. As Gamble and Burgess noted in their detailed 1919 study, *Peking: A Social Survey*, an attempt was made to merge the carpenters' guild with that of the masons and painters to create a modern union whose link with the traditional guild would have been merely nominal, i.e., it was to be called the "Lu Ban Industrial Union." (Gamble and Burgess, 1921, 175-76; Burgess, 1928, pp. 99, 102.) As it happened, the Lu
Ban Industrial Union was apparently stillborn, perhaps testifying to the strength of traditional guilds during the 1920's. However, as traditional guilds adapted to non-traditional techniques, their raison d'etre eroded from "guild" into "union," just as their members were transformed from "craftsmen" into "workers". In the process, the form, structure and design of the built environment of China, much as in other non-Western societies, yielded to the pressures for social and architectural change.

One general lesson to be gained from this example is that building form and structure are also functions of the way social needs are defined over time and in different contexts. As Braudel showed in the case of the City of Paris, it was not until (a) the rise of an urban middle class with heavy investments in their own market and real estate infrastructures, (b) the emergence of more efficient extractive and transportation technologies, and (c) the regulatory intervention of governments concerned about the rising costs of public welfare that the built environment of Paris was transformed from a landscape of fire-threatened, wooden buildings into a landscape of fire-retardant, stone-carved and bricked edifices and tiled roofs.

(Braudel, 1981, pp.267-70.) In modern terms, it was factors such as these that gave rise to the web of technical, legal, and financial constraints on the design and construction of all buildings, epitomized today in the complex overlay of regulations found in the building and zoning codes of any modern Western city. But, in modern terms too, these codes and regulations, as well as the purposes and values they serve, have contributed to the greater, and increasingly universal homogeneity and continuity of building form and structure throughout the world. In effect, modernity generated its own traditions.
Religion.

In pre-industrial settings, although the purposes and values served may differ, much the same can also be found in ancient and imperial building practices and regulations. Since the beginnings of organized society, for example, building regulations have been promulgated to serve religio-political interests. Perhaps, as Yi-fu Tuan exhorted, "the world, to be livable, must be reconstituted to reflect the human need for privileged location and boundaries." (Tuan, 1971, p. 18.) Perhaps, as Mircea Eliade also showed, the primordial inclination to invent sacred space "implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different." (Eliade, 1966, p. 20.) Whatever the reasons, the universal result has been to create customary and official regulations about the orientation, location, structure, scale, and design of the human habitat to suit the needs and intentions of religio-political (and, by extension, social) distinctions.

Transformed into imperial palaces through the ideology of divine kingships, or shaped into the form of ziggurat, stupa, pagoda and other temple complexes through the conjurings of priestly architects, the cosmic pole-cum-center is perhaps the most universal means whereby sites and buildings are literally "set aside" and distinguished by custom and regulation as "sacred" or special and "unique." Orientations and axis focused upon and around such centers commonly convey sacerdotal and mysterious messages and meanings. (Wheatley, 1971; Tuan, 1969.) By extension, the precise location, scale and shape of the center and all structures oriented towards or away from the center convey parallel and linked sacerdotal inferences.
Such is the stuff of shamanism, sorcery, alchemy, geomancy and other traditional "proto-sciences." As shown so forcefully by Paul Wheatley in *The Pivot of Four Quarters*, the art and science of sacerdotal distinctions in space, in urban design, and in architecture in China reached monumental proportions as an imperial cult of design for all public and most urban habitats. (Wheatley, 1971.) In China too, under the general title of *fengshui* (literally, "wind and water"), the popular cult of geomancy became a highly specialized astrological, geographical, and architectural proto-science articulated through many different craft schools and handbooks. (Eitel, 1873 and 1985; Needham, 1969; Feuchtwang, 1974; Freedman, 1968; Lip, 1979; Rossbach, 1983). Together, the imperial and the popular cult defined many of the customs and regulations governing the construction of buildings. In the process too, as these and other religio-political codicies became dominant or prevalent, they reinforced and sustained the continuity of built forms and structures.

There are, undoubtedly many other factors that have, through history and in different places, either directly or indirectly influenced the continuity and change of building forms, structures and design. That traditions are shaped by climate, technology, economy, religion, and politics is itself not so much to answer a question about the relationship between the built environment and society, as to give rise to a host of other questions. For example, to what extent is the evolution and invention of technology a function of the adaptability of cultures? Do technologies reflect the willingness of societies to borrow forms and functions from others? If technology is indeed borrowed, to what extent are "alien" social values and institutions carried along as necessary extra baggage? Whether borrowed or indigenous, to what extent are built forms and structures a
function of economies of scale, costs of production, costs of labor, costs of transportation and so on? Perhaps forms and structures persist simply because repetition is the path of least price, and demolition is the path of higher cost. Perhaps forms and structures change because, once savings are introduced through new technologies, new materials, and new work forces, the path of least cost changes.

My point is not so much to answer these questions here as to note that new forms and structures often entail whole new systems of relationships in society before they too succeed in generating the continuities we identify with cultures and civilizations, the continuities which by any other name are "traditions." If the common house or, for that matter, any part of the built environment, "bears perpetual witness to the slow pace of civilizations, of cultures bent on preserving, maintaining and repeating," as Braudel testified, then this is true because all the other continuities of cultures and civilizations, including their dominant social norms, mores, needs, values, and institutions are also slow to change.

This does not mean that traditions do not change. On the contrary, it is only to say that if tradition is the grammar of culture and civilization, at least to the point where inventions or alien introductions begin and frequently even beyond that point, the principal means whereby cultures and civilizations change is conjugation. Whether one speaks of "Greater" formal or "Lesser" folk traditions, change is not so much absent as highly contingent. And, not the least of these contingencies is the extent to which tradition is itself highly segmented in time, place and by social structure.
Vernacular and Official Landscapes.

So far, in speaking of tradition, I have intended to include both Greater and Lesser traditions. (Redfield, 1953). This is mainly because most of the questions I have raised about continuity and change in society and the built environment apply equally well to both. But, no doubt, once beyond the presumed or imaginary stage of primitive communism, traditional societies were (and are) highly segmented into different social and occupational orders, if not classes of people. As a consequence, "tradition" is itself highly segmented, not only in time and space, but also by virtue of the social distinctions that arise in society. As a consequence too, the built environment is also segmented, not only into Greater and Lesser building traditions, but also into many varieties of hierarchical and parallel patterns.

In architectural terms, Redfield's classic distinction has its expression in the form of a distinction between, on the one hand, vernacular and, on the other hand, "professional" or "academic" or "grand design" tradition in architecture. Along with John Deetz, we can define this distinction in the following general fashion:

Vernacular building is folk building, done without the benefit of formal plans. Such structures are frequently built by their occupants or, if not, by someone who is well within the occupant's immediate community. Vernacular structures are the immediate product of their users and form a sensitive indicator of these persons' inner feelings, their ideas of what is or is not suitable to them. . .

Academic architecture proceeds from plans created by architects trained in the trade and reflects contemporary styles of design that relate to formal architectural orders. (Deetz, 1977, p. 93.)

Excluding so-called "primitive" buildings (on the grounds that, by definition, "primitive" societies are lacking in social segmentation), vernacular building traditions are a composite of several major factors including, to borrow from Rapoport's discussion, the emergence of
specialized crafts alongside amateur construction, a dependence on replicated models and, in that sense, a design tradition lacking in "theoretical or aesthetic pretensions," design and construction with close affinity for the local environment, a tradition that permits additive change with no premium on novelty or originality, and stylistic or aesthetic durability being handed down through generations. (Rapoport, 1969, pp. 1-8.)

Phrased differently, there are no "architects" in the vernacular tradition, only builders and craftsmen who, together with end users (often being themselves), design and make buildings according to their immediate needs and the way they have done for generations. Theoretically, the characteristics associated with the vernacular tradition are diametrically opposite those of the grand design, "academic" tradition.

However, the distinctions between vernacular and the grand design traditions in or of ancient and pre-industrial societies are also more subtle than Deetz and Rapoport imply. To be sure, there are fundamental differences between the way in which grand palaces, elite estates, castle compounds, and temple complexes were designed and built, and the way in which peasant houses were designed and built. Scale and complexity alone undoubtedly required a different order and magnitude in the organization of knowledge, skills, labor, and materials. Wealth or the power to mobilize resources over great distances and despite natural or human hazards figures prominently in this distinction. And, although peasants might, did and do rely on the aid of the specialized crafts, few kings, nobles, priests, or merchant princes actually designed and built their own homes with their own hands. The role of intermediaries in the design and construction of the princely environment is clearly one principal means by which to distinguish
the common vernacular from the more specialized grand design tradition. Nevertheless, they also shared many common features.

The grand design tradition was also slow to change and changed mainly by accretion or conjugation. To be sure, wealth and power also conferred ease of access to innovations and introductions from afar, but not necessarily a desire for or a willingness to accept such innovations and borrowings. In fact, as is pointed out below, the practitioners of the grand design tradition had their own good political reasons not to indulge in innovations. Similarly, the grand design tradition also shared affinities for nature, if often on a more grand cosmic scale than the vernacular. By virtue of its religio-political affiliations, the grand design tradition of pre-industrial societies was fraught with anthropomorphic and naturalistic symbolism attached not only to the cosmos, but also to local geomantic forces much in the same way as the vernacular.

Perhaps more importantly, although the grand design tradition entailed a host of specialized craft intermediaries, this is not to say that it employed professional "architects," at least not by the commonly accepted modern definition. Ancient and pre-industrial societies rarely had "architects" per se, any more than they had "astronomers" rather than "astrologers," or "chemists" rather than "alchemists," or "agronomists" rather than "farmers and peasants." Like most of the modern academic professions, professional architecture is mainly a latter-day product of the European Renaissance and early Industrial Revolution. Indeed, in ancient and many pre-industrial societies, except as would be synonymous with "master builder" or "master craftsman," there was no term for "architect."

In China, for example, one of the most ancient and classical terms used in connection with the work of an "architect" is jianren 匠人. But, the
meaning of the term is more accurately conveyed by the translation "master builder," or more simply, "carpenter" (the components of the character itself signifying an 'axe' inside a 'box'). Sometimes used in classical texts with reference to an official title designating an office or officer in charge of construction activities, the term would sometimes still better be translated as "foreman." Perhaps the best translation of the original term would be "artificer." Other, more archaic terms found in the Shi Jing or "Book of Poetry" (compiled sometime during the ninth to the fifth centuries B.C.) include a situ or "officer in charge of stamped earth," and a sikong or so-called "officer in charge of works," but it appears that these too were either master artisans or officers. Indeed, as Ho Ping-ti pointed out, the term sikong as found in the most ancient of shamanist oracle bone texts and early-Zhou dynasty bronze inscriptions clearly referred to "officials in charge of (royal) artisans," and was the precursor to the imperial "minister of public works." (Ho Ping-ti, 1975, p. 301.) Similarly, the modern Chinese term for the professional architect, jianzhu shi is an adaptation which, if intended to convey its modern Western denotation, still carries the traditional connotation via its literal meaning "master of construction." In common usage today, the term is also frequently used interchangeably with gongcheng shi, meaning "engineer" or literally "a master of works." In none of the traditional cases is there intended the artistic, design, and professional connotations carried by the modern term "architect." Furthermore, as will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter, where in traditional China one can find functional equivalents of architect-cum-designers, they were exclusively members of the imperial amateur elite, officials of the state who worked from a corpus of orthodox literature and law.
Although important exceptions can be found in the case of the Chinese official amateur elite (as in development of the school of jiehua or "sharp edge" painters famous for their architectural renderings), the "architects" of most pre-industrial societies were mainly craftsmen in the building trades--carpenters, stonemasons, brick layers, and so on who brought their design skills along with their trades. Organized into discrete occupational guilds which, for reasons stated earlier, often followed particular "schools" or the teachings of particular "masters," craft schools also sometimes evolved into distinctive temporal and regional "styles" based on the origins of the founding fathers or as a result of accretions over time. And, as various schools or styles developed, some came to play a dominant role partly through the greater dissemination of particular craft handbooks, and often through "official" appointments. As Su Gin-djih noted with reference to China:

The best group among the numerous guilds was usually appointed by the Emperor to be builders to the royal family. The best one before the introduction of the modern practice of the profession by the westerner, (i.e., at the turn of the twentieth century), was led by Yang Tzu Lei and his assistant Hou Liang Ch'eng, the designer, while Lee Ch'eng Kiang was the expert on 'color schemes.' There were also 27 other master craftsmen (in the late Qing Court). (Su Gin-djih, 1964, pp. 132-33, emphasis added.)

What determined the definition of a "best group" in China (or any other pre-industrial society) is itself a much variegated tale. To be sure, much depended on the idiosyncratic tastes of rulers or dynasties. Chinese Emperors, like other royalty, could and did set their own tones in architectural taste, sometimes with peculiar results. The Qian Long Emperor (1736-1795), for example, employed an Italian Jesuit priest-cum-master builder to design an extraordinarily ornate Chinese-rococo marble pleasure palace and fountained garden to be set within the grounds of his Yuan Ming
Yuan summer palace.

If Qian Long was eccentric in such things, it is nonetheless the case that Chinese rulers and dynasties differed in their aesthetic tastes. Hence, one can distinguish between the different architectural treatments of different dynasties. Qing Dynasty Emperors (1644-1911), for example, tended to the ornate in color, carvings, and other design executions, whereas those of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) were given to simpler lines, colors and decorations. The difference between the one and the other is perhaps best likened to the differences between an ornate color photograph and a stark black and white photograph, the one overflowing with information, the other more sharply defined. Similarly, as compared with the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1126), the pitch of the roofs of Qing Dynasty buildings were characteristically much steeper. Whether or not this was due to the tastes of their respective imperial occupants is difficult to say, but it is clear that the design difference was memorialized by the authors of the principal and "best" craft handbooks of their respective periods. (Liang, 1984, p. 21).

However, the definition of the "best group" of artisans and craftsmen was itself a complex affair dependent not only on the immediate proclivities of some emperor, but also on a host of other intervening criteria. As will be discussed later in this study, most important of all was the interventions of learned elites by whose criteria not only style and form were rendered approvable and "best," but virtually all other matters as well. For the moment, however, what concerns us here is not so much the criteria used to determine the "best group" of craftsmen or "best guild," but rather the fact that any group was so designated and awarded with official appointment.
In awarding the appointment of the "best group", the Emperor or king or prince succeeded in establishing or confirming an "official" form, structure and design which, translated into the built environment, became its grand design tradition. It became "traditional," moreover, not only because it was in the interest of the "best group" to sustain its imperial guild authority, but also because one of the best ways for succeeding royalty to assert their legitimacy was also to assert continuity with that which they succeeded, including the residence and design tradition of the former occupants of the seat of power. Such is one of the reasons why imperial capital cities tended to remain the same even as kingships changed. Such too is the stuff of which dynasties are made and, perhaps especially in the case of China, of which dynasties succeeding dynasties are made. More to the point of our interest here, such too is part of the stuff out of which "official landscapes" are made.

2. Official Landscapes and Cultural Ideology.

In dealing with pre-industrial societies at large and China in particular, the distinction between "vernacular" and "academic" architecture, or between Lesser and Greater building traditions is perhaps better rendered as a difference between "common" and "official," or even "informal" and "formal" landscapes. If the one refers to the houses and buildings of commoners and subjects, and the other refers to the palaces, temples and estates of rulers and elites, the distinction is also intended to imply a built environment in which elements of the form, structure and
design of both percolate or simply break through the ostensible barrier to shape one another. At the very least, in many pre-industrial settings, part of what we now refer to as the "vernacular" or "common" landscape was, in its own time, an "official" landscape because its form, structure, and design was to one degree or another determined by "official" or "formal" regulation.

By "official landscape," I mean a built environment determined partly by the regulatory acts of governments, partly by the regulations set down by formal religious codes, partly by the evolution of dominant craft handbooks, partly by the definitions employed to determine "the best group" of artisans and craftsmen, and partly by the example and arbitration of elites.

Operating together, these several influences shaped the built environment at large. In one sense, of course, their influence was more obviously felt in urban rather than in rural environments. Indeed, since governments, religious authorities, officialdom, printing houses, imperial guilds, and elites in many pre-industrial societies were together located in cities, and since regulatory authority was most effective in urban settings, the built environment of cities tended to be more "official" than not.

Whether this was the case in China, however, is the subject of some considerable debate among historians and others. The urban bias of traditional Chinese elites, and the urban focus of the imperial political system (despite the often proclaimed agrarian temperament and concerns of Confucianism and the eremitic tendencies of Daoism) is clear, but perhaps not nearly as clear-cut as in many other pre-industrial societies. Hence, for example, based on the records of elite biographies and other quantitative data mainly in the nineteenth century, William Skinner came to
the conclusion that only about a quarter of all elite families maintained an urban residence, and for the most part "China stands out among traditional agrarian societies in having an elite that was by no means predominantly urban." (Skinner, 1977, p. 267.) Similarly, as F. W. Mote noted, in the case of China, "scholars, poets, writers, and artists customarily were in public life for a portion of their lives, and hence in those years necessarily residents of cities and away from their native places. But their productive years often were the years of their private life when...they not only were not concentrated in one or two great cities in the realm, but were widely dispersed and very apt to be residing in rural places." (Skinner, 1977, p. 226.) Nevertheless, as Mote here suggested, insofar as the elite led a "public life," their lives were "necessarily" focused on cities.

In part, no doubt, this debate is resolved by the fact that distinctions between rural and urban elites or, for that matter, between rural and urban residential landscapes do not hold well in traditional China. As Skinner and others have long noted, the basic social and cultural cleavages in China were those of "class and occupation (complexly interrelated) and of region (an elaborate nested hierarchy), not those between cities and their hinterlands." (Skinner, 1977, p.269.) That is to say, even as cities were dominated by elites and officials--hence the urban landscape was more official than not--the real social and cultural distinctions in traditional China, and therefore the principal social contexts for the built environment were a function of status and official rank--not urban versus rural.

Indeed, whatever the locus of power and prestige, whether rural or urban, the point here is that the difference between vernacular and grand
design traditions is not so much a difference in innate quality or substance or locus, but rather a difference of scale and degree in the ordering of knowledge and skills, and a difference in social status, wealth and power. Part of this tradition was inherited by the modern world in the form of the social distinctions between "fine art" and "handicraft," or between "artist" and "draftsman." That is to say, the distinction with a difference here is not so much technical or aesthetic as it is social and political. In the case of China, it was mainly a difference between amateur elites and everyone else.

Amateur Elites.

In the case of pre-industrial societies, and most especially in the case of ancient, medieval and early modern China, this distinction underscored the special role of learned elites not only as arbiters of taste, but also as the essential arbiters of the social system, its formal norms, mores, beliefs, ideologies and institutions. Here, among the learned elites were the poets, philosophers, artists, priests, bureaucrats and other "amateurs" who arbitrated and determined the accepted grand design tradition and the official landscape.

As the learned elites of pre-industrial society monopolized the knowledge of writing and reading, they also held the key means whereby craft handbooks might be created, as well as disseminated. In addition, by definition, they also monopolized formal learning, hence the abstract, metaphysical and deductive reasoning that could be set to the task of designing the built environment. But, more than peasants, they also constituted the true "amateur architects" of their time. Indeed, in many pre-industrial settings and most especially in China, they projected what Joseph Levenson called an "amateur ideal" in which craft skills were not
irrelevant, but also not prized due to the lowly social status of the trades. (Levenson, 1958). Simply stated, it was their social and political status—not their technical skills, even if those be considerable—that made them arbiters. In the words of a seventeenth century commentator on the artist Guo Shu-xian who, like others of the jiehua or "sharp edge" school of painting specialized in highly detailed architectural renderings, and who was also known for his abilities with the compass, carpenter's square, water-level and plumb-line, "he was in no wise embarrassed by these instruments." (Needham, 1971, p. 106, emphasis mine.) In China, as it were, elites were artists, writers, thinkers, and administrators and, in turn, "amateurs" in the business of architectural design and construction lest they be "embarrassed."

This is not to say that they did not design the landscape. Rather, it is to say that they did not so much design the landscape, as imagine the landscape. They created aesthetic, poetic, philosophical, religious, political, and social images, ideals, concepts and ideologies which, in the hands mainly of draftsmen and the crafts (though also occasionally in the hands of scholars) became the designs employed in making the built environment. Similarly, they established the formal "schools of thought" that mediated the approved and "best" designs. Moreover, they established the formal regulations whereby society and its built environment was ordered, organized, and controlled. By such control and manipulation they determined the layout, form, structure and meaning of the official landscape.

The case of China is particularly revealing in this respect, because what might have been in other pre-industrial societies a kind of loosely federated intelligentsia linked together by common gentry or other economic
class interests was, in China, a formally organized bureaucracy, the principal means of entry to which was by formal examinations in the art of writing (calligraphy), in scholastic philosophy, and in historiography. (Miyazaki, 1976; Kracke, 1953; Hucker, 1961; Metzger, 1973.) In other words, in China, membership in and the influence of the learned elite was not a casual or accidental affair. If, like elites elsewhere, the Chinese elite shared gentry interests and sought or gained landed wealth and power, the Chinese scholar-official elite did not necessarily share aristocratic, gentry or other "class" origins. Rather, they shared and inherited intellectual, schooled, and ideological origins and interests which, once turned to power, resulted in gentry interests and status. (Fei Hsiao-tung, 1953; Chang Chung-li, 1955; Balazs, 1964.) As Ho Ping-ti showed in his study of social mobility in traditional China, it was more rank and status in the official hierarchy that gave rise to wealth and power, rather than the other way around. (Ho Ping-ti, 1962).

There will be occasion to refer to the Chinese elite in greater detail later in this study, but for the moment it suffices here to emphasize the point that elites everywhere, including China, set the tone and determined the layout of what I have called the "official landscape". This is not to say, however, that they did so arbitrarily or that they were not constrained. They were constrained not only by their own intellectual and ideological traditions and rituals, but also by the codes of behavior, mores and values of society-at-large, just as they were also constrained by the level of technology, by economic forces beyond their immediate control, and by nature. Indeed, the elites of the post-industrial world and their "official landscapes" were constrained by the impact of the vernacular.
However, as applied to pre-industrial elites, the word "constraint" is a misnomer. Unlike the learned elites of the post-industrial world, those of pre-industrial societies were not by definition trained skeptics. Placing little or no premium on innovation or eccentricity, they sought more to complement and to sustain tradition rather than to conflict with or to change tradition. Similarly, they sought, promoted and demanded unity over diversity. Intellectual and ideological contention was intended to be more resolved and concluded than encouraged and allowed to flourish. Compliance was less a matter of threat than a question of fate, the natural order of things, and acceptance. In short, what would now be considered despotic and totalitarian, or what might now be deemed to be a threat to intellectual, social, economic, and political freedom, was less a threat than a social and political norm in the pre-industrial world. The norm was "tradition," and the sources of tradition were both vernacular and elite at the same time, frequently operating in concert with one another as a singular, complementary, unified, total, and all-powerful cultural and even state ideology. That ideology, in turn, acted as the quintessential rationale for and basis of the official landscape. Such, at least, was the case in China.

Cultural Ideology

As Clifford Geertz has so powerfully and wittily removed many of the pejorative connotations of the term "ideology" from the lexicon of social science, I need not here repeat the muddied peregrinations of the word. By "cultural ideology," I mean what Geertz meant when he referred to culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and
attitudes toward life." (Geertz, 1973, p. 89.) By this too I mean what

Geertz, following Kenneth Burke, meant when he referred to ideology as a kind of "symbolic action," and when Geertz called ideologies "maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience." (Geertz, 1973, p. 208, 220.)

At the same time, however, it appears that Geertz himself could not avoid some of the more pejorative connotations of the term "ideology" when, in treating its role in politics, he too identified it closely with a symbology that indulges oversimplifications of society, which by any other name is called sloganeering. Partly for this reason, Geertz was persuaded that in "polities firmly embedded in Edmund Burke's golden assemblage of 'ancient opinions and rules of life,' the role of ideology, in any explicit sense, is marginal." (Geertz, 1973, p. 218). Hence also in his view, "it is, in fact, precisely at the point at which a political system begins to free itself from the immediate governance of received tradition, from the direct and detailed guidance of religious or philosophical canons on the one hand and from the unreflective precepts of conventional moralism on the other, that formal ideologies tend first to emerge and take hold."

However, if this view applies to the "golden assemblage" of England or France (as Edmund Burke intended), it does not apply to China. Indeed, Geertz's concept of the transition from traditional to ideological political orders is almost entirely irrelevant to imperial and modern China. The traditional Chinese political system was not only ordered by a highly reflective, self-conscious and formal set of moral, ethical and philosophical precepts, but also by an official political canon (and for that matter, slogans), which reached far into and from the depths of society.
to shape the rulers as well as the polity not only in moral and ethical terms, but also in practical matters of power, law and action.

Indeed, one difference between what Geertz meant by "ideology" and what I mean here is perhaps best summarized by this fact of political life in traditional China. The Confucian ideology was not simply a philosophy or point of view projected through a canonical code to which people were supposed to ascribe. It was codified into state law, regulation and policy to be enforced. It provided codified sanctions or punishments for infractions. And, perhaps most of all, it applied not only to those on the receiving end of the ideology, but also to those elites who generated and propagated the ideology whether they believed in or ascribed to the ideology or not. In this sense, Confucian China had more in common with the modern state and its legalistic order than first meets the eye.

Without wishing to raise the hackles of a debate over the nature of "ideology" per se, the main point here is that insofar as the imperial order projected an official, formal, practical, and largely (though by no means only) secular state-sponsored social and political ethos aimed both at legitimation and as a basis for policy or action, in my terms, it practiced a "state ideology." That it did so on the basis of a received and conceived tradition, hoary philosophical canon or the like is only to say that the ideology was an old one. Moreover, it is also to say that in taking from and giving to the inherited body of symbols and meanings in society, it was a "cultural ideology," which is to say further that if it indulged in oversimplifications (slogans) of the kind Geertz decried, it did so in large part because those oversimplifications touched an obvious and sympathetic nerve in the culture and society to which it was directed. In the case of
the built environment and residential landscape, the Confucian ideology sufficed to define and sanction the environment in ways not much different from the ways that a modern "ideology of house ownership" and a modern "ideology of house form" shape the residential landscape of modern America. That is, it did so by reference to common canonical code, and by law.

Whether the Chinese example of a "state ideology" is instructive of other pre-industrial societies is open to question. Nevertheless, one part of its geopolitical premise and religio-political symbology was not unique to China. As in other monarchies, including those of the Hindu kingdoms of India and the Hinduized states of insular and peninsular Southeast Asia, the Chinese state projected the political image and, what Geertz in reference to early Indonesia called, "the theory of the exemplary center, the notion that the capital city (or more accurately, the king's palace) was at once a microcosm of the supernatural order--'an image of...the universe on a smaller scale'--and the material embodiment of political order." (Geertz, 1973, p. 222.) The architectural expression of this image in Indonesia came in the form of:

A squared-off 'heavenly city' constructed according to the ideas of Indic metaphysics, it was more than a locus of power; it was a synoptic paradigm of the ontological shape of existence. At its center was the divine king...his throne symbolizing Mount Meru, of the gods; the buildings, roads, city walls and even, ceremonially, his wives and personal staff were deployed quadrangularly around him according to the directions of the four sacred winds.

(Here) spiritual excellence and political eminence were fused. Magical power and executive influence flowed in a single stream outward and downward from the king through the descending ranks of his staff and whatever lesser courts were subordinate to him, draining out finally into the spiritually and politically residual peasant mass. (Geertz, 1973, pp. 222-23.)
Except for the reference to Mount Meru, and certain other comments made (but not here recorded) about the castles of the Hinduized kings of Indonesia, this description also well befits the spatial ordering, architectural rendering, and metaphysical rationale of the Chinese imperial landscape. Indeed, as Paul Wheatley and Mircea Eliade suggested, the theme may well have been a broadly Asian and perhaps even primordial religio-political symbol. (Wheatley, 1971, pp. 411-76; Eliade, 1961.)

However, if the fusion of "spiritual excellence and political eminence" provided the operative rationale for the cult of the Emperor in China, it is also the case that the Chinese state ideology emphasized--through Confucian and Legalist thought--a secular ethic of social and political norms and laws. Unfortunately, there is in Western and Chinese literature some confusion (sometimes accidental, sometimes intentional) about this secular ethic, and its curious--often ambivalent, and sometimes hostile--relationship not only with metaphysics and religion as a whole, but also with the cult of the Emperor.

Sometimes such confusion is merely the result of a popular misconception about Confucianism as a religion of "ancestor worship." Sometimes too, in the minds of otherwise knowledgeable scholars, the distinction between secular metaphor and religious symbol is badly blurred by misappropriation. This can be illustrated, and at the same time I can demonstrate the difference intended here, by one example. When Paul Wheatley noted the role of the Chinese Emperor as "Son of Heaven" and mediator between Heaven and Earth, who stood at the center of the earth and from there "stabilized the people within the four seas," he chose to use a passage from the Confucian canonical writings of Meng Zi (Mencius) to
further document his point. As Wheatley put it, the role of the Emperor "in the Mencian phrase was 'to stand in the center of the earth and stabilize the people within the four seas. . . .'" (Wheatley, 1971, p.431.)

To be sure, the symbol of the Emperor as divine king at the center of the known world (i.e., in Chinese, "all under Heaven") is amply documented. Focused on the concept of tianzi or the "Son of Heaven," the imperial cult is confirmed by virtually all traditional Chinese political canon. But, Wheatley's reference to and quote from Meng Zi is misappropriated, for the original passage not only did not comment on the virtues of imperial centricity, it also comes close to saying something quite the opposite. The original text is filled with the secular ethic of the Confucian junzi (gentleman, superior man, scholar-official, or philosopher-prince), not with allusions to the divinity of the Emperor or king. And, even if one were to accept the proposition that reference here to a junzi is an allusion to royalty, the message conveyed by this passage is not altogether complimentary. In the original version the text reads as follows:

Master Meng said: A wide territory and a multitude of people is what the junzi (gentleman) desires, but not what he truly delights in. To stand in the center of the known world and regulate people within the four seas, the gentleman takes delight in this, but his natural calling does not lie here. What belongs to the nature of the gentleman is neither increased by the scale of his sphere of action, nor diminished by living in poverty or retirement. These are but allotted to him. What belongs to the nature of the gentleman are benevolence, righteousness, propriety and knowledge. . . .  (Meng Zi, Book 7, Part 1, Sec. 21, Par. 2-4; after Legge.)

Although Mencius here used a metaphor often associated with the divine Emperor (i.e., the middle of "All under Heaven" and regulating the world), in fact, the passage is anything but a declaration of faith in divine kingship. On the contrary, read properly, what Meng Zi here implies is that
the power of kings, even their cosmic power, however pleasurable, pales in significance before the innate virtues of the Confucian gentleman. Benevolence (ren), righteousness (yi), propriety (li) and knowledge (zhi) are the goals and the nature of this "superior man," not power. Nothing could be more thoroughly Confucian in attitude and ethic. It is characteristic too that there is here an implication of the tension that existed between Confucianism and aristocracy, the Confucian gentleman and the rulers. The only potentially surprising thing in this passage is that Mencius left out one of the principal virtues of the Confucian secular ethic, xiao or "filial piety," though this is much compensated for elsewhere in this classic text, and in any case generally comes under the official category of proprieties or "rites."

However, the point here is not so much that Wheatley misappropriated a passage from Mencius. Others have committed much more grievous errors in seeking to explain Confucian social theory. Rather, it is that this secular ethic was, alongside the imperial cult, the core of a traditional political ethos and state ideology. Indeed, it was massaged by the amateur elite into a formal state ideology not only by canon, but also by the establishment and maintenance of the official bureaucracy, its examination system, and a membership whose ideal (and occasional reality) was defined by the model of the Confucian junzi and his social virtues. That this "state ideology" was also a "cultural ideology" is amply evinced both by the sources from which it derived and by virtue of the fact that it employed a simple, familial symbol as the core of its rationale. Indeed, in this respect, the state ideology of China was not so much imposed upon as derived of society, the learned Confucian elite acting not only as authors of the ideology, but also
as transmitters of traditional cultural and social values.

This cultural and state ideology more than merely 'touched base' with the vernacular world of the ordinary man. At one level, of course, the social doctrine of Confucianism penetrated to and influenced the lives of what was generally known to the Chinese amateur elite in the classical language as the world of the min (literally, "common people," and carrying the connotation of the "folk") and often as the fufu (literally, "husbands and wives," denoting the common familial status, hence connoting the average man). At another level, Confucianism was, of course, also aimed to rectify the behavior of xiaoren (literally, "lesser men," meaning crude, rude, unwise or inferior).

At another level, however, the Confucians also derived part of their doctrines from the vernacular traditions of their age. This is amply verified by the texts of the Confucian canon which attest to the constant search for and attention paid to local rites and ceremonies by "The Master" and his disciples. Confucius and his students were inveterate collectors of historical (and then contemporary) local and regional customs, rituals, ceremonies and the like (all of which are meant by the term li or proprieties). They did so both by the exhaustive study of ancient texts and by what could pass under the name of the technique of participant-observation. As underscored in a discussion between two of Confucius' disciples, for example, it is reported that:

Zi Chin asked Zi Gong saying: When our master comes into any country, he does not fail to learn all about its government. Does he ask for this information, or is he given it? Zi Gong (the senior disciple) said: Our master is benign, upright, of courteous temperament, and polite, and thus gets his information. Is not the master's mode of getting information different from others?" (Lun Yu, "Analects") Bk. 1, Ch. 10, Sec.1 and 2, after Legge.)
Similarly, Confucius is himself recorded as having said with some humility (but with an implied lesson in reverence for tradition) that he was "a transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients. . . ."

(Lun Yu, "Analects", Bk. 7, Ch. 1, Sec. 1, based on Legge edition.)

Despite such humility, however, the Confucians took what they found of value in the ancient texts and in the proprieties of their time and wove them into the fabric of a social ethic and political philosophy that was intended to serve the interests of the well-run state.

Moreover, of the rites, customs and proprieties that the Confucians studied and promulgated, few were more important than those derived from the traditional practices and sacrifices surrounding "filial piety" or xiao. Here the Confucians excelled themselves in the exhaustive mining of a rich depository of folk experience, the records of the then ancient (and some mythopoeic) states, and the then contemporary experiences and views of sages and princes to elicit, report, pass judgement upon, and eventually synthesize this "data" into the corpus of what could rightly have been called "Family Law and Practice in Ancient and Modern Times: An Essential Guide for the Virtuous and Successful Ruler." Then and for millennia thereafter Confucian scholars (and their rivals) preoccupied themselves in commentaries and debates on the meaning of this corpus, giving rise to an extraordinary body of state codified laws and regulations governing virtually all aspects of social life. (Ch'u T'ung-tsu, 1961.)

In short, the Confucians and the state took the platitude of the nuclear and extended family and elevated it into a paradigm for the proper ordering of all personal, social, economic, and political relations in the past, present and future. In doing so, they were perhaps guilty of a gross
anthropological fetish—the social order being reduced to the singular
grammar of geneological hierarchy. In doing so too, they were perhaps also
guilty of ideological oversimplification of the sort decried by
Geertz—reducing the complexities of society to the simple formula and
slogan of "the five relationships and the three virtues," (i.e., the
relationships of ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder
brother and younger brother, and of friend and friend; and the virtues of
knowledge, benevolence, and fortitude as derived from one of the Confucian
canonical texts, the Zhong Yon or "Doctrine of the Middle Way").

But, whatever its faults, theirs was a paradigm easily verified by the
everyday experience of peasants and princes. Moreover, theirs was an
ideology that would come to dominate the structure of Chinese civilization
and society at least until the modern industrial era. And, it was also an
ideology that served to give the built environment of China much of its
traditional social meaning.


As noted earlier, it is the intent of this study to show that the built
environment as a whole (the landscape) and in its parts (buildings)—and
most especially the form, structure and design of the house—reveals itself
as a social and cultural institution the positive purpose of which is the
creation of a place or places within which the principal mores, values,
beliefs, and relationships in society are entertained. In one sense, no
doubt, this is only to say along with Amos Rapoport that:
Buildings and settlements are the visible expression of the relative importance attached to different aspects of life and the varying ways of perceiving reality. The house, the village, and the town express the fact that societies share certain generally accepted goals and life values." (Rapoport, 1969, p. 47.)

The landscape and its buildings thus present themselves as a kind of symbolic language filled with social meanings which, if we look closely enough, can be ascertained in their forms, structures and designs.

However, in many societies (not the least example of which is our own) this symbolic language is neither a casual or accidental affair, nor a function only of physical need, aesthetic preference or even cosmological and religious values. Rather, it is a highly structured, secular, legal, political and institutional affair governed by cultural and state ideologies which not only define the "generally accepted goals and life values" of society, but also codify, regulate, and fix them by law in society and on the land. In this sense, the landscape of social meanings is filled with the grammar of ideology, code and law.

Insofar as we look for social meanings in this landscape, few places are better suited to this end than the traditional house. This is so, if only because the home is so intimately involved with the fundamental core and structure of social life, the family. By studying the form, structure, and design of the house, we gain access to the form, structure and design of the society it houses. By extension, directly or indirectly, we also encounter many of the most fundamental values in society. And, what is more, we also encounter some of the most fundamental aspects of ideology and law as they reflect and impinge upon society and its landscape.
Still, as is already apparent, the whys and wherefores of house form, structure and design are not simple matters. Similarly, the study of those whys and wherefores is also not simple, and more especially so insofar as one seeks to uncover the layers of social meaning contained within and illustrated by the form, structure and design of the house. In doing so, therefore, some basic guidelines are necessary to the task of understanding which social meanings are most relevant.

In this respect, several cultural factors identified by Rapoport as affecting the built environment are instructive. (Rapoport, 1969, pp. 61-69). Taking some license with his definitions, these include the following five elements:

1. Some basic needs
2. Family Structure
3. Position of Women
4. Privacy and the Role of the Individual
5. Social Intercourse: Friends and Strangers

1. Basic Needs.

By basic needs I mean only to include survival, eating, sleeping, toiletry, procreation, and such other needs as are determined by the physical characteristics of men and women. Many other aspects of human and social life could also be defined as "needs" (e.g., comfort, recreation), but are more easily assigned to aesthetic "wants" of man. Furthermore, as these are basic needs, hence shared by all peoples equally, the specific forms and spaces they occupy in different societies and cultures are functions less of need than of one or another of the other factors listed here.
2. **Family Structure.**

By family structure I mean the hierarchical ordering of conjugal and extended families, the role and responsibility of family members, and the relationship between family members. Similarly, by family I also mean to include all manner of relatives, including distant kin and clans. The relevant point here is that the structure of the family has a direct impact on the form, structure and design of the house.

3. **The Position of Women.**

Although in one sense a sub-discipline of the family structure, the role of women in society both within and outside the family is sufficiently distinctive as to merit special attention as a factor contributing to the built form. Attitudes toward women on the part of men, attitudes among women about themselves, and the special role of women as child bearers and rearers each play an important role in the assignment of space in the landscape and in the house.

4. **Privacy and the Role of the Individual.**

Again, this too could be taken as but one sub-discipline of family structure, focusing on the role and responsibility of particular individuals. However, as in the case of the position of women, the role of the individual in society, especially in terms of idiosyncracy and its manifestations in the concept of privacy merits special attention as a factor contributing to the built environment even in societies not much given to individualism. Privacy may also in this respect converge with family-based concerns such that privacy is familial (as in a family compound) rather than personal (as in a private room).

This virtually captures all extra-familial relationships, including neighbors, business and professional associations, religious organizations, and so on. Similarly, it captures the distinctive issue of how strangers are dealt with in the social system and, by extension, in the built environment. The fact of social interaction also here refers to the places where such interaction occurs, i.e., the sites and buildings in which people meet—in teahouses, banquet halls, theaters, and so forth.

