

**MEANING IN THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE HOUSE AND GARDEN**

by  
**TAO LI**

**Bachelor of Architecture  
Tongji University  
Shanghai, P.R. China  
July, 1982**

**Master of Architecture  
Tongji University  
Shanghai, P.R. China  
May, 1985**

**Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree  
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at the**

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**Tao Li  
Department of Architecture  
May 8, 1992**

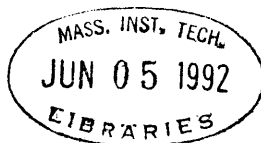
Certified by \_\_\_\_\_

**Ronald B. Lewcock  
Visiting Professor of Architecture  
Thesis Supervisor**

Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_

**Julian Beinart  
Chairman, Department Committee  
for Graduate Students**

**Rotch**



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### Abstract

The thesis deals with the various levels of meanings of the Chinese house and garden, and how the meanings operated in the context of traditional daily life. It is approached from the point of view of meaning in the context of daily life, using the activities and events of daily life described in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* as examples. An eighteenth century masterpiece, the book is regarded as authentically representing the life of the upper class of its time. In the book, the author uses the garden and house proper as the settings two different worlds of daily life activities of a family. The world in the house represents Confusian order, conforming with the social order, and that of the garden a poetic entity dominated by the Taoist ideal.

The house was the microcosm of society, and the garden the microcosm of the universe. Reading beyond this level, we find one was built upon the demand of control over the individual; the other upon the desire of the individual for relief from tight control.

The two worlds in the home environment represented the world of men and the world of nature. In the world of the house, i. e. the world of men, the individual had to deal with all kinds of human relationships, by following the social rules that were designed to sustain the hierarchical structure of the society. In the world of the garden, i.e. the world of the nature, the individual became one with the universe, by following the ultimate standards of Tao.

Thesis Supervisor: Ronald Lewcock  
Title: Visiting Professor of Architecture

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## Introduction

This is a study on meaning in traditional Chinese house and garden. It is not, however, an attempt to investigate all aspects of meaning in the Chinese house and garden. Rather, the study focuses on how meaning in the traditional Chinese home environment affects the individual.

The study is approached from the point of view of meaning in the context of daily life, using the activities and events of daily life described in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* as examples. An eighteenth century masterpiece, the book is regarded as authentically representing the life of the upper class of its time. The structure of the Jia family in the book conforms with the ideal of the society, and the house form of the family represents an idealized model. While it may not be adequate to make general statements out of one case, this famous and widely read book may cast some light on the study of the meaning of the Chinese home environment in traditional society.

In the book, the author constructs two worlds: (1) the world in the Prospect Garden (the garden of the family) and (2) the world outside the garden, mostly in the house. The world in the house represents Confucian order, conforming with the social order, and that of the garden a poetic entity dominated by the Taoist ideal.

When reading the book, one feels strongly the theme of the two worlds. The lives in the two worlds draw two completely different pictures for the reader. One cannot help but wonder what makes the author perceive the two parts of a house compound so differently. Obviously the house is perceived as more than merely a shelter for the family, and a vessel for its daily life, and the garden more than simply a place for seeking earthly pleasure. The message that *The Dream of the Red Chamber* conveys about the home environment is that, to the individuals in the family, the two worlds signify two different sets of value and codes of behavior. These values and codes are imbedded in the physical environment and they are what this study is focused on.

The thesis is structured by following the theme of the two worlds, and develops within each world different topics, from the point of view of the individual.

Chapter One establishes the theme of two "worlds" in the idealized type of traditional Chinese home environment through an examination of the book, and raises some questions at the end of the chapter.

The next chapter, in answering these questions, passing to the subject of the intellectual foundations of Chinese thought, Confucianism and Taoism, to examine them as they are concerned with the role of the individual. Also of interest are their differing attitudes towards human society.

Chapters Three and Four explore in depth the meaning of the traditional Chinese home environment on the basis of the previous discussions.

Chapter. 1

**Life in the Home Environment of Traditional Chinese Society as Exemplified in *The Dream of the Red Chamber***

Before examining the meaning of the traditional Chinese house and garden, looking at how they functioned in the context of traditional daily life is helpful. Since the traditional ways of life no longer exist in modern society, collecting firsthand data by observation is impossible. Therefore, I will turn to literature, and eventually to a novel, for insight. *The Dream of the Red Chamber*,<sup>1</sup> an eighteenth century masterpiece, deals with events in a wealthy and large joint family living in a house-garden complex. While it may not be adequate to make general statements out of one case, the book may cast some light on the study of the meaning of the Chinese home environment in traditional society.

### 1.1 The World of Rong-guo Mansion

Anyone who reads *The Dream of the Red Chamber* will probably be struck by the size of the Jia families and their houses. There were two branches of the Jia family. One branch, which served as the setting for the main stories of the book, and with which this study is concerned, was called Rong-gou-fu, and its house was Rong-gou mansion.

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, unless otherwise noted, the extracts from *The Dream of the Red Chamber* will use David Hawkes' translation. His version, *The Story of the Stone*, is published by Oxford Press 1973.

This branch of the Jia family was a "joint family" which consisted of several nuclear families.<sup>2</sup> The family belonged to the high ranking class, and used a large number of servants and maids in the household. This household was like a community, and was run like a small state. The structure of the family is shown in the diagram below. The head of the family was Jia Zheng.

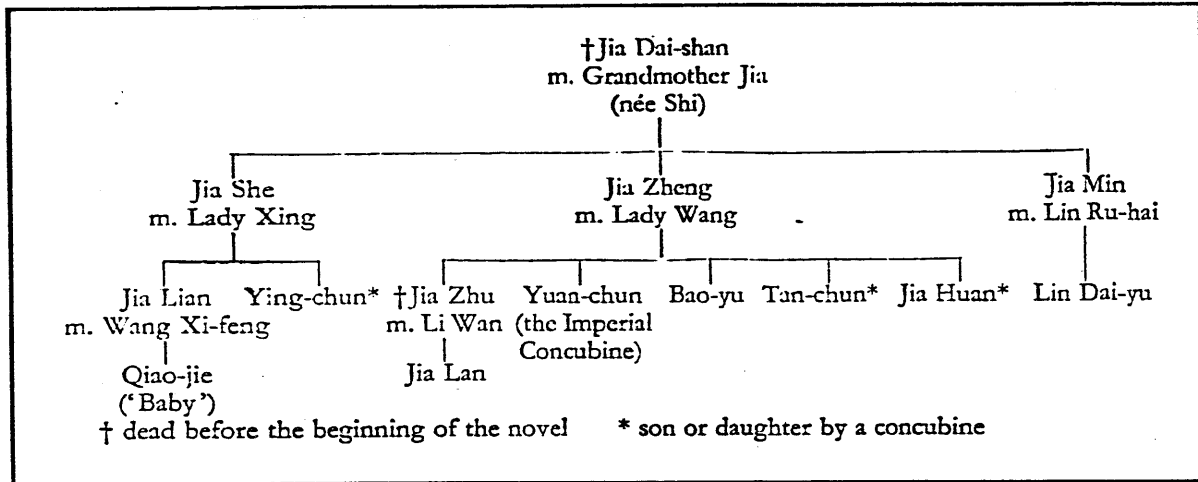


Fig. 1.1 The structure of the Jia family

In the daily life of this large family, from what the author tells us, there were some phenomena that interest us.

What impresses the reader the most is that there were many strict rules that regulated the individual's behavior within the house. The rules even reached deep into private realms and intimate relationships. The following two scenes from the book may give us some idea of the degree to which the rules that regulated their behaviors had penetrated into the life of individuals.

The first scene involves father and sons. A young gentleman, Zhen Bao-yu, who had the same name of the hero of the book and was from a family of long and close

<sup>2</sup>Later in this study, the Rong-gou-fu will be referred to as the Jia family.



connection with the Jia family visited them. Zheng was entertaining him in his study when Bao-yu, Zheng's other son Huan and his grandson Lan came in.

Jia Zheng had been sitting on the floor. When he offered Zhen Bao-yu a seat the lad felt it would be presumptuous to take it as he belonged to the younger generation. He placed a mattress on the floor and sat on that. Bao-yu and the two other boys could not sit with Jia Zheng; on the other hand, since the visitor belonged to their generation, Jia Zheng could hardly make his sons stand in his presence. In this dilemma he rose after a few remarks and ordered the meal to be served.

...

After a few further words Jia Zheng went to his inner study, not letting young Zhen escort him. Bao-yu, Huan and Lan, who had left the room first, stood respectfully outside the door until Jia Zheng had gone before returning to ask the guest to sit down.<sup>3</sup>

(chapter 110)

The next extract of interest takes place in the most private part of the house, the bedroom. Dai-yu, the heroine of the book, arrived at the mansion after a long trip from the south. She went to see her aunt.

The old nurses invited Dai-yu to get up on the *kang*;<sup>4</sup> but guessing that the brocade cushions arranged one on each side near the edge

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<sup>3</sup> Translation by Yang Hsien and Gladys Yang, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Peking, 1980. While the translation of names follows David Hawkes' translation.

<sup>4</sup> *Kang* is a platform with heating device, and functions as bed in northern part of China.

of it must be her uncle's and aunt's place, she deemed it more proper to sit on one of the chairs against the wall below.