Taken together, these five factors constitute a fundamental, though by no means exhaustive, list of social and cultural factors relevant to house form, structure and design. Each might be examined separately or in combination, but together they constitute at least some of the main aspects of culture and society that affect and give meaning to the form, structure and design of the built environment, including houses, as well as to the laws and codes identified with that landscape. In attempting to judge which, if any one, factor is more important than another, it is necessary to keep all the others in mind. However, the extent to which one or another of these socially defined factors is more important is also a function of their cultural and historical contexts. For example, the role of the individual and the issue of personal privacy had little impact on the Chinese landscape. In fact, were it not that the issue of the role of the individual is of such interest in the West, it would pay us little to expend extraordinary efforts in searching out the impact of individualism on the landscape of China.
Indeed, although each of these aspects of culture and society affect the built form in different ways, they are themselves also the result of many different contextual elements, not the least of which is the ideological frame within which they sit—the "official" sources of meaning and sanction for the forms they take. It may be, as Geertz implied, that modern society is more conditioned by ideologies than was the entire preindustrial world. It may also be that in modern, Western, and democratic societies such ideological meanings are more loosely structured than those of most pre-industrial societies (or those of many so-called modern totalitarian states). But, the "ideology of house ownership," or the "ideology of house form" are also hardly unknown to us. (Agnew, 1981; Duncan, N., 1981.) As Dolores Hayden showed in the case of what she called "the grand domestic revolution," for example, the feminist movement in the United States had much to do with the redesign of the American home in the twentieth century. (Hayden, 1981.) Often too, "ideology" is mixed with symbol to form a kind of intuitive bond that results in aesthetic preferences with powerful social sanction, as for example in the preferences associated with the assignment of front yards and back yards to the middle class American home, and in the codes governing their proportions, layout and contents.

On occasion, the blend of ideology and symbol in ancient and modern times can also be carried to extraordinary, even absurd lengths—-one of my favorite examples having occurred during the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China (1965-75) when, for a brief period, the meaning of common traffic light signals changed to better suit the revolutionary elan, the color red coming to mean "Go" not "Stop." Such is the stuff out
of which totemic societies like that featured in the novel *The Lord of the Flies* are made or, for that matter, the stuff out of which Huxley conceived the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* based on the realities of twentieth century Fascism and Stalinism.

Whatever may be the case of modern society, in many pre-industrial societies, the bond between symbol and ideology, and the role of ideological sanction was clearly not a function of "aesthetic preference" or even perceived cosmological need, but of formal code, regulation, and law. Hence, the social and cultural aspects of the built form identified by Rapoport were not casual matters. They were sanctioned not only by social pressures, but also by punishments--often physical in nature as well as psychological and social. In the case of Imperial China, the degree of punishment relevant to the degree of infraction was also codified. Ruptures in the family hierarchy through deviant patterns of behavior, for example, were punishable not only by the family, but also by the state. Similarly, individuals or families who broke the rules of house design execution were also punished--the degree of punishment (usually public beatings with a heavy rod) being determined both by the degree of the infraction and by the rank of the head of household.

We too, of course, have similar, if perhaps less obviously violent ideological sanctions in the form of common, criminal and civil law. Indeed, our systems of legal sanction are so all-encompassing and powerful that, irrespective of any looseness in ideological meanings, it is hardly an exaggeration to claim that modern, Western society is literally determined by formal, codified, and institutionalized laws. As noted earlier, in the built environment these are seen first and foremost in the zoning codes and
building regulations of any modern city. Similarly, infractions of these codes are punishable, if not by public strokes of the rod, then by fines and possible imprisonment.

In short, ideological meanings and sanctions are contexts within which the social relations and issues identified by Rapoport are not only defined and sustained, but also enforced. They constitute the intellectual or ideational glue, as well as the legal cement that holds together each of the five elements he identified in the coherent "whole" we call the "social system," or the "culture," or the genre de vie. Moreover, in trying to unlock the social meanings of the built environment, they--together with the five elements noted here--constitute an essential key.

If then we return to the question that began this chapter, the issue of continuity and change, it will now perhaps be abundantly clear that of the various sources for the immutabilities of the traditional landscape, one of the most important is the persistence and dominance of cultural ideology and the state in the lives of people and in the management of the landscape. Hence it is that in this study I have focused first and foremost on an analysis of the official landscapes of China as the essential key to unlocking the social meaning of the traditional landscape and, in particular, the si he yuan.
CHAPTER THREE
OFFICIAL LANDSCAPES OF CONFUCIAN CHINA

In China the arrangement of space has always been governed by laws. Architecture has always been an art guided by and controlled by the state, aimed not only at organizing the environment but also at providing a frame for the social system.

Michele Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens
Living Architecture: Chinese

To advance and retire within boundaries, to have distinctions between superiors and inferiors, this is called li (proprieties).

Han Shu, 58, 3b

It is almost an axiom of Chinese architectural history that wherever one looks in the Confucian-ordered landscape the state had a direct or indirect hand in determining the design not only of imperial edifices, but also of the entire urban milieu, as well as gentry and formal religious landscapes. While such axiomatic notions are easily exaggerated, it is nevertheless true that virtually all imperial dynasties established building codes whereby even relatively common structures were limited in scale, decoration, and in the complexity of interior space. (Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, 1965, pp. 141-44.) During the Northern Song period (960-1126), for example, sumptuary regulations prohibited private individuals from having household gates more than one span wide, and only the most important personages were permitted to have gates with more than one entry such as existed in the multi-passageway gates of the Imperial City. (Gernet, 1970, p.117.)

Similarly, during the 11th century, curved roofs were reserved only for
government buildings and for families of high official rank, and such ornamentation as the terra-cotta mythical animals that adorned the ridges and eaves of official rooftops were expressly forbidden to the common people. (Gernet, 1970, p.115.)

Attention to such architectural detail was, of course, not merely a function of aesthetic preference. Rather, like other accoutrements of official rank and status, the regulation of the built environment was intended to serve the prescribed social order and to preserve Confucian social distinctions, the most fundamental of which was that between ruler and ruled or, more appropriately, between "superior" and "inferior." Hence it was, for example, that merchants—among the lowest of social orders in the traditional social hierarchy—were theoretically denied sumptuous abodes—a regulation that may well have had its most important everyday manifestation in the design and construction of high exterior walls that allowed the inward exception without sacrificing the outward appearance of compliance to and respect for imperial regulation. Similarly, no one was permitted a residence that would stand higher than the abode of the Emperor himself—a factor that obviously contributed to the low profile or "horizontality" so characteristic of the traditional Chinese cityscape. (Rasmussen, 1969, p. 7.)

It goes almost without saying that the official building codes were not always faithfully followed in practice. Few dynasties could actually enforce their building codes in every corner of the empire or without certain exceptions. Hence, detailed regulations regarding punishments for violations also noted permitted exceptions. Still, the fact of regulation is important in itself, for it testifies to the social and political importance attached even to the most minute design detail. The
fact of regulation itself testifies to the dominance of the state and its formal cultural ideology in shaping the basic forms and structures of the built environment.

Of what did these codes consist? How were they propagated and disseminated? How did they both reflect and shape the social order? And, in the case of the household landscape, how did they structure and delineate basic family law? How too did all of these codes and family law in particular come to shape the residential landscape? Although by no means an exhaustive treatment, the balance of this chapter is aimed to address these questions more fully.

1. Canonical Sources.

The building codes—indeed the landscape design codes—of traditional China were housed in a variety of canonical texts and official codes or laws. Many of their symbolic foundations can, as we will see later in this study, be traced to archaic shamanist cosmological prescriptions, to the cult of the Emperor, to geomancy and to other religio-political mysteries, including the philological mysteries of the Chinese language itself. However, whatever the symbolic origins of the built environment, the fact that the landscape was ordered and regulated by law can be demonstrated first and foremost by reference to the laws themselves. And, in this respect, the sources of the building codes can be traced most immediately to a body of particular texts.

For the sake of greater clarity here, I need only first identify what constituted the corpus of law and regulation. This included a primary set of Confucian canonical writings generally known together as the Four Books
including: the *Lun Yu* ("Analects"), *Da Xue* ("Great Learning"), *Zhong Yong* ("Doctrine of the Mean"), and *Meng Zi* ("The Book of Mencius"), most of which derive from feudal, pre-imperial or pre-221 B.C. periods, but with various accretions and changes over time as fragments went missing or were reedited.

In addition to these, other pre-Imperial texts were also part of the orthodox canonical record. Of the Confucian texts perhaps the most important was the *Xun Zi* ("Book of Master Xun"), written in the fourth or third centuries B.C. Of texts which were not necessarily Confucian in origin, but which were later incorporated into the orthodox literature we can include, for example, the *Zhou Li* or "Records of the Rites (Proprieties) of the Zhou Dynasty" which, with various fragments dating from the early to late Zhou period was compiled or recompiled in the early Han Dynasty. Similarly, among the pre-imperial texts, the *Shi Jing* ("Classic of Poetry"), and the *Shu Jing* ("Classic of History"), both of which derive partly or mainly from Zhou Dynasty or even pre-Zhou times, and both of which came to be essential ingredients in the body of official Confucian literature.

Another of these was the *Chun Chiu* ("Spring and Autumn Annals"), an early Zhou text which was considered by some to have been edited by Confucius himself. Another of similar vintage is the *Zou Chuan* ("Tradition of Master Zou") most of which is an expansion upon the "Spring and Autumn Annals," and most of which was edited in the Han Dynasty by Liu Xin.

Other Confucian canonical texts were also added as orthodox textual references. One of these was the *Li Zhi* or "Record of Rites," written mainly during the first century A.D., but with fragments drawn from pre-Han Dynasty times. The *Li Zhi* was also a synthesis of Confucian writings on the doctrine of *li* or "proprieties," and was used as a kind of standard encyclopedic reference in defining the *li* thereafter. As we will see in the
next section of this chapter, that definition was critical to the
development of Confucian social philosophy and its application to the state
and cultural ideology of China. Another text, along somewhat similar
lines, was a Confucian learning classic called the Xiao Jing or "Classic of
Filial Piety" which, being mainly a convenient synthesis of family doctrine
found in the Four Books was a tool used for generations by parents and
tutors to spread the values of filial piety to their children and students.
As the rites of filial piety were one kind of--indeed the basic form of--the
li, the Xiao Jing could also be described as a primer on family li.

While all of these canonical writings, and many others as well, define
Confucian ideology, some are more relevant than others to an understanding
of the building codes of Confucian China. Hence, for example, as Wheatley
showed, the Kao Gong Zhi or "Record of the Artificers," a pre-imperial
fragment in the Zhou Li is particularly important because it set down many
of the most elemental design principles for the ideal layout of cities and
palaces. (Wheatley, 1971, p. 411.) Indeed, the Zhou Li presents various
kinds of information on site selection, construction and layout, and is
relatively clear in its allusions to the cosmological meanings of spatial
arrangements. Similarly, the Shu Jing or "Classic of History" contains
various references to the cosmological and technical principles of urban and
palace design in pre-imperial settings. Of the texts most relevant to an
understanding of the magical and geomantic symbolisms in the landscape, the
Yi Jing or "Classic of Changes" is particularly important, as it contributed
to the design prescriptions found elsewhere in the Confucian canon and to a
variety of fengshui or "geomancy" texts that proliferated through centuries
of Daoist interpretations, applications and cults.
In addition to all of these, the orthodox histories or annals of the various dynasties, including the official geographies constituted a large part of the Confucian literature. Indeed, if the specifically philosophical texts provided a large part of the canonical ideology of design, the official histories or annals of the various dynasties also contributed something more. As Confucian pedagogy required learning from precedent, the official histories provided no end of information (hence precedential data) about how past emperors and elites conducted the affairs of society and the state, and built their environments. And, if we can now refer back to these official histories as part of the greater canonical tradition in landscape design, so too could centuries of Confucian scholars. A huge and powerful body of Confucian secondary literature thereby also grew on top of the canonical texts contributing an array of learned commentaries about the proprieties and improprieties of urban layout, palace design and execution, and so on. Although these were rarely technical in nature, hence lacking in much of what any modern architectural historian seeks, they were illustrative of required forms. Moreover, what they may have lacked in technical descriptions, they more than made up in becoming absorbed into the greater Confucian canon as orthodox literature from which future generations learned to follow.

With a few important exceptions, about which more will be said later in this chapter, however, such orthodox secondary literature was not architectural so much as it was historical. Indeed, it is mainly here that one finds an almost inexhaustible Confucian and scholastic or traditional historical-geographical literature. The learned commentaries and essays, including the primary official histories, and the official geographical sections of those histories, together with a body of specialized local
geographical writings almost unique to China, the xianzhi or "County Records" became an almost limitless corpus attached to the Confucian canonical literature as part of the cultural ideology of traditional China. But although they reveal much about the built environment and its ideology, it is not here that one finds the codes and regulations for the built environment most clearly articulated.

Rather, as in most modern political systems, the design codes were articulated most clearly in the laws of the state. In the case of Imperial China, first and foremost this meant the xiong fazhi or legal and administrative sections of the imperial histories, and more specifically the body of civil and criminal laws promulgated by the various imperial dynasties under such names as huidian ("Directory of Institutions)," lu ("Collected Statutes"), and others. Here too the codes are lacking in the fine technical detail of the sort architectural historians require. But they do serve our purposes well, because they were intended to describe the social indices most relevant to the built environment, including not only the rules and regulations of the social order that applied to the built environment, but also the punishments to be meted out in cases of infraction.

2. Law and Propriety in Confucian Society.

Long before it became identified with the state and cultural ideology of China, Confucianism was but one among a number of schools of learning, all of which competed with one another for the attentions of the feudal kings and princes of the Zhou period. In time, many of these schools were to one degree or another absorbed by Confucianism as part of its greater
worldview. With one, however, the Confucians had considerable difficulty, namely the so-called Legalists or Fa Jia. For centuries before and after the adoption of Confucianism as the central ideology of the imperial order, and well after part of the Legalist doctrine was itself absorbed into the state ideology, orthodox Confucians debated the finer points of a philosophical, moral, and political dispute with such Legalist writings as the Han Fei Zi. As a consequence, the literature of that debate provides an especially clear view of the social and political meaning of the ideology of Confucianism.

The details of this debate have been discussed at exhaustive lengths by others, and perhaps most completely by Hsiao Kung-chuan in his seminal two-volume study, A History of Chinese Political Thought (originally published in 1945-46, the first part of which is now available in an English translation by Fredrick Mote in 1979). Therefore, we need here only summarize the main points of the debate as they related in particular to the evolution first of the imperial legal system, and second to the sumptuary codes employed in the management of the official landscape.

Basically, the Confucians sought to differentiate the body of social prescriptions or "proprieties" called li from the body of "laws" called fa, which is to say, to distinguish themselves from the Fa Jia. The most often noted distinction between these two schools of thought was that whereas Confucians sought the rule of ethics and good behavioral example, the Legalists sought the rule of law and penal justice. By extension, Confucianism (especially that identified with Meng Zi) promulgated a view of man as essentially good, and having an endless capacity to learn by good example, and notably, by the example of the ideal junzi, as well as the
example of tradition or history. Legalism, on the contrary, projected a view of man as being essentially evil, requiring punishments and fear or negative inducements and positive rewards to behave properly, which is to say to comply with the order of the state.

This is not to say that Confucians thought law *per se* to be unnecessary, for as *Meng Zi* put it: "Virtue alone is not sufficient for the exercise of government, laws alone cannot carry themselves into practice." (*Meng Zi*, Bk. 4, Ch. 1, Sec. 3, after Legge, p. 165.) Rather, it is to say that the Confucians viewed penal codes to have little pedagogic value. Much like those who today oppose capital punishment—and indeed, the Confucians were opposed to capital punishment on almost exactly the same grounds—it was not that the Confucians thought that punishments ought not be meted out to offenders of the codes, but rather that punishments and rewards (negative or positive reinforcements) would not solve the problem of crime. Summed up by one second century Confucian philosopher, this distinction is clearly noted in the argument that the "law is useful to punish the evil, not to encourage the good." (Ch’u T’ung-tsu, 1961, p. 248.) In social terms, this translated further in Confucian doctrine as a philosophy of cooperative harmonies based upon the *li* (and especially on the *li* of *xiao* or "filial piety"). The Legalists, however, supported an almost Pavlovian view of society and the state closely approximating modern totalitarian ideologies. In their view, the operative term for social relations was compliance with the law.
Other important philosophical distinctions between the two schools can also be drawn. However, one of the most important of these centered around the Legalist position that virtually no one was above the law. Whereas Confucians tended to muddle ascriptive loyalties with the law, mainly to the advantage of the former, Legalists saw in this both a philosophical justification for nepotism, and worse still a feudal threat to the ruler. As the *Han Fei Zi* put it on more than one occasion, "to bend the law to suit one's relatives is considered (by the Confucians) as good behavior." (*Han Fei Zi*, 18, 4b-5a; Ch'u T'ung-tsu, p. 246.) For the Legalists, on the contrary, relatives posed one of the six principal threats to good government. Furthermore, the Legalists went so far as to declare that "order cannot be changed according to the will of the ruler; order is more important than the ruler." (Ch'u T'ung-tsu, pp. 242-44.)

Whatever sympathies the feudal princes had for the Legalists' views about punishments and relatives, one can readily discern in this last statement why the Confucians ultimately won the debate. Indeed among the important cleavages between Confucianism and Legalism, this is one of the most important not only because it helped gain the victory of Confucianism as the principal state ideology, but also because it points so clearly to the basic social meaning of the *li* or "rites" and "proprieties" that Confucianism sought to maintain. In political philosophy the differences between these two schools of thought can be summed up by saying that whereas the Legalists sought a uniform, homogeneous, totalitarian dictatorship based on a system of common law *with no distinctions*, the Confucians sought a uniform, and only slightly less homogeneous but benevolent dictatorship *based on distinctions*. Clearly, one fundamental cleavage between these two
Therein lies the most elemental meaning of the Confucian li or "proprieties." However else it may be translated, the concept of li refers at minimum to the rule of "social distinctions." Hence it was, for example, that in speaking of the li the Chun Chiu fan lu noted that the li (proprieties) "arrange the rank of the superior and the inferior, of the noble and the humble, and of the great and the small in order to distinguish between the grades of the external and the internal, the remote and the near, the new and the old." (Chun Chiu fan lu, 9, 6b, after Ch'u Tsung-tsu, 1961, p. 233.) Similarly, the Guan Zi noted that:

There is justice between the upper and lower; there is distinction between the noble and the humble; there are grades between the elders and the young. There is (a difference) in standing between the rich and the poor. The above eight are the essentials of li. (Guan Zi, 3, 13b; after Ch'u Tsung-tsu, 1961, p. 233.)

Indeed, in the most fundamental way, the definition of man sui generis in Confucian terms was the 'creature who distinguishes.' As Xun Zi phrased it: "Wherein is it that man is truly human? Because he makes distinctions . . . Hence the way of human life cannot be without its distinctions. . . ." And, as Xun Zi added with emphasis, "no distinction is greater than the social divisions. . . ." (Xun Zi, 14, 5a, after Ch'u Ts'ung-tsu, 1961, p. 232.) What were these "social divisions," and on what were they based?

As is apparent from the foregoing, the single most fundamental distinction in the Confucian worldview was also the basis for Confucian political philosophy, namely the distinction between "superiors and inferiors." But, of course, both in theory and in practice this could mean many different things, more especially if in distinguishing between
superiors and inferiors it was intended--as the Confucians did indeed intend--to establish a moral and ethical code based on that distinction. Hence it was that they seized upon the model of the family as the principal basis for the ordering of social distinctions. This is partly summed up in the concept of the so-called *wulun* or "five relationships" that figure prominently in the Confucian canonical classics, the *Zhong Yong* ("Doctrine of the Mean"), and *Meng Zi*. (*Meng Zi*, Book III, Pt. 1, Ch. 8, after Legge, 1961, Vol. 2, pp. 251-52; *Zhong Yong*, Ch. XX, 8, after Legge, 1961, Vol. 1, pp. 406-07.) The five basic social relationships as most commonly translated are thus between:

1. Ruler and Minister
2. Father and Son
3. Elder and Younger Brother
4. Husband and Wife
5. Friend and Friend

Variously interpreted by students of Confucianism in China and the West, it has long been noted that, except for the last, each of these relationships entail a superior-subordinate ranking. Husbands, elder brothers, fathers, and rulers all were linked together (common role models) as superiors, whereas wives, younger brothers, sons, and ministers were subordinate. Only the "friend and friend" relationship is often said to have been based on equality. In fact, however, taken as a whole, the *wulun* formula admits of no equalities in our sense of the term, and more correctly meant:

1. Ruler and Subject/ Righteousness
2. Father and Son/ Affection/Loyalty
3. Elder and Younger Brother/ Order
4. Husband and Wife/ Separate Functions
5. Others by rank/ Fidelity/Reciprocity
The first of the relationships set the general rule of subordination, the three familial ties set the model, and the final or fifth relationship sought to describe the ramifications of both the rule and the model in society as a whole. Hence it was that in the corpus of the Confucian canon the lessons to be drawn from these five relationships focus all attention on the meaning of subordinate rankings. The Zuo Chuan describes this in some detail. It is worth repeating one whole section of the latter in order to clarify this fundamental point. It reads as follows:

That the ruler order and the subject obey, the father be kind and the son dutiful, the elder brother loving and the younger respectful, the husband be harmonious and the wife gentle, the mother-in-law be kind and the daughter-in-law obedient—these are things in what constitute propriety (li). That the ruler in ordering order nothing against the right, and the subject obey without any duplicity; that the father be kind and at the same time reverent, and the son be dutiful and at the same time be able to remonstrate; that the elder brother, while loving, be friendly, and the younger docile, while respectful; that the husband be righteous, while harmonious, and the wife correct, while gentle; that the mother-in-law be condescending, while kind, and the daughter-in-law be winning, while obedient;—these are excellent things in propriety (li). (Zuo Chuan, III, 419-420, after Legge, Vol. 5, Pt. II, pp. 718-19.)

Simply stated, each person in his proper place and rank according to his or her relationship with superiors and subordinates as in the model of the father-son, elder-younger brother, and husband-wife relationship is what the Confucians meant when they spoke of li in society as one of the pillars of the well-run state. Hence it was, for example, that the Xun Zi noted that: “Li are the pinnacle of governing, the basis of a strong nation, the way of majesty, and the sum of merit and fame; it is by them that a king is able to acquire the empire, or without them to lose the country.” (Xun Zi, 10, 15b, after Ch’u T’ung-ts’u, p. 240.)
Eventually, the integration of social distinction and political order in Confucian philosophy witnessed the codification of the li into the lu (statutes) of the state. Once Confucianism became the official ideology of the empire (principally during the early Han Dynasty, B.C. 206-25 A.D.), law became a kind of "adjunct to ethical education." (Bodde and Morris, 1967, p. 27; Meijer, 1971, p. 7.) Moreover, in the hands of Confucian scholars at Court and magistrates in the courts, li became the basis of civil law, including family law. With various detailed changes of interpretation and application in the codes of different dynasties, the law of Imperial China was thereby thoroughly Confucianized. (Ch'u T'ung-tsu, pp. 267-79; Vandermeersch, 1985.) In turn, the law served to reinforce the social distinctions of Confucian society, including not only the primacy and rank orderings of the family, but also between and within the various occupational categories of traditional society.

3. Codes of Social Distinction.

Basically, the Confucian li established the principle of hierarchical distinctions in society, but the criteria for the hierarchy itself or rank order in society was provided by the Confucians according to the ideal construct of the junzi or "superior man" coupled with the model of the patriarchal family. In time, through centuries of Confucianized imperial codes, by means of the formal examination system, and with the establishment of an empire-wide officialdom acting as the essential arbiters of law, custom, and learning in the state, the Confucian social hierarchy became so thoroughly imbedded in the Chinese social and political order as to be
synonymous with it. As noted, the hierarchy had two basic reference points: (1) the patriarchal family, and (2) the scholar-official elite.

A. The Patriarchal Family System.

Five principal characteristics of the patriarchal family are of special interest: (1) the definition of "family," (2) patrilineal descent, (3) intra-familial hierarchy, (4) the position of women, and (5) extra-familial relationships. (Lang, 1946; Chu T'ung-tsu, 1961.)

The "family" in traditional terms meant a patrilineal descent group known as the zu in which all members shared property in common under the direction and absolute authority of the male head of household. Though rarely achieved in practice, the ideal form of the zu entailed five generations descended of one common male ancestor all living together as one joint family in a single, large residential compound, i.e., great-great grandfather together with great-great grandson. The property of the zu was held in common. Inheritance was familial (through the male line) and not individual, though individual males obtained access to more or less family resources according to the absolute authority of the head of household and to designated ranks within the joint family. All members of a zu also shared in common the male head of household's surname.

Being a patrilineal descent group, female members of the zu were classified first and foremost according to whether they were members by marriage, or by birth—but in both cases females were not complete members of the zu. All maternal relatives by marriage were outside the family as kin but not members of the zu, and of her relatives only her parents,
brothers and sisters, and their children (hence three generations) were considered to be kin. They were known as waizu or "outside the family" and accorded a status of respect but well below relatives on the male line. Females born within the family retained their zu status through life, hence upon marriage they retained their maiden name. However, since females were required upon marriage to physically separate from their zu household and join the zu household of their husband, their new familial status was akin to that of their mothers--members by marriage whose own status in the family was acquired first by virtue of the status of their husbands, and second by virtue of giving birth to sons who would enhance the zu of the father. Similarly, since females were required to move from their zu household upon marriage, they also could not inherit zu property--zu property being held inseparable and indivisible by Confucian family code and by state law.

Various attempts were made through the centuries to routinize and regularize the overall rank definition of relatives so as to maintain appropriate distinctions in behavior among different degrees of relationship. These distinctions were partly simplified into five main groups defined by codes governing the length of mourning periods and the type of cloth worn in mourning for relatives appropriate to the degree of relationship--the so-called wufu or "five clothings". (Baker, 1973, pp. 107-113.) For the sake of greater simplicity here we need only note that these five groups distinguished mainly between (1) father, (2) nuclear family members, (3) collateral relatives through the father's line of descent by seniority--hence uncles, (4) first cousins and nephews on the male line, and (5) lesser relatives. The titles of these classifications
were employed during life to distinguish degrees of relationship among relatives. However, they were made more complicated by rules of seniority favoring elders so that rank and degree of relationship within the family was also defined by number in order of age. Hence, for example, "second uncle's third son" ranked far below "first uncle's second son," and so on. The rules were extremely complicated, and varied over time according to the regulations of one or another reign period, but in all cases rank ordering within the family was maintained both by custom and by law to determine all interpersonal relations within the zu, between members of the zu and outside relatives, and between relatives and non-relatives.

Male supremacy was also maintained by custom and law so that only males could legally hold the position of head of household. When the head of household died, his first born son would normally take over (never his wife), or if there was no son or the son was too young, the next senior-most male in the collateral line would assume the post. As the Li Zhi put it: "Mother is dear, but not superior." (Li Zhi chu su, 54, 8b, after Ch'u T'ung-tsu, p. 31.) The male head of household ruled as sovereign over a familial state in which all others were not only subjects, but also subjects ranked according to seniority. The result was a familial social system in which compliance and propriety was observed in ascending order of relationship. And, although there were sanctions against improper behavior toward those ranked as juniors or subordinates, these were invariably less severe than those imposed upon subordinates who behaved improperly toward superiors. (Grosier, 1972, pp. 11-21.) The Confucian social and legal system was in this respect aimed to protect the honors due superiors, not the rights or privileges of subordinates. (Baker, 1979.) In theory and in
practice this meant that whatever benefits might arise from rank, the obligation chain could become particularly oppressive to certain groups within the zu, notably children and women.

In Confucian theory and imperial law, parents and in particular fathers were virtual "god-like" figures to be obeyed in all respects. Their very names were taboo, so that a child referring to his or her parent was required to use honorific titles. Similarly, in pronouncing or writing out any word containing the parent's name, the child was required to both mispronounce the word and leave out several key strokes in the character representing that word. Hence it was, for example, in the great eighteenth century novel Hong Lou Meng ("Dream of the Red Chamber"), that the tutor of the girl Lin Tai-yu, upon discovering that her mother's maiden name was Jia Min, exclaimed with complete understanding that: "No wonder my pupil always pronounces min as mi and writes it with one or two strokes missing." (Cao Xuejin and Kao Ngo, 1791; 1978 edition, Vol. I, p. 31.)

Similarly, parents held the authority of life and death over their children, suffering only light penalties for beating or killing sons charged with unfilial behavior, and little or no penalty for beating or killing daughters. In general, from the Tang Dynasty through the Qing, unfilial behavior was deemed a serious state crime punishable by beating, banishment to the frontier provinces, or death. The grounds for such a charge included an act of prosecuting or cursing one's grandparents or parents (punishable by death), refusing to live with grandparents or parents and seeking to separate one's property from theirs, the failure to support one's grandparents or parents, marrying, entertaining, or otherwise ceasing to observe appropriate mourning before the end of the required period,
concealing one's parent's death, and falsely announcing the death of one's grandparents or parents. Insofar as the head of household was unable to punish such behavior or discipline an unfilial son or grandson, the latter could be denounced to the state and, at the request of a parent or grandparent, the state would automatically impose relevant punishments. In most dynastic periods, a parent (father, widowed mother, grandfather, or widowed grandmother) need only request that the state beat, banish, or put to death an errant son and, irrespective of any other more "objective" grounds, the imperial magistrate was virtually required to comply with the wishes of the parent. For children, young and old alike, life in the zu could be a sentence of penal servitude to the patriarchal dictator, his wife, and his parents. Perhaps naturally, therefore, filial behavior was the norm. Or, as Confucius put the matter:

In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose; and should they punish him, he does not allow himself to murmur. (Analects, Bk. 4, Ch. 18, after Legge, p. 34.)

Among the above mentioned grounds for unfilial behavior, one is of particular note—the charge of refusing to live with one's grandparents or parents and of attempting to separate one's own property from theirs. In part, this regulation derived from the abolishment of primogeniture as a rule of inheritance during the second and first centuries B.C., hence the replacement of the ancient and feudal social system with the imperial order. However, in this too, the law of all imperial reign periods affirmed that the zu was fundamentally an economic unit in-situ. That is to say, the zu household was a single unit across time (at least to the sixth generation).
wherein the incomes and expenses of all members were managed by the whole through the head of household (zuzhang) and his designated aides (e.g., his younger brothers or elder sons). The head of household was in charge of the domestic affairs of the zu and governed even the most minute details of daily life for all members, as well as all interaction with non-family members including marriage, friendships, and relations with the state (e.g., the payment of taxes). Ideally, and frequently in practice, whether large or small, the zu also occupied a unitary common space or household compound—a single zu in-situ coming to mean a joint family compound.

Ultimately, to be sure, in the case of large families, the zu did not actually occupy a single unit of space. Its various collateral members had separate domiciles located apart from the household of the zuzhang and, in time, sons and brothers could and did establish their own affiliated but spatially distant household compounds. Sometimes, and especially in southern China, as relatives proliferated through the extended zu system, single surname towns might emerge along with extended clans, and members of a zu might spread out to distantly removed towns and farms across the empire. Nevertheless, in such cases, the zuzhang retained ultimate authority over the management of all zu resources, including family lands, ancestral tombs and temple, family school, the payment of taxes on common zu property, and the use of rents from any such properties. And, at the same time, members of the zu within and between their designated ranks continued to owe obedience and propriety obligations to the zuzhang and their respective relatives within the zu.

If, however, the zu was divided by internal strife or competition among the sons, and in particular by virtue of the demands of younger sons, the
event was a social cataclysm tantamount to treason. Hence, in modern times, when the traditional family system came under attack, the event was altogether revolutionary. (Lang, 1946/1968, pp. 102-119.) Indeed, as Margery Wolf showed so well in her seminal study of the House of Lim in Taiwan, in modern times (1959) when the subdivision of family property had already become a norm, a family like the Lims that attempted to live by the Confucian codes was the exception. Nevertheless, for them, the event of subdivision remained thoroughly traumatic, causing all manner of intra-familial as well as extra-familial turmoil. (Wolf, 1968, pp. 82-98.) Had the Lim family trauma occurred during the Qing or other imperial times, however, such turmoil would have found resolution, if not at the hands of the zuzhang, then at the hands of the imperial magistrate. Younger sons and daughters-in-law in the imperial Confucian order had no rights of familial separation or "privacy." On the contrary, what they had were obligations which, if not fulfilled, was cause for severe punishment.

Necessarily, to be sure, in imperial times as in modern times, economic exigency, war, natural disasters and other factors played havoc with the Confucian ideal of the large, indivisible zu residing within a single household compound. Hence, in general, and partly because of the greater security and prosperity of regions south of the Yangtze River, the zu household compounds of commoners in southern China tended to be larger and more complex than those of northern China, just as wealth, the arts, high fashion and extended kin groups also tended to be more prolific in the south. (Mackerras, 1972, pp. 16-39, 54-61; Lang, 1946/1968, pp. 173-180.) With the exception of the scholar-official elite, the household compounds of commoners in northern China tended to contain fewer people, be smaller in
scale, and were seldom as elaborate as those of the south. Still, the principle of the highly structured, hierarchical, and patriarchal family was maintained throughout the land by custom, by Confucian canon, and by law. Necessarily, as will be discussed in greater detail later, this had many consequences for the organization, design and use of the human landscape, and especially that of the household compound.

B. The Scholar-Official Elite.

The family system was, as noted, the primary reference point for the Confucian ordering of society as a whole. Indeed, as Olga Lang noted in her seminal study of the Confucian family system:

The authoritarian Confucian family represented a Confucian state in miniature. "Inside the smaller doors leading to the inner apartments (of the household compound) are to be found all the rules (of government)." (Lang, 1946, p. 25.)

Society, which is to say the state, was only a somewhat more complicated zu in which the Emperor served as the head of household, and all others were subjects assigned to their places in society according to status ranks. Here too seniority (age status) played an important role. Here too all the rules of propriety applied to individuals according to their relative ranks, and as was noted earlier, it was one of the important functions of the state to enforce those proprieties not only for the society as a whole, but also for the family itself. However, there was one essential difference between the zu and its system of ranking, and that of the society as a whole. Rank status in society was also determined by occupational category and by the extent to which particular groups were
eligible or ineligible for membership in the Confucian amateur elite, the scholar-official class. Indeed, through centuries of Confucianized legal codes the whole of society was classified into ranked occupational categories, the three main clusters of which were officials, commoners, and outcasts.

Although the boundary between commoners and outcasts fluctuated over time and from one dynasty's codes to another, outcasts generally included slaves, prostitutes, entertainers, government runners, and various regionally defined groups such as the boatmen of Guangdong Province. However, what all outcasts shared in common and what made them distinct from commoners was that all were deemed ineligible to the third generation for the civil service examinations. They were thereby rendered congenitally ineligible for membership in the Confucian scholar-official elite, and were also therefore socially immobile. All other people, save the imperial family, were commoners. That is to say, commoners belonged to social categories eligible for the civil service examinations, and therefore eligible for elite status. Hence, for example, peasants, landlords, merchants, craftsmen, professional soldiers, and so on were all min or "commoners" whose rank was not determined by wealth or property, but by the fact that they were eligible for the civil service examinations, and were therefore potential recruits to the ranks of the scholar-official elite. At times, of course, the various commoner occupational categories were themselves ranked in terms of the degree to which they were close to or distant from outcast status. In general, the status of soldiers and merchants was at best open to question, and the imperial codes vacillated from one period to the next in assigning rank status to these two groups.
Nevertheless, like all other commoners, they too were generally eligible for the civil service examinations.

As has already been suggested, elite status in Confucian society was defined not by wealth or heredity, but rather by public civil service examinations. Simply stated, the Confucian elite was made up of all those who studied for, took, and especially succeeded at one or all three levels (local, provincial, and metropolitan-central) of the imperial civil service examinations. As required by the Confucian ideal of the junzi or "superior man," social superiority was a function of education, ability and merit. Hence, while social superiority often entailed landed wealth and gentry status, the Confucian elite was less an economic class than a political and intellectual rank. (Ho Ping-ti, 1962; Kracke, 1953.)

To be sure, there were exceptions to this general principle. For example, women were completely excluded from eligibility and were a special kind of outcast group—worse than occupational outcasts in that the latter were excluded only to the third generation, whereas women were always excluded, but better than occupational outcasts in that women enjoyed elite status through the status ranks of their husbands, sons, and grandsons (and sometimes through their brothers or other male relatives). Moreover, the exclusion of women had other ramifications in society as well. A family with no sons, for example, not only could not pass on the inheritance of the zu, or sustain the appropriate ancestral rites, but also was thereby excluded from the ranks of the elite. Therefore, the "borrowing" of sons through adoption became a natural and thoroughly accepted institutional response to what would otherwise in Confucian society be worse than death itself—no heirs to maintain the zu, and no sons to become officials.
Furthermore, however open the system may have been in theory, wealth obviously afforded greater opportunity for the extensive study required to prepare for the examinations--studies that involved many years of tutorials with no guarantee of success. Therefore, poor families were at an obvious disadvantage as compared with rich families in their ability to allocate resources for this purpose (i.e., one or more sons, as well as relevant monies to pay for tutors, books, and other expenses), especially as there could be no guarantee of any return on such investments or, even assuming success, no substantial return on the investment for many years--metropolitan level examinations, for example, were only held every twelve years or at imperial discretion. Similarly, despite the uniform imperial system, educational opportunities were not uniformly available in all places. As a general rule, teachers, books, private libraries, art collections and other essential means of education and training for the examinations were available in descending order from large cities, towns, county-seats, market villages, and remote settlements. Therefore, where one was born and lived necessarily affected one's functional eligibility and chances of success. Hence, while membership in the ranks of the scholar-official elite was and remained the ideal and status aspiration of virtually all commoners, functional eligibility was necessarily restricted by wealth, by time, and by location.

Partly because of such constraints, social mobility in Confucian society was also a protracted process of subtle negotiation for access to elite status or, at least, to elite perks. One consequence was a kind of cronyism wherein poor scholars and officials--often distant relatives, but also including anyone who might appear to be a good investment--were supported by rich landlords and merchants in search of the perks of elite
status and rank. Along similar lines, poor families and clans might also pool their resources to support one or another selected individual whose task it was to study for and pass one or all of the three examinations. In both cases, the advantage to the "investor" group was not necessarily obtained through corruption. Rather, by virtue of the codes of filial piety, certain relatives of anyone who obtained elite status and rank automatically obtained like status. And, although official positions could not be inherited, by custom and by law, the status perks of an official were inherited by those who had shared them during his lifetime. Although in most dynasties these relatives were restricted to the official's parents, wife, and children, it was not very difficult to expand the legal definition of such relatives by adoption, through the acquisition of additional wives, and other means.

In addition, there were also other less subtle means of access to the status perks of the scholar-official elite. For example, one not uncommon means of raising state revenues was the formal sale of degrees and ranks. This was perhaps most especially true during the Ming and Qing dynasties, but was also generally associated with fiscal emergencies when the normal tax base was insufficient to meet state expenditures. At various times in Chinese history, in short, one could purchase elite status. Although this rarely if ever entailed the purchase of an actual operational position in government, it did provide license to obtain and observe the many perks of elite status. As in all other matters of social status in Confucian society, however, the monetary as well as the social price extracted for such status was a function not only of the general category--elite--but also of the specific rank ordering that was obtained within the category.
While the Confucian scholar-officials shared a common elite status, they too were categorized by rank. In part, their ranks were determined by the levels they achieved in the examination system. Hence, the bottom rung on the Confucian ladder of success was filled by students who were in preparation for the examinations. The lowest were those who by reason of youth (or because of having continuously failed) studied for the local (county-seat) level examinations, the passage of which afforded the bare minimum qualification for official rank, but also accorded eligibility to the second or provincial level examination. The highest level was filled by those who passed the metropolitan-central examinations and received the jinshi degree, the receipt of which meant automatic appointment to a major posting such as governor of a province. Grades achieved in the examinations also provided a measure of success and rank, the top three graduates in any one examination class usually being granted seniormost positions at local, provincial, and central government levels. In short, however similar they may have been in education and training, the scholar-official elite was a highly segmented, hierarchically structured, and relatively diverse group. In turn, their status perks varied accordingly and were, like other aspects of rank in Confucian society, codified by law. As in the case of the family, rank order among the elites had many ramifications in their daily lives, and in the design, scale, and construction of their built environments, including their family homes.

The social distinctions and ranks of Confucian society were sustained and articulated by means of canonical reference and legal codes defining almost all public and many private (i.e., intra-familial) modes of living for all the people of the empire, but especially with respect to the
Confucian scholar-official elite. Hence it was, for example, that the Guan Zi maintained that:

Stipulate (men's) dress according to noble rank, control their expenditures according to their official emolument; set limits on food and drink, regulate standard items of clothing; there should be regulations for palaces and dwellings; there should be fixed numbers of domestic animals and servants; and there should be prohibitions governing the use of boats, carriages, and ceremonial vessels. While living, the distinctions apply to men's carriages and coronets, costumes and class-rankings, as to their incomes, dwellings and lands, and in death the regulations govern their coffins, shrouds, graves, and tombs. Though a person may possess worthy qualities and personal excellence, if he does not possess the rank he dare not wear that costume; though he be of wealthy family and have vast means, if he does not have the official emolument he dare not so use his money. (Guan Zi, Ch. 4; after Hsiao Kung-chuan, 1979, p. 349, ft. nt. 83.)

For centuries thereafter such constraints were also codified into imperial laws which, while varying in detail from one reign period to another, sustained the principle of social differentiation in food, clothing, kinds of transport, housing and so on. Hence, for example, during the Han Dynasty merchants were regarded as one of the lowest of classes in society and, in consequence, were not permitted to wear silk or ride horses or live in opulent estates. During the Tang Dynasty, merchants along with other commoners were allowed to wear ordinary silk, but not the fine silks of the official class. And, during the Ming Dynasty, they could wear silks of various kinds, but were not permitted to wear brocaded silk. Similarly, they were all restricted in the type and blend of colored clothing. Hence, during the Han Dynasty, commoners were required to use blue and green, whereas during the Tang period, blue, green, scarlet and purple were reserved for officials holding positions in government. Officials not in
office and commoners were not allowed to use such colors. During the Ming period male commoners could use most colors except yellow, while females were restricted to a series of colors (mainly purple, green, peach and other pastels) but were forbidden to use scarlet, blue, black, or yellow. Hats, shoes, and all manner of decoration were thoroughly regulated in this fashion down to the most minute detail of stitching, the number and kinds of knots used in tassels, types of jewelry (e.g. at no time were commoners permitted to use jade, gold or silver ornaments, and pearls were restricted to the mothers and wives of officials only), and so on.

4. Imperial Building Codes

There were, of course, also many other kinds of restrictions, among the most important of which were the codes governing the designs and elaboration of houses. The design, size, number of rooms, and decoration of houses were all regulated according to the relevant social distinctions. In part, the basic distinctions in housing can be discerned in China, much as elsewhere, by the names employed to describe the "house." According to the Qing Dynasty codes (1644-1911), for example, there were at least four different terms used with reference to the "house." These included: fudi or "noble's residence" (used exclusively with reference to the houses of the Manzhu nobility), gongshi or "official's palace," (used primarily with reference to the palace-like compounds of high ranking officials including their private offices), zhai or "official's residence-villa," (used with reference mainly to the actual residential houses of officials), and jia or "commoner's home." In addition, the term shi was also frequently used in combination
with one or another of these for emphasis. Hence, for example, a qongshi meant a mansion or palace, whereas a jiashi meant the common home.

The etymology of the terms themselves reveal the status of those who occupied such places. For example, the term gong was and remains used with reference only to palaces or mansions. As will be described in greater detail in Chapter Four of this study, the etymology of the term is closely associated with the development of the courtyard as the design model for feudal and imperial palaces, as well as official cities. Simply stated, the character gong ( 宮 ) is composed of two squares linked by an angled line over which sits a single roof--all of which is in symbolic reference to the proper ordering of society and to the rule of the Confucian elite. Only the Imperial family and Confucian elite lived in gong, though they set the example for all others.

The term for the commoner's house or jia ( 家 ) makes reference to the typical peasant household, being a roof within which dwelled a pig--the domestication of the pig being associated with the farm household as an economic unit. In time, the term jia lost much of its status-bias to become associated with the "family" as an economic unit, i.e., relatives dwelling under one roof who contribute their entire incomes to the maintenance of the unit. The common family house thus also came to be called a jiating or "household." And, by extension, all "domestic" matters came to be identified with the jia (sometimes specified as jianei or "inside the family," as opposed to jiawai" or "outside the family." But, in origin and with reference to houses, until modern times the term basically retained its loaded connotation as the abode of commoners.
The distinctions in name, however, were not merely nominal. They also involved detailed restrictions and allowances in the design, size, number of rooms and elaboration of houses according to specific ranks within society. Among those that figured most prominently, the size and the elaboration of household life styles were the most important measures of the social hierarchy.

The size of all traditional Chinese buildings was determined by the number of spaces (jian) between the principal front posts that supported the roof. House size was traditionally measured by the number of such jian, meaning that the more jian, the greater the house and, by extension, the more elevated its owner's status. Therefore, each of the dynasties established carefully defined regulations to determine the number of jian permitted the various ranks.

During the Tang Dynasty (618-905 A.D.), for example, officials from the third rank upwards were allowed to have more than five jian in a row for their houses, and a front gate with more than three jian. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the main halls in the residential compounds of first and second ranked officials could have seven jian, and a front gate with three jian. However, officials from the third through the fifth rank were allowed main halls with a maximum of five jian and front gates with three jian. Lesser officials (from the sixth through the ninth ranks) were permitted halls with a maximum of three jian, and a front gate with only one jian.

In virtually all periods, commoners were permitted buildings with a maximum of three jian, and front gates with a maximum of one jian. Hence, no matter how wealthy a commoner might become, and no matter how many houses...
he might own or how large the overall compound he and his family might occupy, no single building within the compound or owned by a commoner could exceed three jian in scale.

By themselves, such restriction obviously affected the overall scale (width and height) of any one building. In doing so, the regulations contributed to the overall flat appearance of the traditional residential landscape. Hence, as a rule, Chinese residential landscapes expanded outwards, not upwards. Moreover, it also placed technical restrictions on the number of rooms any one building could contain, and thereby (especially as families grew in numbers and wealth) also contributed to the lateral spreading out of numbers of buildings in compound form, many of which would then be linked by covered walkways or zoulang.

Obviously, wealth and power permitted extensive decoration and elaboration on basic forms. However, these too were restricted according to rank. Hence, for example, during the Tang Dynasty only officials were allowed to use tiles with animal designs. By the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.), only officials above the fifth rank could use roof tiles with animal figures—normally positioned on the roof ridge. Similarly, end beams and rafters were often decorated with colored paintings, but the colors and themes of such paintings were thoroughly restricted according to rank. In virtually all periods commoners were forbidden to paint the end beams and rafters of their houses. Likewise, the kinds of materials and decorations used for door knockers, gate insignia and so on were also similarly restricted. Distinctions were also maintained in virtually all aspects of household decoration, including daily use items such as the type of window curtains and dressings, the kind of material used to make mattresses,
comforters, seat cushions, kitchen and eating utensils, and all manner of furniture and furnishings. Similarly, the number of household servants and staff, from gatemen and maidservants to carriage attendants were all designated by regulation. In short, here as in virtually all other aspects of social life, status rank determined the Confucian genre de vie.

Violations of the codes were also severely punishable. Indeed, the maintenance of the proper distinctions by rank were so important that, whereas commoners normally suffered punishments far in excess of anything meted out to officials and scholars for the same crimes, in the case of violations of the social codes, officials and scholars received punishments well in excess of other commoners—on the grounds that they knew better and that it was, after all, one of their prime responsibilities to maintain the distinctions in society (the li). In virtually all cases, furthermore, the head of household or zuszhang was held responsible for any violations of family members.

The legal codes of almost all dynasties also fixed the penalties for violations. Officials who violated the codes were often dismissed from their posts, frequently subjected to public beatings, and sometimes banished in penal servitude to the frontiers. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, for example, an official who violated the sumptuary laws was dismissed and was given one hundred strokes by heavy rod. The laws of the Tang and Song dynasties provided that the houses, clothing, carriages, and utensils of the violator be sold. During the Yuan dynasty, such houses and other possessions would be given as rewards to informers. In various reign periods they were confiscated by the state.
To be sure, exceptions were allowed in specific cases, as the laws also provided that the members of an official's family who ordinarily would not obtain the status rank of the official were nonetheless allowed to enjoy various perks associated with that rank. Similarly, the investigation and prosecution of violators was the responsibility of particular officials who were not always or necessarily objective in their implementation of the law. Hence, violations of the law were not uncommon, a fact made evident by the frequency with which imperial governments issued edicts and new codes aimed to reinforce compliance.

Nevertheless, despite such violations, the codes emphasized the Confucian social distinctions as the ruling principle of the social and political order. And, if officials were able to circumvent or to obtain exceptions to the law, other commoners were clearly less able to do so. Indeed, one vital component of the enforcement mechanism during the Ming and Qing dynasties was that artisans, tailors, craftsmen and others who made articles for commoners (including officials) to which their status ranks did not entitle them were themselves severely punished. They, in turn, were also required by law to determine a customer's status rank in advance and to inform on any customer who proposed to violate the codes. (Ch'ü T'ung-ts'u, p. 151.) In effect, craftsmen were agents of the state.

5. Elites and Handbooks

If craftsmen were agents of the state in the sense that they were required by law to provide services exclusively according to the status ranks of their customers, they were also agents of the state-sponsored cultural ideology in that they provided an essential means for continuity in
the design and construction of the houses, carriages, clothing, jewelry and other material items in the genre de vie of commoners and elites. As noted in Chapter Two, they constituted a minimum means for the transmission and maintenance of the building traditions. They did so by reference to the Confucian canon and to the laws of the state. In addition, they did so by reference to craft traditions handed down by "schools" of apprentices which, in time, were systematized and routinized not only by state code, but also by craft handbooks, dictionaries, and encyclopedia that obtained official and elite status.

As the compilation, recording, and diffusion of imperial handbooks, dictionaries, and encyclopedia were the responsibility of the literate elite, they also represented a kind of deliberate collusion of interest between tradesmen and Confucian scholar-official elites. Indeed, they became official and elite handbooks, dictionaries, and so on less because of their content than because of their authorship, and the extent to which they were printed under the auspices of one or another imperial ministry. This was, of course, most especially true as they related to the design and construction of all imperial buildings, the handbooks for which acquired orthodox approval and official endorsement. These then became the standard imperial guides to the design of the official landscape.

Unfortunately, official craft handbooks for periods prior to the twelfth century A.D. are now either lost or mere fragments attached to later texts. Therefore, in order to discern the principal structural elements of earlier official buildings, we have to turn mainly to various pre-Confucian texts and the Confucian canon itself. For example, the Shi
Jing or "Classic of Poetry" (ca. ninth to fifth centuries B.C.) described in some detail the preparations required for the construction of a noble's house. A certain Duke Tanfu together with his wife Lady Jiang are recorded to have been looking for a suitable site to build their home. Coming to the fertile plain of Zhou, the poem notes that Duke Tanfu announced:

Here we will make a start; here take counsel, here notch a tortoise. It says 'Stop,' it says 'Halt,' 'Build houses here.'

So he halted, so he stopped. And left and right he drew boundaries of big plots and little. He opened up the ground, he counted the acres from West to East; everywhere he took the task in hand.

Then he summoned his Master of Works (szu-gong). Then he summoned his Master of Lands (szu-tu), and charged them with the building of houses. Dead straight was the plumbline, the planks were lashed to hold (the earth); they made the Hall of Ancestors, very venerable. They tilted in the earth with a rattling, they pounded it with a dull thud. They beat the walls with a loud clang. They pared and chiselled them with a faint phing, phing (sound); three hundred rod lengths (i.e., 15,000 sq. feet) all rose up. The drummers could not hold out. They raised the outer gate; the outer gate soared high. They raised the inner gate; the inner gate was very strong. They raised the great earth mound, whence excursions of war might start. . . .

(Shi Jing, after Legge, III, i, 3, pp. 437, quoted in Needham, 1971, pp. 123-24.)

Other Shi Jing poems also identify the basic form of mansion construction during the feudal period. For example, another poem speaks of the home of a noble lord as being 100 cubits or 5,000 square feet in size, with doors on the west and south, standing atop a pounded earth platform, over which stretched an extended eaved roof. The house was situated in a
courtyard, and the overall ambiance is described as "level is the courtyard and straight are the columns. Pleasant and cheerful the halls of reception, ample the living rooms, where the Lord can be at peace. . . ." (Shi Jing, after Legge, Vol. 4, II, iv, 5, p. 303, quoted in Needham, 1971, pp. 124-25.)

Although accepting such basic structural components, Confucians and other social philosophers were themselves often critical of feudal ostentation in the design and execution of noble mansions. Hence, for example, the Meng Zi speaks disparagingly of those given to such pomp and ostentation as to build mansions "several times eight cubits high, with beams projecting several cubits." (Meng Zi, Bk. 7, Ch. 34, Sec. 2, after Legge, p. 372.) Similarly, the Mo Zi ("Book of Master Mo," a fourth century B.C. classic) noted that when the sage-kings of old built their houses, their guiding principles were simply to make sure that the houses be built high enough to avoid dampness, that the walls be built thick enough to keep out the wind and cold, that the roofs be strong enough to stand snow, frost, wind, rain and dew, and lastly, "that the partition walls should be high enough to observe the proprieties of (the separate accommodations for) the sexes." As the Mo Zi noted, "these things are sufficient, and any expense of money or labor which does not bring additional utility should not be permitted." (Mo Zi, Ch. 6, 13a, after Needham, 1971, p. 125.)

Although the stringent utilitarianism of the Mo Zi was rarely followed, and although Confucian writers maintained a certain prudishness in their continuing criticism of feudal and imperial ostentation, they nonetheless accepted most of the design specifications of the classic period. They did so by canon and imperial code, and they did so by means of a host of other textual means. Among the latter, for example, one can include the sections
devoted to building and construction terminologies in such orthodox
dictionaries as the Er Ya (an etymological dictionary compiled during the
late Qin and early Han dynasties, and extensively edited and enlarged upon
during the fourth century A.D.). Similarly, various historical encyclopedia
were also written on the meanings of technical terms employed by craftsmen
and artisans. One of the best of these dealing with architectural matters
was written in the late eighteenth century by Jiao Xun, and is entitled Chun
Jing Gong Shi Tu or "Illustrated Treatise on the Plans, Technical Terms, and
Uses of Houses, Palaces, Temples, and Other Buildings Described in the
Classics." (This can be found in the collection Huang Ch'ing Ching Chieh,
Ed., Yen Jie, 1829, Xu-bian, Chapters 359-60.)

That the Confucians accepted the design requirements of tradition in
practice as well is testified by the extensive remains of funerary objects
(clay models), extant wall paintings and bas-reliefs, and other
archaeological material including some extant buildings dating back to the
Tang Dynasty. However, of the available evidence, few are more directly
relevant than the various craft and design handbooks that remain from the
medieval and late medieval records. These were generally of two kinds:
(1) those concerned with the basic layout of imperial palaces, temples, and
cities, and (2) those concerned with the actual design and technical
specifications for the construction of palaces, houses, temples, and the
like.

Of the first of these types, one can count several texts and literary
traditions as being particularly prominent. One of the most traditional of
these was ostensibly composed during the second century A.D. under the title
San Li Tu or "Illustrations of the Three Rituals," various versions or
editions of which were known to have existed up to 770 A.D. Unfortunately,
the text was thereafter lost, although a small section was apparently copied
by one writer in the late tenth century and, after passing through several
other hands, was last revised and edited in 1676. It was preserved mainly
for its liturgical and ceremonial contents, and for what remained of its
ostensibly authentic descriptions of the layouts of the imperial "cosmic
temple," the imperial "palace and apartments," and the "princely city."
(Granet, 1934, p. 178; Soothill, 1951; Needham, 1971, pp. 80-81.) Other
texts, partly based on the remnant versions of the San Li Tu, were written
along similar lines after the twelfth century. These included, for example,
the Yi Li Shi Gong ("Explanations on the Buildings mentioned in the Personal
Conduct Ritual"), written by Li Ru-guei about 1193 A.D., the Gong Shi Kao
("Study of Halls and Buildings") written by Ren Chi-yun in the early
eighteenth century, and the Miao Ji Tu Kao ("Study of the Plans of Ancestral
Temples") written by Wan Szu-tong about 1685. (Needham, 1971, p. 81.)

What all of these texts had in common was a scholastic emphasis on the
rigorously applied rules of propriety in the layout of imperial palaces and
temples. They were a kind of ritual guide to, as well as historical
summaries of, the ways in which official rites and ceremonials were to be
conducted in-situ. In that respect they were supplements to the canon
itself including not only the corpus of Confucian writings on the li or
rituals of propriety as in such texts as the Zhou Li, but also the Yi Jing
and other Daoist and magical literature. They were also of a type of
literature and art associated with landscape painting and that branch of the
latter which eventually became known as the jiehua or "sharp edge" school of
painters famous for their architectural renderings. Unfortunately for our
purposes, they rarely had much to say about the layout of buildings in terms
of the social system. But, along with other evidence, they provide
supplementary support to the effect that hierarchical order in the proper allocation and use of space was sustained as the rule for all imperial layouts.

The second kind of handbook was much more detailed in its descriptions of actual construction methods. These were more properly craft handbooks which, often compiled under the auspices of the imperial workshops, were official guidebooks to the design, structure, and actual construction of buildings. Here too, unfortunately, virtually no such handbooks for periods prior to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1126 A.D.) have survived, and only a few of the more important late medieval texts have remained intact. One of the earliest examples for which fragments survive is the Mu Jing or "Wood Classic" (or as Needham translated its title, "The Timberwork Manual"), an early Song Dynasty text devoted to carpentry.

What is perhaps most revealing about the Mu Jing is that its technical specifications pay particular attention to the relationships between the scale and design of buildings and the proportions of the human body. Hence, for example, in describing the layout and scale of the "Lowerwork Unit" (i.e., platforms, foundations, ramps, steps, paving, and so on), the Mu Jing specified that:

... of ramps (and steps) there are three kinds: steep, easy-going and intermediate. In palaces these gradients are based upon a unit derived from the imperial litters. Steep ramps are ramps for ascending (whereby) the leading and trailing bearers (of the imperial litter) have to extend their arms fully down and up respectively. Easy-going ramps are those for which the leaders use elbow length and trailers use shoulder height; (and) intermediate ones are negotiated by the leaders with downstretched arms and trailers at shoulder height. (After Needham, 1971, pp.83-84.)
Otherwise, the *Mu Jing* is indeed a "manual" of technical specifications on the size, cut, and structural frame of the woodwork used for palace construction. Indeed, as Needham suggested, the text was so technical that it was not recorded in the official Song Dynasty bibliography, most probably because it was not considered worthy of scholarly attention. However, much of the technical information in the text was soon thereafter to be included in what is perhaps the single most important architectural classic in Chinese history, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi*.

The *Ying Zao Fa Shi* or "Treatise on Architectural Methods" was written by Li Jie. The text itself was begun in 1097, completed in 1100, and printed in its official version in 1103 A.D. The author had for sometime been a junior official in the Song Dynasty's central Bureau of Imperial Sacrifices (i.e., the agency in charge of official rituals and ceremonies), who in 1092 was transferred to the central Directorate of Building and Construction. It appears that Li Jie was a protege of the great Song scholar, Shen Gua, whose own writings on architectural matters included a study of the *Mu Jing*. Although apparently himself also a practicing builder-architect, Li Jie was first and foremost an imperial official, hence a member of the Confucian elite. Therefore, his text was also accorded official, scholarly status with the further result that, in addition to becoming an orthodox classic, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi* also survived virtually intact to modern times. Indeed, although almost all printed copies of the text were destroyed when the Northern Song Dynasty capital of Kaifeng fell to the invading Jin Tartars in 1126 A.D., several copies managed to reappear in the Southern Song Dynasty capital of Hangzhou, and the text was considered sufficiently important to be reprinted from newly cut wood blocks in 1145 A.D.
Although the text was partly based on such other earlier material as the *Mu Jing*, Li Jie himself claimed that it was based mainly on his own study of the practices and orally transmitted traditions of master carpenters and other artisans. At the same time, he quoted extensively from the Confucian canon and from various medieval texts, especially on matters of terminology. The text itself was divided into several main sections: an author preface, introduction dealing mainly with terminology, a section on Rules and Regulations that constitutes the main body of the study, a chapter on accounting and management, a chapter on building materials, and a classification of the crafts. In addition, the text contained extensive drawings, diagrams, and architectural renderings to illustrate the various points made in the main body of the text. The main body on Rules and Regulations provided extensive commentary on thirteen main topics including: moats and fortifications, stonework, greater woodwork (i.e., structural), lesser woodwork (i.e., decorative), wood carving, turning and drilling, sawing, bamboo work, tiling, wall building, painting and decorating, brick work, and glazed tile making. (Needham, 1971, pp. 84-85, 91-95, 107-111.)

Perhaps ever since its appearance, the *Ying Zao Fa Shi* has been considered the classic text on traditional architecture. In modern times, however, as many of its terms and usages were arcane even at the time of Li Jie, the text has also been the subject of some considerable debate and analysis among architectural historians and other scholars. The latest attempt to render its contents intelligible to contemporary readers was made by one of China's foremost architectural historians, Liang Szu-cheng (1901-1972) in his *Song ying-zao fa-shi tu-zhu* or "Annotated Drawings on
the Song Dynasty Treatise on Architectural Methods" (Liang, 1952), and in other writings including A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture, recently reedited by Wilma Fairbank. (Liang, 1984.)

We will have reason to consider some of the more important structural elements noted in the Ying Zao Fa Shi in the concluding section of this chapter. For the moment, however, it suffices to note that the text was a standard post-twelfth century imperial reference for the design and construction of palaces and buildings of all kinds. Dynasties subsequent to the Song also produced their own versions of the Ying Zao Fa Shi, usually based on the Song original, but with occasional changes in detail. Hence, the succeeding Yuan Dynasty under Kublai Khan (1260-1368) apparently issued its own Nei Fu Gong Tian Zhi Zuo or "Codes for the Construction of Noble and Imperial Palaces" issued by the Yuan Directorate of Architecture, but it is now lost. The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) had its Ying Zao Zheng Shi or "Correct Standards for Construction," and the succeeding Manzhu empire under the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) had its Chin-ding Gong Bu Gong Cheng Zuo Fa or "Official Manual on the Methods of Construction Engineering" issued by the Qing Ministry of Works in 1726, and again in 1734 in a slightly reedited version known simply as Gong Cheng Zuo Fa Ze-li or "Structural Regulations." (Needham, 1971, p. 86; Liang, 1984, p. 18.)

In all of these cases, the texts and their design specifications had the weight both of imperial authority and elite approval. Complementing such texts, furthermore, certain specialized talents in the rendering of architectural designs also obtained the elite status of fine art. Among these one can include two of particular importance: (1) the making of miniature models, and (2) the development of the jiehua ("sharp edge")
school of painting. The first of these apparently existed as early as the fifth century A.D., and was in any case common by the eleventh century when miniature buildings became a kind of popular interior decoration. (Sickman and Soper, 1968, pp. 257, 278). It was likely in association with this tradition that the art of landscape miniaturization in the form of penjing (known in the West mainly by its Japanese pronunciation as "bonzai") became classified among the fine arts of the Confucian scholar-official elite. The second of the fine arts involved architectural renderings and landscape drawings which because of their fine line techniques and plan-like layouts were easily distinguished from the more aesthetic, less realistic norm of landscape painting. These too had their links with another kind of drawing considered among the higher sciences and arts, namely cartography, and in particular urban maps and plans. In both cases, moreover, the practitioners were not craftsman-commoners, but scholar-officials and, as members of the elite, their products obtained the status of their authors.

From amidst this panoply of official and elite literature and art, one can readily discern the main structural ingredients of virtually all imperial buildings and design layouts. For the sake of greater simplicity in later chapters of this study, these basic ingredients can be identified in the following fashion.

6. Basic Structural Components

Apart from the symbolic content and social meaning of design layouts, the officially endorsed and elite authored built environment of imperial China shared a common structural tradition. The major components of that
tradition can be discerned in the remnant landscape and in the corpus of literature and law noted earlier. They can be briefly identified as follows:

1. High perimeter walls.
2. Non-structural partition walls.
3. Courtyard enclosures.
4. Flat-horizontal profiles.
5. Pounded earth platform.
7. Post, beam and corbel bracket construction.
8. Curved roofs with extended eaves.

The high perimeter wall is one of the more obvious and outstanding structural elements of the traditional built environment of palaces, houses, and cities. As Osuald Siren noted in his 1930 study of Chinese architecture:

Walls, and more walls, constitute so to speak, the skeleton or groundwork of the Chinese community. They encircle it; they divide it up; and they dominate it more than any other structure. There is no real town in China which is not surrounded by a wall, as also appears from the fact that the Chinese use the same word, ch'eng, to designate a town and a town wall. A town without a wall is for them as inconceivable as a house without a roof. (Siren, 1930/1970, p. 6.)

Although slightly exaggerated, Siren's description is well taken. Not all towns were described in terms of their perimeter walls, as the term cheng was used mainly for local, provincial and central administrative centers, whereas market towns were also known as shi. Nevertheless, virtually all urban centers and many villages were surrounded by high perimeter walls. Furthermore, urban districts were also walled, as were urban residential compounds. In theory and in practice, the traditional urban landscape was a kind of maze of walled compounds within walled compounds. If not uniquely Chinese, the walled compound became a distinctive feature of the Chinese landscape. As Chang Sen-dou put it, "Chinese civilization was identified with the growth and spread of walled
urban centers right up to the end of the imperial era. Walled cities ... were perhaps the major landmarks of traditional China." (Chang, 1977, p.100.)

The perimeter wall, no doubt, served various purposes. Most especially during the feudal period of warring kingdoms, and in response to invasions, banditry, and rebellion, the high perimeter wall obviously served defensive functions. In addition, the wall also served cosmological and magical purposes, and was an architectural means of social distinction (i.e., as between family and outsiders). Similarly, as noted earlier, the high perimeter walls of residential compounds also served to permit greater license in the design and construction of buildings within compounds irrespective of official regulations.

The perceived importance of the wall in the design of the social landscape of China is also revealed by the fact that the term used in modern times for "architecture" (jianzhu) itself contains the latent recognition that all construction is, at base, accomplished according to the technique of wall construction. The term zhu refers directly to the process whereby walls were (and are) constructed of earth compacted and pounded in wooden frames that can then be removed to reveal a free-standing, hardened earth wall (similar to the framing used today in holding liquid concrete until it sets). At base, one could say, "architecture" is the business of constructing walls.

Whatever their origin and intended function, however, one aspect of the Chinese wall deserves particular attention. Although walls were usually quite solidly constructed of pounded earth, and were often bricked, they did not serve a structural purpose akin to the weight-bearing walls of Western
buildings. On the contrary, the walls of Chinese buildings were attached after the wooden structural frame was in place including the roof--posts and beams bearing all weight. Walls served mainly to fill in the spaces between roof supporting posts. Outside and inside walls in traditional Chinese buildings were partition walls serving no essential structural purpose, but rather acting to separate spaces into discrete modular units.

The most fundamental of these discrete units was the courtyard compound or yuan. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four, the courtyard layout had, along with its accompanying perimeter and internal walls, a cosmological meaning and a socio-political content that surpassed any specific structural function. At the same time, however, the courtyard unit served to underscore certain technical constraints on the built environment. Not the least of these was the extent to which the imperial codes encouraged and virtually demanded horizontal expansion at the expense of vertical extension. The result was that the traditional Chinese residential landscape (and indeed, urban landscape as a whole) took on a flat appearance that some three centuries ago led one famous Western commentator, de Magalhaens, to note that "whereas we build our lodgings one story above another, the Chinese build upon the same level one within another--so that we possess the Air and they the Earth." (de Magalhaens, 1688, quoted in Needham, 1971, p.63.)

Although vertical extension did occur within the residential compound, this was usually limited to two stories with the roof of the upper story being only barely visible above the outside perimeter wall of the compound. Similarly, multiple storied buildings outside residential compounds were generally restricted either to foreign influences as in the case of the Buddhist pagoda, or to special circumstances such as was the case with the
multi-storied, circular apartment dwelling-fortresses of Hakka immigrants in South China.

In short, building "upon the same level one within another" entailed a compounding of internally partitioned spaces. This, in turn, had all manner of economic, social and aesthetic consequences. For example, horizontal expansion could occur only at the expense of purchasing new land. The growth of a single family household compound, therefore, also had a kind of built-in territorial imperative and constraint which, among other things, contributed to annexations, extramural suburbanization, and a kind of internecine commercial urban and rural land dealing that was the functional equivalent of the modern-day real estate industry.

On a more aesthetic plane, the flat, horizontal structure of the traditional residential landscape did not lend itself to an emphasis on external view as a criterion for location or construction. Rather, as will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter Five of this study, considerations of view were internalized so that a thoroughly artificial, intra-compound view or aesthetic perspective was created by the internal organization of space—epitomized by the traditional Chinese garden. This, in turn, also had various social ramifications. One of those was the fact that in traditional terms the physical condition of the neighborhood beyond the compound wall was of little immediate concern to residents within the compound—contributing, on the one hand, to a disregard for the neighborhood and, on the other hand, the creation of an urban residential milieu in which rich and poor, elites and commoners, officials and non-officials lived next to one another in neighborhoods that had little or no particular or dominant class characteristic.
Vertical extension did, however, figure prominently in one respect. All Chinese buildings, regardless of scale, were built upon a platform usually constructed of pounded earth, and often (in palaces and homes of the elite) covered by brick tile or stone work. The origins of this feature appear to be deeply embedded in the mythopoeic cosmology of pre-imperial shamanism, but the platform also undoubtedly served two important structural purposes. On the one hand, it acted as a solid and flat foundation or plate upon which to build. On the other hand, it also served to raise living quarters above the damp earth and was a kind of insulation. Whatever its original intent, as is clear from the earlier quoted poem from the Shi Jing about Duke Tanfu’s new mansion, after the selection of a site, the first act of the house builder in the most ancient times was the construction of a pounded earth platform upon which would be raised the structural membranes of the building. The tradition remained precisely the same throughout imperial history and, indeed, continues in the modern-day peasant house.

Platforms could be of various heights, usually dependent on the status of their owners, though also sometimes a function of local topographical conditions. In general, only the most important official buildings and palaces had platforms more than six feet above ground. Hence, the platforms of the Imperial palaces in Beijing were anywhere from ten to twenty feet above ground, and were covered in white marble. Access to the palaces atop the platforms was provided mainly by two flanking and one central marble stairway, the middle section of which was a designated "spirit path" for the Emperor and was carved in high relief with such symbols of authority as the five-clawed imperial dragon (symbol of Heaven and of the Emperor as Son of Heaven).
Atop the platform, the principal structural posts of the buildings sat in concave stone-carved plinths. The palace or house effectively began at this point, being constructed exclusively of wooden posts, cross beams and tie beams held together by male-female/tongue and groove carved wooden fittings, corbel brackets, and by gravity. Most of the actual construction methods need not concern us here, as they are described in considerable detail by Liang Szu-cheng and others. (Liang, 1984; Needham, 1971, pp. 90-104.) With two exceptions, we need only note here that, as a result of these methods, various characteristics developed to give the built environment a distinctly Chinese character, as in the case of the upswept roof end and eave. However, two elements in traditional construction methods are of particular interest to this study.

The first of these elements is the fact that irrespective of the availability of other building materials, including those used in other ways on building sites, the structure of the traditional Chinese house, palace and other buildings was made almost exclusively of wood. Unlike other great ancient and medieval civilizations, the Chinese did not employ stone or brick in any extensive fashion until the Ming Dynasty, and even then mainly as facing material. Therefore, one is hard pressed to find any extensive use of such material even in the most monumental imperial buildings. Cut stone or brick work of the scale and kind associated with the pyramids of Egypt, the Parthenon of Greece, or the Gothic churches of medieval Europe are almost completely nonexistent in the imperial landscape of China.

To be sure, marble and granite slabs were used as facing material, were carved into balustrades, and were employed for decorative purposes. And, to be sure as well, Chinese craftsmen and technology were more than adequate to the task of using stone materials of enormous weight and scale, as is
evidenced by the use of giant boulders and cut rock as decorative elements in gardens. A long and artful tradition of stone quarrying, cutting, polishing, engraving and carving is thoroughly evident in the handicraft traditions of China, as for example in the case of jade mining. Nevertheless, except for plinths, stone was rarely used for structural purposes.

Why this was the case remains the subject of an unresolved debate among historians and others. Whatever its origins, however, it clearly contributed to one outstanding feature of the Chinese built environment—its ephemeral character. Wooden buildings (even if covered in layers of lacquer) have a notoriously short lifespan, being subject to all manner of natural degradations like dry rot and termites, as well as man-induced threats like fire. As Arthur Wright and others have suggested, the traditional Chinese urban-architectural environment thereby acquired a kind of ephemeral quality quite unlike the more permanent stone cityscapes and "eternal monuments" of Western and Middle Eastern cities. (Wright, 1977, p.33-34; Blunden and Elvin, 1983, p. 12.)

Unlike the case of Braudel's Paris, and despite the fact that medieval Chinese cities were much larger than European cities and were equally exposed to fire, the Chinese response was not to require stone, brick and tile replacements for wood as the common building materials. (Braudel, 1979, pp. 267-68). Rather, in China, as was particularly evident in the great medieval emporium of Hangzhou (with a population over one million), prudence found expression in the construction of inn-warehouses surrounded by water-filled moats for merchants and their goods. These became islands of greater security when fires threatened to engulf the rest of the city. Indeed, as Wu Zu-mu, the thirteenth century author of a book on daily life
in the Southern Song capital noted, court eunuchs, rich families and even members of the imperial family engaged in real estate speculation whereby they had large warehouses of this sort constructed in order to rent them out to itinerant merchants and to local shopkeepers, hiring out both the space and small armies of watchmen for substantial monthly payments. (Meng Liang Lu, Ch. 19, Sec. 3, p. 299; Gernet, 1959/1962, pp. 34-38.) In addition, medieval Chinese cities also often had well organized, official fire departments strategically located by district throughout the city.

Nevertheless, medieval Chinese cities were under the constant threat of fire. Despite this, however, their scholar-official managers did not require the reconstruction of Chinese cities into stone, brick or tile. And, whatever the losses suffered in fires, there appeared to have been little interest in doing so on the part of commoners or elites, one result of which was a constant rebuilding and repair of buildings. In turn, apart from keeping thousands of craftsmen well employed, this had the further advantage of reinforcing design, structure and layout traditions by constant repetition. In short, Wright and others to the contrary notwithstanding, it was not so much due to a lack of regard for permanence that Chinese cities were built of ephemeral wood. Rather, it was precisely because the favored building material was wood that there was constant need and opportunity to renew tradition in China. "Eternal monuments" can, after all, be left out in the cold as mere reminders while the rest of the landscape becomes filled with new ideas and structures. The Chinese, however, favored the maintenance of tradition by keeping the tradition alive, in use, and in constant repair through repetition.

Another aspect of the structural tradition that merits some closer attention here is the modular nature of the structure and design of
buildings. Chinese buildings were not only copies of one another, they were also themselves constructed and added to one another by simple replication of modular units. By way of analogy, the basic method of construction was akin to an old-fashioned tinker toy set with posts, lintels, brackets, and other elements being designed at specified lengths, widths, and tension-bearing strengths, all of which were prefabricated for assembly on site. Other than finishing work like lacquering, the building of a Chinese house or palace was less "construction" than assembly.

It is of this modular character that the Ying Zao Fa Shi speaks when noting that "everything depended on the standard size of the materials chosen, (for which) there are eight standard sizes of cai ("modules") determined by the type and official rank of the building to be erected. . . Thus, the height and depth of the roof, the length, curvature and trueness of the members, and the ratios of column and post heights, together with the right use of square and compass, plumbline and inkbox—all proportions and rule depends on the system of standard timber dimensions and the standard divisions of these." (Liang, 1984, p. 15; Needham, 1971, p. 68.)

Such modularity had several important ramifications, one of the most important of which was the fact that it permitted a form of structural standardization that was perhaps unique until the arrival of modern industrial architecture. Hence, once beyond the most primitive of huts and cave dwellings, all buildings in traditional China, whether palaces or common houses, temples or shops were built according to standarized modular units in scale (cai) as defined by the status-rank requirements of the imperial building codes and, by inference, according to intended uses. They constituted, in this sense, a structure akin to the modern apartment building laid on its side, extending outwards, rather than upwards.
Obviously, this alone greatly contributed to the continuity and homogeneity of the built environment. Differences between buildings were essentially differences in scale and elaboration, not in actual structure or form. The module (cai), thereby, constituted a grammatical constraint on the language of traditional architecture such that virtually all differences were merely conjugations. Hence, differences between the homes or buildings of elites and commoners were differences mainly in scale and elaboration, or more accurately, differences in the number and scale of buildings contained within their respective compounds.

In this respect too, the modularity of the built form also complemented and reinforced the modularity of the landscape itself, which is to say the compound layout of the built environment into discrete units of space defined by exterior perimeter walls and interior courtyards known in traditional (and modern) China as yuan. As will be discussed at some length in Chapter Four, the socio-political and cosmological connotations of this unit of space were many and profound. For the moment, however, it suffices for us to note, along with Needham and many others, that the yuan was the most fundamental component of the layout of the built environment of traditional China. (Needham, 1971, p. 61-62). In fact, it was so fundamental that, with few exceptions and those mainly attributable to foreign influences, no building in imperial China could be conceived without its functioning or at least figurative module courtyard compound.

7. An Official Landscape

It will now be clear that the built environment of traditional China was not a casual or accidental affair. Insofar as was humanly possible, by
reason of Confucian canon, imperial code, and design regulation, and by virtue of the highly structured system of intra-familial and social distinctions, virtually nothing in the built environment of China was left to chance.

Rather, the human landscape was almost everywhere a planned, highly structured, hierarchically arranged, and an ordered landscape, the design principles of which arose and were themselves ordered and systematized in the context of a discrete (mainly Confucian) orthodox literature and a body of imperial laws both of which extended across time and space to homogenize and unify structure, form, and meaning in the landscape. At the very least, admitting exceptions and curiosities due to foreign influences, physiographic necessity, and the odd groups such as Hakkas and riverine boat people, the built environment of China obtained a homogeneity and continuity through the official tradition that is probably comparable only to the homogeneity of the modern industrial landscape. Thus, the human landscape was almost everywhere a product of and reinforcement for the state-sponsored cultural ideology of Confucian and Imperial China. And, in that sense too, the traditional Chinese landscape--including not only imperial palaces and temples, but also the common home--was an "official landscape."

The precise cosmological, social, political, and economic meanings of the "official landscape" were themselves part and parcel of the design, structure and form of the landscape, including the landscape of the traditional house. They too were derived of the state-sponsored cultural ideology of Confucian China, and they too were not only reflected in the built environment, but were also reinforced by that environment.
While all of these meanings, symbolic and otherwise, were to one degree or another articulated in the landscape, some were perhaps more obvious and more important than others. This was perhaps especially true in the case of the traditional house, if only because the family it contained was so essential to the fundamental principles of Confucianism. Indeed, as noted earlier, it was especially true here too because the house and its household were, like the spatial units they occupied, modules within the greater social and political system of the imperial state—a kind of mini-state, bonzai-like model of the whole of society.