But it turned out that her aunt was in another bedroom, so Dai-yu move to the other room, and applied the same guess work there.

Seeing her niece enter, she (Dai-yu's aunt Lady Wang) motioned her to sit opposite her on the *kang*, but Dai-yu felt sure that this must be her uncle Zheng's place. So, having observed a row of three chairs near the *kang* with covers of flower-sprigged brocade which looked as though they were in fairly constant use, she sat upon one of those instead. Only after much further pressing from her aunt would she get up on the *kang*, and even then she would only sit beside her and not in the position of honour opposite.

(Chapter 3,)<sup>5</sup>

In the first case, we find that the rules regulating behavior made a reception so difficult that Zheng had to leave in order to solve the dilemma. Upon his departure, his own sons had to show respect in seeing him off as if it was an official situation. In the second case, the setting was in the bedroom and concerned the *kang*. In the northern part of China, the *kang* in the bedroom of the head of the family often serves as a family gathering place, since it is heated during winter. One would expect a meeting here to be intimate and casual, yet what we see here in the book is a rather formal scene. There is similar scene in chapter 23, where some family members were sitting "formally" around the *kang* in a casual gathering.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Translation from David Hawkes, *The Story of the Stone*, 1973. Oxford

<sup>6</sup> Bao-yu went to see his father one day, and this was what happened: "Bao-yu entered in a sort of sideways crouch, the picture of submissive son--a gesture that was wasted, however, since his father and mother

Throughout the book one finds numerous instances like these two, where rules were strictly imposed upon one's behaviors in the house. From the reading we can summarize some major relationships to which the rules were applied. These relationships were those between masters and servants, between people of older generations and people of younger generations, and between men and women. The two scenes cited above are concerned with the rules that applied in the relationship between younger and older generations. Another incident in the book may be more revealing about the nature of the relationship between young and old, where we find that a person of the older generation had authority over the young even when he was not present.

In Chapter 52, Bao-yu was about to see his uncle in town, and was riding on his horse and ready to go when he remembered something:

'Zhou, Qiau,' Bao-yu called out from the saddle to the two in front, 'let's go out of the side gate, otherwise it will mean going past the door of my father's study and I shall have to get down.'

'Since sir Zheng went away, his door's kept locked at all the time,' said Zhou Rui, turning a grinning face back to his young master.

'You don't need to get down.'

'Even though it *is* locked, I still ought to get down,' said Bao-yu.

(Hawkes, vol. 2, p.546)

To Bao-yu, the study had become the symbol of Zheng. He could circumvent it. But if confronting it, he would have to subordinate to it .

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were in the inner room at the back....Jia Zheng and Lady Wang sat facing each other on the *kang* talking. Ying-chun, Tan-chun, Xi-chun and Jia Huan were sitting on a row of chairs below... the other three rose to their feet."

The distinction between masters and servants had always been clear in the Ronggou mansion, and is easy to understand. As to the relationship between men and women, the basic rule was to separate the two sexes. The following example shows the extent that the rule had been carried out. A maid named Skybright was rather ill and a doctor was called in.

The maids had all fled as soon as the arrival of a male visitor was announced, leaving only three or four old nannies in charge of the apartment. The old nannies quickly let down the closet bed's red embroidered curtains and Skybright stretched forth her hand through a join in them.(Hawkes, vol. 2, p.525)

What we see here is that the rule was more important than human life. Even though the maid was very ill, the only way that the doctor could make his diagnosis was through examining her hand.<sup>7</sup>

Rules were not only imposed on individuals' behaviors to make distinctions between masters and servants, men and women, young and old, but were also applied to the distribution of living quarters in order to reinforce these distinctions. The distribution followed a hierarchical order which was in accordance with the structure of the Jia family. (see fig.1.2, the plan of the mansion)

The head of the family, Jia Zheng, lived with his wife Lady Wang in the most important part of the mansion, the main inner hall named The Hall of Exalted Felicity, which was also the center of the whole mansion. This Hall was the symbol of power, the splendiddness and glory of the family, and was therefore more imposing than any other

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<sup>7</sup>The poor doctor did not even know who his patient was and what she was. He thought that she was a lady in the mansion.

building in the mansion.

The big building at the head of the courtyard was connected at each end to galleries *running through the length of the side buildings* by means of 'stag's head' roofing over the corners. The whole formed an architectural unit of greater sumptuousness and magnificence than anything Dai-yu had yet seen that day, from which she concluded that this must be the main inner hall of the whole mansion. (Hawkes, vol.1, p.95, chapter 3. My emphasis )

Zheng's mother, Grandma Jia stayed in the west side of the main court. Though

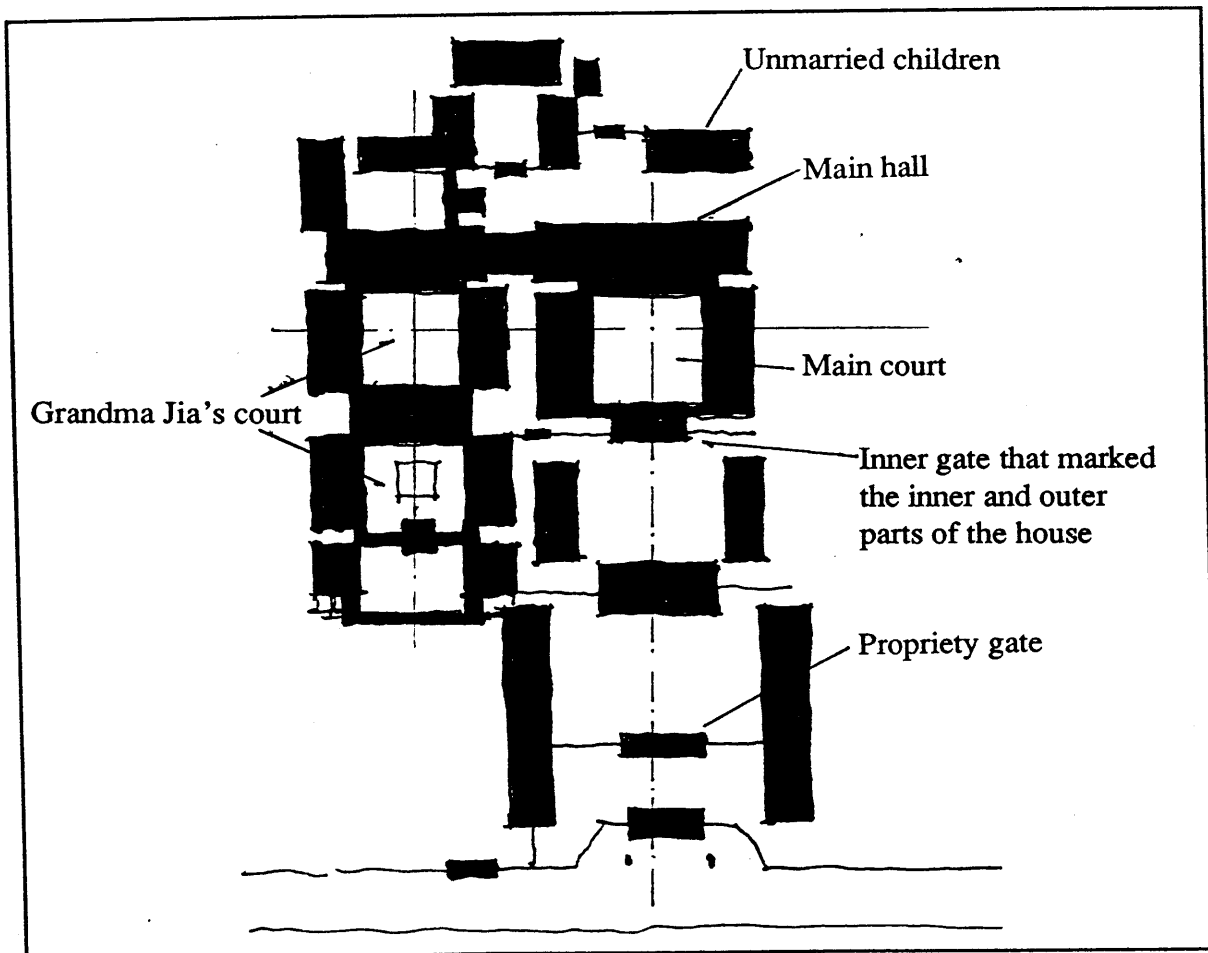


Fig. 1.2 Plan of the Rong-guo Mansion

not officially acknowledged, she was, in practice, the head of the family (hence in some English versions she is named as Matriarch). Her place consisted of a group of buildings that were organized into two courtyards along a north-south axis, with the outer court as a reception part, and the inner as the living quarters. Her apartment was on the main axis facing south. Such arrangement shows Grandma Jia's respected status in the family.

Married Children (the generation younger than Zheng's) had their own courts, but in less important locations, with less impressive architectural treatments. The unmarried children's area was relatively crowded. They lived in the apartment on the back of the main inner court (Zheng's court).

The mansion could be divided into two parts in terms of the degree of privacy. The outer part was the setting for social activities and primarily the men's area. The inner part was the more private family area. There was a gate that separated the two parts, and it was called the "inner gate". Women's activities were limited to the inner area, within the inner gate.

Interestingly enough, although Zheng and Lady Wang were entitled to use the main hall as their living area, they chose not to.(fig. 1.3)

Lady Wang did not, however, normally spend her leisure hours in this main reception hall, but in a smaller room ("three smaller rooms" in original text) on the east side of the same building.