With this in mind, several major components of the traditional family home stand out as being especially relevant to an understanding of the social meaning of the official landscape of imperial China. Of these, two are particularly important and can be summarized most simply and diagramatically in terms of two comprehensive spatial symbols: the square and the circle.
The house is the basic cell in the organism of Chinese architecture, just as the family it houses is the microcosm of the monolithic Chinese society.


The fundamental conception of Chinese architecture arranges one or more courtyards (ting yuan) to compose . . . a general walled compound.


There is and perhaps always has been in China a vernacular aphorism to the effect that "heaven is round, the earth is square" (tian yuan, di fang). Although long noted by Western and Chinese scholars, the origins and meanings of this aphorism remain buried in the primordial dust of archaic cosmologies, or are simply unknown. (Needham, 1971, p. 73; Wu, 1963, pp.11-13, 28-45.) It is possible that the aphorism refers to nothing more mysterious than the obvious perceptual distinction between a domed sky and a flat, horizoned earth. However, if so, it is at least curious that only one part of this equation, "the earth is square," became the basis for the most fundamental design symbol and built form in the traditional political iconography and social landscape of China.
1. Spatial Symbolism and the Landscape

If there is any one most fundamental spatial element in the classical and medieval design tradition of China, it is clearly rectilinearity. Traditional Chinese cities, buildings, and houses, whatever their scale or execution, are—with one important exception—figuratively or actually squares, rectangles, or rectilinear modular boxes. The importance of this single feature can be gauged not only by its constant repetition, and by canonical reference, but also by the traditional linguistic, and indeed the primordial cosmological and symbolic identification of "squareness" (fang) with all the works of man-in-society and man-in-nature. In a Chinese version of "nature knows no straight lines," the square and the rectangle always implied the man-made environment and its social order.

The reasons for the association of this geometric form with human activity are deeply buried in the most ancient of Chinese cosmologies, perhaps so deep as to be beyond our reach. Nevertheless, its expressions are so bountiful as to be almost self-evident. For example, in the language of the most ancient of Chinese cosmologies associated with the shamanist jia pu wen (oracle bone or divination texts) of the Shang period (ca. B.C.1766-1122), the word-symbols for the human manipulation of nature in its most basic agrarian terms, cultivation and water use, are thoroughly evocative of the squareness of social action. The form of the pictographs (early characters which like any language symbolize meanings, but in their case visually so) for the words jing (井) or "water well" and tian (田) or "cultivated fields" are striking examples. Indeed, once combined in the classical (Mencian) model of the jing-tian or "well-field" system, the ensquared social order connoted by these terms became even more emphatic.
To be sure, some have suggested that before it came to be used for agricultural plots the original intention of the term tian was to describe delineated hunting territories. And, to be sure, the precise meanings of the original terms jing and tian have been the subject of much scholastic, if also pedantic debate for centuries. (Levenson, 1960.) Indeed, Confucian scholars have debated their philological origins ever since the terms were employed in such ancient canonical writings as the Zhou Li, or "The Rites of Zhou" (compiled about B.C. 40 but with fragments from much earlier times) and the Meng Zi or "Book of Master Meng" (ca. B.C. 290). Nevertheless, it is clear that the most elemental premise of both of these terms is that they imply the human ordering of space. That they do so in squared forms cannot be accidental. The word and in particular the written word had far too many important magical or shamanist connotations to have been taken lightly.

In cosmological terms, nature (by which was meant all that is natural) by Zhou times (B.C. 1122-221) became identified with heaven or tian (天) and the deity Shang Di or "God on High", whereas the earth-of-man (not the earth in the abstract, but as occupied by man) was in turn identified with the soil or tu (土) and with the bounded square sifang 四方 or "four-sides (directions)." There were, of course, many other connotations associated with these terms, and the history of their use in the context of ancient Shang and Zhou period religion is the subject of considerable debate among sinologists. (Ho Ping-ti, 1975, pp. 316-21, 328-339.) Nevertheless, the notion that Heaven is "high" and the earth is "low," that Heaven establishes the laws of nature and rules over the four directions which is the earth-of-man became a fundamental premise of the Zhou doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven or the imperial cult of the Emperor. (Ho Ping-ti, 1975,
Hence it was too that the phrase *tianxia* meaning literally "beneath heaven" came to be used to mean the known world and, by extension, the empire. And, in the same context, soil or *tu* came to figure mainly in the verbeage and symbology of geographical locality as in the word *di* for "place," *tudi* meaning "local territory," *tuhua* meaning "local dialect," and so on. Both, furthermore, carried certain associated metaphysical connotations as well--heaven implying universality and infinitude, the earth-of-man implying boundness and limitation.

In symbol, they were rendered differently: heaven is round and the earth-of-man is square. Hence it was that one of the first acts of the shamanist palace and town builder to appease the local earth spirits was the construction of an ensquared *gongshe* or public earth altar. The mound was placed on the site of the lord's palace-capital, and became the site of the patron deity of his domain. It was before this altar that early rulers took their vows. (Creel, 1937.) Moreover, the earth altar became the symbol of the continuing power (and legitimacy) of the kingdom, so much so that the destruction of the state was synonymous with the "ruin of (its) altars of earth and of crops," i.e., its *gongshe*. At some point during the Zhou period, the earth altar was apparently placed in company with the lord's ancestral temple to constitute two of the most sacred places in the palace city. (Wright, 1977, p. 39.) Later still, this tradition was continued in the form of the "Temple of Harvests" (*She Ji*) and the Imperial Ancestral Hall or "Supreme Temple" (*Tai Miao*) in the forecourt of the Forbidden City of Beijing. That the earth altar was or became ensquared was fully consistent with the logic of the square earth.
At the same time, however, another, complementary cosmological tradition of heavenly roundness also emerged. It was to find landscape expression in at least one important fashion. From the Zhou period onward only one round building figured prominently in the built environment of China, the Temple of Heaven. With few if any indigenous exceptions, the Temple of Heaven and its cognates were and throughout imperial history remained uniquely round. (Cheng Te-k'un, 1963, pp. 34-35.) Almost all other round structures can either be traced to a linked cosmology (as perhaps in the case of the garden pavilion), or to borrowed forms (as in the Buddhist pagoda).

Why this became the case remains open to much speculation. The roundness of Heaven may indeed be attributed to nothing more mysterious than the dome-like appearance of the sky over a flat earth. (Needham, 1971, p. 73; Vol. 3, pp. 211.) If so, however, it is at least of some interest to note that the earliest oracle bone text references to the term Heaven (of which there are, incidentally, only few) depict a man standing under and perhaps looking up to either a rectangular or a straight horizontal line—not a rounded dome. (Ho Ping-ti, 1975, p. 247, Chart.) Nevertheless, from the Zhou period onwards, Heaven and nature were held together symbolically in-the-round as distinct from the world of man confined and articulated in-the-square. And, with few exceptions, all the works of man, including his buildings, were designed as earth-bound, man-centered squares.

To be sure, it is possible that the density of squared buildings versus round is due to nothing more subtle than the use of such tools as the plumb-line and the square for construction layouts and timber cutting. However, that argument holds true only to the extent that roundness might be
deemed more complicated in assembly—an argument that can be countered by the appearance of thousands of round Buddhist pagodas on the landscape of traditional China. Technology, in short, is here at best only a necessary, not a sufficient explanation for the emphasis on rectilinearity. Rather, more profound explanations can be found in the fundamental logic of spatial distinction and boundedness employed by ancient Chinese cosmologists and administrators.

Bounded Space and Order

One obvious place to find the logic of spatial symbolism is in the language of space, and one of the first places to look is in the cosmological notion that the world-of-man is a world confined within the four directions. To be sure, as Needham pointed out, the latter is perhaps no more mysterious than the fact that (in graphic terms and in drawing maps) the most simple way of dividing the azimuth is into four cardinal directions. (Needham, 1971, p. 73.) However, that the world-of-man was thus easily rendered a world within the four directions (in classical Chinese usage rendered as sifang or literally "the four sides of a square") also had many other ramifications in ordering the world-of-man.

To order society meant first and foremost to bring it under control, which is to say, make society into the state and thereby ensquare it. Hence, the ancient (and modern) term for the kingdom or state, quo (ỀV), by its component elements reports the elemental connotation of a delineated, ensquared, populated territory defended by armies. Similarly, one of the most archaic variant forms of the term is found in the shamanist oracle bone
texts as pang (卻) and clearly depicts the squared-off spaces of territorial control that figure in the character 天 noted above, together with what appears to be a branched roadway. (Needham, 1971, p.73.)

Needham suggests that the character form pang also evokes the typical idealized ground-plan of a square-walled city, with what might be a branched roadway leading from its main gate. From this, it is only a short leap to the symbolic association of the state with the imperial city. However, whatever its other connotations, its squareness acted at minimum as an expression of human order. Indeed, depicted here (as elsewhere in the language) wherever boundaries are by inference or implication required, human order is symbolically displayed in the form of a delineated and subdivided square. Whatever else it may intend, its most elemental denotation was that of an occupied, ordered, bounded, disciplined and therefore ensquared space.

This is further attested to by the classical sociogram of the Yu Gong ("Tribute of the Emperor Yu"), an already ancient Shang text when it was compiled together with other texts during the late Zhou period to form part of the corpus of the Shu Jing or "Classic of History." (Needham, 1959, Vol. 3, p. 502, fig. 204.) According to this most ancient of Chinese geographies, the Emperor Yu aligned the world-of-man into 9 provinces—the number 9 then as thereafter having numerological significance in reference to the earth, the square root of which made reference to the trinity of Heaven, Man and Earth. Although later Zhou Empire bronze craftsmen attempted to depict these nine provinces on ceremonial vessels, the Yu Gong itself offered no contemporary map of the world as such. However, it did purport to show the bounded space of the ancient social hierarchy, and it
did so by means of a series of concentric *squares* extending downward from the king and his court through the feudal nobility and outward to "savage barbarians." Similarly, the names employed to describe the people and territory of the *Yu Gong* (Shang) empire are evocative of the symbology of the square. Hence, for example, the territories of the Shang domain were designated according to the titles of those who held such territories including the *tian* (田) or *nan* (寢), both of which referred to agricultural colonists. As Ho Ping-ti argued, the terms *tian* and *nan* were various synonyms for the term *tian* or "agriculture," save that in the hierarchical social structure of the *Yu Gong* they were also titles designating persons in the Shang period whose task was to carry out agricultural colonization, which is to say further that they supervised the absorption of territory into the Shang realm. Later, under the Zhou period, the term *nan* would be used to mean a "barony." (Ho Ping-ti, 1975, p. 301-02.)

It was also presumably no accident that the term *nan* meant (and means) a "male," the social being in command. Or, more correctly, it was no accident that "maleness" is defined by evoking the symbol of the squared and subdivided *tian* (田) and the symbol of "strength" and "power," *li* (力), legitimate power in the square being always an affair of men. In short, the clear minimum philological implication in virtually all usage of the subdivided square is that of the male-dominated social order either in terms of territory ("herein lay an area under control"), or in terms of those in charge of the orderings of space and place.

Another place to look for the inherent meaning of the spatial symbol is in the history of cartography, for here too the square plays a vital role. Map boundaries were usually rectilinear, especially as straight line
projections became the basis for the traditional cartographic grid. In part, no doubt, this is no more surprising than the fact that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points on a map. But the traditional Chinese grid system is also more interesting than this. It is linked to the same cosmological symbology as the well-field system and ancient urban design principles, and probably derives from these since the map grid came later and uses much the same nomenclature. Hence it was, for example, that map language terminology for the concept of "distance" was rendered in so many li (里) or units of space defined by the grid. This is precisely the name originally used for the prescribed lengths of the boundaries of the ideal city in the *Zhou Li*. Similarly, the word-symbol li contains the original term tian (天) or "fields" together with its underpinning, tu (土) or "earth." The inference here seems clear enough. The term li is a cartographic rendition of "ordered space," in this case the order imposed by the cartographic grid, but also the political act of ordering territory. Were it not so cumbersome in English, the meaning of the term might perhaps best be translated as "units of space known to us and under our sway." Distances measured in li were thus also, functionally, distances under control or, in certain cases, distances potentially under control.

For this reason, on the one hand, traditional Chinese maps depict the known world (sifang, or tianxia) as gridded by units of square li. On the other hand, occasionally, the grid dissipates or even disappears as the map approaches territories which, in the real world, were beyond the ken of the imperial order. However, imperial cartographers also had to be circumspect in this regard, being careful not to be too accurate lest they incur the
Imperial wrath. After all, the Emperor was the Emperor of "All under Heaven" including places and peoples who were not known, not to mention territories over which the Emperor only laid claim. Therefore, the cartographic grid was sometimes extended over territories which, in the real world, were not actually administered by or under the ostensible sway of the imperial order. Hence, insofar as the grid dissipated, it could mean only one thing: as there were places off the map, they were not worth controlling, a fate synonymous in the imperial Confucian ideology not only with being uncivilized and barbaric, but also and more importantly not falling within the human square and, therefore, by definition being sub-human.

To be human meant to be enclosed within the square, hence a member of organized, civilized society—the oecumen of the Greeks and the sifang ("four-sides/square") under Heaven (tianxia) of the Chinese. This, in turn, had many other important connotations, not the least of which were those associated with the ancient cosmology of the "pivot of the four quarters" and the proto-science of geomancy, both of which contributed an elaborate theory of cardinal axiality and locational prescriptions to create magic squares, the single most magical of which, after the empire (sifang) itself, was the imperial city.

Cardinal Axiality

In China as elsewhere, the four cardinal directions were early associated with cosmological meanings. In part, as Wheatley showed, this was a function of the ancient shamanist and classical concept of the axis
mundi—the "pivot" or 11 of the four quarters. (Wheatley, 1971, p. 476, ft. nt., 168.) So too was it closely associated with the cult of the Emperor—the Emperor and his palace-capital being identified with the Pole Star (beichen) as the axis of heaven and earth, a veritable cosmic pole linking the two in a single, natural order and, as it applied to the earth as the home of man, the center that governed the four quarters by right of Heaven. (Wheatley, 1971, pp. 411-76.) The cosmological theory was thereby also and neatly reinforced by numerological mysticism—the square of four sides actually becoming 5 since it included a center, an odd number which like the Five Elements and the Nine Provinces had special magical significance.

The four directions thereby also acquired various magical denotations and connotations, not the least of which was the imperial (and popular) insistence on placement according to the main axis, i.e., south-north, such that the palaces of the Emperor and by extension all heads of household were located in association with beichen at the north. Hence, the main access route of imperial cities, palaces, administrative towns, and offices—the Imperial Way—was located on the south-north axis, facing southwards. Similarly, Emperors and heads of households ceremonially faced south on formal occasions, and the principal gates and doors of buildings were located at the actual or figurative south. Such gates and doors were also the principal ceremonial or "front" gates and, as they provided the essential access route, they were also fraught with magical opportunities for the expansion of power and with the equally magical threat of power drainage. They were, therefore, the essential "sacred" threshold holding
the mundane and the sacerdotal together and at a distance. The case of the Imperial City of Beijing with the massive, ceremonial gate of qianmen (literally, "front gate") is perhaps the most obvious example, but the principle applied as well to virtually all major city gates and, figuratively, the thresholds of even the most common of houses.

This convention had many ramifications in the history of Chinese social thought and practice. For example, traditional Chinese maps are south-facing in that the geographical location "south" is at the top of the map (as opposed to the Western convention of placing "north" at the top)--the viewer standing at the northern end of the map looking southwards. South and, for that matter, all of the directions also obtained magical connotations. Indeed, in the hands of shamanist soothsayers and Daoist magicians using such ancient classics as the Yi Jing or "Book of Changes," an elaborate cult of cardinal axially and locational prescription or geomancy emerged in the name of dili (地利) or "principles of earth regulation," often also popularly known as fengshui (风水) or "winds and waters."

Here too, by its very name, dili, we can discern the inherent reference to order and control, in this case, control under the interpretations and prescriptions of shamans and magicians who sought to determine the locational requirements of the man-made landscape to take maximum advantage of natural and supernatural forces. They sought to shape the built environment according to two main schools of thought: (1) a so-called "form school" that emphasized the shape of natural landforms and the direction of watercourses as guides mainly to the propitious location of grave sites (accompanying the Confucian focus on the construction of
ancestral temples and parental graves); and (2) a so-called "compass school" that emphasized the astrological and numerological theories of the Yi Jing, and employed the compass to determine the most propitious sites for towns, walls and buildings of all kinds. Both schools were influential, but the latter obtained a somewhat greater official prominence, especially during the Song Dynasty, inasmuch as it also directly served to support the imperial doctrine of centricity and was extensively employed in planning the axis and orientation of imperial cities, palaces, and tombs. (Eitel, 1873/1985; Feuchtwang, 1974; Freedman, 1969; March, 1968; Needham, 1956; Vol. Z, 1950, Vol. J; Wheatley, 1971; Skinner, 1982.)

Although the influence of the geomancers was manifold, it was also contained within and by the imperial tradition to serve the interests of the Confucian state ideology, and to further articulate that interest in the spatial arrangement of the built environment. The result in urban and residential design was an emphatic (if, as Wheatley showed, a not always accurate) cardinal axiality contained within a magic square perimeter (sifang) delimited by a high perimeter wall whose principal passageway was located on the magic south. Indeed, the most traditional compass of the geomancers was itself a model of rectitude in this regard, for the compass or ganyu ("chariot of Heaven and Earth") was originally cast as a south-pointing needle on a round disk (Heaven) set into a square plate (Earth) frame—reflecting the arcane usage in a fashion that was replicated as well in the classical Chinese garden and in the Temple of Heaven. Here too, as in virtually all aspects of the design and construction of the human landscape, and in particular in the design, structure and form of cities, palaces, and houses, the symbology of social order in the square remained all impressive.
City Walls and Urban Space

As virtually all commentators on the origins of imperial cities in China have long noted, the ideal classical urban form was predicated on (or a continuation of) the motif identified earlier with the term tian or "cultivated field," and its further articulation in Meng Zi as the so-called jing-tian or "well-field" system of nine equally divided spaces (li), eight of which were occupied by individual families, with the ninth being the gongtian or the ruler's share located at the center. (Meng Zi, Bk. 3, Pt. 1, Ch. 3, Sec. 19, after Legge, p. 121.)

Once housed in the Confucian canon, the ideal form became a veritable "article of faith" in the wisdom of the ancients. Similarly, the form is replicated (sometimes in greater detail) in other canonical texts, and is closely associated with the urban design specifications contained within the Kao-qong Zhi ("Record of Artificers") section of the Zhou Li ("Book of Rites of the Zhou Period"), the editions of which are many but in any case purport to include much material prior to B.C. 213. As Wheatley put it, the Kao-qong Zhi became the veritable "locus classicus for the (ideal) layout of Chinese capitals," and by extension all official landscapes. The most relevant passage reads as follows:

The artificers demarcated the (Royal Zhou) capital as a square with sides of 9 li, each side having 3 gateways. Within the capital there were 9 meridional and 9 latitudinal avenues, each of the former being 9 chariot-tracks in width. (Wheatley, 1971, p. 411.)

As was intended, the use of the number 9 and the squared format clearly evoked the well-field tradition, although the layout prescribed by the
Kao-gong Zhi results in a more complex division of space into sixteen units, and there was no single central unit, save as represented by a group of four such units that served the central function occupying not one-ninth of the total area (as noted by Meng Zi) but one-quarter. As Wheatley noted, the selection of the site according to the four directions (another Zhou Li prescription) and the layout design was also intended to evoke allusions to and compliance with astrobiological and geomantic forces. Similarly, as noted earlier, the numbers 9 and 3 had numerological significance; the one being an archaic reference to the earth-as-home-of-man divided into the 9 provinces established by the mythopoeic Emperor Yu, and the other being the square root of nine representing the 3 levels of cosmological interaction—Heaven, Man and Earth. In short, for those who designed it, the resulting square was filled with magic. It was literally a magic square filled with cosmological and symbolic sanctification for the Imperial Confucian social and political order. (Wright, 1977, pp. 47-48.)

Many have pointed out, of course, that these instructions were not always precisely followed in the practice of townsit construction. Local topography often entailed non-symmetrical layouts, and city form varied greatly not only from specific place to specific place, but also according to their specific origins and main functions. Strategic needs sometimes dictated design adjustments such as Ningbo where the city was a walled island, the wall following the water’s edge throughout. Similarly, major commercial towns, especially those in South China were often laid out according to transport and other market needs. Hence, even after the imperial capital was transferred to Hangzhou in the thirteenth century, the irregular pattern of its outer-perimeter walls remained virtually unchanged.
Without question, local and regional, as well as empire-wide vicissitudes caused all manner of aberrations in the execution of the design principle. (Chang Sen-dou, 1977, pp. 76-100.)

Nevertheless, such aberrations were just that—irregularities in principle. Cities were supposed to be ensquared, if only in the sense that they were supposed to be surrounded by square or rectangular walls. Deviations could be (indeed had to be) accounted for by local geomantic considerations and, as in the case of Hangzhou, the design and construction of the imperial ("Forbidden") palace city within the bounds of the larger city would be made to conform to the ideal model. The city was, in this sense too, a microcosm of the state—a kingdom surrounded by an ensquared boundary. The two, city and state, were in this way also symbolically linked one to the other through their mutual ensquarement.

Indeed, even admitting exceptions, the basic square or rectilinear design principle was usually approximated one way or another and to one degree or another. As Chang Sen-dou noted, "virtually all of the imperial capitals built in the region of North and Northwest China . . . were in fact square or rectangular, the most notable exception being Han Ch'ang-an." (Chang Sen-dou, 1977, pp. 87-88.) Changan's exceptional construction under the second Han Emperor in B.C. 192 can itself be partly explained by the vicissitudes of warfare and the confusion that still ruled only some fourteen years after the violent reign of the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi and the conquest of his empire by the early Han Emperors. (Wright, 1977, pp. 43-44.) Moreover, despite the poor execution of the ideal in Changan under the Han Dynasty (B.C.206 -220 A.D.), several hundred years later the Emperors of the Sui (605-618 A.D.) and the Tang dynasties
(618-907 A.D.) wrought their own spatial rectification in a newly reconstructed Changan laid out to better suit the canonical codes, especially its squareness. (Wright, 1977, pp. 55-60; Wheatley, 1971, pp. 411-14.) It may well be that after almost four hundred years of civil war and disunity from the end of the Han Dynasty to the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, legitimation required the restitution and more exact execution of the ancient codes.

Certain emperors were also more fanatic than others in following the traditional and most thoroughly Confucian codes as a signification of their own legitimacy. For example, as the Hou Han Shu ("History of the Later Han Dynasty" written ca. 25-220 A.D.) says of the infamous usurper Wang Mang (ca. 6-25 A.D.):

(He) believed that if institutions were fixed, the world would pacify itself. Hence he gave detailed attention to geographical arrangements, the institution of the rites, and the composition of music. (Wright, 1977, p. 50.)

Indeed, Wang Mang's interregnum was noted for its devotion to sorcery, numerical and geometric divinations and symbolism, and an almost manic concern for taboos found in the renaming and reassignment of official titles and terms. Similarly, in building his own palace south of the old Han capital at Changan, he designed and had constructed a palace complex almost precisely according to the detailed instructions of the Zhou divination texts, but apparently also going them one better in emphasizing the symbolism of squares and rounds. In an archaeological find excavated in the 1950's that some believe to be the remains of Wang Mang's palace, the buildings can be seen to have been constructed first with a round pounded earth mound, on top of which was a square pounded earth foundation, and
while the built-up complex was surrounded by a square wall, the entire complex was then further surrounded by an encircling (round) waterway or moat. (Hsia Nai, 1961; Wright, 1977, p. 51.) It would appear that Wang Mang could in this way sit content and secure in the knowledge that he sat at the apex of the center of the universe as rightful heir to the "Mandate of Heaven."

But then, as the Confucian authors of the Hou Han Shu inferred, and as Arthur Wright pointed out, it was perhaps only in the nature of usurpers to the "Mandate of Heaven" that they should go to extraordinary and exacting lengths to legitimate their rule by symbolic reference to tradition. As Wright put it, Wang Mang was not only an heir to tradition, he was also a "victim of the imperial ideology." (Wright, 1977, pp. 50-51.) Other more legitimate heirs to the "Mandate of Heaven" could perhaps afford greater license in the designs of their capitals and palaces.

Yet, as the example of Wang Mang points out, the authority of the imperial ideology and its spatial symbolism was not to be ignored. All imperial authorities sought to comply with the orthodox spatial symbolism of the square in the design and construction of imperial cities and palaces—to one degree or another. If practice deviated from the prescribed form, furthermore, such deviations could always be accounted for by adjustments to local geomantic and astrological forces. More important than exacting execution, the principle could be sustained in symbolic acts and in the appearance of squareness. Hence it was, for example, that the Ming and Qing city of Beijing was by no means exactly symmetrical. In fact, a blatant twist occurs at the northwest edge of its outer wall to accommodate a major watercourse. Similarly, the layout of major thoroughfares and streets was,
in fact, forced to accommodate plebian uses as well as imperial parks, gardens and so on.

Nevertheless, the overall appearance of the City of Beijing and, in particular, of the Imperial City within the outer walls was strikingly symmetrical. Moreover, the inner imperial or so-called "Forbidden City" of palaces and formal court halls clearly articulated the traditional ideal in its projection of lesser and greater square courtyards. The squared imperial palace city was here, as elsewhere, the arcane and canonical square. To make matters more complete, the numbers 9 and 3 figured prominently as well in the layout and design of the Forbidden City—there being, so it is said, 9,999 buildings within the walls of the Forbidden City itself, each of the throne halls being no less and no greater than 9 jian (modular architectural units of measurement) in scale, the formal courtyards being 3 in all, and there being altogether only 9 gates to the Imperial City (what was known in Qing Dynasty times as the Tartar City).

In short, the principle of the square remained particularly stable for the layout of imperial cities, town walls, palaces and other residences from the early Zhou period to the end of the imperial system in 1911. For more than three thousand years, the cosmological and political inference of the square remained quite simply that here—in the cities, in the towns, in the palaces, and in the household compounds—there was a legitimate, organized, and disciplined social order, and that it was from here that such order emanated to encompass the whole of society. In so doing, society as a whole, rural as well as urban, also became ensquared, if not in actuality, then in the symbolic square of the bounded kingdom or quo. The two were as
one in cosmological and political symbol. That this was the case in the
design of the human landscape writ large has been so fully documented by
others as to require little further comment here, save as may help drive the
point homeward toward the si he yuan and its basic form.

2. The Basic Courtyard

That the ensquared layouts of cities, palaces and houses were all
closely allied, so closely indeed as to be virtually indistinguishable save
by scale, is perhaps already apparent from the foregoing discussion. It
remains only to point out further here, first, that the ancient and
classical terms for "palaces," "houses," and "courtyards" are linked
together and are likewise evocative of the symbolism of the square, and
second, that the whole complex of spatial symbolisms was synthesized in the
expression of the courtyard or yuan as the basic modular replication unit of
space for all residential, palace, and office building design.

Philological Evidence

Most of the archaic and classical terms related to palaces, houses, and
like enclosures derive from one of two basic symbolic forms: yen (yen) or
mian (mian), the former apparently being an archaic reference to cave
dwelling, and the latter being nothing more mysterious than a "roof." Why
and how these terms became differentiated and deployed to describe different
aspects of housing remains a mystery. However, that they did so is clear
enough. Hence, for example, the terms for "palace" or gong (gong), "private
house" or shi (shi), "family" or jia (jia), "reception hall" or tang (tang)
and many others have the roof radical (mian) as their root meaning. At the same time, the term for "courtyard" or ting (庭), "verandah" or wu (屋), and "armory" or ku (庫) and a few others have the cave-dwelling radical (yen) as their root meaning.

One can extrapolate from these terms all kinds of historical ramifications, some more obvious than others. For example, the archaic divination text word-symbol for "palace" ( 宮 ) is two rectangular spaces linked at the middle by a single line, over which extends and hangs the symbol for a roof, thus completing a courtyard-like enclosure. (Needham, 1971, p. 72.) The classical and modern term (gong) was and remains virtually the same, save that the roof became shortened. Similarly, the term for a reception hall (tang) seems a clear allusion to one square space or building on top of the earth over which is placed a roof. One can speculate further that the meaning of the term for a "private house" (shi), for example, is composed of earth owned or occupied by an individual head of household (si) over which is placed a roof—hence a house.

However, the origins of the term for "courtyard" or ting are somewhat more problematic, as are those of its linked term yuan or "courtyard compound." One can speculate that the courtyard as a ting makes some allusion to the sunken space occupied by courtyards (since all surrounding buildings are raised on platforms), whereas the courtyard as yuan is a reference both to the square form and to the compounding of such spaces under one roof. Perhaps because of such ambiguity, the vernacular term for "courtyard" (in the sense used in this study) came to be the somewhat redundant ting-yuan or literally "courtyard-courtyard-compound."
The origins and meanings of the term for the courtyard compound yuan can be discerned in the root form of its component parts, the basic intention of which is to describe a series of courtyard squares arranged on a south-north axis linked together and held in association with a roofed enclosure. Before it was simplified by Confucian scribes, the radical or root element of the character was clearly just such a series of enclosures placed on top of the directional axis. Although it is tempting to speculate that the entire right-hand side of the character was employed to mean an "unbroken whole" or the "totality" of squares in compound form, it is frankly not known why the classical scribes chose to employ the component yuan as the phonetic value for the term "courtyard." What is clear, however, is that the term was employed for millennia with reference to the modular compounding of courtyards.

In classical (and modern) Chinese usage, the term yuan usually applied to the ideal of multiple courtyards within a single household complex and, by extension, to the generic "compound." Similarly, it applied as well to important government buildings, offices, and institutions (as in the modern Nationalist usage "Executive Yuan" or "Legislative Yuan" meaning the executive and legislative branches of government), by which was (and is) meant a series of offices or institutions figuratively linked together as a "complex." By extension, the same linguistic logic applied as well to its many other usages as, for example, in the case of the terms for "college" (xueyuan) and "hospital" (yiyuan). In time, the term acquired a considerable metaphorical stretch, being widely used with reference to all manner of spatial and institutional "complexes," including such para-legal institutions as, for example, intended by the phrase yuanwai (literally, "outside the yuan") meaning a "lobby," a phrase that carries the same
para-political connotations in Chinese as in English. Perhaps for this reason, the somewhat redundant form tingyuan 厝院) became the generally accepted reference to the architectural courtyard compound, ting being the modifier referring to the kind of yuan, a "sunken household court." Taken together, the two constituted the module unit of traditional architectural space replicated over and over again in the built environment as a compounded, ensquared, sunken, courtyard, the principal and ultimate residential definition of which came in the form of the si he yuan or "four (sided) enclosed courtyard house."

Modular Replication and the House

As noted earlier, modularity was an essential ingredient both in the manufacture of construction materials and in the design and layout of built forms. The sunken household courtyard tingyuan with its ensquaring wall was the basic modular unit of space within which buildings were constructed according to a basic eight standard size units called cai. Together, the courtyard-house module constituted a kind of architectural design grammar that resonated with the status rankings in society to shape the built environment of Confucian China in almost all contexts.

This is not to say that all residential and ceremonial buildings were constructed exactly according to the ideal or the regulations. As noted earlier, powerful landlords, wealthy merchants and others frequently exceeded the status rank regulations to construct elaborate estates. Similarly, poor peasant families were often unable to meet minimum size and wall requirements. And, styles of execution varied from place to place and across time. Nevertheless, from poor peasants to rich merchants, from lowly officials to ministers of state, including the Emperor and the imperial family, the design and construction of houses, palaces, and offices entailed
the latent or complete model of the rectilinear sunken courtyard compound module.

At the level of the typical vernacular farm house, for example, the module was often only latent, still to be completed when family size and fortune permitted. Beginning with a single rectangular building housing the nuclear family, peasant heads of household nonetheless knew where the design was to lead. As Margery Wolf described so well in the case of peasant houses in Taiwan:

... When a man builds a house he follows the old pattern. He builds with a vision of housing under one roof a large and prosperous family of many generations. Farmers are rarely wealthy on Taiwan. Although they are just as likely as anyone else to try to implement their dreams, they do so with a shrewd practicality. Instead of hoarding gold or borrowing money to build the huge U-shaped structure that is to house generations as yet unborn, they build the base of their future, a strong rectangular building. At each end of the rectangle, however, there are indications of the ultimate design—an unnecessary door, a carefully made archway clumsily boarded over until the day it will open into a new wing housing the family of a son or a grandson. The rectangle becomes first an L and finally a U whose arms may be extended again and again. (Wolf, 1968, p. 24, emphasis mine.)

The U-shaped form to which Wolf referred was (and is) the standard sunken courtyard module, save that the corner edges were not rounded as in the English "U," but rectangular, the front end of which was opened, but ready for closure by means of an attached gateway. From basic form to completed model, the steps involved nothing more complicated than modular attachments, expanding outwards, adding rectangular living quarters, ceremonial buildings, and courtyards one to the other and, when funds permitted, converting one or more courtyards into gardens. The basic steps from start to completed model can perhaps best be seen by way of the following diagram:
The steps involved can be itemized as follows:
Step 1: Simple rectangular box residence built on platform. Courtyard is latent. Perimeter wall provided by solid back wall of building. There are no windows or access through the back wall. The building opens only to the front with windows and false doors provided at either side.

Step 2: Attach side wing. L-shaped courtyard appears. Perimeter wall still provided by backs of buildings. Building opens to front only.

Step 3: Attach second wing on the opposite side. Squared U-shaped courtyard appears. Perimeter wall still provided by backs of buildings. All buildings and rooms open to the front, facing the courtyard, with access at sides for passageways, and with no windows or other openings to the rear. At this stage the courtyard may be closed at the front with the addition of an attached gate or gatehouse, thereby constituting the basic si he yuan module. Left open at the front, it remains a san he yuan or three (sided) enclosed courtyard house.

Step 4: Repeat steps 1-3, in the same order, usually toward the front (south). Double courtyard begins to appear with second major residential or screen unit (former gatehouse) functioning as the divider between courtyards. The perimeter wall is still provided by the solid back walls of the buildings, and all buildings, save the central courtyard divider and the front gatehouse are closed at the rear.

Step 5: Expanded U compound with additional L usually to the side. Third courtyard eventually appears, part of which may be employed as garden, study, etc. Similarly, the original double U may be expanded to the front to incorporate a ceremonial gate and courtyard. Invariably, at this juncture, the beginnings of an extra perimeter wall appears to enclose the garden and front gateway compounds.

Step 6: A completed complex with multiple compounds and extended garden entirely ensquared by an external perimeter wall the inside face of which is usually stuccoed and whitewashed. The latter provides the additional benefit of permitting the real walls of buildings to be opened with windows, the white-washed inner face of the external perimeter wall thereby reflecting light into the buildings, and the space between external perimeter wall and rear building wall providing extra space for storage, plant cultivation and other uses.
As Margery Wolf noted, while the plan may vary in size, floor plan, and interior decoration, "the basic outline is the same for all" peasant houses. (Wolf, 1968, p. 25.) Clearly, family size and wealth had much to do with the degree to which one or more of these steps would or could be followed. Nevertheless, the modular form of the ensquared courtyard compound was not simply an ideal. It was followed repeatedly, again and again in all residential and official buildings. As H. Y. Lowe put it in his richly descriptive study of daily life in Beijing during the early twentieth century (*The Adventures of Wu, Life Cycle of a Peking Man*):

> The builders, architects and experts of house designing in China, somehow or other never outgrew their idea about building their house in the quadrangle principle. The four-sided bungalows of three rooms each surrounding a square courtyard is a project never for a moment out of the mind of every house-planner. (Lowe, 1940/1983, p. 3.)

Indeed, as Lowe presumably knew well, the builders "never outgrew" the modular square compound not by accident, but because--among other reasons--it not only permitted relative ease of construction, but also served to enhance (and indeed, virtually required) replication in form--the built form repeating itself on the landscape in much the same way that the Confucian family system, social distinctions and ranks, and the dynastic order repeated themselves in society and through history. The ensquared sunken courtyard module was, like so much else in the Confucian ideology, a "precedent" which, through the act of repetition, served to renew tradition.

It was precisely such repetitiveness that led many early Western critics of Chinese art and architecture to decry the monotony of the landscape. Hence, for example, Sir William Chambers, architect at the Court of H.R.H. Prince George of Wales, in 1757 wrote a report on *The Design of
Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils in which he complained that the "houses of the Chinese are all distributed in one and the same manner," and furthermore that:

Du Halde observes that there is such a resemblance between the cities of China, that one is almost sufficient to give an idea of all; and the same remark may be made on their buildings: for in all the paintings I ever saw, which were numerous, and in all the descriptions I ever read, I do not remember to have met with any forms of building greatly differing from those which I have represented. (Chambers, 1757, p. iii.)

Chambers went on to describe a truly large two-story eighteenth century merchant's house that he visited in Guangzhou. His description is sufficiently clear as to be worthy of further detailed recording here (save that I have substituted the normal "s" and certain other terms for his eighteenth century period English). As Chambers noted:

In Chinese houses more than half of the ground is taken up with courts and passages. . . The same disposition is observed in them all: on the ground floor a broad passage (A), running from the street to the river occupies the middle; and on the sides are the apartments, each consisting of a large room (B) for the reception of visitors, a small bed-room (C), and sometimes a closet for study (D). Every apartment has before it a court (E), at the farther end of which is generally a pond, or cistern of water, with an artificial rock placed therein. . . .

The large room or saloon (B) is commonly from eighteen to twenty-four foot deep, and about twenty broad. The side toward the court just described is entirely open; having only one cane-mat which lets down occasionally to keep out rain or sunshine. . . The bedroom (C) is divided from the saloon only by a partition of folding doors. . . Besides these apartments, the ground-floor contains the dining hall (F), the kitchen (G), the coolies' or servants' room (H), the bath (I), and the necessary house (K); the offices or counting houses (L), and towards the street the shop (M). . . .

The Lou or upper story, consists of several large halls (O), that occupy the whole breadth of the house, and cover the apartments on the ground floor. . . In one of these large halls usually in that nearest to the gate of the house, is the portrait and altar (Q) of the household idol so placed as to be seen by those that enter. The rest of the second story is distributed into apartments (R) for the family; and over the shops are lodging-rooms for the shopkeepers (S). (Chambers, 1757, pp. 7-11.)
To be sure, Chambers' Guangdong merchant's house was exceptional according to the standard codes for merchant houses during the then contemporary Qing Dynasty. However, this is partly explicable by its location in Guangzhou. Indeed, the houses of rich Chinese merchants engaged in the overseas trade in such southern entrepots as Guangzhou and in the overseas Chinese mercantile communities of Southeast Asia were often of this type. One can today find almost exact duplicates of the house described by Chambers in the huge apartment-like courtyard estates of the wealthier Chinese merchants of Malacca, many of which also date to the eighteenth century or earlier.

Still, if exceptional in scale and execution, the mid-eighteenth century house described by Chambers was nonetheless compliant with the rectilinear module for all Confucian residential landscapes. Apart from its scale, the single most impressive feature of the house, as clearly revealed by Chambers' sketch, was its emphatic rectilinear modularity—a repetitive series of square apartments in square courtyards linked with other square apartments in square courtyards arranged in linear fashion on two sides of a twenty-foot-wide, ground-floor passageway. One needs only briefly compare Chambers' sketch with the steps in the basic design layout discussed above to immediately discern the intimate, modulated relationship between the two otherwise different worlds of the farmer and the merchant.

That the ensquared worlds of the farmer and the merchant were also linked to the rectangular courtyard compounds of the imperial palace city is perhaps already self-evident. Simply stated, in the words of one modern architectural historian, Liu Guanhua, "... the palace (city of Beijing)
resembles any ordinary Chinese house many times enlarged." (Liu Guanhua, 1982, p. 7.) The basic layout of the "Forbidden City" of Beijing and its palace compounds are indeed only a larger and more complex version of the basic compound.

Indeed, whatever the differences in the worlds of farmers, the gentry, the urban poor, the merchants and the scholar-elite, in this and in many other ways, their homes were fundamentally the same. The cultural ideology and ordering principles for the design and social meaning of their homes were the same even as, most assuredly, they differed in scale, execution and in overall effect. There was, in short, an extraordinary consensus in the Confucian residential landscape irrespective of social class. Everyone, including the Emperor and the imperial family, resided within the modular, hierarchically ordered, authoritative, civilized and human square. One way or another, to one degree or another, they were all contained by and within the walls of the Confucian compound.

Peasants, merchants, scholar-officials and the Emperor himself, whatever their different status ranks, all shared a commonly denominated ensquarement because, among other things, they were each in their own places and at their own levels "heads of households." Thus, "All under Heaven," the empire, the imperial city, the palace city, the imperial office, the scholar-official estate, and the common home were all, at their proper and designated scale in the social and political hierarchy, greater and lesser cubes within cubes, the spatial realms of which were dominated by male heads of household. In this sense too, the container of society as a whole, like that of the joint family, was the courtyard compound, the internal arrangement of which was almost everywhere and at every scale shaped into form by the Confucian ideology and the state.
Necessarily, as the container of the family, the traditional household compound took on the social forms (proprieties) or 门 of the Confucian ideology, including its many codes of intra-familial and extra-familial behavior. Like the organization of society and the family itself, the household compound was organized as a series of formal spaces. Nothing was left to chance, and little was left to idiosyncrasy. With the singular (but only partial) exception of the garden, and save as might on occasion be unconventionally defined by a head of household, all courtyard compound space was an exacting, formal and official space, which is to say—in Confucian terms—it was a civilized, cultured, hierarchically ordered, segmented and ensquared space.

Figuratively by its rectangular shape and empirically by its wall, the courtyard compound family house was the basic unit of social space in Confucian China. The walled compound was organized within and itself served to set the physical and the social boundary between family and non-family, between members of the joint family unit and the outside world. The outside world was itself composed as well of other walled compounds, some of which were hierarchically above and therefore figuratively included the household compound, and others of which were simply the compounds of other families. All such compounds were literally yuanwai ("outside the compound"), but some were more "outside" than others. Those who had no compounds (e.g., boat people) were by definition "outcasts," just as those who were not contained by the ensquaring civilization of the imperial grid were, by definition, sub-human and figuratively "off the map." More to the point here, they were "far beyond the wall," but then so too was almost everyone else—the outcast's position being only the extreme in a context filled with "outsiders beyond the wall."
As has already been noted at some length, the wall served as a fundamental boundary, on the one hand, separating inside and outside worlds and, on the other hand, defining that which it contained. It acted as a boundary first and foremost in that its face to the outside world was at once solid and closed, not to mention high. The wall served to present "a blind front to the outside world" so that which it contained was secluded and "shielded from prying eyes," often allowing only one doorway through which outsiders might obtain even a glimpse of the world inside.

(Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens, 1971, p. 172.)

However, even that glimpse could only be fleeting at best. Located just inside the gateway was a so-called "spirit wall" that served, among other things, to block the view from outside. And, just in case, the main gate of the typical compound was always located off-center relative to the residential complex within (so that one could never have a clear view through the compound). As Ida Pruitt described the gateway of an upper middle class compound in Beijing:

The privacy of the family was fully guarded. Even when the two leaves of the Great Gate were open and all the leaves of the inner gate removed, no one in the street could have seen into any but the Entrance Court or seen anything but the Spirit Screen. To give this added security to the privacy of the home was the reason that the Great Gate was on the east end of the front wall of the compound. Never should a gate be in the center. If it should be in the center and open, and (if) all the doors in all the houses and the gates between the courts were open, there would be a view down the whole length of the conventional compound. What family could stand such an invasion of privacy? What family could stand the flood of evil spirits, those beings who traveled only in straight lines, that this would let in. "Only the Emperor had a destiny strong enough to withstand the ills" that could come sweeping in. His living
quarters, however, were guarded by a series of throne halls and walls to the throne hall courts between his living quarters and the Great Front Gate. This gate (Qian Men) was the front gate of the whole city and also of the Forbidden City, his home. It was in the center of the wall, but the gate in a private home had to be on the eastern side of the front wall. (Pruitt, 1979, pp. 21-22.)

That the wall was intended to hide its contents is amply attested to by the experience of local residents. Because of the wall, for example, it was virtually impossible for anyone other than those who were supposed to know, to learn anything much more about the family it contained than the rank and name of the owner. As noted earlier, the rank was displayed by virtue of the scale and decoration of the front gate. Occasionally too, especially among the upwardly mobile, the name of the owner was sometimes displayed along with his place of origin as signage incorporated as part of the decorative frontage of the gate. However, this was neither necessary among the most highly placed families nor common among those at the lower ends of the social scale. Hence, for example, in speaking of life in the small alley-like side streets or hutong of Beijing during the early twentieth century, Robert Swallow, by then a long term foreign resident of Beijing, could complain that:

I have lived in a hutung for several years and it is astonishing what little I know about my neighbors. It is said that in London it is not unusual for a person to be ignorant of even the name of the man who lives next door, and in Peking this aloofness is often apparent in as far as the officials and better class residents are concerned. (Swallow, n.d., p.15.)

H.Y. Lowe, like Swallow, a highly perceptive chronicler of daily life in Beijing in the early twentieth century, also described the social effect of the wall in the following fashion:

In the United States. . .you (can) easily notice at a glance whether the Smiths are at home or out of town. . . Besides when they are at home there is usually some activity noticeable from without. You (can) almost judge if prosperity is around by the frequent or
otherwise changes of those bits of interior decoration perceivable through the sitting room window, or by the colours or texture of the curtains themselves. But in Peking, and in the greater part of China for that matter, the "devil screen" of solid brickwork is a rubberneck-proof defense work against all and sundry intruding forces, including the neighbors' prying eyes."

(Lowe, 1940/1983, pp. 2-3.)

One reason that Swallow could learn so little about who lived next door was that he was a "stranger" and the high wall separating him from the world inside the compound was, if nothing else, intended to keep "strangers" at bay. Indeed, Swallow was, after all, a foreigner which is to say also that he was a "stranger" twice removed—a "barbarian" who could hardly be expected to observe the codes of social behavior and distinction set down by the Confucian canon even if, out of simple courtesy and the common sense recognition of the superiority of the Confucian way, he tried to do so. In this sense, "strangers" held a status in the Confucian residential landscape akin to "outcasts" in the society at large—they were neither part of, nor contained in the social square of the residential compound and therefore, by definition, had literally no place in the landscape of home, save that of their own.

This, in turn, gave rise to all manner of conventional means of dealing with "strangers" and non-family members in the residential landscape. First and foremost, no doubt, "strangers" were simply forbidden to enter. Hence, servants in the residential compound performed the essential service of acting as barriers to the entry of strangers—hence it was too that the servants' quarters inside a compound were invariably located near the principal entryway (on the south wall of the compound), and that one of the key personages among the servants was the gateman. Indeed, the gateman became, for all families of means, the essential arbiter of access not only
because he and only he came into direct and daily contact with those who
might wish or need to penetrate the enclosed compound, but also because he
alone knew all of the comings and goings of family members as they passed in
and out of his domain. Hence, the gateman was almost always a highly
trusted, elder retainer whose job it was not so much to physically prevent
entry (as might an armed guard)—rich families sometimes had their own
armies for such purposes—but rather to keep account of and inform on those
who entered and exited the compound. In modern times, when Robert Swallow,
H. Y. Lowe and Ida Pruitt were writing, the job of the gateman was almost
rendered extinct by the telephone—save for the fact that "enlightened
traditional" families saw to it that all incoming and outgoing telephone
calls were also routed through the gateman who, in effect, became the
household switchboard operator.

To be sure, strangers of a sort could enter the compound by virtue of
being appropriately introduced. Being appropriately introduced also
entailed a vastly complicated series of formulae wherein, in effect, the
"stranger" became a "friend," and not just any friend, but rather a friend
of someone in a particular status-rank in the family and the compound who,
through the Confucian filial doctrine of relations among friends—known
simply as guanxi or "mutual relationship"—gave this stranger at least a
temporary but nonetheless an equivalent status place in the family
hierarchy. To oversimplify this process, it is only to say that guanxi
meant (and still means) a set of reciprocal obligations wherein the
stranger-now-friend became part of the larger obligation chain within the
family system. Still, a "friend" was not a member of the family in fact
and, therefore, was officially accorded a status that in English is best
rendered as a "guest," which is to say a favored stranger. Hence, it was
too that a host of conventions grew around the treatment of friends or
guests, and their place in the compound.

The procedures for entertaining formal guests or friends were, of
course, many and complicated. But certain rules generally applied
throughout. First and foremost was the rule that no non-family member,
hence no guest or friend, could officially or at least in theory have access
to the inner residential compound, which is to say to the area of the
compound reserved for the family, including such taboo areas as the
compartments of the female members of the family. Rather, they were
greeted, entertained and confined to one of three places: a formal greeting
hall or room, the garden in the compound, or the private library of the head
of household. The guests of female members of the household were, no doubt,
sometimes admitted to the residential quarters of the women of the
household, but in traditional families this posed few serious problems since
there was virtually no way, in any case, for female members of the family
ever to have had any contact whatsoever with outsiders, and their guests or
friends were normally only extended kin either on their own or their
husbands' side of the family. Therefore, the favored strangers we here call
"guests" were invariably male.

Furthermore, unless the friend was one of such long-standing (a
classmate or the like) as to be almost a member of the family, a rigid
formalism was necessarily attached to his visit. Hence it was, for example,
that the Li Ji or "Book of Rites" clearly defined the procedures to be
employed in greeting guests as follows:
The host enters the doorway and turns to the right, and the guest enters and turns to the left. The host proceeds to the eastern stairway, while the guest proceeds to the west. If the guest, for some reason such as his inferior social rank insists upon climbing the eastern stairway, the host must refuse in a most persistent manner; and then the guest may go back to his own side and be ready to ascend. In ascending the stairway, the guest follows the host's moves; as the host lifts his right foot to ascend, the guest lifts his left foot to ascend the western stairs. (Li Ji, after Legge, Vol. 2, pp. 72-72.)

Once inside and seated, the guest remained to the left of the host, the place of honor in China being opposite to that in Western cultures. Food was then presented by the host first to his guest on the left, and then to lesser guests on the right. And so on. We need not here define all the rules, but simply note that the entire procedure was necessarily formal and, as with all social relations, required the strict observance of proper placement and positioning throughout.

To be sure, occasions did permit a loosening of these regulations when, for example, the head of household had drinking parties with his close male friends. But these were not usually held in the courtyard per se. Rather, if held within the compound, they were usually restricted to the garden or to the master's study which was also usually in or adjacent to the garden. Moreover, they were most often held outside the compound as a whole, in the "tea houses" and "inns" designated for such purposes in particular quarters of the city. Perhaps for this reason, entertaining friends at home was not common, save for families with means sufficient to build extensive gardens away from the main residential courtyards. Traditionally (and indeed still today) entertaining friends meant "going out" either literally to a restaurant or figuratively into that part of the compound that, as we will discuss later in this study, was in but not fully of the compound--the garden.
In short, strangers either became guests and friends, or they were of no significance to the family or the compound, save as potential threats. At most, true strangers, such as itinerant pedlars had access to family servants only. But even they succeeded in establishing contact with the servants only insofar as they acquired guanxi, i.e., established an ascriptive relationship of mutual obligation with the servants. Fortunately for the itinerant merchant, establishing guanxi with the servants of the compound was usually no more difficult than giving vouhui, a "preferential price" so that the servant could charge the master the regular price and pocket the difference—a process that was fully accepted by masters and servants alike as appropriate and legal.

Simply stated, access to the compound and to the family on the part of "strangers" and, for that matter, distant relatives required a prior or special "relationship" (guanxi). A detailed excursion into the manifold ways in which individuals acquired such guanxi would require volumes, but we can sum them up by way of one example provided by the authors of the monumental novel, Hong Lou Meng ("Dream of the Red Chamber"), one of the best and most descriptive guides to the intricacies of family and compound life in late imperial times. Indeed, the example is so rich in its description of "relationships" in traditional China that it deserves extensive recording here.

It happened, so the authors of Hong Lou Meng reported, that a poor peasant woman named "Granny Liu," wished to go to visit the enormously powerful Lady Wang, matriarch of the vast Jung Mansion and its more than three hundred servants in Nanjing. Granny Liu's purpose was to gain a favor for her son-in-law who had fallen on bad times. Granny Liu knew that there
was a distant, indeed marginal family link between her son-in-law and the
father of Lady Wang (the son-in-law's grandfather had been a petty official
who worked for Lady Wang's father at one time and had "joined family with
them calling himself Wang's nephew"). Furthermore, for reasons left
unstated (but perhaps when her daughter was betrothed to the present
son-in-law), Granny Liu and her daughter had once called on the Wang family
in Nanjing and incidentally met the young Lady Wang before she married into
the Jung Mansion. Hence, there was another link with Lady Wang. Realizing
that Granny Liu had actually met Lady Wang previously, the son-in-law urged
her to travel to Nanjing herself to seek Lady Wang's assistance. What
follows is the description of how Granny Liu got into the Jung Mansion:

"Since this is your idea, mother, and you've called on the lady
before, why not go there tomorrow and see how the wind blows?"

"Aiya! 'The threshold of a noble house is deeper (i.e., more
set-back and therefore more private) than the sea.' And who am I? The
servants there don't know me, it's no use my going."

"That's no problem. I'll tell you what to do. Take young Pan-erh
with you and ask for their steward Chou Jui. If you see him, we stand
a chance. This Chou Jui had dealings with my old man and used to be on
the best of terms with us."

"I know him too. But how will they receive me after all this
time? Still, you're a man (i.e., it was especially difficult for
male strangers to enter a compound) and too much of a fright to go, and
my daughter's too young to make a show of herself (i.e., a young
female was not allowed to go out by herself). I'm old enough not to
mind risking a snub. If I have any luck we'll all share it. And even
if I don't bring back any silver the trip won't be wasted--I'll have
seen a little high life."

They all laughed at that, and that same evening the matter was
settled... .

(The next day, Granny Liu and young Pan-erh arrived in Nanjing
and) asked their way to Jung Ning Street. But (she) was too overawed
by the crowd of sedan-chairs and horses there to venture near the stone
lions which flanked the Jung Mansion's main gate. Having dusted off
her clothes... she timidly approached the side entrance where some
arrogant, corpulent servants were sunning themselves on long benches,
engaged in a lively discussion.

page 157
Granny Liu edged forward and said, "Greetings, gentlemen."

The men surveyed her from head to foot before condescending to ask where she had come from.

"I've come to see Mr. Chou who came with Lady Wang when she was married," she told them with a smile. "May I trouble one of you gentlemen to fetch him out for me?"

The men ignored her for a while, but finally one of them said, "Wait over there by that corner. One of his family may come out by and by."

An older man interposed, "Why make a fool of her and waste her time?" He told Granny Liu, "Old Chou has gone south, but his wife is home. His house is at the back. Go round to the back gate and ask for her there."

Having thanked him, Granny Liu . . . (went) to the back gate. Several pedlars had put down their wares there (i.e., in the Jung Mansion, the important servants' quarters were off to one side near a back gate, hence this would be where itinerant merchants would congregate) and about two dozen rowdy servant boys had crowded round those selling snacks and toys.

(Granny Liu) caught hold of one of these youngsters and asked, "Can you tell me, brother, if Mrs. Chou is at home?"

"Which Mrs. Chou?" he retorted. "We have three Mrs. Chous and two Granny Chous. What's her job?"

"She's the wife of Chou Jui who came with Lady Wang."

"That's easy then. Come with me."

He scampered ahead of her through the back gate and pointed out a compound. "That's where she lives." Then he called, "Auntie Chou! Here's a granny asking for you."

Mrs. Chou hurried out to see who it was while Granny Liu hastened forward crying, "Sister Chou! How are you?"

It took the other some time to recognize her. Then she answered with a smile. "Why, it's Granny Liu! I declare, after all these years I hardly knew you. Come on in and sit down."

Smiling as she walked in, Granny Liu remarked, "The higher the rank, the worse the memory. How could you remember us?"

... After a short exchange of polite inquiries, she asked Granny Liu whether she just happened to be passing or had come with any
special object.

"I came specially to see you, sister, and also to inquire after Her Ladyship's health. If you could take me to see her, that would be nice. If you can't, I'll just trouble you to pass on my respects."

This gave Mrs. Chou a shrewd idea of the reason for her visit. Since Kou-erh (Granny Liu's son-in-law) had helped her husband to purchase some land, she could hardly refuse Granny Liu's appeal for help. Besides, she was eager to show that she was someone of consequence in this household.

"Don't worry, granny," she replied with a smile. "You've come all this way in good earnest, and of course I'll help you to see the real Buddha (i.e., a common respectful reference to powerful, elder matriarchs). Strictly speaking, it's not my job to announce visitors. We all have different duties here. My husband, for instance, just sees to collecting rents in the spring and autumn or escorting the young gentlemen in his spare time, while all I do is accompany the ladies on their outings (i.e., "outings" within the vast estate). But since you're related to Her Ladyship and have come to me for help as if I were someone, I'll make an exception and take in a message for you."

"I must tell you, though, that things have changed here in the last five years. Her Ladyship doesn't handle much business any more but leaves everything to the second master's wife. And who do you think she is? My lady's own niece, the daughter of her elder brother and the one whose childhood name was 'Master Feng'."

"You don't say!" cried Granny Liu. "No wonder I predicted such great things for her. In that case I must see her today."

"Of course... Even if you don't see her Ladyship you must see her, or your visit will have been wasted."

"Buddha be praised! I'm most grateful for you help, sister."

"Don't say that. 'He who helps others helps himself.' All I need do is say one word--no trouble at all." She sent her little maid in to see if the Lady Dowager's meal had been served.

(After some time)... the maid came back to report. "The old lady's finished her meal. The second mistress is with Lady Wang."

At once Mrs. Chou urged Granny Liu to hurry. "Come on! Our chance is while she has her own meal. Let's go and wait for her. Later on such a crowd will be going there on business, we'll hardly get a look in. And after her nap there'll be even less chance to see her."
Granny Liu followed Mrs. Chou by winding ways to Chia Lien's quarters, then waited in a covered passageway while Mrs. Chou went past the spirit screen into the court (so that), before Hsi-feng's (i.e., the second mistress and heir to Lady Wang's position as matriarch) return, (she could explain) who Granny Liu was to (Hsi-feng's) trusted maid Ping-erh. . .

"She's come all this way today to pay her respects. In the old days Her Ladyship always used to see her (i.e., Mrs. Chou here exaggerates to imply a direct and early guanxi between Lady Wang and Granny Liu, and thereby also protected her own position in case it should turn out that Lady Wang refused to recognize Granny Liu), so I'm sure she'll receive her; that's why I've brought her in. When your mistress comes I'll tell her the whole story. I don't think she'll blame me for taking too much on myself."

Ping-erh decided to invite them in to sit down (i.e., each step of the way a senior maid or servant acts as a buffer) and accordingly Mrs. Chou went out to fetch them. As they mounted the steps to the main reception hall, a young maid raised a red wool portiere and a waft of perfume greeted them as they entered. . . .

Ping-erh's silk dress, her gold and silver trinkets, and her face which was pretty as a flower made Granny Liu mistake her for her mistress. But before she could greet her as "my lady," she heard the girl and Mrs. Chou address each other as equals and realized that this was just one of the more favored maids. . . .

The next instant (Granny Liu) heard a loud done like the sound of a bronze bell or copper chimes repeated eight or nine times. Before she could clear up this mystery, a flock of maids ran in crying: "The mistress is coming!"

Ping-erh and Mrs. Chou stood up at once, telling Granny Liu to wait (in the room) till she was sent for. They left her straining her ears, with bated breath, as she waited there in silence.

In the distance laughter rang out. Ten to twenty serving women swished through the hall into another inner room, while two or three bearing lacquered boxes came to this side to wait. . . A long silence followed. . . Next Mrs. Chou came to beckon (Granny Liu) with a smile.

. . . A soft scarlet flowered portiere hung from brass hooks over the door (to the inner room), and the kān (i.e., a raised, brick bed or couch that is heated by coals underneath) below the south window was spread with a scarlet rug. Against the wooden partition on the east (side of the kān) were a back rest and bolster of brocade with chain design next to a glossy satin mattress with a golden centre. Beside them stood a silver spittoon.
Hsi-feng (the second mistress) had on the dark sable hood with a pearl-studded band which she wore at home. She was also wearing a peach-red flowered jacket, a turquoise cape lined with grey squirrel.

... Dazzlingly rouged and powdered she sat erect... Ping-erh stood by the kăng with a small covered cup on a little lacquer tray, but Hsi-feng ignored the tea.

... "Why haven't you brought her in yet?" she finally asked. Then raising her head to take the tea, she saw Mrs. Chou with (Granny Liu) before her...

Granny Liu had already curtseyed several times to Hsi-feng who now hastily said:

"Help her up, Sister Chou, she mustn't curtsey to me. Ask her to be seated. I am too young to remember what our relationship is, so I don't know what to call her."

"This is the old lady I was just telling you about," said Mrs. Chou.

Hsi-feng nodded.

By now Granny Liu had seated herself on the edge of the kăng...

"When relatives don't call on each other they drift apart," observed Hsi-feng with a smile. "People who know us would say you're neglecting us. Petty-minded people who don't know us might well imagine we look down on everyone else."

"Gracious Buddha!" exclaimed Granny Liu. "We're too hard up to gad about. And even if Your Ladyship didn't slap our faces for coming, your stewards might take us for tramps."

"That's no way to talk!" Hsi-feng laughed. "We're simply poor officials trying to live up to our grandfather's reputation. This household is nothing but an empty husk left over from the past. As the saying goes: 'The Emperor himself has poor relations.' How much more so in our case."

... (In the meantime, Mrs. Chou went to report to Lady Wang. As Lady Wang was busy with other guests she could not see Granny Liu, but sent word through Mrs. Chou that:)

"She hopes you (Hsi-feng) will entertain (Granny Liu) and thank (her) for coming. If (she) just dropped in for a call, well and good. If (she has) any business (she) should tell you, madame."
... "If you've nothing special, all right," said Mrs. Chou. "If you have, telling our second mistress is just the same as telling Her Ladyship."

She winked at Granny Liu who took the hint. Although her face burned with shame, she forced herself to pocket her pride and explain her reason for coming.

"By rights, I shouldn't bring this up at our first meeting, madame. But as I've come all this way to ask your help, I'd better speak up. . . ."

(Granny Liu went on to explain the family's financial difficulties, and then was invited to have a meal in a separate room. Mrs. Chou then returned to Hsi-feng's room to report further what Lady Wang had said about Granny Liu.)

"Her Ladyship says that they don't really belong to our family," Mrs. Chou told (Hsi-feng). "They joined families because they have the same surname and their grandfather was an official in the same place as our master. We haven't seen much of them these last few years, but whenever they came, we didn't let them go away empty handed. Since they mean well, coming to see us, we shouldn't slight them. If they need help, madam should use her own discretion."

(Granny Liu then came back into the room.)

"Sit down now and listen to me, dear old lady," said Hsi-feng. "I know what you were hinting at just now. We shouldn't wait for relatives to come to our door before we take care of them. But we've plenty of troublesome business here, and now that Her Ladyship's growing old she sometimes forgets things. Besides, when I took charge recently I didn't really know all our family connections. Then again, although we look prosperous you must realize that a big household has big difficulties of its own, though few may believe it. But since you've come so far today and this is the first time you've asked me for help, I can't send you away empty-handed. Luckily, Her Ladyship gave me twenty taels of silver yesterday to make clothes for the maids, and I haven't yet touched it. If you don't think that too little, take that to be going on with. . . If you refuse it, I shall think you're offended. . . It's growing late, I won't keep you for no purpose. Give my compliments to everyone at home to whom I should be remembered." (Cao, 1791; 1978 English edition, Vol. 1, pp. 88-101.)

As the authors of the Hong Lou Meng put it, Granny Liu left that day in a "flutter of joy" with her great success. What they did not fully note was that, while her joy was due to the gift of twenty taels of silver, it must
also have been especially due to the further realization that she had accomplished something of even greater importance—she had fully reaffirmed her small family’s guanxi with the great Jung Mansion, an asset far more significant than her twenty taels of silver.

As is abundantly apparent from the tale of Granny Liu, entry into the grand compounds of the super-elite was—for those whose guanxi was not evident—something akin to the feat of entering a highly classified government installation in modern times. Without the right passwords (the names, places and connections clearly identified) entry was simply forbidden. Those who had no guanxi either with the family or with the servants had no legal or accepted access to the compound whatsoever. They were fully excluded from the compound and the family itself, and were left, like Swallow, outside the walls to ponder over what might be inside the walls.

No wonder then that, like all other outsiders, Swallow could learn about his hutong neighbors mainly by observing the occasional events of life around the gate associated with those who lived within. He learned, for example, that one of his neighbors, whose gateway was imposing and painted red, indicative of prominence, was a politician who could be judged in or out of favor by virtue of the density of callers and automobiles that frequented the lane. But, as Swallow noted:

I see little of my other neighbors and as a rule the only outward signs of life in their houses are a few children playing around the doorway and the sight of the amah (older female servant), or maidservant bargaining with a pedlar. It is only on certain occasions, such as the passing of a funeral procession, that one becomes aware of the number of people who comprise the household of a well to do Chinese family. It is then that the children, concubines, the female relatives, the amahs and servants cluster around the gate and watch with absorbing interest the cortege with its long line of hired mourners and white dressed relations. (Swallow, n.d., p. 17.)
Indeed, save for the occasional amah or maid servant, only under such circumstances as a funeral would Swallow or any outsider normally see the female members of the family. The world inside the wall was securely private and for none more so than the women of the household, and almost equally so for the children, both of whom rarely if ever left the compound save as was essential (or, in the case of children, as may have resulted from their adventurism). As Kong Demao, a descendant of Confucius (Master Kong), who from 1917 to 1937 lived in the huge and vastly formal Kong family compound in Qufu, described her own childhood experience:

I lived at the Kong Mansion for a total of twenty years. In those days, the worlds within and without the Mansion were completely separated from one another, and (I) had very little knowledge of the life of the people who lived beyond the Mansion's high walls. Out of curiosity, I would stand on a pile of earth inside the grounds, clinging to the top of the wall and secretly watching what went on outside, but apart from this I had few chances to experience life beyond the main gates. (Kong and Ke, 1984, p. 288–89.)

To be sure, Kong Demao's experience was special. The quasi-sacred and thoroughly official Kong mansion and the rigidly formal family of Confucius were not commonplace. They were, rather, the veritable epitome of the scholar-official and elite tradition, establishing clan rules so rigid as to exceed imperial and traditional Confucian codes. Most assuredly, those who lived beyond the Kong family walls in the vernacular courtyards of Qufu were not nearly so confined as their Kong mansion neighbors.

The lives and courtyard compounds of the common people were, in fact, necessarily less confined. Hence, for example, in speaking of the working class homes in his hutong, Swallow noted that, in contrast to the homes of the "better class residents:"

page 154
In the smaller houses . . . and especially where, from reasons of economy, two or three families share the same premises, . . . privacy is impossible and everything that goes on is a matter of common knowledge. (Swallow, n.d., p. 15.)

For the craftsman, clerk, merchant, and other common town dweller life beyond the walls was an everyday affair. Where wealthy or powerful households had servants to interface daily with the world beyond the walls, thereby acting as guards, buffers and filters for those within, the families of poor commoners had, of course, to fend for themselves with life on the streets. And, as Swallow noted, poorer families had often to share compound space with one or more non-related families.

Indeed, as described by the Venerable Mrs. Ning to Ida Pruitt in the mid-1930's, the lives and courtyards of commoners were different. Mrs. Ning's story and the story of her homes are so typical of the working class poor of traditional Chinese society that they bear extensive repeating here.

When Mrs. Ning was three years old in the year 1870, for example, she and her parents were reduced by economic necessity to move to a small courtyard in the town of Penglai in Shandong Province. The courtyard was convenient, being located near the market garden where her father worked, and the house was also relatively large, being three jian or three rooms wide, two of which were sufficient to contain a bed (kang), wardrobe and other furnishings, and one of which was a large kitchen. Still, within the courtyard there was also a second house on the east wall in which another family lived. As Mrs. Ning put it, "This was the first time that our family had lived in a court with others. The house had a thatched roof. Before we had always lived in houses with tile roofs." (Pruitt, 1945/1967, p. 20.) The decline in family fortune was thereby rendered obvious.
However, the move also had certain advantages. On the one hand, as Mrs. Ning noted, her own mother had lived a secure and sheltered life behind walls and was not well suited to cope with the difficulties she now confronted. "How could such a person," Mrs. Ning asked, "living behind walls, know how to manage poverty?" There was presumably a valuable lesson to be learned in coping with poverty which, among other things, meant having to live with the world outside the walls. On the other hand, for a child there were also other advantages to life in the small, shared courtyard, not least of which was greater license. As Mrs. Ning noted, "I was a difficult child to manage. I liked to play too much. I played with my brother and sisters and the children of the neighbors. We played on the streets and in the garden next door." Later, moreover, when the family fortunes declined even further, and they were forced to move to a small house in the corner of the market garden, there was opportunity for even greater license. As Mrs. Ning put it, "The wall between the house and the rest of the garden was low. I was a very mischievous child. When I was naughty and my mother wanted to beat me, I would run and jump over the wall and she could not catch me."

Still, whatever the pleasures such greater freedom might provide and whatever the advantages to be gained from the lessons of life beyond the wall, even among the poor the confinement of the wall eventually won out. However different their lives may have been from that of the rich, the poor were also enwalled. Mrs. Ning described the process so well that we should here simply allow her to speak for herself:

When I was thirteen my parents stopped shaving the hair from around the patch of long hair on my crown. I was no longer a little girl. My hair was allowed to grow and was gathered into a braid at the back of my head... Part of the hair was separated and braided into a little plait down my back. When the little braid was gathered into the big braid, I was a woman and not allowed out of the gate. So we have a saying that the
girl with the full head of hair is not as free as the one with a bare head, that is, partly shaved. And at the age of thirteen I was taught to cook and sew. My father was a very strict man. We were not allowed, my sister and I, on the street after we were thirteen. People in Penglai were that way in those days. When a family wanted to know more about a girl who had been suggested for a daughter-in-law and asked what kind of a girl she was, the neighbors would answer, "We do not know. We have never seen her." And that was praise. (Pruitt, 1945/1967, p. 29.)

Such confinement was, to be sure, particularly true for females. As Mrs. Ning reported at length, except on occasions when they were required to venture out, as when returning to the patriarchal home on obligatory filial visits to their parents, the women of Penglai could at best only approach the gates of their household compounds to observe events on the streets. Indeed, standing just on the inside of the opened gate was a favored pastime. But those who dared venture just outside the gate were invariably asking for trouble. And those who, forced by economic need, ventured forth to earn a living were objects of scorn. As Mrs. Ning put it:

A woman could not go out of the court. If a woman went out to service, the neighbors all laughed. They said, "So and so's wife has gone out to service." Or they said, "So and so's daughter has gone out to service." I did not know enough even to beg. So I sat home and starved. I was so hungry one day that I took a brick, pounded it to bits, and ate it. (Pruitt, 1945/1967, p. 55.)

Indeed, at times, confinement behind the walls—with all of its internalized obligations to superiors within—could become so oppressive as to induce a kind of "craziness." As Mrs. Ning told it, after having had a particularly severe argument with her mother-in-law:

My sister went crazy. In Penglai it is the custom for the women to stand in their gateways in the evenings to watch whatever may be passing by. When my sister went to the gate that evening she did not stop and watch as is the custom, but went out of the gate and walked south. . . She walked three li to the village of the Three Li Bridge. All the people came out to see the crazy woman. The cry went out for all to come and see the crazy woman. (Pruitt, 1946, 1967, p. 31.)
If the neighbors were unkind, they were, in one sense, also right. Those who forgot or who ignored the wall did indeed go "crazy." It was, after all, the purpose of the wall to delineate inside and outside and thereby sustain order within the family and separation from the outside world—which is to say the wall was to keep people sane.

Still, a certain "craziness" was not uncommon. That there was a popular explanation for such strange behavior is perhaps best expressed in the folk belief in a special demon called the dang qianq qui or "wall building demon." According to the legend of this particular demon, it often happened that when someone was walking alone, especially at night, they might suddenly find themselves surrounded by a four-sided wall, and feel as if they had been thrown into prison. In fact, so it was said, they had met up with none other than dang qianq qui. Understandably, dang qianq qui seemed to have had a particular liking for the residents of old Beijing. He was one of the common "ghosts" listed by Swallow in his recording of popular folk tales among the inhabitants of the hutong courtyards of early twentieth century Beijing. (Swallow, n.d., 129.) But, the demon was also well known to inhabitants of most traditional Chinese cities before 1949.

If the folk tale is correct, dang qianq qui did not discriminate between male or female, young or old. Moreover, if one encountered him, the only way to deal with him was not to go "crazy" by trying to run away. It did no good to try to run away. Rather, the folk prescription for dealing with this evil fellow was to squat down, stare directly ahead and then cover one’s face with one’s hands. After a time, the demon would go away and the person would be free to move along as before. Squatting down and covering
one's face, at least for a time, seems to have been the only cure for this particular affliction. After all, there was nowhere to go without finding oneself confined by four-sided walls.

4. The Order Within

The privacy of the inner court world was, of course, not impermeable. Rather, access was exclusive, a function first of membership in the family and, second, according to the prescribed rules of friendship, social relations, and rank. Similarly, the inner court world was itself ordered into relatively discrete spaces, access to which was again according to prescribed rules. Figuratively, the inner court world was itself a world of walls within walls.

Although the internal order of the inner court world varied according to scale and according to the means of the inhabitants, certain general rules of status place applied in virtually all cases. For the sake of greater clarity here these can be listed by order of prominence as follows:

1. Ancestral Hall and Formal Greeting Room/Dining
2. Sleeping Room of the Head of Household
3. Sleeping Room of the Wife of the Head of Household
4. Rooms of the Eldest Son of the Head of Household
5. Rooms of the Unmarried Daughters
6. Rooms of the Eldest Son's Wife (and Children)
7. Rooms of Grand Children
8. Rooms of the Next Order Sons
9. Rooms of the Next Order Sons' Wives and Children
10. Guest Rooms
11. Secondary Wife of Head of Household and Children
12. Servants' Quarters
13. Kitchens, Facilities
14. Storage
Obviously, courtyards of the working class poor were spartan and, as noted earlier, they could be shared by multiple, unrelated families. But even in the single-room household, a basic Confucian ritualized order would be latent in the allocation of space regardless of scale. If one moves through schematic renderings of three different scaled examples, the ordering will perhaps be more apparent.

1. Basic Model

```
N
I 1 & 2 : Family Altar
I Husband : =====
I Wife : 1
I Child : I
I____________I I
South
Front Gate
```

2. Advanced Model

```
W
I 1 I 1 I 2 I
I Head of : I
I Household : =====
I : 1
I I
I ______ I ______ I ______ I
I 4 I Ancestral Hall I
I Family Dining I I E
I 6 I
I _____ I
I 13 I
I _____ I
I 12 I
I ______ I
I _ _ COURTYARD
I ___ I
I 9 I
I _____ I
I 11 I I 11 I 11 I
I 11 I I 11 I I
South
Front Gate
```
3. More Advanced Model

North

Perimeter

Wall

Garden Gate

GARDEN

I I 1 & 2 I I + with

I 1

or I + Sunlight

I + Reflecting

ALTAR

I 2 I + Back Wall

I + and

Corridor

I I I

Garden Gate +

++

++

++++

++

++++

++

++++

++

++++

++

++++

++

++++

++

++++

++

+++...

South

Front Gate with External Spirit Wall

page 171
Each of these can be described as a kind of "bare bones" layout model to which, in real life cases, one is forced to add or subtract architectural and functional elements. It was not uncommon, for example, that the basic model noted above was reduced further in the homes of the working poor, such that what is here depicted as two side rooms were divided by cloth screens to house two separate families, and the ancestral hall-eating area became a common kitchen-eating area for both families, used according to an agreed upon schedule. For the poor, ancestral halls invariably gave way to ancestral tablets or to small ancestral shrines located within the private reserves of their respective principal room. One can today see much the same phenomenon in the apartment dwellings of the urban poor in Hong Kong where, because of the lack of space, forests of ancestral shrines are sometimes to be found on the roof-tops of high rise tenements and much reduced versions in tablet form may reside on the main wall of the living quarters.

In the case of the courtyards of the upwardly mobile, it was common to add side gardens, small side courts with studies or libraries, trees, and other courtyard furnishings. As is perhaps apparent from the sketch of a typical (indeed, classic) Beijing si he yuan that serves as the frontispiece for this study, many "middle class" courtyard houses in the City of Beijing were a cross between Model 2 and Model 3.

As depicted here, the world inside the compound was a world of walls within walls--of spatial distinctions and order based on the Confucian codes, a total world basically closed to the outside, but also to one degree or another closed even to those who lived within, save for those who held the most senior status ranks. Although the order within necessarily varied
from one family to the next, depending on the size of the family involved, certain general rules applied throughout. For the sake of some simplicity here these rules can be summarized as follows:

In general, status place within the compound increased with distance from the main entrance. The ancestral shrine or tablet and the location of the main house, the residence of the head of household, his wife and eldest son was, therefore, normally at the far end of the compound. For reasons already noted, it was usually situated on the main south-north axis, hence near the center of the north wall of the compound. Subordinate children had their rooms in the east or west wings, depending on their date of birth (hence, rank), with minor girls usually located in close proximity either to their parents (if their parents' rooms were deep into the interior) or their grandparents. As girls were married young and left their family compounds to live in the compounds of their husbands, there was seldom a need to allocate space to unmarried daughters per se, save as would be allocated to them as minor children.

In multi-courtyard compounds, the first and second courtyards were invariably separated by a formal guest greeting hall. Frequently too the guest greeting hall did double duty as a formal meeting hall for the family and would, therefore, also often include a large altar over which would be hung a portrait of the ancestral forebearer. In this respect, the hall could also be considered a formal ancestral hall. It was, in any case, a taboo boundary, for guests could not penetrate beyond this hall into the compound.

Lowest status space in the compound was also, in effect, defined by the taboo boundary of the guest greeting hall. In general, low status space
meant locations close to this hall or, more importantly, close to the entry
gate, hence to the south. Therefore, save for the most intimate
personal servants, family servants invariably resided in the first courtyard
adjacent to or on the south wall. Service areas were also usually allocated
low status place in the compound. Kitchens, for example, were of two main
types: compound kitchens for the whole joint family usually located
together with the servants' quarters or sometimes simply attached to the
compound as a "dirty kitchen" outside the main walls as a separate building,
or individual family kitchens which were usually small and took up space
somewhere on the east or west wings or on the south wall. Interestingly,
despite the grand culinary traditions of China, kitchens do not figure
prominently as status areas and, unlike the French, seemed to have been
regarded by the Chinese as a necessary evil in the household compound.