(From David Hawkes' translation, vol 1, p.97, chapter 3)

The reason for this choice was that there were two orders in the family. One order, which we may call the political order, established the principal position of Jia Zheng, and placed him and his wife in the main court. The other order, the ethical order,

which was generated by the requirement of filial piety, placed Zheng's mother in the highest position in the inner order of the family. As a result of balancing the two orders, Zheng and his wife shifted their daily activities to the side rooms. Such an arrangement demonstrated a compromising solution to the conflict of the two orders.

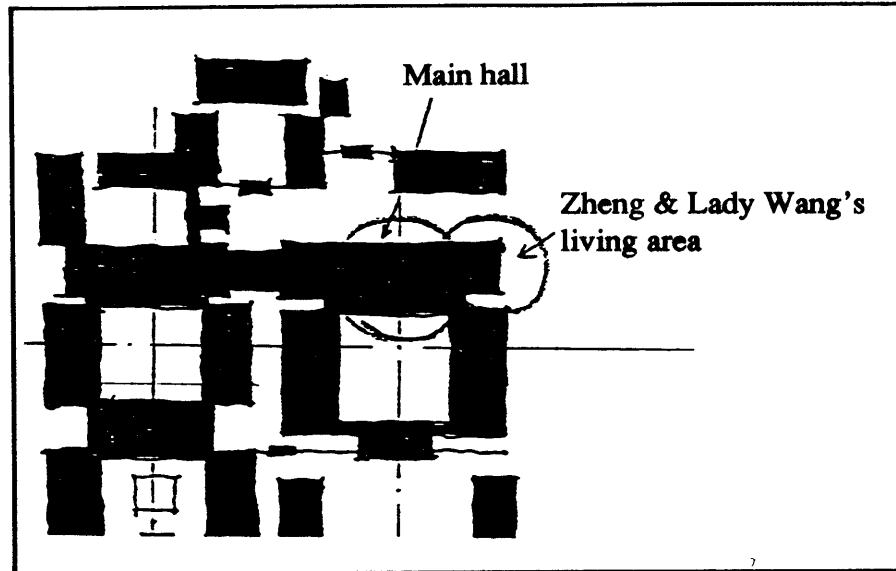


Fig. 1.3

## 1.2 The World of the Prospect Garden

To the reader of the book, the scenes in the Prospect Garden present a different picture. Contrary to the formal and strict life in the house, the life in the garden was joyful. The individuals in the garden appeared to be carefree and cheerful. The rules that were strictly carried out in the house did not seem applicable here. The two orders that dominated the life in the house did not appear so distinctive in the garden. Bao-yu's birthday party in chapter 63 is a good example of the informality of the life in the garden. On the night of Bao-yu's birthday, the residents of the garden, whether they were masters or servants, gathered around on the same table in a night banquet, something that would never be permitted in the house. They drank wine, sang songs and did some other things that they would not be permitted to do in the mansion. While Bao-yu had a formal birthday party during the day with his family, he enjoyed more the party in the garden.

The reader of the book may find that the Prospect garden was a world enclosed against the whole outside world, including the mansion. Although the Rong-gou mansion was physically closed to the outside, to the residents of the garden it was identical with the order of the outside world. A contrast therefore, was set between the mansion and garden. The state of the enclosure of the garden was not only a physical reality, but also the perception of the residents in the garden. They perceived the garden as a land of escape where they could live freely. This idea is supported by the advice that Shi Xiang-yun gave to the new comer Bao-qin:

'Apart from the time you spend with Her Old Ladyship,' Xing-yun advised Bao-qin, 'I should stick to the Garden as much as possible if I were you. In these two places you can eat and drink and play



anywhere you please.' (chapter 49, Hawkes, vol. 2, p.475)

The treatment of water in the garden gives another example of its closeness and how its residents perceived it. The water that fed the pools and streams and all the watercourses of the garden came from an outside river. At the point where the water came in, there was a weir that served, in metaphor, as a guard, filtering the water from the outside in order to keep it clean in the garden. As soon as the water ran out from the garden, it was regarded as unclean again. Dai-yu once said, "the water you see here is clean, but farther on beyond weir, where it flows past people's houses, there are all sorts of muck and impurity". (chapter 23, Hawkes, vol.1, p. 463)

There was also one instance in the book that an explicit analogy was made between the Prospect Garden and an escape land. In chapter 17, soon after the garden was constructed, a group of literary gentlemen visited it, and in one of the spots, when they were asked to name the place, they all came up with the same idea.

Inevitably the literary gentlemen thought of Tao Yuan-ming's fisherman of Wu-ling and his Land of Peach-blossom Stream.<sup>8</sup>

"The Wu-ling Stream",<sup>9</sup> said one of them. "The name is ready-made for this place. No need to look further than that.'

(When Zheng declined the name) 'All right,' said the others good-humouredly. 'In that case simply call it "Refuge of the Qins".'<sup>10</sup>

Their minds still ran on the Land of the Peach-blossom Stream and

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<sup>8</sup> Hawkes translates the place as Peach-blossom Stream. I change it in accordance with the conventional translation.

<sup>9</sup> Wu-ling Stream is another name of the Land of Peach-blossom Stream, so named because of its location.

<sup>10</sup> Also refer to the same place. Jia Zheng did not like the first suggestion because it was the name for a "real" place. So the literary gentlemen named the spot after the residents of the Land of the Peach-blossom Stream in their second try.

its hidden paradise. (Hawkes, vol. 1, p. 338)

The Land of the Peach-blossom Stream is an imaginative land of peace created by the famous poet Tao Yuan-ming. Its residents escaped from society and lived freely in this land. The place is often referred to as "The Land of the Other World".

For our hero Bao-yu and his companions, the Prospect Garden was their "Land of The Other World". In it, life "became utterly and completely satisfying" for them, and Bao-yu "was blissfully happy" in the garden.<sup>11</sup>

The garden was not only a refuge for its masters to escape from reality, but also a place where its residents could contemplate. It was filled with "all the prospects of earth's and heaven's",<sup>12</sup> and seasonal changes added more prospects to the garden so that one could observe the way of nature. The architecture and planting were arranged in accordance with the rhythm of the seasonal changes. It was considered a world of self-contained completeness where various elements formed a harmonious whole. Inquiring beyond the aesthetic value of the Prospect garden, we will find that it was treated as a place with a meaning that was more than natural landscape for earthly pleasure. It was regarded as an entity that identified with the principles of Nature, or the Tao of Nature, as Chuang-tzu, Bao-yu's favor Taoist master, would call it. This dimension of the garden as a contemplating place was valued by its residents. Ying-chun once wrote about the garden:

The garden finished, all its prospects please.

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter 23, Hawkes, vol. 1, p. 460

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 18. Hawkes's translates as "Earth's fairest prospects all are here installed".

Bidden to write, I name this spot 'Heart's Ease'.

Who would have thought on earth such scenes to find

As here refresh the heart and ease the mind? (chapter 18, Hawkes,

vol. 1 p.366)

As the reader discovers, the physical escape was temporal, yet the peace of mind one might achieve in the garden could be eternal. Bao-yu's final exit can be read as an act which Zen Buddhism calls "awakening". When he walked out from the mansion singing "He breaks through the first door of his cage", he had reached complete liberation of his self, the self that was repressed in the family.

To sum up, we can say that in the Jia compound, there were two very different worlds: (1). the world in the Prospect Garden (the garden of the family) and (2). the world outside the garden, mostly in the house. The world in the house represents the Confusian order, which conforms to the social order, and that of the garden a poetic entity dominated by the Taoist ideal. The house was where the individual was repressed, and the garden was where the individual could liberate himself--at least temporarily.

Why was there such a difference between the two? What were the ideas behind the two worlds? Or, we may ask, what were the factors beyond the physical environment that made the house and the garden different? The following chapters will deal with the meaning and aspects that constitute the significance of the traditional Chinese house and garden and attempt to answer these questions.

**Chapter 2**  
**An Overview of Confucian and Taoist Ideals**

Confucianism and Taoism were two major systems of thoughts that constituted the intellectual foundation of Chinese society. They functioned as two complementary systems in the course of Chinese civilization ever since they were formed. A brief examination on the two may illuminate the study of the meaning of traditional Chinese house and garden.

Both Confucianism and Taoism were rooted in the ancient Chinese world view, and both of them emerged from a chaotic era. But they learned different lessons from the same source and same situation, and reached opposite conclusion about the world, human beings and human society.

### **2.1 Confucianism and Traditional Chinese Family**

In the long history of imperial China, Confucianism had been the official ideology for most of the time. It originated in a time of chaos, and formed its ideas largely as a response to the issues raised by the disorder of the society of the time. Its response was that the order had to be restored. All the major issues in Confucianism were

centered around this conviction. Confucians tried to justify the importance of maintaining a stable order in human society by adjusting human society into the cosmic order. To them, Heaven and Earth, the four seasons, and the major elements in the universe had displayed a well ordered whole, with Heaven on the superior level and Earth on the inferior one. As Mencius (372-289 B.C.) put it: "Because of Heaven and Earth, there is the distinction of higher and lower."<sup>1</sup>

### **The Importance of Family in the Confucian System**

The aim of Confucianism, as mentioned above, was to establish order within human society. The order that Confucius (551-479 B.C.) envisioned the human society should follow was an idealized version of Chou society. To Confucius, the key to the perfection of a society, with the stability brought by good order, lay in the perfection of the personality of the ruler, as exemplified in the personality of King Wen and King Wu of Chou. In other words, the virtue and personal education of a ruler should be perfect. Confucius believed that good virtue was what made man good, and the key to good virtue was education. Education here meant the learning of moral values which Confucius regarded as central to human society. Because of his perfection in virtue, a ruler became a ruler, and he became superior to other human beings.