More obviously, an even less regarded place was assigned the family
privy. Indeed, the two, kitchen and privy, were frequently located adjacent
to one another or near one another as a matter of convenience for the
traditional waste disposal system, i.e., the collection of organic waste
material by so-called "nightsoil collectors" for treatment and distribution
to farmers as fertilizer. This did not, however, include "bathrooms." As
bath water was provided by small porcelain basins in each room, most family
compounds had no bathrooms per se. Full scale baths were taken in public
bathhouses, a tradition similar to the modern Japanese bathhouse, except
that the sexes were generally partitioned in China. Wealthy heads of
household sometimes did have their own private bathhouse, but these were
invariably for his use alone (or with whoever he might invite to join him).
This suffices to describe the basic organization of space within the compound. However, once beyond the limits of the merely "upwardly mobile" and into the realm of the scholar-official and gentry elite of Confucian society, there was a vastly more complicated labyrinth-like version of courtyards within courtyards within gardens and gardens within courtyards extending—as was intended—for all appearances without limit. At this scale, the ultimate model was, of course, the residential compound of the Emperor himself, known simply as Da Nei or "The Great Within."

The imperial residence was a compound whose rich complexity virtually defies accurate description. Hence, even those who, like Reginald Johnston, in modern times gained intimate knowledge and access to the inner court world, could only barely scratch the surface of that complexity. Johnston was the British tutor of the last Qing Emperor, the child-king, Pu Yi or as he was known by his reign title, the Xuan Tong Emperor. For five years, from 1919 to 1924, Johnston lived within the walls of the Forbidden City, and of Western writers, his memoir (Twilight in the Forbidden City) offers one of the most intimate glimpses into the world of the inner palaces of the imperial court. (Johnston, 1934/1985, pp. 160-79.)

As Johnston well knew, by 1919 the official residences of the Xuan Tong Emperor were but a shadow of their former selves, being reduced by Republican decree to the northern, innermost palaces and gardens of the Zi Jin Cheng or "Purple Forbidden City." Nevertheless, even this greatly reduced palace compound was a complex maze of courtyards, gardens, palaces, side courts, libraries, storage houses, eunuch and servant quarters and other areas, the access to which was governed strictly according to traditional Confucian protocol (or at least as strictly as was possible in
light of the reduced financial circumstances of the court and its thirteen-
year-old Emperor).

We cannot here give complete attention to the many different
compartments of even this reduced "Forbidden City," as it would require a
study unto itself. However, we need here only note further that each of the
palaces and courtyards mentioned had its own special and highly codified
access protocol depending first on the rank of the resident and second on
the rank of the visitor.

By the time Johnston was writing there were only six imperial residents
in the palace compound including: the Emperor, his Empress, his secondary
consort, and four "empress dowagers." The Emperor himself lived in the Yang
Xin Tian palace ("Yang Hsin Tien" in Johnston's romanization). Rebuilt in
1802 and the residence of several previous emperors, the Yang Xin Tian was
located just to the west of the courtyard of the inner throne hall (Qian
Qing Gong), which is to say, it was located with easy access to the throne
hall employed mainly for imperial family affairs such as weddings,
celebrations of the Emperor's birthday and, during Pu Yi's brief residence,
the place where the Seals of Imperial Authority were kept. To the north and
northwest of his personal residence were, respectively, the two separate
compounds of his Empress (the Qu Xiu Gong or "Palace of Treasured Beauty,"
depicted in Johnston's sketch map as the "Ch'u Hsiu Kung"), and of his
Second Consort (the Chang Chun Gong or "Palace of Everlasting Spring,"
depicted in Johnston's sketch map as the "Ch'ang Ch'un Kung"). Both of the
latter were literally and figuratively behind that of the Emperor, his
Empress being housed directly to the rear on the same axis, while the palace
of his Second Consort being off-center and to the west—in fact nearer to
the residence of the Emperor but ceremonially more distant. The empress
dowagers had their private compounds either further to the north (in the
Zhong Hua Gong) or to the east (in the Yong He Gong).

Following, but also exaggerating the Confucian filial canon to the
effect that there could be only one male Head of Household, the male
imperial relatives, including Pu Yi's father, brother and uncles lived in
palatial estates outside the Forbidden City mainly to the north and
northwest. Access to the imperial compound by them was according to their
ranks and by protocol. Of these, only Pu Yi's natural father, Prince Chun,
was exempt from such ceremonies as the ketou (koutou) or bowings (literally,
"knocking one's head on the ground") to the Emperor. Being the natural
father of the Emperor, by Confucian canons of filial piety it would have
been improper for him to ketou to his son. But, as his son was the
Emperor—and had, in any case, been officially adopted by the previous
Emperor, his uncle—Prince Chun had nonetheless to refer to his son as
wangye or "Your Imperial Majesty," and, like all others, had to receive
special imperial permission to approach the throne or to enjoy other
privileges, one of the most important of which was the right to ride a horse
within the imperial city walls. Among all the relatives of the Emperor
there were but few who, due to seniority in age and rank, were owed
ceremonial rights even superior to the Emperor, notably the empress
dowagers.

The ceremonies required of all who entered the imperial compound were
far too complicated and extensive for detailed reporting here, but they all
suffice to note that access was an extraordinarily exclusive affair
predicated on degrees of relationship to the Head of Household (the Emperor), on rank, and on privileges given to individuals in accordance with their service to the Emperor or to the Royal Family. The imperial tutor, Reginald Johnston, was himself especially privileged, but he too had to assume a subordinate position in his comings and goings within the compound save that, as Pu Yi's own days in the Forbidden City came to their end (1924), the Emperor sometimes sought Johnston's personal advice and assistance.

For the Imperial Head of Household himself, despite the pomp and ceremony that wealth and power accorded, life in the Da Nei allowed little more than constant attention to the details of ceremony, all of which were actually managed (and funded) by the Nei Wu Fu or "Imperial Household Department." Indeed, this department was itself a fount of constant intrigue, being controlled by powerful eunuchs each of whom had his own status rank and privileges, and all of whom saw to the proper allocations of ceremony according to the Confucian and Imperial codes—or at least as they saw fit to interpret them. In this, as in so many other things, the emperors—or at least a weak emperor—was little more than a prisoner in his palace. Hence it was that Johnston wrote of the imperial palace:

If ever there was a palace that deserved the name of a prison, it is that palace in the Forbidden City of Peking in which the Emperor Shun-Chih pined for freedom, and in which the last but one of his successors, the Emperor Kuang-Hsu, ended his dismal days nearly twelve years ago. That ill-omened pile of buildings was an emperor's prison two hundred and sixty years ago, and an emperor's prison it remains to this day. (Johnston, 1934/1985, p. 303.)

That it was, indeed, a prison—albeit a golden prison—for the boy Emperor Pu Yi is more than amply revealed by his own autobiography, From
Emperor to Citizen. (Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, 1964.) But then, Pu Yi's experience was hardly the norm for Chinese emperors, and perhaps—much as in the case of the ancient Han Dynasty usurper, Wang Mang—strict attention to the formal details of the Confucian order was, after all, aimed mainly to underscore the legitimacy of the Imperial Mandate in the face of its Republican enemy. For other more powerful emperors, and for heads of households who ruled with greater and real authority, the walls and compartments of the compound were not so restrictive as Johnston suggests. Indeed, in the halcyon days of imperial strength, and in the household compounds of official elites and those who remained unaffected by the decline of the House of the Qing, the strict order, spatial and social, though always apparent and always effective, could be loosened in various and sometimes powerful ways.

One can cite many empirical examples of imposing, indeed awesome, courtyard compounds of the elite and the rich which, while following the appropriate codes, nonetheless also pursued generous elaboration and an aesthetic license that spoke of power and self-confidence. In those cases, the Confucian ordering of the landscape gave rise to what Ida Pruitt rightly called "endless variety within the pattern." (Pruitt, 1979, p. 10.)

Because these examples in fact reflect an endless variety in layout complexity and in decorative elaboration, any attempt to convey their uniformity necessarily misshapes that which made them special. Hence, of several tens of large compounds in the cities of Beijing and Suzhou visited by this author during the past few years, once beyond the required formal first one to three courtyards, none were the same in detail. In the context of the greater rigidity of the Confucian residential landscape, they
exhibited an almost breathtaking variety, as in their own time their inhabitants must also have enjoyed an almost breathtaking self-confidence.

Most of these compounds, of course, have long since fallen out of traditional use, so that one can now only surmise from their variety and complexity what lives were lived beyond the formal courts. Fortunately, there are clues to be found in the historical and the creative literature of China. Of the various and large family compounds that figure prominently in the creative literature of China, for example, none can surpass the descriptions provided by Cao Xuejin and Kao Ngo, the mid-to-late eighteenth century authors of the novel *Hong Lou Meng* or "Dream of the Red Chamber." (Cao Xuejin and Kao Ngo, 1791; 1978 edition in English.) We have already encountered it elsewhere in our discussion of the story of Granny Liu and her successful attempt to enter the great Jung Mansion. The novel as a whole purports to tell the story of two official, enormously rich, powerful and related clans, both of whose principal family estates (the Ning Mansion and the Jung Mansion) were in Nanjing. If fictional, the authors provided what is almost without question one of the most accurate descriptions to be found anywhere of the lives and the mansions of the ultra-rich and powerful elite of south-central China and the Jiangnan Region during what were for them the halcyon days of the reign of the Qian Long Emperor (1735-1795).

We do not have space here to indulge the temptation to extract and report upon the extraordinary complexities of the Jung and Ning mansions. We need, perhaps, only note the description of the Ning Mansion front gate to get a taste of what might lie inside. As the authors of *Hong Lou Meng* noted:

... They came to a street with two huge stone lions crouching on the north side, flanking a great triple gate with beast head knockers, in front of which ten or more men in smart livery were
sitting. The central gate was shut, but people were passing in and out of the smaller side gate. On a board above the main gate was written in large characters: Ningkuo Mansion Built at Imperial Command. (Cao, 1791; 1978 English edition, p. 35.)

Most assuredly, by Confucian canon and Imperial law, the gate foretold of enormous palaces and vast gardens hidden away behind the imposing walls. It was, indeed, the home par excellence of the super-rich and ultra-powerful, not to mention the decadent elite of southern China. What the gate did not say, but those who cared to read the novel Hong Lou Meng would discover, was that it was also only one of two such mansions on the street, the other being the Jung Mansion whose gate was equally imposing, and whose fortunes were caught up in the hands of a grand old matriarch and her daughter-in-law. Such was the stuff of which a great novel was made and, indeed, such too was the stuff of which much of the reality among the elites of traditional China was constituted.

Fortunately, we do not have to explore the many and complicated inner relationships and courtyards of the Ning or Jung estates to discover the larger social meaning of that landscape. Many vital clues can also be found in such real-life examples as was provided by Ida Pruitt's recounting of her remarkable visits with the elderly Madam Yin, the matriarch of a large, wealthy and official family who in the early twentieth century lived close to the old (seventeenth century) Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in the far northeastern corner of the greater walled city of Beijing. (Pruitt, 1979.) Although by no means as richly endowed or as complex as either the Jung Mansion or the Ning Mansion of Hong Lou Meng fame, the Yin Mansion at least provides a more digestible allotment of inner relationships and land.
Indeed, based partly on extensive field research in the cities of Beijing and Suzhou from 1983 to the present, on the historical record, on the *Hong Lou Meng* and other novels, and on records like that of Ida Pruitt's *Old Madame Yin*, I can here provide what is perhaps best described as a kind of overview picture of an elaborate compound. Like any picture, the superficial results can be observed immediately, but the finer grain reveals shadows of truths yet to be discovered. In this case, there are at least three truths. The first and predominant truth is the truth of order and regularity in the social meaning of the residential landscapes of Confucian China irrespective of scale and elaboration. The second and perhaps lesser truth is the truth of eccentricity in the same landscape, an eccentricity which, while subordinated and controlled, reveals itself as a measure of self-confidence and power, individual effort, and even a kind of freedom within the greater walls of control and authority in the Confucian order. The third truth is that however large or small, complex or simple, rigidly controlled or flexible, and whatever the eccentricities, the traditional Chinese house was first and last a temple to the supremacy of the Confucian *li*. In that sense too, it was a temple to male supremacy.

5. **Male Space: The House As Temple**

That the residential landscapes of Confucian China were ensquared, hierarchically ordered compounds has perhaps already been shown to reasonable effect. However, one important aspect of that order requires some further amplification, as it served to underscore not only the
sacerdotal nature of the spatial order, but also one of the most fundamental distinctions within the spatial and social order of the Confucian landscape—the distinction between men and women.

As already seen in the case of the magic square of the city and as attested to by shamanist and classical geomantic usages, the residential square was also a sacred space. The walled residential compound was, wherever possible, situated on the critical south-north axis. Similarly, its site was carefully chosen with due regard for dili and with the aid of geomancers. And, should ideal site and geomantic influence be less than propitious, the precise layout or the location of particular buildings could, with the most exacting geomantic advice, be strategically aligned or realigned so as to overcome site disadvantages. Similarly, all houses were consecrated, often by a combination of Daoist geomantic priests and Buddhist monks.

For that matter, no significant piece of household furniture or furnishing could be located without first considering its overall impact on the dili or fengshui of room, building, courtyard, compound and, therefore, on the fate of those who lived within. (Rossbach, 1983, pp. 103-40; Skinner, S., 1982, p. 108-18.) Indeed, just to be more certain, virtually all Chinese homes allocated strategic space to mirrors—not out of some inherent narcissism, but because mirrors not only helped confuse and, thereby keep out evil spirits, but also because if something was actually ill-located in the room, its unhealthy dili might be offset by its reflected opposite. Similarly, mirrors acted in some cases to reflect into the room good influences from the outside, like that of water and sunlight, both of which inferred to the geomancer a superfluidity of wealth and power.
The exact location of interior partition walls and the extensive use of multi-panelled screens served similar purposes. On the one hand, they acted to subdivide space for functional privacy. On the other hand, they also helped prevent the infiltration of evil spirits or their "killing arrows" which, by custom—and like normal arrows—could only travel in straight lines. As noted earlier, this too had its affect on the alignment of the main gate of the traditional compound, requiring that it be off center and ideally at the eastern edge of the southern wall. Similarly, its expression is found almost immediately upon entering any traditional compound in the appearance of the so-called "spirit wall," the purpose of which was not only to prevent outsiders from gaining glimpses into the inner court, but also to deflect evil spirits which, fortunately, would not be able to make the turn without losing much or all of their powers.

To be on the safe side, just as some evil spirits were more clever than others, the compounds of those who had the means and were therefore equally clever had more than one spirit wall. Sometimes upon entering large courtyard compounds one would have to make several twists and turns in order to get past the two or three spirit walls built at ninety degree angles to one another. In addition, especially powerful elites had large, formal main gates set well back from the street (extensive setbacks were a privilege and an exclusive right of the elite), and there was also often a special, free standing spirit wall outside the main gate. This acted not only as a sign of the resident head of household’s prestige and status rank, but also as a reflection of his greater need for protection. Though perhaps not of special interest to the owners of such compounds, the extra spirit wall outside the main gate also had the additional advantage of protecting the gateman from evil spirits too.
One could go on almost without limit in describing the manifold impact of geomancy, superstition and, more generously, religious principles in the arrangement of space. But, the point would be the same—the courtyard compound, like the city and, indeed, the state as a whole was a sacred space. However, it was also a sacred space with a special kind of social message related not to geomancy, but rather to the maintenance of filial, ancestral obligations and rites. The household compound was a kind of sacred space because it housed one of the two single most sacred and important objects of adoration in the Confucian order—the ancestral shrine or tablet. The second of these most important objects was itself only a more elaborate version in the form of the family ancestral shrine usually located at the site or in proximity to the tombs of the ancestors of the head of household.

We do not need here to engage in an extensive analysis of what has so often been described as "ancestor worship" in traditional China. Simply stated, popular Confucianism blended over time with Daoist and Buddhist influences and, perhaps, also retained some of its shamanist roots to indulge a form of ancestral worship akin to anthropomorphism. Traditional funerary practice and eschatological theories both confirm a popular and official belief in an afterworld populated by ancestral spirits. Similarly, traditional Chinese folk tales are replete with examples of ancestral ghosts inhabiting this earth, caught in a kind of earth-bound limbo awaiting their time in the nether world, just as they are also filled with examples of appeals to dead ancestors for aid in this life.

However, for all of that, it was not so much the worship, as it was the adoration of ancestors that made the compound sacred. Moreover, it was not
an indiscriminate adoration. Not all or everyone's ancestors were sacred in the compound, but only those on the male line. The compound was sacred, that is to say, not so much because it was consecrated ground. Rather, it was consecrated ground because it was the first and principal ground in which filial piety ruled supreme, a piety whose main (and indeed, with the exception of one's primary wife and one's mother, exclusive) objects were one's father's or one's husband's male ancestors at least to the third generation, and one's own father or husband--the head of household. The compound was sacred because it was the locus classicus of filial piety—the place where the secular trinity of ruler, father, and son was worshipped, and the place upon which the Confucian model of social order through seniority status rankings was founded.

Hence, among the distributions of other architectural elements in the compound, the location of the family ancestral hall or tablet listing the names and honorific titles of at least the three previous male heads of household took special pride of place. Normally, in a one-courtyard compound, the tablet-shrine occupied center place in the main, northern hall and, like the master of the house, faced south. Frequently too, in a two-courtyard compound, the first hall separating the two courtyards contained the family ancestral tablet-shrine. It was here that the head of household received formal guests, and it was here that the proprieties of filial piety guarded over the welfare of the compound—the ceremonial hall being also a boundary beyond which non-family visitors could not penetrate.

In larger and more complex compounds, however, the ceremonial greeting hall was often just that—a formal receiving room for the head of household to receive guests, conduct business, hold family conferences and the like.
In these cases, the ancestral hall was often located deeper into the
recesses of the greater compound, frequently in a temple-garden courtyard of
its own located just to the north (rear) and west of the head of household's
own master courtyard. It was, for example just such an arrangement that
figured prominently in the large compound of Ida Pruitt's friend and
informant, Madam Yin. As she described it:

We went forward (toward the west) through a gate into a courtyard
with a "rockery," a little rock mountain, perhaps ten feet high at
the central crest, on one side and a wall broken by two little
gates on the other. This court was back of the Main Courtyard,
the Master's Courtyard. I could see the back of the Main House
to the south of this little rock mountain, its ridge pole highest
of all in the compound. . . I wondered why there was a rock
mountain behind the Main Courtyard and the house of the Main
Courtyard, but when Lao Tai-tai (Madam Yin) turned north, away
from the rockery and started for the first of the little gates
saying, "This is the Hall of the Ancestors and that," pointing her
chin to the other little gate, "is the Hall of the Gods," I
understood. I thought of Coal Hill behind the Forbidden City, the
home of the Emperors. It too was an artificial mountain, between
the quarters of the living family and the ones devoted to those
who had joined the ancestors. . . It was necessary to separate the
quarters given to those living in the Western Heavens from the
quarters of those who still lived on earth. Although the line
between the living and the dead was very shadowy, a mere matter
of not seeing, it was necessary for those who had passed over to
understand that they return to visit their relatives only when
invited. This little "rock mountain" was the dividing line as
well as the protection.

As Ida Pruitt suggested, the layout evoked an image in miniature of the
plan of Prospect Hill, a walled, man-made, five-peaked hill located (for
reasons of dili) just north of the residential compound of the Forbidden
City. On the north face of the hill was sited the Imperial Ancestral
Portrait Hall (Shou Huang Tian), one section of which housed the imperial
portraits of the Qing Emperors, and within which the bodies of deceased
emperors lay in state before being moved to their imperial mausoleums.
However, the master of the Yin Mansion (or its previous owner) had also apparently sought to capture a "magic" similar to that of the forecourt of the imperial city, for Madam Yin showed Ida Pruitt two adjacent courtyard temples. The temple on the east was the ancestral shrine where the deceased old Master Yin had laid at rest before burial and where his ancestral shrine then resided along with that of his father and grandfather—three generations in all. The temple on the west was the "Hall of the Gods," housing the images of the Amidha Buddha, the Goddess of Mercy (Guan Yin), and the King of the Fox Fairies.

In this arrangement, the design replicated in miniature the layout of the two large temples standing in the forecourt of the Forbidden City, i.e., the formal Qing Imperial Ancestral Hall (Tai Miao, or literally "The Supreme Temple") located to the northeast of Tian An Men ("Gate of Heavenly Peace") just inside the Imperial City walls, and the "Temple of the Tutelary Gods" (She Ji) sometimes also referred to as the "Temple of Harvests" located directly west of the Tai Miao. The She Ji was itself derived of the most ancient shamanist traditions, the gongshe or sacred earth altar where pre-Zhou and Zhou period kings took their vows. Indeed, in the shamanist tradition, the earth altar was the symbol of the continuing power of the state, so much so that the formal expression for the destruction of a kingdom in pre-imperial times was simply, "the ruin of their altars of earth and of crops," i.e., their gongshe. (Wright, 1977, p. 39.) Together with the Imperial Ancestral Hall, the She Zhi balanced Confucian filial piety with the most arcane earth worship traditions to provide a maximum landscape symbol of legitimacy, hence their locus within the grounds of the Forbidden City at a critical-taboo divide between the Palace City (the "Great Interior") and the less great exterior Imperial City.
Whoever designed the Yin family mansion almost certainly had a similar idea in mind, save that they were located in the deepest recesses of the compound in taboo territory adjacent to the head of household. If necessarily smaller, it provided no less effective a statement that the household compound was, like its Imperial counterpart, a space filled with divine authority and with the ancient and sacred *li*—the rightful proprieties of controlled, structured, and hierarchically ordered distinctions, the most important of which were the superiority of males and of age. In this, the household compound, like the family system it housed, was a temple of male superiority. As Margery Wolf noted in the Introduction to *Old Madam Yin*:

The Chinese family system was organized around the kinship of men. Th ancestral rites performed in the lineage hall focused the patrilineal principle and celebrated the antiquity of the male line. Be he mythical or real, the founding ancestor was always male. Women were the property of their fathers' and then their husbands' lineages, but they became members of their husbands' lineage only after death. Men were born members of a lineage. The birth of a daughter who could not provide sons for her father's lineage was treated as a disappointment at best; the birth of a son—even one with a multitude of elder brothers—was cause for feasting and celebration. (Pruitt, 1979, p. vi.)

The traditional household compound was sacred first and foremost because its furnishings, architectural layout and the allocation of status space confirmed and affirmed the rightful dominance of the male head of household. As a first and irreducible Confucian code, with one important exception, males dominated over females in the compound, just as they dominated in society as a whole. Similarly, as a second and general rule, age dominated over youth in the compound, just as age seniority dominated in society as a whole. Indeed, the two rules reinforced one another so that, not only was the direct line of descent determined by the eldest male (by
definition, the head of the household), but so too were all critical family decisions, including the appropriate allocations of space within the compound. The household compound was, in this sense, a temple in celebration of the supremacy of elder males.

One consequence of this arrangement was the subordination of younger sons. Though by no means disinherited, since property was inherited by the zu not by individuals, younger sons nonetheless suffered a necessarily reduced status place in the family and, therefore, a reduced status space in the compound. By Confucian code, no doubt, they did have at least two opportunities to better their status rank; first, if they themselves provided grandsons before their elder brothers, the status of elder grandson could—especially if the elder brothers failed to have sons—elevate the positions of their fathers by default; and second, younger sons could functionally (though not ceremonially) elevate their status rank by obtaining official positions through the Imperial examination system higher than those of their elder brothers.

Nevertheless, by strict interpretation of the Confucian canon, juniors were always subordinate to seniors and, whatever the realities of life, a younger brother who, for example, obtained high official position in government owed ceremonial obedience and respect to his elder brother. His place in the family hierarchy, whatever his official rank in society, was determined by his date of birth, as was the location and prominence (though not necessarily the scale) of his house within the joint family compound. The net social effect was the formal subordination of younger males.

To be sure, the exigencies of family history frequently intervened in specific cases to permit certain deviations in practice. Hence, for
example, in the case of Madam Yin’s family, her husband had died and, by Confucian code and Imperial law, her first and eldest son (First Master) became head of household. However, in their case, the First Master did not live in the household compound in Beijing. Rather, he occupied the more senior official post of head of household of the family estate in Anhui Province, the family’s (Madam Yin’s husband’s) original home. Therefore, the next eldest son (Second Master) was the titular head of household in the Beijing compound, or as another of Ida Pruitt’s informants explained it, "It is the Second Master who counts... The Second Master is the Head of the Family here in Peking. He is the one who makes money (he owned a uniform factory). The Third Master is teaching in Tientsin but comes home often. He has one of the courtyards in the compound. The Fourth Master is at school in Paris..." (Pruitt, 1979, pp. 2-3.)

The elevation of the Second Master to the head of the Beijing household did not occur without other consequences. For one, his wife had produced only a daughter and was considered too sickly and too old at thirty-five years of age to produce the necessary male heir. His “secondary wife” (the polite term for concubine) was pregnant and, being only eighteen, was likely to produce the required male heir sooner than later. However, as the “secondary wife” had been purchased from "The House of the Wide Gates," at least to Madam Yin, the matriarch of the family, it was unseemly that the next in line to inherit the title of head of household should be produced of such lineage. Therefore, it was she who arranged, in a highly traditional and officially recognized maneuver, to have the Second Master and his primary wife adopt a male baby whose legal transfer and acquisition of the family name would occur prior to the birth of the secondary wife’s
child—thereby giving the adopted son prior right of title to head of household. (Hence it was also she who arranged to meet Ida Pruitt who, as it happened, was then head of the Social Services Department of the Peking Union Medical College Hospital and, not coincidentally, in charge of child adoptions.)

Another consequence of the elevation of the Second Master appeared also to have been the almost pathetic inability of the Third Master to cope with the situation. As Madam Yin put it, "... my Third is so silly. The Second took a concubine, so he must take one. The Second adopted a son, so he must adopt a child also. They have taken a little girl—an eight-year-old little girl. I think she is their amah's (maidservant's) daughter. Perhaps the amah talked them into it. Always he is copying his brother and not doing it as well." (Pruitt, 1979, p. 55.)

There were also other reasons in the case of Madam Yin's family for some potential problems in the ability of the sons to adjust to the situation of the death of the Old Master. Not the least of these was the fact that Madam Yin and the Old Master Yin had previously been married to others, their first spouses both having predeceased them, but not before producing offspring. In addition to the fact that Madam Yin had thereby broken traditional Confucian proscriptions against the remarriage of widows, the Second Master was actually a son by her first marriage. In short, there was much about Madam Yin and her family that was unconventional. Perhaps for this reason, there was here (just as we have seen elsewhere) a special need to maintain the appearance of orthodoxy—an effort that was well accomplished by the authoritative, almost Imperial arrangement of the Yin Mansion. So too was it accomplished by Madam Yin's careful attentions to
the right of inheritance of her own first born son, the Second Master. In this, Madam Yin was perhaps only acting out the traditional Confucian code of the proper parent and dowager mother—a role that was paralleled in the Imperial Family by the Empress Dowager, the often exceptionally powerful woman of the household whom even Emperors learned to fear.

6. Female Space

The general status of women in the Confucian social hierarchy was, as we have seen, that of a special kind of "outcast within." By strict interpretation of the Confucian codes, women were confined within the male-dominated square as chattel having none of the rights or privileges of men. They were in but not wholly of the compound—members not by birthright, but by marriage. Their status rank in society and in the compound, without question, was entirely derived. They were not persons so much as they were "wives," "daughters," and "mothers." Moreover, they acquired status and rank in society and in the family precisely insofar as they became so and so's wife and so and so's mother. Indeed, as a whole, women were saved from the status of true social outcasts because they did, after all, fulfill their primary function—the bearing of sons to honor fathers.

Daughters, as noted earlier, were a "disappointment" in principle because they contributed nothing to their father's ancestral line. Indeed, as girls were required to leave their patrilineal home upon marriage to join the lineage estate of their husbands, the birth of a daughter was not
infrequently regarded as a net reduction in the family fate and fortune. As Arthur Wolf put it, "from her father's point of view, a daughter is an outsider." (Wolf, A.; 1974, p. 148.) Hence, although disapproved by canon and imperial law, one common response to the birth of a daughter was female infanticide, an act presumably considered by those who perpetrated it, even if contrary to the codes, the lesser of two evils.

In principle, one consequence of their lowly status rank in the family was an equivalently low status space in the courtyard compound. Largely for this reason, females who had passed into puberty and remained unmarried were theoretically assigned the lowest status place among family members in the household compound. To make matters more complete, should an unmarried female member of the family be on the verge of death, she would often not be allowed to die within her father's compound. In such cases, a temporary structure would be constructed outside the walls of the compound and, after death, her ashes would be placed in some hidden corner until such time as her spirit (and the spirit of the ancestors of her father) could be appeased by a "ghost marriage." (Wolf, A., 1974, p. 149.) Perhaps fortunately for most women, then, marriage was commonly arranged quite early, often well before puberty and sometimes before birth.

As in many other preindustrial societies, to make their lowly status more complete, women in traditional China were also regarded as ritually polluted. During menstrual periods they were forbidden to participate in ancestral ceremonies or other sacred rites. (Ahern, 1975, pp. 169-90.) Similarly, menstruation, sexual intercourse, childbirth and other events that brought men or women into contact with the effluvia of the female body were considered unclean and dangerous. (Topley, 1975, p. 71.) Anyone who
came into contact with female effluvia was also considered temporarily polluted and was also not allowed to participate in the ancestral ceremonies.

Therefore, activities related to such contact were also, theoretically, to be carried out in areas of the compound well removed from the principal ceremonial halls, which is to say off the main axis of the compound, away from the ancestral hall—a matter of some difficulty, no doubt, for the poor, but of little constraint to those who could afford large compounds. For this reason, if for no other, among the rich and the official elites gardens and garden pavilions often figured prominently as places for assignations, seduction and sexual intercourse. Perhaps for this reason too, gardens also thereby acquired an erotic presence and meaning. But, as we will see in the following chapter, gardens were also—like women—not entirely of the Confucian family compound, even if they were fully in the compound.

In short, by Confucian code and canon, by imperial law and ideology, and by common practice women were fundamentally subordinate chattel with few if any privileges and no "rights" of their own. However, their condition and status was not permanent. There was, in one respect alone, the possibility for social transformation arising from marriage and the birth of a son.

As noted earlier, upon marriage, a woman automatically obtained the status ranking of her husband which, although entirely derived, gave her a specific place in the social hierarchy of his family and a specific space in the hierarchy of his family compound. Since the position was derived, of course, it could also change with any changes in the status of her husband,
whether upward or downward, depending mainly on the circumstances surrounding his father's and brothers' status rankings in the family.

Moreover, her status could change permanently or at least substantially if, in giving birth to a son, she contributed to (hence altered) the lineage of her husband. The birth of a son brought about an immediate elevation in her status (though not always her rank) in the family. Even more importantly, assuming the son survived through his own majority, by reason of his filial piety toward her, she would eventually become the dowager mother of a household of other women and children who were subordinate in status and rank to her. Under certain circumstances, in practice and by code, she could even assume functional, though usually not titular, control of the family compound in the role of an elder matriarch.

Because of the rules of filial piety emphasizing a son's obligations to his parents, including his mother, and because of the rules emphasizing superiority by seniority, the mother of a head of household held extraordinary power, and especially so if she was elderly and widowed. Ostensible power in the family increased with age. In the case of women, this had also the advantage of being roughly coincident with the end of menstruation, hence the practical end of ritual pollution. Furthermore, if a husband predeceased his first wife and mother of his eldest son, she would be the only remaining parent to whom was owed the maximum day-to-day filial obligations of their children. Although her and her husband's eldest son would assume the title, rank and status of head of household, the widowed mother could inevitably count on her superior position to become the effective control over the affairs of the family, and all the more so if her son was ill-acustomed to dominance after so many years of subordination to
both his father and mother. The elderly, widowed mother could become, in
her own world, a veritable Empress Dowager who could rule by chui lian ting
cheng ("lowering the screen and attending to affairs of state"), the process
whereby powerful empresses and empress dowagers issued instructions while
remaining concealed both in fact and metaphorically behind the Dragon Throne
of the Emperor. That this was commonplace in Confucian society is perhaps
best attested to by the fact that the trials and tribulations of sons and
daughters-in-law at the hands of scheming matriarchs is one of the most
important motifs in the creative literature of traditional China.

Simply stated, the power of a wife was a function first of the power of
her husband and of her place among the various women of her husband's
household, but even more fundamentally it was a function of the age and
status-rank of her son. Her power increased with age, culminating in
widowhood. It also increased with the number of sons she produced, not only
because there was, in this sense, a reserve supply of heirs, but also and
more directly because the more sons she had, the more daughters-in-law and
grandsons she could expect to eventually dominate. A childless woman and,
in particular, a woman with no sons had little or no authority, as it were,
because she had no one of junior rank over whom to reign.

The rules whereby wives and concubines reigned over other wives and
concubines were no less complicated than in the case of males. Indeed, they
were the mirrored image of male subordinaton rules, determined primarily by
the reflected rank orderings of their husbands. But in the case of women,
they were also ranked according to their having borne sons, by the age of
their sons, and by whom they had sons with.
In the case of old Madam Yin's family, for example, at the time Ida Pruitt met her, the wife of the Second Master was formally the wife of the new Yin family head of household. Among the women of the household she ranked just below old Madam Yin herself. But, as noted earlier, the wife of the Second Master had failed to produce a male heir. What was more, the Second Master's "secondary wife" or concubine was pregnant. Had his "secondary wife" produced a son before his primary wife, that son would theoretically become the official heir to the position of head of household. The sons of concubines usually, though not always, shared equal status with the sons of primary wives because both acquired lineage status through their father's line. Moreover, in effect, the "secondary wife" would have automatically become the mother of the heir, hence the future potential matriarch of the family and the rightful heir to old Madam Yin's position. It was, therefore, not merely a matter of "seemliness" alone that prompted Madam Yin to find an adopted son for the Second Master. She was also protecting the future rank of her primary daughter-in-law, an act which was, by canon and by code, entirely proper on her part even as it required a kind of 'sleight of nature' in maneuvering to formally adopt a grandson. In this, Madam Yin was, as apparently in many other things, a shrewd player in the game of derived familial power. But she was not exceptional.

The histories of traditional Chinese families are almost everywhere filled with examples of capable, cunning, and powerful mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law who were expert players at the game of family power, just as they are also filled with examples of those who, by luck of the draw (of a husband, of the birth of sons, of the dates of the births of sons, of an ill-disposed mother-in-law, and so on) were doomed to a life of complete
subjugation. For some wives and mothers, life behind the walls was indeed a life of hard labor in prison. For others, life behind the walls was also a game of familial intrigue filled with the delights of power. Probably for most, life behind the walls was a day-to-day blend of both. Still, with but few exceptions, among China's traditional elite and the rich, all women were nonetheless behind the walls and contained within the male-dominated, ensquared courtyard compound. If they were not, they were either members of the working poor (as in the case of old Mrs. Ning), or they were exceptional indeed.

That there were certain famous exceptions has not gone unnoticed. There were many in the creative literature as, for example, the character of Mu Lan, the tale of a heroic daughter who was so filial that she went to war in place of and wearing the garb of her elderly father and returned home triumphant with military honors. Moreover, there were two entire households filled with the example of powerful women in the popular novel *Hong Lou Meng*. Indeed, the theme is sufficiently strong in Chinese literature to suggest that, as Confucian convention restricted official reportage about women to stories about their devotion to their husbands and sons in such formal texts as the "Virtuous Women" sections of local county records (*xianzhi*), a strong but latent recognition of the importance of powerful women was left to the entirely unofficial literature such as novels.

However, there were also certain historical female figures who, if often vilified by the official histories, nonetheless succeeded in scaling the heights of power in traditional China. Of these, two are often cited: the case of the Tang Dynasty Empress Wu who established her own short-lived Zhou Dynasty, and the case of the Empress Dowager Ci Xi who for all practical
purposes ruled China from 1875 to 1888 and for all appearances as well as practical purposes from 1898 to her death in 1908. Although each of these cases (as, for that matter the more recent case of the third wife of Mao Zedong, Jiang Ching) are illustrative of females who rose to exceptional heights of power and prestige, it is also true that none did so without a special kind of legitimacy that was traced not to themselves, but to the rites of male dominance.

Empress Wu, for example, had risen to power in the first place because she was the wife of an Emperor of the Tang dynasty. Furthermore, in establishing her own dynasty, she was forced to resort to the title Wu Zi Tian, literally "Wu, Son of Heaven," as there was no way for her to legitimately assume the position of head of state without a nominal change in sex. She had to take on the magical name of "Son of Heaven" regardless of her own notions about the legitimacy of a female ruler. (Fitzgerald, C. P., 1956.)

Similarly, although Ci Xi did not resort to such devices, she nonetheless had first to resort to the traditional formula for powerful empress dowagers of rule by chui lian ting cheng ("lowering the screen and attending to affairs of state"). Furthermore, when she had her nephew, the Emperor Guang Xu arrested, and actually assumed the appearance of rule (1898), she did so by right of her dowager rank which, given her own longevity and experience at the "game" of familial intrigue, was assured to be superior in status and in rank in the family even to the Emperor. Although today (as during her own lifetime) a much vilified figure, even those who despised Ci Xi (for example, Reginald Johnston) had to admit that she played the "game" of status-rank according to the book of Confucian
filial obligations—it was just unfortunate for the Qing Imperial House and perhaps for China that she knew how to read the book so well. If Ci Xi did indeed manipulate the rules to her own advantage, she did so in no wise different in principle from the manipulation of Ida Pruitt’s old Madam Yin. Moreover, the rules were not hers. They were the rules of the male-dominated square. And, if Ci Xi was "exceptional" or, for that matter, if some women were "exceptional," she and they were so within the context of the larger Confucian social square. Otherwise they were, by definition, outcast and sub-human.

7. The Social Square

Save as might be further illustrated by the several tens of large courtyard houses in the cities of Beijing and Suzhou investigated by this author since 1982, little more need be said to demonstrate the overwhelming fact that the world of household design in traditional China was, indeed, everywhere intended to serve the canon, code and law of the Confucian social square.

To be sure, Confucian society was not closed to change brought through technological innovation and economic growth, as in the late medieval "economic revolution" of the Jiangnan region, or through foreign influences, as in the growth and spread of Buddhism. Indeed, Confucianism itself did not remain a merely static dogma, but changed over time through debates among learned Confucian scholars. Similarly, the codes of various dynasties also changed over time, partly in reflection of the changing interpretations.
of Confucian scholars, partly by virtue of the influence of Buddhism and, admittedly, partly by virtue of the self-interest of particular emperors and their consorts. For that matter, there was in the natural philosophy of the Confucian order, as we will see in Chapter Five, a highly articulate logic of change which could be and was employed to justify and rationalize change within the greater system. There was too, as we will see in the following chapter, a recognized and authoritative means for diversity within the system.

Nevertheless, what is most striking about the built environment of Confucian China, irrespective of any change or putative diversity, is its enormous continuity and the singular determination with which builders, architects and craftsmen stayed with the form and with the meaning of the social square. Clearly, the walled, subdivided, and sunken square held an authority far beyond its immediate appearance. It was sacred. But, it was sacred not only because of its mysterious and arcane shamanist roots. It was sacred because it was the sine qua non of order, hierarchy, and structure in society and the state. It was, simply stated, the landscape symbol par excellence of the Confucian li out from which there was, in the ideology and in the law of the Confucian state, no escape--not even in death--since the world was itself but a smaller version of the grand cosmological schema that differentiated all existence, including the existence of ancestral ghosts, into greater and greater social squares.
A scholar earned a degree, served with distinction, and then retired at a relatively early age in order to write or teach, nurse a chronic illness, care for his parents, or build a garden.


The realm outside each square but inside the next larger circle may be conveniently called *t'ien-ien chih-chi*, between Heaven and Man. In this eternally negative space, between reason and untarnished emotion, between the correctness of the straight line and the effortlessness of the curve, between the measurable and the romantic infinity, lies the Chinese garden which is between architecture and landscape painting.


Amidst the overwhelmingly secular ideology of *social order-in-the-square*, the Confucian state and its scholar-official elite maintained a persistent and complementary, if mainly latent concern for the natural order. In part, no doubt, this was a concern the roots of which can be traced to Confucian pedagogic concerns for ancient precedent, the precedent in this instance being arcane shamanist-earth and heaven-directed cosmologies and rites. In part too, it arose from Daoist and other naturalist intellectual traditions that, while not Confucian, were absorbed into the greater Confucian cultural ethos and state ideology as part of the legitimate and orthodox canon. Equally important, concern for the *natural* order was also a political concern derived of and focused upon the right of kingship, which is to say it was focused around the logic and rationale for the cult of the Emperor and his Mandate of Heaven. In all of this too, for
the Confucian scholar-official elite in his world of ordered and structured squares, it was clear by symbol and landscape expression that the natural order was a related, but nevertheless distinctive order-in-the-round. It was distinctive because it was eccentric. And it was ordered because it was inside a square.

1. The Ensquared Circle

As noted earlier, the symbolic association of roundness with nature was of such ancient, indeed arcane origin that it is difficult for us (just as it was also difficult for Confucian cosmologists) to trace its roots. Indeed, unlike the case of the square, the philological evidence is itself so meager as to suggest that, after centuries of Confucian tamperings, the language was itself brought into conformity with the state ideology to hide or otherwise diminish any potentially antagonistic meanings of "roundness." That this was the case can be illustrated by a few linguistic examples, the first of which is associated with the origins of the square city wall.

Among the arcane shamanist oracle bone text terms for a "town," one can find the character yi (borah) which either meant or at least came to mean a "county town." As noted here, its original form appears to depict a human figure kneeling before a circular ring-wall, suggesting to some that the most archaic of city wall types may have been round. (Needham, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 72.) Whether this was the case or not need not concern us here. Rather, what is perhaps most interesting about the character yi is that at some time the character was changed to better suit the Confucian ideology of ensqurement. In the hands of Confucian scribes the character yi became
written as ( ), the circle being changed to a square. To make matters more complicated, but also more complete, when the character \( y_i \) became one of the radicals or roots in the written language it was shortened to ( ).

At first glance, the abbreviated form might seem to be suggestive of roundness, but again the Confucian scribes were, if not playful, then at least very subtle in their inferences. The abbreviated form of the character was made precisely in the shape of the abbreviated form for the radical \( \text{fu} \) ( ), which as we have seen was, in its unabbreviated form ( ), two linked rectangles atop the directional axis—the radical or root character for the term yuan or "courtyard." The only way to differentiate these two characters was (and is) by placing one to the right and the other to the left of any composite character using these radicals. Simply stated, the Confucian scribes absorbed whatever the circular "ring wall" of the oracle bone text character \( y_i \) had intended into what they demanded in the way of a legitimately ensquared wall, while at the same time, in good Confucian fashion, retaining an arcane usage and word. Indeed, they engaged in one of the most traditional of scribal tasks, the "rectification of names."

Although such philological evidence is not in itself sufficient to prove the attempt to force the written word into conformity with the ideology, there are also several other examples that can be cited to indicate a general tendency in that direction. Not the least of these is the term for "roundness" itself. It seems hardly coincidental that the classical (and modern) term for "roundness" or yuan is, in fact, a square. Indeed, the word for "round" is written as a group of rectangular shapes housed inside a square ( ). Although it is probably carrying the point
too far and there are other possible explanations, one cannot help but suspect too that the choice of a phonetic value for the term was in some way linked to the term _yuan_ meaning "courtyard." However that may be, it is also true that the written characters for virtually all round objects, including round ceremonial objects, are enscribed squares. Hence, for example, the formal term for an "altar", including the round Altar of Heaven, is _tan_ (壇), a group of squares.

There are, in fact, virtually no cases to be found in the classical written language using a round symbol. This might, perhaps, be attributed to the difficulty of drawing perfect circles, or to the difficulty of drawing rounded shapes with the traditional Chinese writing brush. However, neither of these arguments holds against the preponderance of evidence that traditional calligraphers were certainly able to draw circular characters with their brushes, as can be seen in the aesthetic tradition of so-called "grass script" calligraphy. Moreover, when dealing with the written word, we are not dealing with the "common man," but with trained, expert calligraphers. That the square form of the classical characters has a basis in calligraphic technique is itself undoubtedly true. The formal calligraphic technique (other than that of "grass script") is itself one of precise mathematical order--strokes following strokes from left to right, top to bottom in proper sequence. Here too the square shape implied systematic control, and there was no place for eccentricity except in "grass script" which was intentionally exceptional. In short, the philological evidence goes almost entirely to support the thesis that "roundness" to be legitimate in the Confucian schema had also to be ensquared. Otherwise, the round would not fit in. Otherwise, too the round would be eccentric.
What was true for the language was also quite true for the built environment. As noted earlier, in the entire Confucian architectural tradition only one indigenous building (and its cognates) was purposefully round in shape, the "Altar (Temple) of Heaven" or Tian Tan. As noted earlier too, the design was a symbolic reference to the roundness of Heaven—of the universe as a whole, of infinity and of nature writ large.

Without going into the entire liturgy of Heaven worship in ancient China, suffice it to say in addition here that Heaven or Nature was also separate from the earth home of man, and the world of man had little or no control over Heaven. Only the Emperor (the "Son of Heaven") had direct access to Heaven, but that was limited to certain ceremonial occasions in which he would appeal to Heaven. Moreover, he did not control Heaven. He was the transmitter of Heaven’s will, and was himself either the recipient of Heaven’s mandate, or the victim of its wrath and the loss of its mandate.

The concept of Heaven in the shamanist tradition was itself similar to the concept of "fate." Furthermore, in the hands of philosophers who followed the path of Daoism, the Five Elements school, the Yin-Yang school, the Yi Jing ("Book of Changes"), the principle of wuwei ("non-action") and the like, the concept of Heaven was closely akin to what we mean by the phrase "the laws of nature." In the hands of Confucian thinkers it was both "fate" and "the laws of nature," but most of all it was of interest only insofar as it served the doctrine of li and its manifold forms in ordering society and the state.

That the Confucians were not themselves much interested in Heaven or Nature has long been noted alongside the famous sayings of Master Kong to the effect that, while one must respect and be wary of the spirits, such
matters took care of themselves. As recorded in the Lun Yu or the Confucian "Analects:"

Fan Ch'ih asked what constituted wisdom. The Master said, "To give one's self earnestly to the duties due to men and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom." (Lun Yu, Bk. 6, Ch. 20, after Legge, p. 55.)

The subjects on which the Master did not talk were extraordinary things, feats of (supernatural) strength, disorder, and spiritual beings. (Lun Yu, Bk. 7, Ch. 20, after Legge, p. 55.)

This is not to say that the Confucians ignored or denied the concept or the "reality" of Heaven. On the contrary, they accepted the reality and used the concept. Indeed, they made it their own as a means to help legitimize the social order and the state. They did so both by accepting the concept in the form of the Imperial "Mandate of Heaven"--the source of Imperial legitimacy and, not coincidentally, the extraordinary eccentricity of the Emperor. They did so too by making the essential li or proprieties of social distinction a veritable "first cause" and principle of Heaven.

But there was also and almost always a kind of latent tension in the Confucian blending of the concern for Heaven and their interest and concern for the social order. Time and space here do not permit an extensive analysis of the sources and expressions of that tension, but they can be summarized in several ways.

First and foremost, as suggested earlier in the case of the Mencian use of phrases and ideas related to the concept of the ruler as the "Son of Heaven," there was perhaps always in the Confucian political ideology an inherent uneasiness about (and sometimes hostility toward) the concept of the Emperor's eccentric cosmological legitimacy--hence their unrelenting need and desire to "teach" and "train" rulers in the li or proprieties of
the well-run state. It is true, no doubt, that the Confucians, unlike the Legalists, did not go so far as to suggest that the *li* were in fact superior to the ruler, or that their applications in society were "laws" that the Emperor was compelled to follow. As Leon Vandermeersch clearly showed, the Emperor was Himself supreme as "the origin of all power" in the state, and state laws or codes (*lu* and *ling)* "(had) their sole source in the imperial will." (Vandermeersch, 1985, p. 4.) Nevertheless, as Vandermeersch so aptly pointed out, in the hands of Confucian rationalists, the statutes and codes of the imperial will were supposed to be in accordance with the norms of the *li*. Or, more precisely, as is revealed by the original meaning of the term for imperial "statute" *lu* (丗) or "musical harmony," in the words of the *Shi Ji* or "Book of History":

> In everything that he institutes or lays down as law (*fa*), the sovereign acts in conformity with the six musical tubes (*lu*).

And what are these "six musical tubes?" In the explanation of one learned Confucian commentary:

> In the "Monograph on the Calendar and the Musical Tubes" of the *Hanshu* we read that "once the (measurements of) the musical tubes (statutes) have been deduced from the calendrical values, the instruments are fixed; circles are traced with the compass and squares with the set-square, weights are weighed in the scales, and true measure is taken with the water-level and the cord. When things of mystery have been studied and hidden things examined, when the depths have been sounded and the farthest reaches attained, we can make use of our discoveries. (And then) he who measures length loses no fraction of an inch." ...Thus the secret of the six musical tubes also gives us the exact measure of a fraction of an inch, a pinch, a single grain. This must be the nature of whatever is established as law (*fa*). This is why the statutes have been given the same name as the musical tubes. (Shen Jiaben as quoted by Vandermeersch, 1985, pp. 21-23.)

The six musical tubes or the statutes, that is to say, were the exacting measure and division of the "distinctions" in nature—the *li* of
nature, and the ruler was supposed to act in "conformity with" these measures lest, presumably, he lose the Mandate of Heaven.

Phrased differently, in terms of the language of spatial symbols, "round" as it may be, even Heaven was contained by a "square." Just as the eccentric "Son of Heaven" was contained by his earth-bound square, so too was the eccentric "Altar of Heaven." Indeed, transposed into the logic of architectural design, the exceptionally round Temple of Heaven was, after all is said about its "roundness," nonetheless contained by an ensquaring wall. To be on the safe cosmological side, the northern section of the outer wall of the temple complex was in the form of a semi-circle, but the two sides and the magical southern section of the outer wall were square. What is more, the inner walls of each of the buildings within the temple complex, including the inner walls of the round altar itself, were exacting squares. And, to make matters numerologically complete, the altar was built on three terraces with three tiers of nine steps each, and a layout figured in marble slabs moving from the round center outward in multiples of three to eighty one at the outside rim. In the Confucian worldview and ideology, much as in the language itself, an arcane and legitimate architectural "roundness" was thereby confirmed--but only in the square.

To be sure, there were arcane precedents for the round Temple of Heaven and for the concept of "roundness" as the spatial cognate of Heaven. The Temple of Heaven appears to have had its origins in the Zhou cult of Heaven for which there was also a round altar built in the southern part of the palace city. (Wright, 1977, p. 41.) Similarly, the Shi Ji or "Book of Poetry" refers to a number of magical buildings associated with the mingtang, "Hall of Light" or "Cosmic House," including the linntai or "magic
tower" and the biyong or "Bi (Round) Shaped (Moated) Mound," all of which were round in shape. (Needham, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 80, notes 121-22; Wright, 1977, pp. 49-51.) That they were all identified with Heaven or with the cosmic powers of Nature seems incontestable. Unfortunately, it is not clear how they were used.

In at least one case, however, it is not entirely inappropriate to "leap" to the conclusion that, in conjunction with their identification with the cosmic force of Heaven and Nature, these round altars or towers or temples were also early identified with a special kind of imperial eccentricity and license employed in the appreciation of nature. The case I have in mind is the lingtai or "magic tower." That this structure was associated with a kind of pleasureful, if controlled license on the part of the ruler is suggested by its description in the "Book of Poetry" and by Mencius. As the "Book of Master Meng" put it:

Mencius another day saw King Hui of Liang. The king went and stood with him by a pond and, looking around at the large geese and deer, said, "Do wise and good princes also find pleasure in these things?" Mencius replied, "Being wise and good, they have pleasure in these things. If they are not wise and good, though they have these things, they do not find pleasure. It is said in the Book of Poetry:

He measured out and commenced his spirit tower (lingtai). He measured it out and planned it. The people addressed themselves to it, and in less than a day completed it. When he measured and began it, he said to them Be not so earnest; But the multitudes came as if they had been his children. The king was in his spirit park (lingyou); the does reposed about, the does so sleek and fat; and the white birds shone glistening. The king was by his spirit pond (lingchao); how full was it of fishes leaping about!

King Wan used the strength of the people to make his tower and his pond, and yet the people rejoiced to do the work, calling the tower "the spirit tower," calling the pond "the spirit pond," and rejoicing that he had his large deer, his fishes and turtles. The ancients caused the people to have pleasure as well as themselves, and therefore they could enjoy it. (Meng Zi, Bk. 1, Pt. 1, Ch. 2, Sec. 1-3; after Legge, pp. 3-5.)
Whether the lingtai and its cognates the lingyou ("spirit garden") and lingchao ("spirit pond") had anything whatsoever to do with Heaven or Nature "worship" is not clear here, save as may be implied by their names. But that they were places and employed in association with an appreciation for nature seems incontrovertible. Similarly, in the hands of no less orthodox a Confucian master than Mencius, the message for the ruler who would build and use such spirit towers, gardens and ponds seems clear enough—sovereign license employed in the pleasureful appreciation of nature, and in ordering the people of the domain to construct a place for such pleasure is legitimate only insofar as it is a measured license, measured in accordance with the Confucian principles of li and ren ("benevolence"). To put it in terms otherwise employed by Mencius when speaking of the pleasures of life and power, "to nourish the heart, it is essential to avoid self-indulgence." (Meng Zi, Bk. 7, Pt. 2, Ch. 35.) Not for nothing was the abbreviated, slogan form of this Mencian comment employed as the name for one of the principal residential palaces of the Emperor of China in the Beijing Forbidden City (i.e., the Yang Xin Tian or "Hall To Nourish the Mind").

In short, insofar as nature and the lingtai (and perhaps by implication the garden and pond) implied a certain roundness, it was nonetheless—in Confucian hands—a roundness constrained by the social order. Like the eccentric Temple of Heaven, it was figuratively a circle inside a square. And, I would submit, it is here too that one finds the precedent for the design of the classical Chinese garden—a space filled with roundness and eccentricity but confined by its own square wall.
2. The Garden and Eremitism

The origins of the classical Chinese garden are as obscure as the origins of the cosmologies of Heaven and Nature. Here too philological evidence suggests a kind of Confucian scribal obscurantism. Since ancient times the terms for a garden have also been written with the ensquaring boundary: you (園) or yuan (園).

However, as noted above, the garden was also associated with the eccentric circle as a place filled by "nature." Furthermore, there is a clear historical association between gardens and landscape painting. Both are also, no doubt, further associated with Daoist naturalist philosophy. But it is not their philosophical origins that are of particular interest here. Rather, it is their social meanings. And, in this respect, gardens (and landscape painting) are associated mainly with the tradition of eremitism--the life of reclusion.

In Confucian society, there was but one specific institution for legitimate or at least quasi-legitimate non-social behavior, the institution of eremitism or hermitage. The hermit or recluse obtained a special kind of status as a legitimate "outsider" for whom the li of society was ostensibly replaced by the qi ("vital breath") of nature, who sought unity with nature not with the state and society. Therefore, hermits were not Confucians, but Daoists, and were considered legitimate mainly in the sense that, in the first place, they were few in numbers and had no anti-Confucian political theories to offer (hence posed no threat), and secondly, they were simply "eccentrics."
That Daoist hermits were indeed eccentric is everywhere attested to by their literature and by the practices of Daoist hermits. Hence, for example, among the most famous third century Daoist hermits known as the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" there was a certain Liu Ling (ca. 221-300 A.D.) who, so it was told, delighted in sitting naked in his room whenever someone came to visit him. "I take the whole universe as my house and my own room as my clothing," he was reported to have said whenever someone became upset by his appearance. "Why then do you enter here into my trousers?" (Fung Yu-lan, 1948, p. 235.) Some such as Maggie Keswick may be correct in suggesting that he was being witty or "expressing a fundamental Taoist view. He had achieved unity with all existing things, however great or small; his trousers, his house and the universe were totally interchangeable." (Keswick, 1978, p. 74.) However, in the Confucian world, Liu Ling was most assuredly also peculiar--at best an eccentric and at worst a little insane. Still, his was an understandable eccentricity. Nature was--in the Confucian view of things--by definition eccentric, unique, universal, infinite, and round. Therefore, those who chose a life in nature were also only "naturally" eccentric.

That those inclined toward Daoism lived in and with nature was itself made clear by the ideal to which they aspired--the reclusive cottage located in fact or figuratively somewhere in the mountains. Tao Qian, one of the great poets of the fourth century, put it well when he composed the following poem:

I built my hut beside a traveled road
Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.
You would like to know how it is done?
With the mind detached, one's place becomes remote
Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge
I catch sight of the distant southern hills.
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets.
And flocks of flying birds return together. 
In these things is a fundamental truth 
I would like to tell, but lack the words. 
(Tao Qian, as quoted by Murck and Fong, 1980, p. 4.)

Here in the cottage by the isolated road, as it were, the confinements of the wall and the courtyard gave way to the openness of the hut and the hillside.

However, I have chosen the example of Tao Qian deliberately, for he—like most such writers—was not a true Daoist hermit. Real Daoist hermits did not need to engage in writing poetry or rationalizing their acts. They preferred theiraloneness and aloofness in nature. Rather, Tao Qian was a retired Confucian scholar and official. Confucian scholars who either retired from office or who sought time away from the travails of social life in order to study sometimes took on the appearances of the hermit. Indeed, it was this kind of eremitism that was deemed "legitimate" and therefore fully acceptable. The other, truly hermit-like Daoist reclusion was perhaps more than eccentric in the Confucian mind's-eye; it was peculiar and, if not anti-social, then bordering on insanity. The legitimate eremitism of the Confucian scholar-official, however, was the orderly, controlled, rational, and contained eremitism of the amateur, literary elite.

Legitimate eremitism was expressed in the reclusive activities of the scholar-official, including such activities as studying, practicing calligraphy, and painting. It was an eremitism defined by the classical wen hua si bao, the brush, the ink, the ink-stone, and the paper (and paper weight). For that matter, it was often expressed in the exclusivity of the wenhui, the "literary society" or "club" of gentlemen who studied and
painted together. But, perhaps most of all, it was expressed in the
Confucian gentleman's activity as a designer and builder of his garden—a
place expressly set aside for his reclusive activities, and a place filled
with allusions to nature, to nature's roundness, and to eccentricity.

If there is any one element of garden culture in traditional China that
fully reveals its intentional eccentricity, perhaps none can excel the case
of rock connoisseurship. As anyone who has had the pleasure of studying
Chinese garden rocks will confirm, they are to Western eyes oddly shaped
sculptures akin, in spirit and in form, to the work of Henry Moore. They
were also oddly shaped sculpture to traditional Chinese eyes, and were much
prized for their peculiarly eroded forms evocative of the power and
submissiveness of nature. For this reason, limestone and dolomite long
eroded by water action were favored for free standing rock sculptures in
gardens, and the shapes of individual pieces were themselves enhanced by
skilled artists and craftsmen. Indeed, an entire sub-culture of rock
collection and connoisseurship grew up among the literary elite. Various
texts were written in advice to the would-be rock collector and garden
builder such as the twelfth century "Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest" by Du
Wan, and the nineteenth century "Chats on Rocks" by Liang Jiutu. (Hay,
1985, pp. 26-27.) The result was the invention of one of the finer arts of
the Confucian gentleman in his eccentric mode as a builder of gardens.

Rock connoisseurship in the garden was similar in form to calligraphic
colloisseurship in the written word. Indeed, there is a close relationship
between "grass script" writing and its eccentricities and the design and
eccentricities of gardens. Calligraphic style, and most especially the
cursive "grass script" style of writing Chinese characters was also a fine
art. Here too, strange or peculiarly shaped characters, often illegible save to one initiated in the style of particular calligraphers, were intended to evoke images of power and submission. Here too, shapes were rounded, cursive, flowing and ostensibly not confined by the square blocks of official script and the wood block printer.

But, it was also understood that rock connoisseurship and calligraphy, like all such literati activity, was a man-centered art, the rules and ordering principles of which were determined by precedent, by history, and by other men. It was clearly understood that in the hands of the Confucian gentleman, rock and calligraphy were artifice and, therefore, not uncontrolled. Similarly, the garden was a place where nature, nature's roundness, and where eccentricity were contrived, artificial and partial. To be sure, Wen Fong and Alfreda Murck were correct when they noted that "the lure of a simple solitary life in harmony with nature was one impetus toward the building of walled garden complexes." (Murck and Wen Fong, 1980, p. 5.) However, like most interpreters of the meaning of the classical Chinese garden, they tended to neglect the Confucian corollary that the "solitary life in harmony with nature" entailed by the garden was only a "lure" not the "real thing." The garden was necessarily an ersatz place, its harmonies were contrived, its mountains were "false" (indeed, they were called jiashan or "false mountains"), its space was filled by square buildings--with architecture--and, most of all, it was all contained within a square wall.

There is, no doubt, also considerable truth to the common notion expressed by Nelson Wu to the effect that in the world of the Confucian garden:
When a man leaves (the) courtyard and enters his garden, thus away from organized society, he is not the social man who has to be myopic to eternal values so that he may function well in immediate situations, nor is he the biological man who is constantly becoming and is responsible for reproduction. He is instead the eternal man of Chinese landscape painting and poetry whose growth, adolescence and obligations for reproduction are either behind him or not his concern. (Wu, 1963/1968, p. 46.)

Nelson Wu may also have been correct in his assertion that, in speaking of the garden, "here, inside the circle and outside the square, man's creative imagination is untrammeled by myopic considerations." (Wu, 1963/1968, p. 48.) However, without wishing to dispute such authorities as Wu and Wen Fong, I would argue instead that, being in the square, the garden was everywhere filled with implications (but only implications) of an infinite, round and natural, but nonetheless rational order, and with connotations of a legitimized eccentricity. The garden was a self-conscious, intentional place. It was not contrived in some "free," "natural," "mysterious," or Zen-like anti-intellectual spirit, but rather with a controlled, orderly, artificial, rational and explicable logic.

This is not to diminish the aesthetic meanings of the garden. On the contrary, it is only to say that the garden was like a landscape painting: a perspective, a balance of emptiness and form, a series of colors and shapes working in harmony with one another, and a technique. Like a painting too, not all gardens were successful or good or beautiful or well-designed. And, in the Confucian world (as everywhere) there were socially defined or accepted norms as to what was meant by a well-designed garden.

Time and space here do not permit a detailed excursion into the intricate and detailed theories and principles of garden design in traditional China. It will perhaps suffice to say, along with
Chen Congzhou, one of the foremost architectural and garden design historians in China, that "in former times, garden designers always conceived plans for their landscape." (Chen Congzhou, 1984, p. 13.) The principles whereby they conceived their plans is a subject of considerable debate, part of which is ably dealt with by Professor Chen's study On Chinese Gardens, but a great deal of which remains open to question.

Nevertheless, much as traditional builders had their classic handbooks and, in particular, the official Ying Zao Fa Shi, garden designers and builders also had at least one major reference work to guide their hands, the Yuan Ye or "On Making Gardens" written by Ji Wu-fou (often referred to by his pseudonym, Ji Cheng) at the end of the Ming Dynasty in 1634. Although the Yuan Ye had no universal design formulas, and was less a technical handbook than an aesthetic critique, Ji Cheng did offer a guide for the design of gardens in his distinctions between large and small gardens, and country and city gardens, as well as between "in-position" and "in-moving" gardens (viewing positions or perspectives), all in terms of what Ji Cheng identified as being "appropriate." (Chen Congzhou, 1984.) Similarly, the text is filled with advice on the proper placement of rock, plant, pond, and viewing positions, as well as kinds of plants, rockeries, and so forth.

As to the purpose of a garden, Ji Cheng was perhaps more revealing than he intended when he noted that:

A single (false) "mountain" may give rise to many effects, a small stone may evoke many feelings. The shadow from the dry leaves of a banana tree is beautifully outlined on the paper of the window. The roots of the pine force their way through the crevices of the hollow stones . . . If one can find stillness in the midst of the city turmoil, why should one then forego such an easily accessible spot and seek a more distant one? (Siren, 1949, p. 5.)
The man-made garden in the city clearly provided a fully acceptable means of legitimate eremitism. The Confucian scholar-official did not have to travel off into the mountains and become a Daoist hermit to enjoy the pleasures of nature and become "one with nature." He had a perfectly good substitute. Indeed, he had something better, a garden that was of his own creation and design, and that could be measured against the artful tradition of landscape painting, calligraphy, and the gardens of others. It may be too much, but it is tempting to claim—in the light of what has been identified throughout this study as the dominant Confucian concern with social order—that the man-made garden became an object of aesthetic attention and Confucian scholar-official interest precisely because it was a way of controlling true eremitism and its "lure of the simple solitary life in harmony with nature" by substitution. Viewed in terms of its social effect, moreover, the man-made garden in the compound served to temper the urge to escape the walls into some mountainous hermit's hut, by providing a suitable alternative within the wall. To borrow a phrase and a concept from an earlier section of this study, one way to avoid the "wall-building demon" was to create an illusion that the wall was not there. The illusion is the garden and its creator was a man finely skilled in the arts of illusion—of words, letters, and the refinements of wen hua si bao.

3. The Role of the Individual

The legitimized eremitism of the classical Chinese garden had its complement as well in a Confucian individualism. The creator of the garden, member of the scholar-official and amateur elite was, finally, an individual
who, as Nelson Wu suggested, could for a time escape the heavy responsibilities of the li of filial piety and of social rank by leaving the entirely square world of the courtyard and stepping into the rounded world of his garden. Indeed, the garden was virtually the only place in society where he could legitimately do so. There, in the acceptable world of eccentric roundness, the would-be junzi (“superior man”) of Confucian persuasion, could retire to his library-study to contemplate, to write, and to explore the intricacies of the brush, the ink block, the inkstone, and the way in which the finest of cotton or silk threaded paper absorbed his thoughts. There too, for a time, he could scale the walls of propriety to engage in the mundane pleasures of friends and companions, as well as the erotic pleasures suitable to a place filled with roundness. There too, on such special occasions as his birthday, he could invite a company of actors and entertainers to come to perform for his own and his family’s and friend’s pleasure. Indeed, there is perhaps no better example of the implicit “freedom” and extraordinary eccentricity of the garden than the fact that here—and only here—could the otherwise expressly outcast world of the actor and entertainer come literally into legitimate contact with the head of household and his family. Most assuredly, the garden was an exceptional and eccentric place within the compounded square.

No wonder then too that elite heads of household frequently outdid themselves in the design and construction of their gardens. No wonder then too that the rich and the powerful expended fortunes on the construction of elaborate gardens and villas both within their normal urban residential compounds and, frequently too, in palatial “summer homes” located in some
nearby scenic area. The epitome of such behavior was, after all, none other than the great eighth century Tang Dynasty poet, musician, artist, and scholar Wang Wei. His elegant Wangchuan Villa, a huge country estate made up of pavilions, courtyards and other buildings situated on the hills outside the Tang capital of Changan became the veritable archetype for centuries of scholar-official artists and writers who could look to his example. Indeed, Wang Wei virtually assured his own position in that regard by writing an extensive series of poems describing each section of his garden in considerable detail.

Should the example of Wang Wei be insufficient precedent, there were in addition countless other "great" scholars and powerful officials who outdid themselves in trying to create gardened places for their "retirement." Hence it was, for example, that Wang Xianchen, a wealthy and retired imperial censor of the Ming Dynasty in or about 1525 began to build the renowned Zhuo Zheng Yuan ("Garden of the Humble Administrator") in the City of Suzhou. The garden was thereafter immortalized by the paintings of one of the preeminent artists of the Ming period, Wen Zhenming, who in 1527--it so happens--was invited by Wang to live in a studio in the garden while it was still being completed. Apart from its scale and elegance, and in addition to being immortalized by none other than Wen Zhenming, its owner assured the garden's place in the history of architecture by then giving it a name that could not help but strike an especially responsive chord in the minds of his fellow scholar-officials then and thereafter--the name Zhuo Zheng Yuan having a double-edged connotation meaning, on the one hand, the garden of "a humble official," and on the other hand, the garden of "the unsuccessful administrator." The wits of Confucian officialdom
could not help but appreciate Wang Xianchen's allusion by name to the actual meaning of "retirement" in the garden.

That the rich and powerful were also sometimes consumed by the effort to design and construct their gardens is attested to first and foremost by the elaborate Imperial gardens of the Emperors—gardens like the Yi He Yuan and Yuan Ming Yuan of Qing Dynasty Beijing. The Empress Dowager Ci Xi, for example, spent ten entire years from 1888 to 1898 doing virtually nothing except oversee the design and construction of her most favored playground, the Yi He Yuan, the so-called "Summer Palace" built by her because, after all, the former Summer Palace of the Qing, the Yuan Ming Yuan had been completely destroyed by invading Western armies in 1860. By way of just one example of its scale, the man-made lake she had constructed was intended for use by the Qing Imperial Navy for mock battle plans. Indeed, so it is said, Ci Xi was so angered by the defeat of the Qing Imperial Navy at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Navy during the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 that she had the entire budget of the navy redirected to the construction of only part of the Yi He Yuan, including a famous marble boat pavilion built in mockery of Qing naval commanders.

But, the Imperial Majesties of China were not alone in their effort and desire to build palatial gardens. That other rich and powerful heads of households and families also indulged the temptations of the garden is amply attested to by the remnant landscape as well as by the creative literature of China. No better example can be found in the literature than that of the enormous Da Guan Yuan (most simply translated as "Grand Vista Garden") that figured so prominently in the eighteenth century novel Hong Lou Meng ("Dream of the Red Chamber"). We cannot here give license to the
temptation to record the details of its ostensible elegance, but it assuredly deserves attention as an example of scholar-official excess (just as the author of the novel intended it to be). Perhaps the best way to illustrate that "excess" is to report on how it came to be built.

According to the novel, it happened one day that the ostensible head of the Jung Mansion, Chia Cheng (the husband of Lady Wang whom we met earlier in this study during the visit of Granny Liu) was suddenly called by special order of the Emperor to come to the "Hall of Respectful Approach." There he was informed that, by the gracious will of the Emperor, the eldest unmarried daughter of the Jung estate, a girl by the name of Yuan Chuan, had been selected to serve the Emperor as "Chief Secretary of the Phoenix Palace with the title of Worthy and Virtuous Consort." In other words, a daughter of the Chia family was to become a secondary wife of His Imperial Majesty. The family of Chia Cheng would thus become imperial kinsmen, a cause for great celebration in the family. Sometime after, the Emperor (with the agreement of his parents, and in particular his mother) issued a special edict to allow his secondary consorts to visit their own families insofar as the latter could provide "adequate accommodation at home for the reception of an Imperial retinue."

Thereupon, the fathers of these court ladies set about building especially constructed courtyards for this purpose. As Chia Lian (brother to Chia Cheng) noted to his old wet-nurse, Nanny Chao, "All were so grateful for this decree, they leapt for joy. The father of the Imperial Lady of Honor Chou has already started building a separate court for her visit home; and Wu Tien-yu, father of the Imperial Concubine Wu, is looking for a site outside the city." Hence, the Jung mansion set about building a
special courtyard for their visiting daughter.

That the event was extraordinary and called for extraordinary expenditures was confirmed by Nanny Chao who noted, "Ah, such a thing only happens once in a thousand years! . . . I was just old enough (when the first Emperor of the Ming went on a tour of the country) to remember things. In those days our Chia family was in charge of making ocean-going ships and repairing the sea wall around Suzhou and Yangzhou. To prepare for that Imperial visit, we spent money just like pouring out sea water."

To which, Hsi-feng (the wife of Chia Lian, whom we encountered earlier in the tale of Granny Liu) noted that "Our Wang family did the same. . . ."

And, as Nanny Chao continued, "That's your family, madame. And the Chens south of the Yangtze, Oh how rich and great they were! That family alone entertained the Emperor four times. . . Don't talk about silver treated like dirt, every precious thing you could name was heaped up like hills, no one bothering to check the wicked waste." "So my grandfather and granduncles often said," noted Hsi-feng, "and of course I believe it. What amazes me is how one family could have so much wealth." "Why, madam," (Nanny Chao replied), "the truth is that they were just spending the Emperor's money on the Emperor. Otherwise who would waste so much on empty show." (Cao, 1791; 1978 English edition, Vol. 1, pp. 217-219.)

Simply stated, one spent fortunes on an imperial visitation (including the figurative visit of the Emperor in the person of his consort) because it was expected and because, in doing so, one occasioned Imperial gratitude which, in turn, meant rewards. For this reason, if for no other, the Chia family set about obtaining land, designing and constructing what is without question the most elaborate and excessive garden in the history of Chinese
creative literature. As reported by Chia Jung to his uncle Chia Lian:

My father sent me to tell you, uncle, that the old gentlemen have settled on a plan. We’ve measured the distance from the east wall through the garden of the East Mansion to the north, and it comes to three li and a half (i.e., about 1.1 English miles) enough to build a separate court for the visit. Someone has been commissioned to draw a plan which should be ready tomorrow...

The next morning... Chia Lian went to the Ning Mansion. With some old stewards, secretaries and friends he inspected the grounds of both mansions, drew plans for the palaces for the Imperial visit and estimated the number of workmen required. Before long all the craftsmen and workmen were assembled, and endless loads of supplies were brought to the site: gold, silver, copper and tin, as well as earth, timber, bricks and tiles. First they pulled down the walls and pavilions of the Garden of Concentrated Fragrance in the Ning Mansion to connect it with the large eastern court of the Jung Mansion; and all the servants’ quarters there were demolished. Formerly, a small alley had separated the two houses, but since this was private property and not a public thoroughfare the grounds of both could now be thrown into one. As a stream already ran from the northern corner of the Garden of Concentrated Fragrance, there was no need to bring in another. And though there were not enough rocks or trees, the bamboos and rockeries as well as the pavilions and balustrades in the original garden of the Jung Mansion where Chia Sheh lived were brought over. The proximity of the two mansions made amalgamation easy, in addition to saving much labor and expense. On the whole, not too many new features had to be added. The whole was designed by an old landscape gardener known as Gardener Yeh. (Cao, 1791; 1978 English edition, Vol. 1, pp. ZZ0-ZZZ.)

The balance of an entire chapter of the Hong Lou Meng is devoted to a detailed description of the newly constructed garden. And, while there is no need here to report on its manifold complexities, it is worthy to note that the description almost naturally became another in a long series of precedents employed by countless real-life officials and artists who sought either to recreate parts or the whole in paintings and in their own gardens for centuries thereafter. The power of the image of the Da Guan Yuan (despite or perhaps because of the intention of the authors of the Hong Lou Meng to use the building of the garden as an example of wasteful excess) knows few competitors in the history of late imperial art and landscape architecture. Indeed, the power of the image persists today, as a much
touted (but less extensive) replica of the Da Guan Yuan has been built as a local and foreign tourist attraction by no less than the Government of the City of Beijing.

One can hardly encounter the historical literature surrounding the lives of wealthy and powerful officials and merchants, most especially in the so-called Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze River) region of China, without also encountering their often large and sometimes elegant gardens. Unfortunately, no comprehensive history of these gardens—how they were constructed and by whom, how they were used and by whom—has yet been accomplished. Even the most famous gardens of the ultra-rich merchants and officials of the City of Suzhou await detailed social histories.

Hence, for example, the origins, development, and the use of no less famous a garden than the Wang Shi Yuan ("Garden of the Master of the Nets") are only barely reported in the standard architectural histories. We know that it was originally built by a retired official named Shi Zhengzhi in the twelfth century as a garden-residence compound he called Yu Yin or "The Fisherman's Retreat." We know too that, four hundred years later, in the eighteenth century the site was purchased by Song Zonghuan in 1760. Song had been an official at the Court of the Qian Long Emperor in charge of an office tantalizingly called "Imperial Entertainments," and he chose the old Yu Yin garden as a garden-residence for his own retirement. It was he who gave the garden its present name, an obvious and perhaps playful allusion to its original name. For reasons yet unclear, at the end of the eighteenth century the garden was in the possession of a certain Qu Yuancun, about whom we know little save that it was he who gave the garden much of its present form, shaping and reshaping what he acquired, its
buildings and its landscape, until he achieved what he (and several generations of critics thereafter) regarded as the most sophisticated and elegant of urban residential courtyard gardens in the whole of the empire.

A brief glance at a sketch of the layout of the Wang Shi Yuan will reveal the careful attention to symbolic form and structure, while at the same time revealing the eccentricity and license of the artist who designed it. Its front, south-facing, four residential courtyards are perfectly rectilinear and virtually set on the eastern side of the site as a firm and absolute statement of Confucian rectitude. The garden and its rounded, irregular pond and pathways unfold on the proper western and northwestern part of the site (a reference to the Daoist magical "Western Paradise," and the home of its even more magical Xi Wang Mu, "Queen Mother of the West"). Inside the garden are several principal pavilions and halls for "in-position" viewing, as well as an inner courtyard studio for the master of the household to engage in the legitimate eccentricities of the scholar-official. Similarly, the entire complex is appropriately confined and rendered "private" by its ensquaring wall.

One could go on to describe each and every square meter of the Wang Shi Yuan as an almost (but, according to Chen Congzhou, not entirely) perfect example of sophisticated elegance in the design and construction of a classical Chinese garden. I will refrain from that temptation, but note instead that it was for this reason, in fact, that the studio courtyard of the Wang Shi Yuan was chosen by Professor Wen Fong of Princeton University for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as the model for their attempted replica of a traditional scholar's courtyard, the so-called "Astor Court." Similarly, it was for this reason too that the basic layout
of the entire Wang Shi Yuan was chosen by Professor Maruyn Samuels of the University of British Columbia as the model for the "Suzhou Classical Garden," now nearing completion as part of the City of Vancouver's so-called "Dr. Sun Yat-sen Park and Classical Garden." The Wang Shi Yuan clearly has had its effect near and far from the shores of the Grand Canal and the City of Suzhou.

Like the nearby Zhuo Zheng Yuan ("Garden of the Humble Official"), the Wang Shi Yuan too had its share of famous artists living and painting in its midst, some of whom like the great modern painter Zhang Daqian used the Wang Shi Yuan as a site to give vent to certain extreme eccentricities. Zhang Daqian, for example, lived in the Wang Shi Yuan for several years in the 1930's where he painted all manner of wildlife including tigers and peacocks, the live "models" of which he kept as "pets" with him in the garden. To be sure, not many artists in traditional China were so eccentric as to keep live tigers and peacocks in their gardens, and Zhang Daqian was, after all, a modern artist. But the case of Zhang Daqian is only, after all, an extreme example of what was, theoretically, possible in the rounded places of the garden. Here, in the garden, an individual could, for a time at least, be whatever he chose to be, even a bit peculiar.

Still, as noted earlier, the peculiarities and eccentricities of the Confucian scholar-official elite were not the "freedoms" and "license" of the atomistic individual so often inferred when Western writers and thinkers speak of the "role of the individual." Indeed, if by "individualism" one intends to mean the individual in legitimate and accepted opposition to the collective of society, the one against or in
contrast to the whole, then it must be said unequivocally that there was no such individualism in the Confucian world.

The Confucian scholar-official ideal did, of course, contain its own form of individualism. The junzi or "superior man" of Confucian tradition was not born to his position, but rather learned his way to become a "superior man." He was studied in the art of self-realization, the realization that by finding and supporting the proper distinctions (li) in society, he became truly human. Along the way, as Benjamin Schwartz noted, he encountered at least three basic polarities involving a kind of dialectic between himself and society--between the individual and the collective: (1) the dialectic of personal self-realization and social responsibility, (2) the dialectic of inner and outer realms or "subjective" and "objective" worlds, and (3) the dialectic of thought and action. (Schwartz, 1964, pp. 3-15.) In each case, and with due regard for variations in emphasis between different periods and different Confucian writers, the apparent contradictions were logically resolved by removing the contrariness of the opposities. Hence, for example, personal self-realization in Confucian terms was the cultivation of ren or virtue. What kind of "virtue"? The virtues of social distinction, hierarchy, precedent, and selflessness.