In addition to the ruler, anyone in an official post should achieve high standards in his personal education and hence demonstrate his virtue and goodness. This virtue qualified him for the post. The higher he reached in his personal education, the better his virtue would be, and the more authority he would have over others. Therefore, in the Confucius social system, there was a clear and definite hierarchy of superiority and

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Book of Mencius*.

inferiority, with the ruler at the highest level and the commoner at the bottom. What determined position in the hierarchy was virtue, and specifically, personal education. It is interesting to note that Confucius believed that whether one was superior or not should be determined by the difference of education instead of that of class.

But how was it possible to make common people accept the authority of those who were superior to them? Confucius and his followers believed that this could be achieved by educating the common people. In other words, in the eyes of Confucians, everyone should be educated, and one important aspect in such education should be to teach people to accept the authority of their superiors. This concept served to strengthen further hierarchy in traditional Chinese society.

In what way, then, should every individual be educated? Confucius believed that the family should be the basic unit for this purpose. Mencius, a Confucian philosopher who was one generation younger than Confucius and was as important in the Confucian school as the master himself, once said: "The root of the empire is in the state. The root of the State is in the family. The root of the family is in the individual." Since Confucians believed that the root of a well ordered society was the individual, they emphasized the obligations and duties rather than the rights of the individual. The individual would first be educated to recognize his obligations and duties to the family and accept the authority of the superiors in his family. If the individual could be well educated in his family, then he would accept the authority of the state and the empire, and fulfill his duties. The idea here was to make the individual willingly accept the authority of the state, instead of having the state exert its authority through force. This was why education, in particular education in the family, was so important to

Confucianism. Because of that and similar convictions, Confucianism placed high value on the family, and at the same time emphasized the importance of making distinctions of status among the members in the family. Each individual had a particular position in the family system.

In the Confucian system, therefore, the family held a prominent position and played a key role. The family can be said to be the "prototype of all social organization"<sup>2</sup> in traditional Chinese society. And Confucianism reinforced the role of family in society. How, then, was the Chinese family structured in the traditional Chinese society after Confucianism became the official ideology? What were the relationships among the family members? And how did the institution of the family operate?

### **The Hierarchical Nature of the Traditional Chinese Family**

The ideal Chinese family was a "joint family" comprising several, usually three, generations along the paternal lineage. They all lived "under one roof". Whenever possible, the Chinese family tended to extend its size and relations. In a sense it was a microcosm of a community, a state in miniature. A joint family consisted of parents, their married son or sons and unmarried children, and children of their married son or sons. In other words, it was comprised by two and more nuclear families.

As mentioned above, it was important to make the distinction between superiority and inferiority in the family. Therefore the family in traditional Chinese society was hierarchically structured.

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted from Charles Moore, *Chinese Mind*, Honolulu, 1967

The principles of hierarchical organization were determined by generation, sex and age. The generation was the prime factor in determining the status of the individual, with the oldest generation on the most superior position. Next to the rule of generation, was that of gender. Men were superior to women. Then it was the factor of age, within one generation, and among the same gender, the eldest had the most superior position. These rules themselves were in hierarchical order, with the generation rule on the top and the age rule on the bottom. Sometimes a member in a younger generation might be older than a member in the older generation, and in this case, according to the rule no. 1 of hierarchy, the one in the older generation was superior, no matter how young he was. The head of the family was usually the oldest male member in the oldest generation.

The hierarchy was so strong in the family that even ancestral worship, the major tie which held the family together, served to solidify it. The practice of ancestral worship enhanced the authority of the head of the family and the members in the oldest generation, because they were the ones to be worshiped next.

### **Relationships within the Family**

The father-son relationship was the prime relationship among the family members. While this may be true in many human societies, it was particularly emphasized in traditional Chinese society because of the fact that the basis of the family was patriliney and because of the ancestral worship. The relation was nothing between equals. The father had the absolute authority over the son, even the power to demand the death of his son or sons. But a father should not abuse his power. The son, on the other hand, should obey his father's authority, and respect him. No matter how a father treated his son, the son should not challenge the father. In *The Dream of the Red Chamber*,



although Jia Zheng treated Bao-yu unfairly, and once beat him almost to death, there was no indication that Bao-yu hated Zheng, or disobeyed him. The father-son relation was that of absolute superiority and inferiority.

All other relationships can be said as the extensions, or supplementaries to the father-son relationship, even the relationship between husband and wife. The reason of a marriage was not love but production. If a wife failed to give birth to a son, the husband had the *responsibility* to marry a second wife, provided that he could afford to. According to the rule of sex in the family hierarchy, the husband had the authority over the wife. And according to the rule of generation, the wife had authority to her children. One exception to the rule was that if the husband died, the wife should accept the authority of her eldest son. It is interesting to note that this was somehow conflicting to the first rule in family hierarchy--the generation rule, and therefore brought up the subtle situation in which mother and the eldest son had authority over each other. If a situation like this happened, it would complicate the relationships among family members. In *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, the relation between Zheng and his mother, Grandma Jia, was an example of such case. In the long history of chinese empire, there were many instances of such subtle relationships between emperors and their mothers. This kind of situation not only had its impact on family affairs, but also had influence on the uses of domestic space within a house, as we shall see in the Jia family house in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

### **The Pursuit of Harmony within the Family**

Besides the prime concern of maintaining the hierarchical order in the family, harmony was also emphasized by Confucianism. Confucius taught that parents and children should love each other, and live harmoniously together. One major means to ensure the harmony in the family was to avoid conflict. In order to avoid conflict, certain codes of behavior were imposed on the family under the concept of *li*. In *Li Chi (the Book of Rites)*, a classic of Confucianism, the section on "Domestic Rules" is one of the most important ones.

*Li* has been translated as rite, propriety, manner, etc. While none of these translations is accurate, together they give a sense of what the term may mean. *Li*, if we are to define it, is "approved patterns of behavior between individuals *standing in a definite relationship to each other*, and in conformance with a definite system of values relating to such social relationships"<sup>3</sup>. It was, therefore, a set of codes for the purpose of sustaining the distinctions among people in the society. *Li* originated in ritual. It was no coincidence that *li* was transformed from ritual into patterns of behavior. Confucius highly praised ritual. To him, ritual was the "symbol of orderly intercourse between Heaven, Earth and man."<sup>4</sup> In other words, it encompassed interactions between the superior and inferior. The processes performed in ritual could therefore be taken as a series of codes appropriate to the behavior among the societies of man, to be used to help maintain order and harmony among people.

Another way to reach harmony was to create a sense of "togetherness" in the family. Confucians believed that the more the members of the family could get together, the closer the family would be brought towards harmony. This conviction had

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Hsien Chie Hu, *The Common Descent Group in China and Its Functions*, my emphasis

<sup>4</sup> From *Anlalet*,

considerable influence on the spatial relationships of traditional Chinese houses. The openness of all house units to the courtyard they enclosed is one example, as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

The Chinese family system helped to ensure a stable, well ordered social system. But to the individual, it was hardly a system that was celebrated. The Chinese family system was not meant for the good of the individual. On the contrary, the individual was asked to devote himself or herself completely to the good of the family group he was in. As Bodde points out:

Confucianism aimed at teaching each individual how to take his place with the least possible friction in his own social group, and how to perform his allotted duties within that group in such a way as would bring the greatest benefit to the group as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

Confucianism held the belief that it was in the fulfillment of social responsibilities that the individual realized his complete fulfillment. And there was scarcely any way for one to escape from the fate the family "planned" for him. "The family system caught the individual in its net as soon as he was born. It laid out for him the whole pattern of behavior, accompanied him through all events of his life, and , in his old age or upon his death, used him to bind the following generations to the same ideals."<sup>6</sup> At various stages of the life of an individual, he would find a definite position in the family system corresponding to his status in each particular stage. No matter what his position might be, the individual had obligations and responsibilities to the group.

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<sup>5</sup>Derk Bodde, "Dominant ideas in the formation of Chinese Culture" in *Essays on Chinese Civilization*, Princeton

<sup>6</sup>Callis, P45. My emphasis.

Since the family was given a high value and the individual was expected to carry out his duties and obligations, it is not surprising that the physical layout and the spatial distribution of a house reflected the family structure and would constantly remind the individual of his position and duties in the family. Significantly, the Chinese character for family, *chia*, also means house. When someone spoke of *chia*, he would think of his position in the family hierarchy and at the same time, his physical position in the spatial structure.

## 2.2 Taoism and the Escape from Human Society of the Individual

As mentioned above, Confucianism was the official ideology and the major system of thought throughout imperial Chinese history. But it was not the only one. There were other systems that influenced the life, and the experiences of philosophy and the art of the Chinese. Among the rivals of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism were the two most important ones, and this section will examine the idea of Taoism as it was relevant to the study of the meaning of traditional Chinese garden.

The term Taoism signifies two schools which were built on the same foundation-philosophic Taoism and the religious Taoism. What concerns this study is Taoism as a philosophy.

Like Confucianism, Taoism was deeply rooted in ancient traditions. The fundamental difference between the two is expressed as follow: "Confucianism believes that man should live in harmony with nature and with man, but that man is the measure of Confucian value... In contrast, Taoism sees man as ideally living in harmony with nature and if necessary isolated from other men. Nature, not man, is the touchstone of Taoist value."<sup>7</sup>

Although Lao Tzu was the founder of Taoism, and his *Tao-te Ching* was regarded the most important Taoist text,<sup>8</sup> it was the theory of Chuang Tzu that set forth the ideas which later developed into Taoism. Both philosophic Taoism and the religious Taoism that emerged from Tang period were developed on the basis of Chuang Tzu's theory.

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<sup>7</sup> Frederick Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, p.71, New York, 1971

<sup>8</sup> Some scholars now believe that the earliest part of *Chuang Tzu* was written before *Tao-te Ching*. See Fung Yu-lang, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* and Herrlee G. Greel, *What is Taoism*.

Chuang Tzu elaborated and systemized Lao Tzu's ideas. Individualism and the mysticism in Taoism should be attributed to him. While Lao Tzu had to some extent concerned himself with social and political questions, Chuang Tzu came to believe that man should be completely free from social burdens and should seek inner peace in the world of nature.

As discussed, Confucius and his followers tried to reform the individual and society, to establish order in human society and end chaos. Chuang Tzu's response to both the chaotic world and the suffering of man, which later became the typical Taoist attitude, was: free man from the world. Burton Watson, who translated the text of the *Chuang Tzu*, points out that "the whole theme of the *Chuang Tzu* may be summed up in a single word: freedom"<sup>9</sup>

What, then, was the freedom that concerned Chuang Tzu? To Chuang Tzu, to be free meant to discard the conventional moral values, which Confucianism valued highly, and be free from duties and obligations. Why was it important for man to be free? Chuang Tzu's answer was that if man was free from conventional values, he would no longer suffer. As mentioned above, Taoism started from the response to the chaos of the time and suffering of people. Chuang Tzu and the followers of Taoist school believed that man himself was the cause of his suffering. Man was suffering because he was bound by conventional values; he made distinctions between things, between right and wrong, between virtue and evil. Man placed value judgment on things, but in fact all things are equal. Therefore, Taoism, as Mote points out, "came to regard social man as a misguided being. It scorned government, feared progress and civilization, and was wary

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted from the Introduction to *Chuang Tzu, Basic Writings*, translated by Burton Watson, New York and London, 1964.

of all kinds of technical skills. It came to see all standards, definitions, distinctions, and classifications (in which Confucianism placed such value) as degenerating devices destructive to the healthy state of pristine nature...It withdraw to nature because it found man's society too hazardous."<sup>10</sup> If man wished to end his suffering and be happy, he had to free himself. We can hear the echo of such ideas in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, particularly in the opening chapter.

How then could man be free? He could only be free by understanding the Tao, by dwelling on the unity of Nature and the universe. Once man stopped making all distinctions and discarded conventional values, he was on his way to freedom and happiness. Chuang Tzu suggested that man replace conventional moral values with the Tao of nature, and "subordinate himself to the Tao, that is, to nature."<sup>11</sup> Man had to be part of nature, and act only by following the natural course within himself. This was the way to end suffering and be happy. The following passage from the *Chuang Tzu* may enlighten us to an understanding of Chuang Tzu's ideas.

The small man sacrifices himself in the pursuit of gain, the superior man devotes his whole existence to the struggle for fame. Their reasons for relinquishing the normal feelings of men and warping their natures are quite different, but in that they abandon the proper human course and give over their whole lives to a strange and unnatural endeavor, they are exactly the same. Therefore it is said, 'Do not be a small man, thus to destroy the

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<sup>10</sup> Frederick Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, p.71

<sup>11</sup> Derk Bodde, "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture" in *Essays on Chinese Civilization*, p134, Princeton, 1981,

very essence of your being. And do not try to be a superior man, either. *Follow the natural course.* No matter whether crooked or straight, *look at all things in the light of the great power of nature that resides within you.* Look around you! *Attune yourself to the rhythm of the seasons.* What difference whether it is called "right" or "wrong"? *Hold fast to the unfettered wholeness that is yours, carry out your own idea, bend only with the tao*"<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere in the Same book, Chuang Tzu said:

For our external life, there is nothing better than adaptation and conformation. For our internal life, there is nothing better than peace and harmony.<sup>13</sup>

As we understand it now, to Chuang Tzu, the perfection of the external and internal life of man was to be found in the world of nature instead of the society of man.

I would like to conclude this discussion on Confucianism and Taoism with quotations of two Masters of the two schools.

Confucius said: "It is man who can make the Way (Tao) great, but not the Way that can make man great"<sup>14</sup> , and Chuang Tzu said: "The perfect man does nothing, and the great sage originates nothing; that is to say, they merely contemplate the universe."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chuang Tzu, translation from Greel, What is Taoism, p.4. My emphasis. I use Greel's translation because it appear to the most accurate I know.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted from de Bary (eds), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol 1, Colounbia Unversity Press

<sup>14</sup> From Wing-Tsit Chan, "Chinese philosophy and religion" in *Half the World, the History and Culture of China and Japan*, Arnold Toynbee Ed.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from Greel, What is Taoism, p43.



Chapter 3

**Discourse of Meaning of Traditional Chinese House**  
----The Siheyuan Type

### 3.1 The House as a Symbolic Entity

In his book *Chinese House*, Knap points out:

The (Chinese) dwelling is symbolic of family unity and sanctuary, a public statement of status as well as a tangible expression of the family's aspirations. It is a dynamic entity that expresses in varying degrees the changing relationships within the family, symbolizing and accommodating evolving hierarchical patterns. The individual is essentially disregarded in the organization of the layout of a Chinese dwelling, with space defined more broadly in terms of family rather than personal needs and use.<sup>1</sup>

Knap is referring to the rural house, but the same can be said of the urban house, especially the *siheyuan* type.

The *siheyuan*, or the four-side-closed courtyard house is typical of houses in northern China where Confucianism prevailed. This type of house best expresses the

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Knap, *Chinese House*, Oxford University Press, 1990.

Confucian values and the hierarchical characteristics of traditional Chinese society.

Before the construction of a *siheyuan* house, the first thing to be considered was to place it in harmony with Heaven and Earth through the symbolism of orientations. This notion paralleled Confucius' effort of adjusting the order of human society into the order of the universe. Such an emphasis on orientations in order to associate the house with Heaven and Earth, was strengthened by Fengshui theory. The siting, for example, had much to do with Fengshui theory. For instance, when a Fengshui master refers to the orientation of West and tries to explain what he thought about that direction, he may use the term 'white tiger' to describe it (the West) and then offer strategy to deal with it accordingly. Here, 'white tiger' was the symbol for the orientation of West. There is no evidence to determine exactly when orientations were symbolized. But as early as Han period, the symbolized images had appeared in tiles with various faces but similar meanings.<sup>2</sup> The house thus became a place where man could associate to the order of the universe. In *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, we see that a courtyard was used as a place to communicate with Heaven and Earth, as shown in the following scene.

On the morning of his birthday Bao-yu rose at dawn, and after completing his toilet, put on his most formal clother and went out to the main front courtyard of the mansion, where Li Gui and three other of his grooms were waiting for him by a table they had make ready with an incense burner and candlesticks and offerings as an altar to Heaven and Earth. Bao-yu lit some sticks of incense and made his prostrations, poured out a libtion of tea, and burned the

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<sup>2</sup>For a concise description of the meanings of these symbols of directions, please refer to Nelson Wu's *Chinese and Indian Architecture*, chapter one.)

paper offerings and offertory scrolls. (Hawkes, vol.3, p187)

After associating the house with the universe, the next concern was to make the house, to use Knap's words, "a public statement of status" of the family. This statement intended to address to all of the society. In fact, the status of a family can be determined by its house. This is because that ever since the Chou period, laws had almost continuously included a very strict hierarchical building code that determined the scale and the uses of material and color, in accordance with the official status of the owner. Therefore one could easily determine to what class and official rank a family belonged.

In a given rank, if a family wishes to make some statement through its house, i.e. to show its wealth and superiority over others, the only way is through the front gate. Although the law restricted the size and the use of color and material for a gate, there were still possibilities that the family could make its personal statement, e.g. the refinement of craftsmanship, or a displaying tablet,<sup>3</sup> as we shall see in the discussion in section 3.4 of this chapter.

Though the front gate could express a part of the family's characteristics, it is what is behind the gate where the meaning of the house is focused. In other words, the meaning of the house is mostly to be perceived behind the front gate, within the wall, in the "interior" of the house. The meaning of the house is intended to be understood by the members of the household and their guests.

The meaning expressed in the "interior" involved two issues. One is to strengthen the hierarchy in the family system, and to remind the individual of his position in the family through certain spatial arrangements in accordance with social rules and the

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<sup>3</sup> A tablet is a board hanging above the opening of the gate, beneath the eaves.

requirements of *li*, e.g. his duties and obligations. In other words, to have the individual constantly watch his behavior in his own house.