This is not to say that the Confucian gentleman was an automaton lacking in subjective judgment and emotion. Rather, it is to say that, working within a tradition and according to the canon and codes of social life--all of which were fortunately extensive and therefore open to interpretation--he chose precedents and the various meanings of virtuosity and propriety that were most compelling. Were it not for the pejorative
connotation of the English term, it would be appropriate to say that he "manipulated" the canon and the codes to serve his greatest purpose, the sustenance and longevity of his ancestral line, and thereby also satisfied the most important demand of the Confucian state and cultural ideology. The tradition was also large enough to accommodate almost any kind of polemic. Even the famous case of the trial of the so-called heretical Confucian scholar Li Zhi at the end of the sixteenth century suggests that it was not, in fact, his extraordinary theories defending the individual or his speculations on how to coordinate personal wants and needs with social and public morality that got him arrested. (Huang, 1981, pp. 189-221.) Rather, it was his way of conducting interpersonal relations with potentially dangerous officials, many of whom he irked and some of whom he provoked. Indeed, the charges brought against him were less concerned with his heretical individualism than with his public morality, i.e., his consorting with prostitutes and going so far as to bathe with them in public. That conservative Confucian censors did not like his theories and that his writings were periodically banned is also to say that they were concerned that others had similar ideas which might, in the extensive Confucian tradition, find currency and legitimacy sooner or later.

Within the tradition too, being as extensive as it was, there was usually plenty of room for aesthetic choice, for the turn of a phrase, for the style of the brush, and for the arrangements of a garden in which the individual gentleman could indeed reveal something of himself. As reported by the eighteenth century poet Yuan Mei, when it was suggested that he purchase an already completed residential garden rather than incur the cost of refurbishing his own older house and garden, a scholarly gentleman in
the Confucian tradition could refuse to take the easier and less expensive route--because, as Yuan Mei put it, "there would be nothing of myself in it." (Murck and Wen Fong, 1980, p. 10.) However, what Yuan Mei had in mind was not the atomistic "self" of Western fame, but the self of Confucian persuasion--not isolated from the collective, but part of the collective world of the Confucian aesthete and the Confucian family. (de Bary, 1970.)

In this way too, the round, eccentric garden of the Confucian persuasion was not entirely of the compound, not composed in the rigidly geometric form and structure of the residential courtyard, but it was nonetheless in the compound, inside its ensquaring wall, and thus part and parcel of the social world of the Confucian individual. Indeed, the garden was, after all, not only a place for individual eccentricity, but also a place for social activities of all kinds--some of which were more eccentric than others, but all of which, being in the square, were necessarily legitimized and legitimated by the Confucian order.

4. The Garden as Social Space

That the traditional garden was a place for social activity has already been alluded to earlier. We need here comment only briefly on the various ways the garden figured in the social life of the Confucian family and its head of household.

As noted, the garden was a place of reclusion for the head of household and whomever he wished to invite. But, the reclusive dimension of the
garden was usually extended to include other members of the family and friends as well. It was also extended to include activities that ranged from literary to dramatic performances, as well as alcoholic and erotic delights. Indeed, in addition to its role as a place for scholarly and artistic eccentricity, the garden figured prominently in literature and in life as a place unique in the Confucian residential landscape for its associations with erotic pleasure and for carrying out activities which, if not actually taboo, were otherwise regarded with disdain and disapproval by Confucian conservatives.

As touched upon earlier, for example, the garden was a place where prostitutes, actors, and other entertainers were not only allowed, but also encouraged on certain occasions to come inside the otherwise closed compound. Hence, in preparing for the grand party that was to take place in the newly designed Da Guan Yuan of the novel Hong Lou Meng, the nephew of the Chia family head of household was "given . . . the job of going to (Suzhou) with Lai Ta's two sons and secretaries . . . to hire instructors, buy girl actresses and musical instruments and costumes there." (Cao, 1791; 1978 English edition, Vol. 1, p. 220.) For that matter, the putative reputation of the Chia family and its wealth notwithstanding, as Colin Mackerras showed so well, the truly rich families of the Jiangnan Region did not have to send their nephews out to buy actresses. Rather, they had their own complete companies, and sometimes two or three companies of actors, actresses, and musicians at home. (Mackerras, 1972, pp. 16-48.) That they did so was eccentric, but it was also usually a careful eccentricity in that the actors, actresses and musicians of such families did double duty as household servants and staff—thereby satisfying (or at least giving the
appearance of satisfying) the Confucian proscriptions against outcast entertainers.

Actors were, as noted, outcasts, being congenitally ineligible for the official examination system to the third generation. But, more than this, they were also often considered morally dangerous, partly because they were mobile, but perhaps also because master actors had to purchase young boy and girl apprentices from poor families and, in rumour and often in fact, the young boys and girls were frequently abused. Often too, male actors were well known for their homosexual proclivities. And, actresses were also often known as or at least expected to be prostitutes. During the late Ming period, many famous actresses had, in fact, been previously employed as prostitutes. One of the most famous was a certain Gu Mei, whose house was renowned as a place for good banquets. (Mackerras, 1972, p. 46.) During the Ming and Qing periods, prostitution was if not a principal source of income for actresses, then at least an important sideline activity.

That ultra-conservative Confucians therefore rejected and condemned households that employed actors and actresses, especially when it reached extreme proportions, is hardly surprising. That others, even the sons of the conservatives, often nevertheless pursued their own views on the matter is also not surprising. In one well known case recorded by the eighteenth century poet Yuan Mei (whom we met earlier as the poet who refused to buy a new house), for example, there was a famous conservative scholar who

... warned his sons and grandsons against ever having anything to do with actors, and as long as he was alive no actor or entertainer ever came near his house. When he had been dead for ten years (his son) began occasionally to get actors from outside to give performances. But he still did not venture to keep a private troupe on the house. An old family servant ... when chatting one day with (the son), got on to the subject of theatricals. "A company of actors from outside," he pleaded, "is never so good as a troupe trained in the house, or so handy.
A lot of servants here have children. Why don't you get hold of a teacher, make him select the likeliest and have them trained as a company?" (The son) was much attracted by the idea. (Mackerras, 1972, pp. 28-29.)

That such behavior was commonplace among the wealthier families need not be further documented here. However, one side of the issue deserves some further note. Orthodox and conservative Confucians were normally appalled by the excessive theatrical and sexual license indulged by the rich and powerful, even among their own families, and especially as it took place inside the family compound. It was, for them, a case of power and wealth gone wrong. If they chose, they could perhaps always refer to the famous trial of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Confucian scholar Li Zhi who, although something of a Confucian hero for his defense of the individual scholar, was nonetheless a heretic in the eyes of the conservatives. As noted earlier, among the other charges brought against him was his reputation for consorting with prostitutes. Indeed, his "consorting with prostitutes and actually 'bathing with them in the daytime'" was mentioned in the official charges brought against him when he was arrested by the Silk Road Guard of the Wan-li Emperor. (Huang, 1981, p. 219.) Clearly, for the conservatives, there was an unhappy and dangerous association to be made between errant Confucians and those who consorted with loose women. Perhaps for much the same reason, conservative Confucians did not approve of elaborate gardens.

This was perhaps especially true of local gentry officials. As Ray Huang rightly noted, "in practice, it was (the local gentry and lower echelons of government) who were expected to carry out the orthodoxy and
translate its abstractions into reality. The local gentry were morally obliged to see to it that within their districts the younger generation honored the old, women obeyed their menfolk, and the illiterate followed the educated elite. Personal evaluation of local officials also took these matters into account, citing the number of virtuous men and women in their districts and the absence of disputes as measures of their moral leadership." (Huang, 1981, p. 217.) Perhaps in China too, as elsewhere, provincial and local elites were more conservative and prudish in their views than those of the great capital cities. In any case, that there was a kind of moral tension among the elites about those who indulged the temptation to build large gardens and who allowed their garden-life to take over their social responsibilities is shown by virtue of the extent to which it is recorded in the creative literature. *Hong Lou Meng*, for example, is a morality tale written by a Confucian critic about the decadence of the ultra-rich and powerful families of the Jiangnan Region. Its principal author, Cao Xuejin, was himself the heir to a once extremely powerful Qing Dynasty official family. His great grandmother had been the wet nurse of the Kang Xi Emperor, and his great grandfather, grandfather, and father had all held important official posts. However, the family was caught up in the internecine struggles at court over the succession to Kang Xi. In 1727, his family was suddenly charged with embezzling imperial funds, fell into disgrace, and were forced to move from their estate in Nanjing (the site of the novel) to the poverty-stricken life of workers in Beijing. Cao Xuejin, the author of the *Hong Lou Meng* knew well the excesses of life among the powerful of the Qing period and of the consequences for those who sought and failed to achieve and retain power.
To be sure, most traditional elite families had neither the means nor the power to indulge a lifestyle similar to that of the Jung or Ning mansions of *Hong Lou Meng* fame. Their gardens were necessarily restrained, as were their eccentricities. For them, the life of the garden was a life of family and friends, the garden a place for recreation. As noted earlier, the garden was the place within the compound for the head of household to entertain his male guests, most of whom were otherwise restricted from entering the residential courtyard (save for the formal greeting hall). Frequently too, the master of the household would choose to live in a pavilion or studio in the garden, leaving his wife, secondary wives, children and grandchildren behind in the formal courtyard complex. Sometimes too, he would be joined by his primary wife or by a favored secondary wife, and perhaps a favored child or grandchild to live together in a residential court within the garden.

Here too, the overwhelming male dominance of architectural form and symbol gave way to a greater—though not dominant—female presence in symbol and in activities. Without going into all of the garden’s subtle and not so subtle sexual symbols, derived mainly from Daoism, certain aspects of that symbology are perhaps worthy of mention by way of distinguishing it from the symbology of the formal courtyard. As noted earlier, the latter was figuratively a "temple" to male supremacy. The garden, in contrast, was filled with symbols associated with the relationship between male and female. Certain areas or components of the garden were more female-less male, and other areas were more male-less female, but the whole garden was a play on the tensions, contradictions, and dialectics of sexuality. The pond, for example, was a female element—water being a *Yin* element in the
Daoist dialectic. The rockery or "false mountain" was a male element--stone being a *Yang* element. The relationship between rock and water--water flowing over rock, rock standing over water, water reflecting rock, and so on--were so many allusions to sexual intercourse. The connoisseurship of rocks among learned Confucian gentleman garden builders was a highly cultivated fine art. (Hay, 1985; Siren, 1949, pp. 17-28.) But it was also a subtle fetish. Freestanding, elongated, highly eroded *taihu* rock sculptures were indeed a highly developed fine art intended to reflect the power of nature, but it does not diminish them to note too that they also reflected the power of water and rock in action with one another--of sexuality--and were phallic symbols. As one might expect too, as the rounded and irregular shapes of the garden were allusions to Nature, the intentionally surprising and unexpected "in-moving" views within the garden were allusions to femininity (at least the conventional male view of femininity).

With such symbols in mind and readily available for the reading, the garden was a highly suggestive and, for those who understood the symbols, erotic place. Therefore, it was also a favored place for licit and illicit assignations. Should the symbols be too subtle, there were also other more direct objects in the garden to encourage or to provide assistance in sexual foreplay. It was in a favored garden pavilion, for example, that stone-carved water mazes were sometimes placed for such use. These were usually large blocks of marble into which were carved maze-like circular water courses. Water flowed into one end and out the other, passing round and round, weaving a path toward the center and out to the peripheries, finally exiting at a point opposite to where it entered. Several games were
played using the maze, most involving drinking matches (Who could drink more before a flower petal exited the maze? How many cups of wine floating through the maze could so and so drink before becoming confused?). Often too the games were used in sexual foreplay. A favored maiden would join the master in the pavilion and engage in a maze drinking game while both quoted or composed erotic poetry about flowing water and rock. And so on.

That there were no such stone-carved mazes in the residential courtyard is not to say that sexual activities did not occur in the formal courtyard. It is only to say that sexual activity in the garden was intentionally more whimsical, less burdened by the social responsibility of lineage reproduction and, presumably, less burdened by conventional notions about female ritual pollution. As noted earlier, sexual activity in the formal courtyard was occasioned by certain taboos associated with the ritual pollution of women, one of which was a general requirement that intercourse take place away from the sacerdotal main axis and ancestral shrine. More often than not, of course, that was impossible. But, in the compounds of the elite, the garden was, therefore, an ideal place. Similarly, it was ideal too because, being reclusive, the garden was more private—a place set off and away from grandchildren, children, nieces, nephews, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and parents.

In this, as in many other ways, the garden served as a place in but not entirely of the courtyard compound, an eccentric place and a place for eccentricity. But, then too, certain eccentricities were expected and normal in Confucian society and, by being normal, they were contained. In the case of the garden, its eccentricity was, at all of its edges, contained by its ensquaring wall. The Confucian world would not have it otherwise.
5. Eccentricity and the Landscape.

Eccentricity in Confucian society was legitimate, in short, because it was measured and tempered by tradition, by code, by canon, and by walls. By such definition, little room was left for exceptionalism or at least the exceptionalism of the atomistic individual. Society, like the residential landscape, was so filled with conformity that even the eccentric was, after all, in China—as elsewhere—only an extreme version of the norm. Society, and elite society in particular, like the landscape, and the residential landscape in particular, were both decisively conformist. Innovation and change, or at least legitimate and accepted changes were here only eccentricities not contradictions, and like all eccentricities they tended most emphatically to point out some of the foibles of the norm.

The truly eccentric Confucian was a scholar like Li Zhi whose insistence that he and other Confucians actually live according to the ideal canon was an irritation and a provocation to powerful officials. Had he lived in late medieval Europe, and excepting his other eccentricities, Li Zhi would likely have made an excellent intellectual companion to Martin Luther, another eccentric considered by those in authority to be a heretic. Similarly, of Confucian officials in office, perhaps none were considered more eccentric than the famous late sixteenth century chief censor of Nanjing, Hai Rui. The subject of endless debates among Confucian scholars and others even in modern times, the most recent of which was the ostensible cause for the launching of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1965-75, Hai Rui had the eccentric notion that he should not only enforce the laws of the state to the letter at all levels, regardless of who such
enforcements might affect, but even insisted that the laws of the state and the Confucian canon should be applied fully to their spirit. When he was Governor of Jili (the metropolitan province) he even went so far as to require that land mortgaged at usurious interest rates and then foreclosed upon should be returned to their original owners. As Ray Huang noted, "Hai Jui's (Rui's) convictions and temperament dictated that he would be both a highly regarded and a lonely man." (Huang, 1981, p. 130.) They also dictated that Hai Rui would be regarded then and for centuries thereafter as an eccentric model, which is to say a model that could never be truly institutionalized for lack of sufficiently dedicated followers.

In a similar way, eccentricity in the Confucian landscape was "exaggeration" and license in the expression of forms, shapes and meanings provided by tradition, code, canon and by the example of superiors. Change and diversity in such a landscape was by endless conjugations, rarely, if ever by abrupt leaps forward (though sometimes by eccentric leaps backward), except as might be introduced from outside. For that matter, in Confucian China, even outside influences tended to become only eccentric, not revolutionary. They too were at least partly if not entirely absorbed into the tradition as a whole and then turned out as an exaggeration of one aspect of that tradition. No better example of this exists in the traditional landscape than the Buddhist pagoda and temple complex. The round pagoda is clearly a form borrowed from India, Nepal and elsewhere. But in China it became mainly a tall version of the Temple of Heaven, an exaggeration that became acceptable and commonplace along with rates of conversion, but nonetheless in the Confucian world an eccentric building. Perhaps had Father Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit companions, or perhaps had
all Christian missionaries in China from the mid-sixteenth to the later
nineteenth century adopted a similar design for their churches, the history
of Christian conversions might have proceeded differently. Perhaps Giuseppe
Castiglione, the Italian Jesuit who designed the Western garden in the Qian
Long Emperor's Summer Palace, would have been better employed in designing a
cathedral to match the Temple of Heaven complex.

As it was, however, Western Christians tended mainly to stay with their
architectural forms and meanings, and Chinese Confucians reciprocated.
Castiglione's garden like the man himself was, after all, an alien
eccentricity, more odd than other eccentricities in the Confucian landscape,
but only eccentric and therefore controllable. At worst, the Western garden
and its architect were curiosities which, like any curiosity, could be
enjoyed or discarded at will because they were irrelevant. The Confucian
tolerance for eccentricity was in this way too a critical blind spot in the
state and cultural ideology. By rendering such things merely eccentric, the
Confucians neglected to notice that some eccentricities carried the seeds of
revolution. Castiglione's playful rendering of rococo architecture in the
exaggerated Western garden of the Yuan Ming Yuan was not merely eccentric.
It was a threat, a harbinger of revolutionary change just around the corner.
But the Qian Long Emperor did not see it that way. He found it, like his
collection of strange and wondrous Western clockworks, only an eccentricity
or, at worst, a curiosity. Still, it was but forty some years after Qian
Long left the scene when his successors began to discover that they were
neither merely eccentric nor curious, but part of the stuff that would
destroy not only the Qing Empire, but also the whole fabric of the Confucian
landscape including not only the formalities of the social square, but also
the rounded eccentricities of the classical garden. Had they been able to do so, they might have seen the irony and the lesson to be gained in the fact that, of all the targets chosen by the British and French armies in their effort to force the Qing to give them trade concessions, in October 1860 they chose first to sack and then, by order of Lord Elgin, to burn the Yuan Ming Yuan completely, including even Castiglione's Western curiosity. But by then it was already too late. By 1840 a modern, industrializing world and its ideologies had begun to come thundering into China to create a context for political and for landscape revolution. In the process, much of the traditional Chinese landscape, like the society it housed, was itself rendered merely a curiosity and a curio—the stuff of museums, preservationists, and tourists.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

TENSIONS WITHIN THE GATE

The Gate of Heavenly Peace guards the southern approach to the former imperial palace complex in Beijing. Until China's last dynasty fell in 1912, it was through this gate that the main axis of the Emperor's power was believed to run, as he sat in his throne hall, facing south, the force of his presence radiating out across the courtyards and ornamental rivers of the palace compound, passing through the gate, and so to the great reaches of countryside beyond. During the teens and twenties of this century the gate ceased to have either a clear defensive or a clear symbolic function, though it bore quiet witness to the new paradoxes that were beginning to confront Chinese life. . . .

Jonathan D. Spence, The Gate of Heavenly Peace

(China) is like a large building that, because its timbers have decayed, is about to fall down. If small patches are made to cover up the cracks, then as soon as there is a storm the building will collapse. It is therefore necessary to dismantle the building and build anew if we want something strong and dependable. To lay a foundation, the area of the land, the height of the building to be constructed, the number of bricks and tiles, the sizes of the windows, doors and balustrades, the amount of plaster, nails, bamboo and other items must all be planned and estimated as parts of the overall design before purchasing the materials and hiring the laborers. This is the only way that a building can be constructed. If any one part of the general plan is neglected, the building cannot be properly constructed; and even if constructed, it cannot resist a storm.

Kang Yuwei to the Guangxu Emperor in June, 1898 at the newly constructed Summer Palace (Yi He Yuan), quoted by Jonathan D. Spence, The Gate of Heavenly Peace
For the most part today, in the urban settings of modern China, the traditional courtyard compound has gone the way of the culture with which it so closely resonated. As a living architectural form it has essentially vanished from the urban landscape to be replaced by a stark industrial architecture of high and low rise concrete structures. Where it continues to survive, it does so often in squalid testimony to the hardships of life in the modern industrial Chinese city, or it does so in selectively preserved, restored, and even preferred settings that stand in silent mockery of an alien if insistent modernity. Along the way, the old-fashioned, traditional, "classic" courtyard compound has become its own visible, highly charged and often troubling symbol of the successes and failures, and especially the contradictions of the cultural and social "revolutions" that have so violently swept across the landscape of China during the last one hundred and fifty years.

Partly for this reason, the modern fate of the traditional landscape, including the si he yuan, is the subject of considerable concern among architects, architectural historians, urban geographers, urban historians, and others in contemporary China. (Hou Renzhi, 1973, 1977; Luo Zhewen, 1980; Zhang Zugang, 1980; Wu Guangzu, 1983; Su Gin-djih, 1954; Wu Liangrong, 1979.) The fate of the traditional landscape and its architectural fragments is also the subject of some pressing concern to national and local historic preservation commissions throughout China. As a consequence, questions about the need to preserve, restore, or demolish the landscape fragments of Confucian China have become the subject of frequent discussion in the contemporary Chinese professional architectural, urban planning, historical geographical literature, and in much modern Chinese art, film and
creative literature.

In fact, the contemporary debate and concern is not new to China. Its roots can be traced at least to the turn of the century and to the much larger ideological contest that has raged ever since between erstwhile reformists and revolutionaries, ideologues and utilitarians, conservatives and modernists, nationalists and internationalists, Republicans and Communists, and others. Indeed, conceptually, its roots can be traced most directly to the sacking and burning of the Yuan Ming Yuan in October 1860. In its own way too, one can detect in the statement quoted above by the leader of the Confucian reform faction, Kang Yuwei, to the Guangxu Emperor that there was at the end of the century a latent recognition that not only would the House of the Qing have to be rebuilt and redesigned, but so too would the landscape. More directly, one of its earliest manifestations came in 1911-15 when the "sacred" palaces of the former Qing Dynasty rulers were rudely converted into secular museums and office space for the newly constituted Republican government of Yuan Shikai. Moreover, one of its most public manifestations came in the search for a suitable "Chinese renaissance" architectural style for the redesign and rebuilding of the City of Nanjing into the modern Republican capital of the 1920's and 1930's. Likewise, the "liberation" of the City of Beijing in January 1949 was barely complete before the issue arose in terms of the design and construction of a new "socialist" administrative center, including the city's new and massive Tian An Men Square and its adjacent parliament building, the "Great Hall of the People".

However, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the issue has taken on especially ominous tones. The story of the struggle to
restore, preserve, replicate and find inspiration in the traditional architectural heritage is here a story of ferocious political, ideological and personal turmoil, the likes of which perhaps only the Spanish Inquisition compares. As one Chinese architectural critic, Zhang Jingxian, recently suggested, the meaning of this struggle in modern China is well illustrated by a story drawn from China's most famous modern writer, Lu Xun. It bears repeating here, if only as one example of the depths to which the issue of the fate of the traditional landscape has penetrated the psyche of modern China.

As Zhang noted, in the context of a discussion on the adoption of mistaken attitudes toward the legacy of China, Lu Xun used the analogy of a poor boy who inherits a large, old house. If, as Lu Xun put it, the poor boy "opposed the former owner of the house, he might be afraid to destroy any of the things left within it, and hesitate, not daring even to enter the gate of the house--this is cowardly!" or the poor boy "might curse excitedly, and take a match to torch the place figuring that in doing so he preserved his own integrity--this is muddleheaded. (But) not only because he envied the things of the former owner, but also because he now possessed them, (the poor boy) joyfully slipped into the bedroom of the house and with deep inhaling availed himself of opium. This obviously is a true waste."

The story of the old house as analogy for the inherited culture of China is "especially appropriate to an explanation of attitudes adopted towards traditional architecture" in contemporary China. As Zhang Jingxian noted further:

The pity is that after liberation we also acquired the curse of this mistaken attitude. During the 1950's this is confirmed by the effort to adopt traditional architecture by "joyfully" adopting indiscriminate tendencies, as for example by wasting capital for construction by excessive use of colored roof tiles, using reinforced
concrete to make dou gong (traditional style beams held by corbel brackets), and other ersatz decorations. Afterwards, a period of coercion set in during which labels were put on everything. In coming down with a big stick, and seizing on mistakes, we experienced "hesitating, not daring to enter the gate," being afraid of being stained by the forces of feng, zi, and xiu ("feudalism," "capitalism," and "revisionism"). Especially during the ten years of calamity (i.e., the Cultural Revolution of 1965-75) when the Lin-Jiang anti-revolutionary gang took the relics of classical architecture among "the four olds" to be swept away, (we) "took a match to torch the place" or thoroughly smashed it.

Thus, according to preliminary data, in Beijing among the 77 national and municipal cultural protected units, 44 districts were destroyed; in the City of Suzhou, of the 114 large, medium and small classical gardens, at least 38 were completely destroyed. . . . (Zhang Jingxian, 1981, pp. 107-118.)

We do not need here to follow Zhang through the rest of his depressing recitation of destroyed, damaged and despoiled landscapes in order to be further reminded that the debate over the modern fate of the traditional landscape in the People's Republic of China has long been waged as well at the cost of spent lives and many professional careers. That it reached particularly violent proportions during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1965-75) when thousands of historic buildings and other reminders of China's "semi-feudal" past were either defiled or, as in the case of the walls of the City of Beijing, completely demolished is now reasonably well known. So too is it known that, along with the buildings and sites, those who fought against the wanton destruction of the landscape heritage were also often vilified as "counter revolutionaries" and consigned to the "garbage heap" of history as "reactionary trash."

As Zhang's essay itself testifies, since the end of the Cultural Revolution and especially the death of Mao Zedong, the arrest of the so-called "Gang of Four," and other events of 1976-79, much of the political
and personal risk associated with the debate over the fate of the traditional landscape has subsided. Still, if the debate continues today in a much more benign political context of the "open door policy," it is nonetheless still a highly charged and politically loaded issue. And, it is an issue yet to be resolved.

Much as in other countries, no doubt, in China the debate over the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and areas is also at least partly a debate over the allocation of scarce financial resources. The Government of the People's Republic of China will join the UNESCO fund for historic preservation only in 1986. Therefore, unlike Italy or Egypt, China has not yet been the recipient of much international financial support for the preservation of its historic monuments. As a developing country, the choice between preservation and demolition in China is often no choice at all simply by reason of other, more obvious and pressing social needs.

As typified by the case of the recent restoration of one section of the Great Wall of China, furthermore, much of the concern in China over the fate of the traditional landscape is reserved for the grandiloquent, and monumental structures of Imperial China, including the many hundreds of late medieval or early modern Buddhist pagodas, and Daoist and Confucian temples that dot the landscape. In the process, once proud monuments of the imperial order have become targets for much scholastic and historiographic research, and are readily absorbed into a contemporary public-use ethic through museumification, or adapted to the needs of a modern tourist industry—and most often both.

Yet, for all of the concern about and debate surrounding the modern fate of the traditional built environment, relatively little study or
analysis has been made of the forms, structures and designs of the landscape as they relate to the traditional social system. Rather, perhaps because such concern is reserved mainly for the fragments of the grand imperial past, much of that concern is focused on historiographic reconstructions and on issues of architectural authenticity and style. Often too, due to their larger political contexts, such concerns are easily reduced to polemics. Hence, where Chinese practitioners have indulged "anti-feudal" sloganeering, Western practitioners have indulged anti-Communist vilifications, as in Simon Leys' famous attack on the mutilation of historic Beijing. (Leys, 1977.) Frequently too, and most notoriously with respect to the classical Chinese garden, a pandering to Oriental esoterica results in mystifications little intended to illuminate the social meaning of the landscape. Even more frequently, in the popular literature, the issue is reduced to nostalgia for idiosyncratic, bygone, and never-to-be-replicated eras.

Along the way and with few exceptions, the social meanings of the traditional landscape are all too conveniently ignored, or warped to suit the needs of a fashionable polemic. Hence, contemporary debates over the preservation, demolition, or restoration of imperial fragments explain little about the day-to-day social relationships, the values, pleasures, pains and contradictions of the society and people that created the historic landscape. Not coincidentally, in the process, they also tell us little about the day-to-day social relationships, values, pleasures, pains and contradictions of the society and people that have come to replace the historic landscape with one of their own making.

Yet, it is precisely the relationship between people, society and the landscape that is at the heart of the concern over the modern fate of the
traditional landscape. What matters here is not so much accurate historical reconstructions, although they are obviously essential givens for any serious study of the traditional landscape. Rather, it is the proposition that the form, structure, and design of the built environment are offsprings of the dominant norms, mores, values and institutions that operate together to form the interdependent whole we call the social system. As such, the built environment is a hardened depository of the traditional social system, and what is at stake in its demolition or restoration is the degree to which that tradition can and should be sustained.

However one might address that issue, concern over the modern fate of the traditional landscape underscores the need to better understand its ancestral meanings, and the proposition cited earlier is a vital key to unlocking those meanings. The implications and inferences to be drawn from this proposition are, no doubt, many and varied. But, at bottom, it is to say that we form and construct our built environments according to our needs, mores, values and social institutions, and along the way our built environments reinforce, sustain and shape us as well. Their change, diminution, collapse or restoration is a measure of ourselves.

For that reason, if for no other, in seeking out the social contexts and meanings of the traditional Chinese landscape, I chose in this study to focus attention on the courtyard house and its garden rather than on some other landscape vestige or architectural remnant of Confucian China. The reason is simple. Nowhere else in the landscape could the quintessential needs, mores, values and institutions of traditional society, and especially Confucian society, be better revealed than in its residences—the symbolic and the actual depository of the Confucian family system and its altogether
extraordinarily powerful ideology.

The traditional elite, mainly urban courtyard compound home, the *si he yuan*, as well as its more common and poor relative, is one of the most valuable resources of the vestigial landscape because it is, almost by definition, so revealing of the character and meaning of the society it once housed. A microcosm of imperial palaces and gardens, as well as walled cities, but on a more human scale because it was the "home", a model for rich and poor alike, the courtyard house speaks volumes about the nature of the social relationships that once existed in Confucian China. The use of its spaces informs on the nature of relations between the sexes, on the roles of superiors and subordinates, on the meaning of public and private, and on virtually all day-to-day relationships among its inhabitants, with their neighbors, and with outsiders. Its ancestral halls and spirit walls reveal much about the relationship between sacred and secular in traditional Chinese society. Its walls, decorations, spatial arrangements, and construction methods also speak volumes about the socio-economic, ideational, and recreational values underlying its design and structure.

Hence, it was the primary purpose of this study to fill in some of the gaps in understanding about the social content of this traditional Chinese micro-landscape. In doing so, I have attempted to show that the courtyard house was, indeed, a classic institution within and symbol of traditional Chinese society and culture.

In doing so too, by focusing attention on its inner form, structure and design, I have attempted to explore the many pathways of a now eroded, but once powerful Confucian ethos and system of human relations. Not coincidentally, along the path of that exploration, the issue of the modern
fate of the traditional landscape is illuminated by a better understanding of what it is that the "revolutions" and "restorations" of the twentieth century have sought to overthrow or to rescue or to turn into museums. Along the way, I have sought a more firm basis upon which to say with alacrity whether the traditional landscape is in fact "merely a vestige," or a vital part of an enduring tradition that continues to affect and impress the present. In this way too, the present study is only a prelude to a larger undertaking, an effort to better comprehend how in "reading the landscape" of modern China we can more readily understand the dilemma, the trauma, and the hope of a China no longer Confucian yet presumably still Chinese.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Allom T. and Wright G. N. The Chinese Empire. 2 vols., 1858-59.


"Notes on the Symbolism of the Purple Forbidden City," JRAS/NCB, 1921. Reprinted as Chapter 4 of A Chinese Mirror, Boston, 1925.


______. *Die Baukunst und religiöse Kultur der Chinesen*. Berlin, 1911.


——. Chinese Architecture. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1890.


_______. "The Problem of the Chinese Relationship System," Monumenta Serica, XX.


_______. Kin and Non-Kin in Chinese Society: An Analysis of Extra-Kin Relationships in Chinese Society. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1951. (Special reference to a selected community, Ch’u-hsien, including diagrams and illustrations.)


_______. "Origins of the Great Wall of China: A Frontier Concept in
529-549.

_______. and E. Lattimore. China, A Short History. New York:

Laufer, Berthold. Chinese Baskets. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural
History, 1925. Anthropology Design Series No. 3.

Lee, Rose Hum. "Research on the Chinese Family," American Journal of
Sociology, SLIV (May 1949), pp. 497-504.

Lee, Shu-ching. "China's Traditional Family: Its Characteristics and
Disintegration," American Sociological Review, XVIII (June
1953), pp. 272-80.


Press, 1893-95.

_______. The Confucian Analects. The Great Learning and the

Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the
Vols. I and II reprinted Shanghai in one volume, 1933.

Lenski, Gerhard E. Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social

1895.


Levenson, Joseph R. Confucian China and Its Modern Fate. Berkeley

_______. "Ill-Wind in the Well-Field: The Erosion of the Confucian
Ground of Controversy," in A. F. Wright, Ed., The Confucian
Persuasion. Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press,
1960.

From the Beginnings to the Fall of Han. Berkeley and Los

Levy, Howard S. Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious


_________. "Marriage in Communist China," *Current Background*, No. 136.


_________. Chung-kuo chu chai kai shuo (General Description of Chinese Residences). Peking: Chien chu kung ch’eng ch’u pan she, 1957.


Lu, Gong (Ed.). *Qing dai Bei jing zhuzhici (shisan zhong).* Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 1982.


Ming Qing Suzhou gongshangye beike ji. Jiangsu: Renmin Chubanshe, 1981. (Suzhou Lishi Bowuguan, Jiangsu Shifan Xueyuan Lishixi and Nanjing Daxue Ming Qing Shi Yanjiushi.)


Mukerjee, R.  *Man and His Habitation*.  London: Longmans, Green, 1940.


Ng, Shiu-wai.  *Decorations and Ornamentations in Chinese Architecture in Hong Kong*.  Hong Kong University Department of Architecture.


Shirokogoroff, S. M. Social Organization of the Manchus. Shanghai: 1924.


_________. *The Walls and Gates of Peking: Researches and Impressions.* London: John Lane, 1924.


________. (Wang, Sungxing). "Taiwanese Architecture and the Supernatural."


Wen, Ching. The Chinese Crisis from Within.  London:  Grant Richards, 1901.


______. "Struggle versus Harmony: Symbols of Competing Values in Modern China," *World Politics*, VI (October 1953), 31-44.


Young, John D. *East-West Synthesis: Matteo Ricci and Confucianism*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1980.


NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

For the most part, the pinyin system of romanization used today in the People's Republic of China and increasingly around the world has been employed in this study. However, in certain cases, the older Wade-Giles system is also used, as in the spelling of personal names or titles of books and texts quoted by others. For example, Professor Hsiao Kung-ch'uan is already well known in sinological circles by the Wade-Giles romanization of his name, and it would not benefit the reader of this study in seeking further reference to his writings to render his name in pinyin as Xiao Gong-chuan. However, certain place names, such as Beijing, commonly known as Peking, have been changed to the pinyin system insofar as the latter has become widely accepted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Text Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Di</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>地</td>
<td>p. 122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dili</td>
<td>Geomancy, Geography</td>
<td>地理</td>
<td>p. 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>法</td>
<td>p. 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengshui</td>
<td>Geomancy</td>
<td>風水</td>
<td>p. 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudi</td>
<td>Noble (Manzhu) Residence</td>
<td>府地</td>
<td>p. 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fufu</td>
<td>Husbands and Wives, Common People</td>
<td>夫婦</td>
<td>p. 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>Palace</td>
<td>宮</td>
<td>pp. 92, 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongchengshi</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>工程师</td>
<td>p. 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongshe</td>
<td>Public Earth Mound (Altar)</td>
<td>公社</td>
<td>p. 122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongshi</td>
<td>Mansion, Official's Palace</td>
<td>宮室</td>
<td>p. 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guo</td>
<td>State, Country</td>
<td>國</td>
<td>p. 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji</td>
<td>Pivot, Ridgepole</td>
<td>極</td>
<td>p. 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia</td>
<td>Home, Common House</td>
<td>家</td>
<td>pp. 91, 92, 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiating</td>
<td>Family, Household</td>
<td>家庭</td>
<td>p. 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jian</td>
<td>Space, (Measure) Unit of space between roof support posts--the size of a building being defined by the number of jian</td>
<td>间</td>
<td>p. 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianzhu</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>建築</td>
<td>p. 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jianzhushi</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>建築師</td>
<td>p. 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiangren</td>
<td>Artificer, Master Craftsman</td>
<td>匠人</td>
<td>p. 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jing  Well  p. 120

Jingtian  Well-field  p. 120

Junzi  Gentleman, Superior Man  pp. 50, 70

Ku  Armory  p. 139

Li  Propriety, Rites, Ceremonies  pp. 66, 72, 73, 75

Li  Distance, (Measure)  p. 127
Unit of Geographical Space (ca. 1/3 Mile)

Li  Strength  p. 126

Lu  Statutes, Laws, Musical Harmonies  pp. 69, 209

Min  Common People, Folk  p. 53

Mian  Roof  p. 138

Nan  Agricultural colonist, Barony, Male  p. 126

Ren  Benevolence, Virtue  p. 52, 212

Shi  Private House  p. 138

Sifang  Four Directions  pp. 121, 131

Siheyuan  Four-sided courtyard house  pp. 1, 62

Sikong  Minister of Works  p. 37

Situ  Minister of Stamped Earth  p. 37

Taimiao  Imperial Ancestral Hall  p. 122

Tan  Altar  p. 206

Tang  Reception Hall  p. 138

Tian  Field  pp. 120, 127

Tian  Heaven  p. 121

Tian  Agricultural Colonists  p. 126

Tianxia  Under Heaven, Empire, The World of Man, The Earth  p. 127
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Traditional Chinese</th>
<th>Simplified Chinese</th>
<th>p.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ting</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>庭</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingyuan</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>土地</td>
<td>土</td>
<td>121, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudi</td>
<td>土地</td>
<td>土</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuhua</td>
<td>土地</td>
<td>土</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>庭</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wufu</td>
<td>五服</td>
<td>五</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wulun</td>
<td>五服</td>
<td>五</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiao</td>
<td>孝</td>
<td>孝</td>
<td>pp. 52, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>县</td>
<td>县</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>义</td>
<td>义</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>县</td>
<td>县</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>园</td>
<td>园</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>园</td>
<td>园</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>庭院</td>
<td>pp. 109, 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>圆宅</td>
<td>圆宅</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhai</td>
<td>知</td>
<td>知</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi</td>
<td>知</td>
<td>知</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoulang</td>
<td>走廊</td>
<td>走</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zu</td>
<td>族</td>
<td>族</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuzhang</td>
<td>家长</td>
<td>家</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beijing: The Classical Siheyuan or Four-Sided Courtyard House.
Shanxi Province: Archaeological Reconstruction of Traditional Rural Residential Compound During the Western Zhou Period (771-8 C.256).
Guangzhou: A Merchant's House in the Eighteenth Century
Sketch by William Chambers
Beijing: Layout of the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan).
Wang Shili Yuan, Suchow

- walls
- windows in walls
- walls below knee height
- walls with pillars supporting roofs
- roofed areas
- trees with shrubs
- flowers and shrubs in pots
- rock piles and hills
- bamboos
- direction from which black and white photograph taken
- direction from which colour photograph taken

A South entrance
B North entrance
C Courtyard
D Hall (present-day shop) with terrace
E Courtyard
F Rock-pile with cavern and steps to top floor of Library
G Entrance to library courtyard
H Library courtyard
I Door to gallery on lake
J 'Pavilion of the Accumulated Void'
K Gallery on lake
L Entrance to house
M Covered galleries with calligraphy set into walls on stone tablets
N 'Pavilion of the Clouds and Moon'
O Hall with terrace
P Entrance to garden from house
Q 'Barrier of Clouds' Hall
R Hall with secluded courtyards
S Area now used for pot culture
T Small hall on the water
U Covered galleries with calligraphy set into walls on stone tablets
V 'Pavilion of the Clouds and Moon'
W Hall with terrace
X Study
Y Well
Z 'Hall from which One Looks at the Pines and Contemplates the Paintings'

Total area covered is approx. 1 acre

Suzhou: Layout of the Wang Shi Yuan (Garden of the Master of the Nets).