The other issue is to create a sense of harmony within the family. As previously mentioned, harmony is part of the family philosophy of Confucius. In order to promote harmony within the family, the design of the house took into consideration the issues of creating a sense of sharing and togetherness through the spatial layout. Again, the emphasis here is on the needs of the family as a group, instead of the needs and preferences of the individual.

### 3.2 The Plan Layout of the *Siheyuan* House

The meaning of the *siheyuan* house is closely related to its layout. A *siheyuan* could have only one main courtyard, or could have two and more. The former is called the single court *siheyuan* and the later the multi-court *siheyuan*.

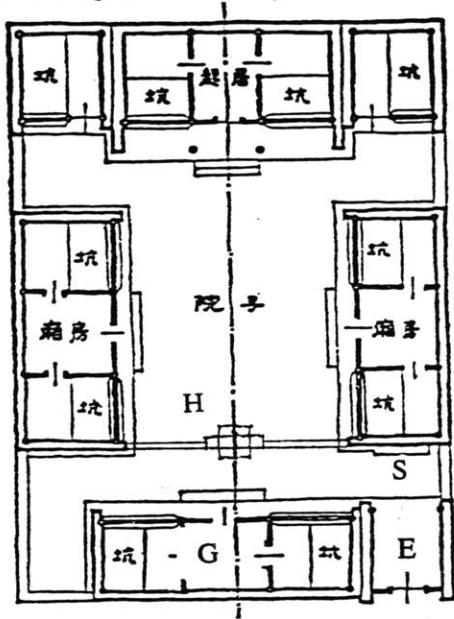


Fig. 3.1 *Siheyuan* house with one main court.

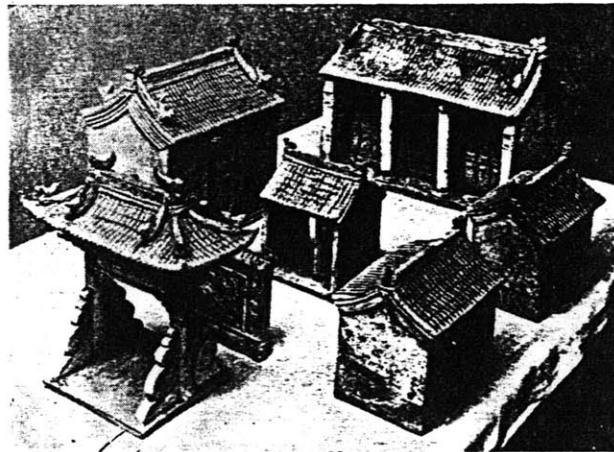


Fig. 3.2 *Siheyuan* house with main gate on the central axis

Fig. 3.1 shows a single main courtyard *siheyuan* house in the Ming and Ching periods. It is symmetrically laid out along a North-South axis, with the south as the desired orientation. The front gate (E) is usually on one east side of the axis. The law of Ming and Ching periods forbade a commoner's house to place its front gate on the main axis. Only the palace and high rank official's houses can have the front gate on the main axis. This code is softened by the *fengshui* theory. The northern school of *fengshui*, which offered an explanation on the placement of the front gate, claimed that the south-east corner of the house is the best place for front gate, in order to avoid evil. Whatever the reason is, the placement of the front gate on the corner made the *siheyuan* house in Ming and Ching periods less formal and grandeur than the house in earlier periods (fig.

3.2), but richer in spatial configuration and flexible in use.

Immediately behind the front gate is a small open space with a facing wall. The wall is called the "shadow wall" (S), and it is intended to prevent the evil forces from entering. There is usually some brick carving on the wall. heading west from this point, one enters a narrow front courtyard. It is actually more an alleyway than a courtyard. On the southern side of the alleyway, facing north, is a suite (G). On the northern side, the second gate (H) sits on the main axis, which is often called the gate of hanging flowers.

Upon entering the second gate, one finds the main courtyard of the house, with the main hall situated to the north and facing the south, and two suites located on the east and the west sides. The main hall is architecturally more imposing than any other part of the house. Its scale is larger, color richer, craftsmanship finer, and very often having a tablet hanging beneath the eaves and above the door. The courtyard's pathways are usually paved and lead to the main hall and the side suites. The plans of the main hall and the side suites are often identical, with a living area located in the middle and with the bedrooms on the sides. It is not uncommon that behind the main hall there is one more narrow court. It is almost the mirroring image of the front court and its suite, except that there is no gate.

Regarding the plan form, the house with two or more main courtyards(fig. 3.3) , the multi-courtyard house is formed by repeating the main courtyard part of the single main courtyard house along the main axis. There are two ways to make the transition from a front court to next court. One is to make the main hall the gatehouse of the next court, so that the two courts share a common component; the other is to make an independent gate way for the back court. In terms of uses and meaning, the multi-

courtyard house is more complicated than simply the repetition of the single main courtyard house, as we shall see in some of the examples.

There are also houses with more than one North-South axis, mostly in large families, e.g. the Kung Mansion, the residence of the descendants of Confucius, and the Rongguo mansion of the Jia family in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. The layout of this type is formed by repeating single courtyard house on the east and west sides. (fig. 3.4)

From the plans in fig. 3.1 and fig. 3.3, we can see that no matter what the size of a *siheyuan*, and no matter how many courts it has, it is usually composed of a number of small, simple and rectangular units. These units are grouped into a centripetal complex with certain linking devices. Another noticeable feature of *siheyuan* house is that it is almost totally closed to the outside world, and opened to the inside, and to the sky. The

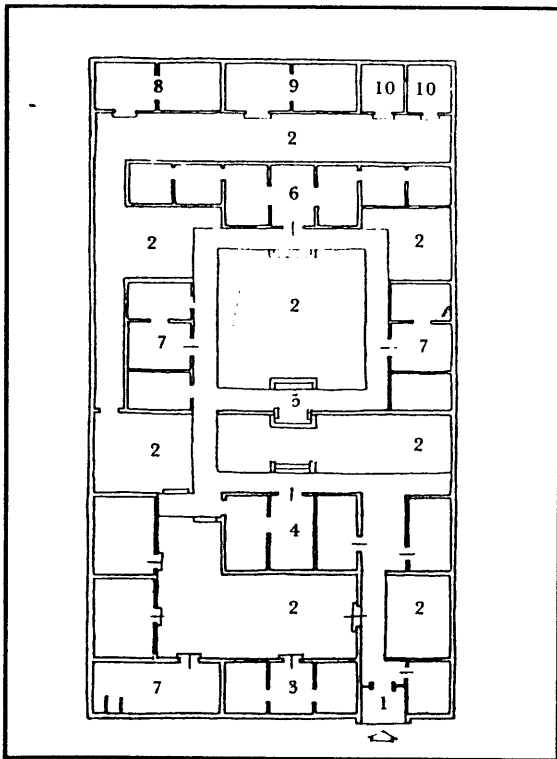


Fig. 3.3 A house with two main courtyards, Beijing

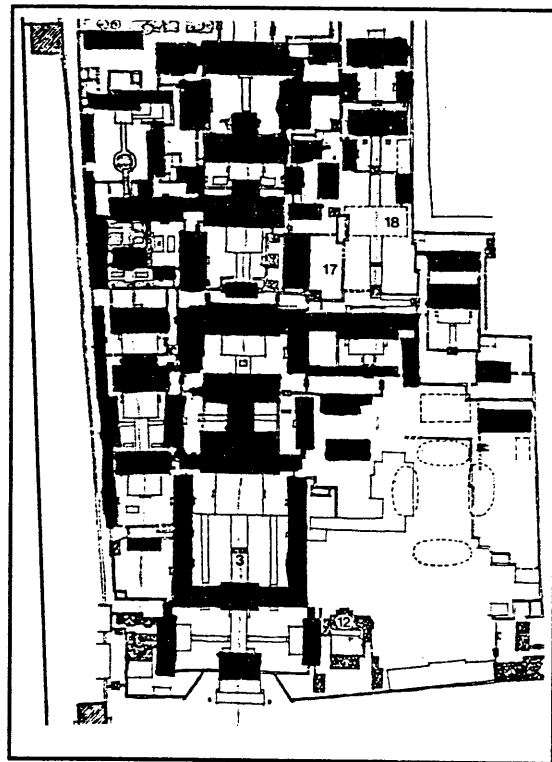


Fig. 3.4 A house with three parallel axes.

layout of the *siheyuan* makes the house significant in two aspects that relate to the two main issues of the design of the house. One is to reinforce the hierarchical order in the family, and the other to promote harmony within the family.

Firstly, the layout clearly distinguishes the building units and orders them in terms of their importance. Since the house complex is fully closed, the house as a whole becomes a self-centered compound. Inside it, one only perceives the inside world. No sign of the outside world can be seen, except the sky. So one's experience is concentrated in the inside. This experience, however, is different from that of the single-building house, with or without courtyard. Unless one is actually inside one of the units of the *siheyuan* complex, he is standing outside (in the court) to experience the "interior" of the house. And, to make the experience more unique, this "interior" is made of the exteriors of a group of buildings. In this way, one can see clearly the order within the house, and easily tell where the most important part is and where the less important part is, from the locations, the heights, and the scales of the buildings. Generally, as a rule, in the *siheyuan* house, the further back (i.e. the further north) on the main axis, the more important a building or a court is. In a multi-court house, the court on the back is usually elevated to a higher level than the one before it. And within a given court, the building on the main axis is higher and larger than the rest of the buildings around the court. Very often the platform of this central building too is higher than those of the other buildings in the same court.(fig. 3.5) The central building is the most important one in the court. The suite to its east is of secondary importance, and the one to the west the least. Such a hierarchical order of buildings is not only perceivable from the bird eye view, but also can be read from the "inside" of the house.



Secondly, the layout of *siheyuan* house helps to promote harmony within the family. The *siheyuan* house is closed to the outside and open to the inside, Its openness in the inside is different from the openness of other types of courtyard house. When the courtyard is that of a single unit house, it is part of that building unit. It belongs to the building. In the case of *siheyuan* house, the experience and the perception of the courtyard can be twofold. On one hand, it can be read as a courtyard shared by several buildings, i.e. the buildings own a court together. On the other hand, the buildings can be perceived as belonging to the courtyard, i.e. the courtyard controls the buildings. In either case the courtyard projects out as the focus in terms of physical composition and mental perception. There is a sense of mutual ownership between the court and buildings surrounding it. Such a sense of mutual ownership and the feeling of the court as a center are further strengthened by the fact that each building around the court tends to be wide open to the courtyard. A sense of togetherness, therefore, can be felt by residents of all building units. It is expected that such a sense of togetherness will help to promote harmony within the family.(see section 3.1)

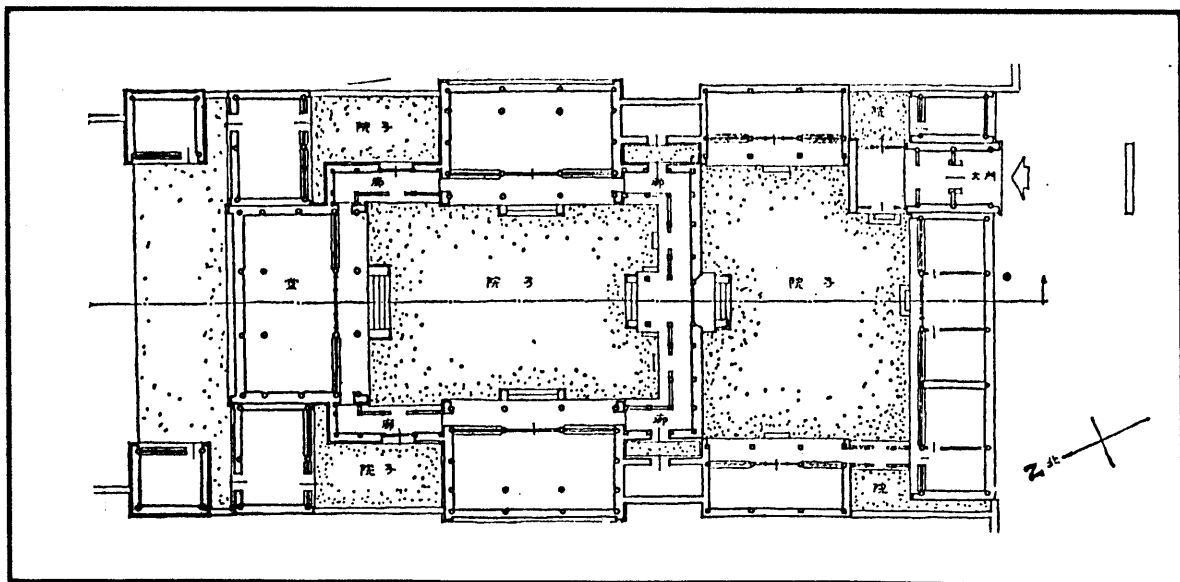


Fig. 3.5

### 3.3 Spatial Distributions and Activities within the *Siheyuan* House

The spatial distribution in a *siheyuan* house does not take into consideration personal preferences. It is always determined by social rules, such as *li*, and the hierarchical relationships within the family. The concept that *li* should govern the design of the house started as early as Chou period. fig. 3.6 is an illustration from a book call *Historical Classic* (or *Book of Documents*). The significance of this drawing lies in its context. The section of the *Historical Classic* in which this illustration appears is about how the Duke of Chou established *Li*. This illustration tells us that house building is part of the *Li* established by the Duke of Chou, and taken over by Confucius.

As we have seen, the *siheyuan* type is ideal for distinguishinfg status through its spatial arrangements, e.g. a building unit can have different meaning by virtue of being placed in different locations. Through its locations and orientations, the design of the *siheyuan* house assigns nobility and baseness to various parts of the house in a hierarchical order. All the distinctions that the Confucianism values are taken into consideration, e.g. the distinction between masters



Fig. .3.6

and servants, between old and young, between different generations, between sexes, etc. It is the custom that the member in the same family in a joint family live close together in a subgroup among the group of the large family. As a result of the distribution according to social rules, some part of the house may be overcrowded, while other part remains unoccupied.

Let us look at the form of the spatial distribution in the *siheyuan* house. The situation in the Jia family in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* provides one instance of it. While the case in Jia family is in a very large and prominent family, the principles that determined its spatial distribution were the same as in the family with less importance.

Suppose that family A is living in the house shown in fig. 3.7, and the family tree is as shown in the diagram. The family would live around the back court, with the front

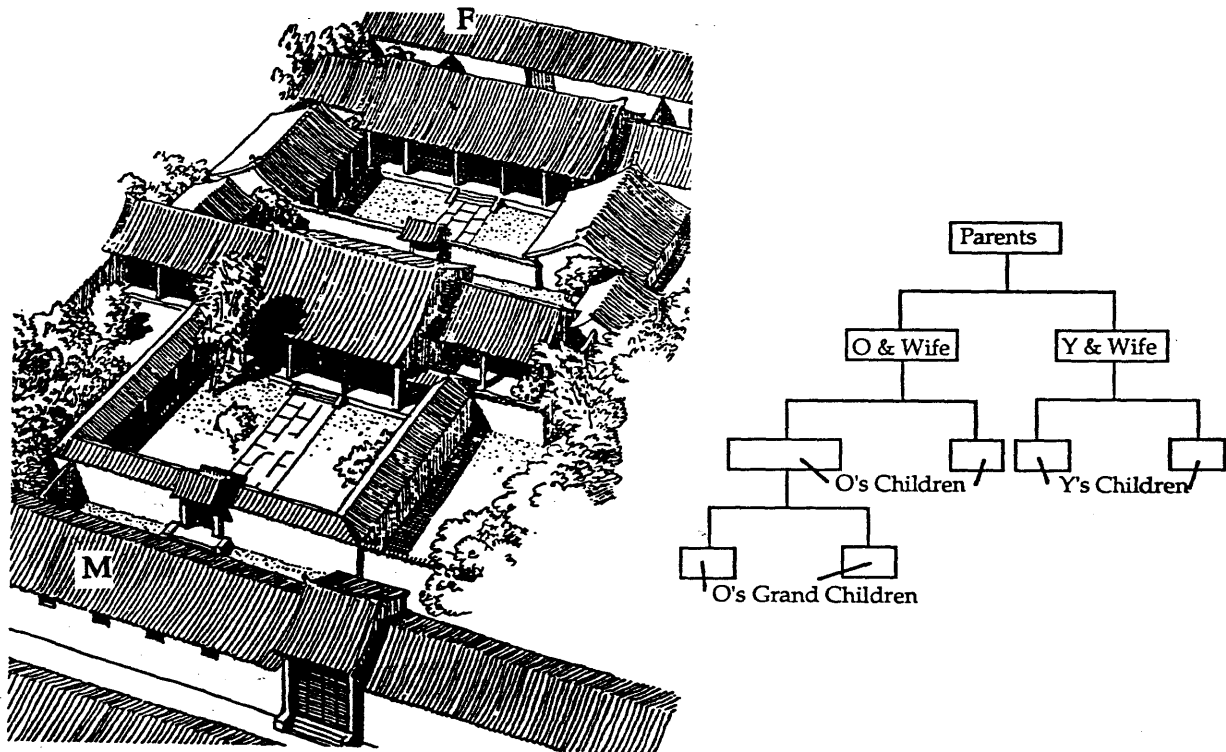


fig 3.7

one for social purposes. In the second court, the parents would occupy the central building. The older son O and his family would be in the east suite. It is also possible that O and his wife stay in the east wing of the central building, and their children remain in the east suite. The younger son Y and his family would be in the west suite. (older son's family has more people, and they live more crowdedly.) Servants live in the outer parts of the house. The male servants are in the front suite,(M) and the female servants in the suite in the back "alleyway". (F)

The front main courtyard is always more socially oriented. One of the many functions of the house is to receive and accommodate guests on a very frequent basis. Almost all the non-official social activities of the Chinese man are spent in his or other people's houses. There are two idioms in Chinese language that express the social function of the house. If one is to describe a family which has great popularity, he would use the idiom "the gateway and courtyard are as crowded as a market", and it is intended to be used as a complimentary remark. The situation it describes is desired by the Chinese family. If a family is not popular, one can also refer to its house, and this time the idiom is "you can catch sparrows on the doorstep (where visitors are few and far between)." The idiom is a derogatory remark and the situation it presents is the one every family tries to avoid. For the Chinese, therefore, the house serves as a setting for his social activities, besides being the shelter of his family.

It is, therefore, necessary to make a distinction between the public, (the social part) and the private part within the house. As we have seen, the structure of the plan layout of *siheyuan* house makes it easy to separate the private and public, or the inner and outer parts of the house. In the house with two or more main courts, as shown in

fig.3.3, the front main court is usually reserved for social purposes. The main hall of this court serves as the reception hall, and the suites on the sides are guest rooms and studies. The host may use his study as receiving place for guests of close relationships.<sup>4</sup> In the case of a single main court house, It is a little difficult to make the separation. Generally, the space behind the front gate and the alleyway-like front yard will suffice for the usual greeting. The rules of *li* are also applied to the social activities in the house. For example, according to *Li Chi (The Book of Rites)*, the proper manner of meeting a guest should be:

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 special 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 eastern stairs, the guest lifts his left foot to ascend the western stairs.<sup>5</sup>

To what extent this has been carried out in reality is not clear, but it certainly has its effect on house design. The main hall in early houses did have two stairs (fig. 3.8). *I Li*, another book on *li*, says: " the main hall should have two stairs, with the east one for hosts and the west one for guests."Although the two-stair type main hall is rarely seen

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<sup>4</sup> Jia Zheng, the head of Rong-guo family in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, often entertain guests in his study. The first scene cited in chapter one is an example.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by James Leggers, My quoting from Nelson Wu's *Chinese and Indian Architecture*

after the Han period, we can still sense the formality of social activities in the house from this example. There are many instances in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* that demonstrate such formality in the house. In the first scene cited in chapter one, we see that such formality made a reception difficult.

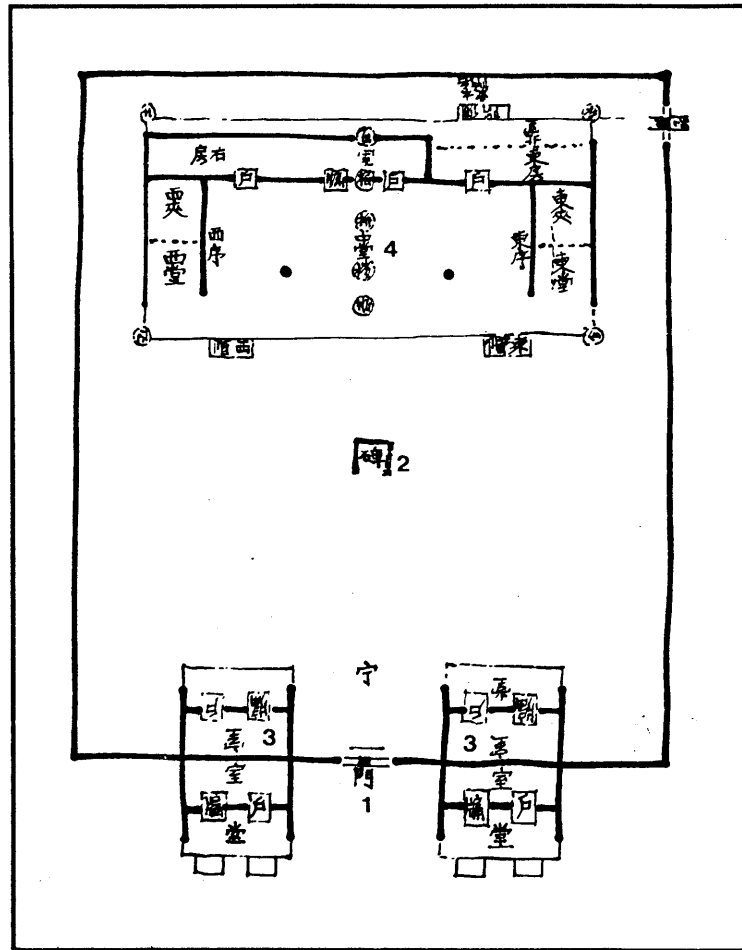


Fig 3.8

### 3.4 A Prominent Element in *Siheyuan* House--the Gate

The gate is a critical element in *siheyuan* house, not because it is indispensable for shelter, but because it is crucial to the meaning of the house.

A noticeable feature of the *siheyuan* house is that the gate is a major component of the house situated all by itself instead of being part of any building. Such a separation of the gate from the house is significant in that it reinforces the ceremonial quality of the house imposed by symmetry, and it makes the gate an element more than just an entrance. In a song in *Book of Songs*(8 B. C.), which described the house building activities, gate is one of the only two elements mentioned, the other is the hall of ancestors. And already there is differentiation of inner and outer gates. The song says:

Then he (Tan-Fu Duke) summoned his master of works,

Then he summoned his master of lands,

And he charged them with the building of houses...

They made the hall of Ancestors...

They raised the outer gate;

The outer gate soared high.

They raised the inner gate;

The inner gate was very strong.

It is interesting that the song described the outer gate as high<sup>6</sup> and the inner gate as strong. It seems to imply the purposes of the two, i.e. the outer gate for manifesting the status of the house and the inner gate for marking the private sector. From the tomb-models showed in fig. 3.2, we can have some idea of the two gates described in this song.

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<sup>6</sup>There is an interesting comment in *Li Chi* on the outer gate. It says: "meet the enemy head-on outside the outer gate; await for the arrival of the guest inside it."

Physically, the gate is used to organize the spatial sequence in the *siheyuan*. Conceptually, it makes a statement about the nature of the space behind it. The inner gate is often placed only because of its ceremonial purpose. The rules for behaviors are usually different inside the gate from those outside the gate. Female members are restricted to the area inside the inner gate. *Zhuo Zhuan*, a classic that *Li Chi* cites very often, says: "women should not go outside the inner gate for receiving or seeing off guests". An incident in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* may serve as an illustration of this idea. Jia Zheng, the head of the Jia family was leaving for an official post in a provincial town in the southern part of the country, and might be away from home for years. While all the male members of the family and relatives escorted him for several miles, "the female members of the family saw him off *at the inner gate*".<sup>7</sup> There is also an instance in the book that this rule of separating the two sexes was broken by a female member of the family, and what followed is interesting: Zheng was beating Bao-yu one day, and he was so angry and beat so hard that no one present could stop him. Someone then passed a message inside the inner gate to his wife, Lady Wang, and

Lady Wang did not stop to tell Grandmother Jia when she received it. She snatched up an outer garment, pulled it about her, and , supported by a single maid, rushed off, not caring what menfolk might see her, to the out study, bursting into it with such suddenness that the literary gentlemen and other males present were unable to avoid her. (chapter 27, Hawkes, vol 2, p149)

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<sup>7</sup> Chapter 97, Yangs' translation.



As for the outer gate, it is made for show besides being a defensive element. As mentioned in section 3.1, one can tell the status of a family from the way the front gate of its house is built. The front gate of Ning-guo Mansion, the mansion for one branch of the Jia family, in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, for example, looked like this: "two great stone lions crouched one on each side of a triple gateway whose doors were embellished with animal-heads. In front of the gateway ten or so splendidly dressed flunkys sat in a row." This is an image of the family of great power and wealth. The triple gateway demonstrate the higher status of the family because it was only permitted in the houses of high rank class. The stone lions, the ornaments and staff in front of the gate showed the wealthy state of the family. In addition to the gate proper, there are some other elements that may tell us something about the family. Among them, the tablet and couplets are the most popular ones, and they can be seen in almost every single house.

A tablet is hung above the gate and functions in a similar way as a coat of arms in the west. It is something the family makes itself, or is made by the hands of others. An emperor, for instance, may grant one to a favored official. For example, in *The dream of the Red Chamber*, Ning-guo Mansion had a tablet written as "Ning-gou Mansion, Founded and Constructed by Imperial Command". A doctor may receive one from his patients with scripts like 'magic hands bring the dying back to life', if he had shown a high performance in his field. In any case, such a tablet gives a hint about the family.

### 3.5 An Example of *Siheyuan* House--Kong Mansion

Fig. 3.9 is Kong family mansion, the house for the descendants of Confucius, built during the early Ming dynasty (14th century). Because of the special status of the Kong family, the house had a magnificent public sector for social and ceremonial purpose which not many private residences in China could match, e.g. it had three halls in the outer part to deal with what could be adequately handled in one hall in another house. But the pattern of the house is nevertheless the same as any other multi-courtyard *siheyuan* house. In the public sector there were three gates which led to the main front hall where the head of the family received government officials. Behind the public sector, an inner gate marked the starting point of the private part of the house. Behind this inner gate, the order of enclosed courtyard house repeated along the main axis and side axes. It is interesting that despite the fact that there were three halls in the public part for social purposes, a reception hall is still present in the private part. The meaning of such arrangement is significant. It means that, to the Kong family, only the private part of the mansion is the residence proper, and a residence was considered incomplete without a public part in it. Thus the private part of the Kong mansion can be further divided into a public and a private part. The reception hall in the residential part was where the head of the family "received close relatives and where family banquets, weddings, and funeral ceremonies were held".<sup>8</sup>

The *siheyuan* house embodied Confucian thought in it. It was designed in accordance with the needs of family group and society. It was the showcase for the family. For individuals, it was the reminder of their statuses, their responsibilities and

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Chinese Traditional Architecture*, p. 154, New York, 1984.

obligations. The personal comfort was not the issue that concerned the house design. Small wonder that there were efforts to seek places other than house for personal good. Making garden was of them.

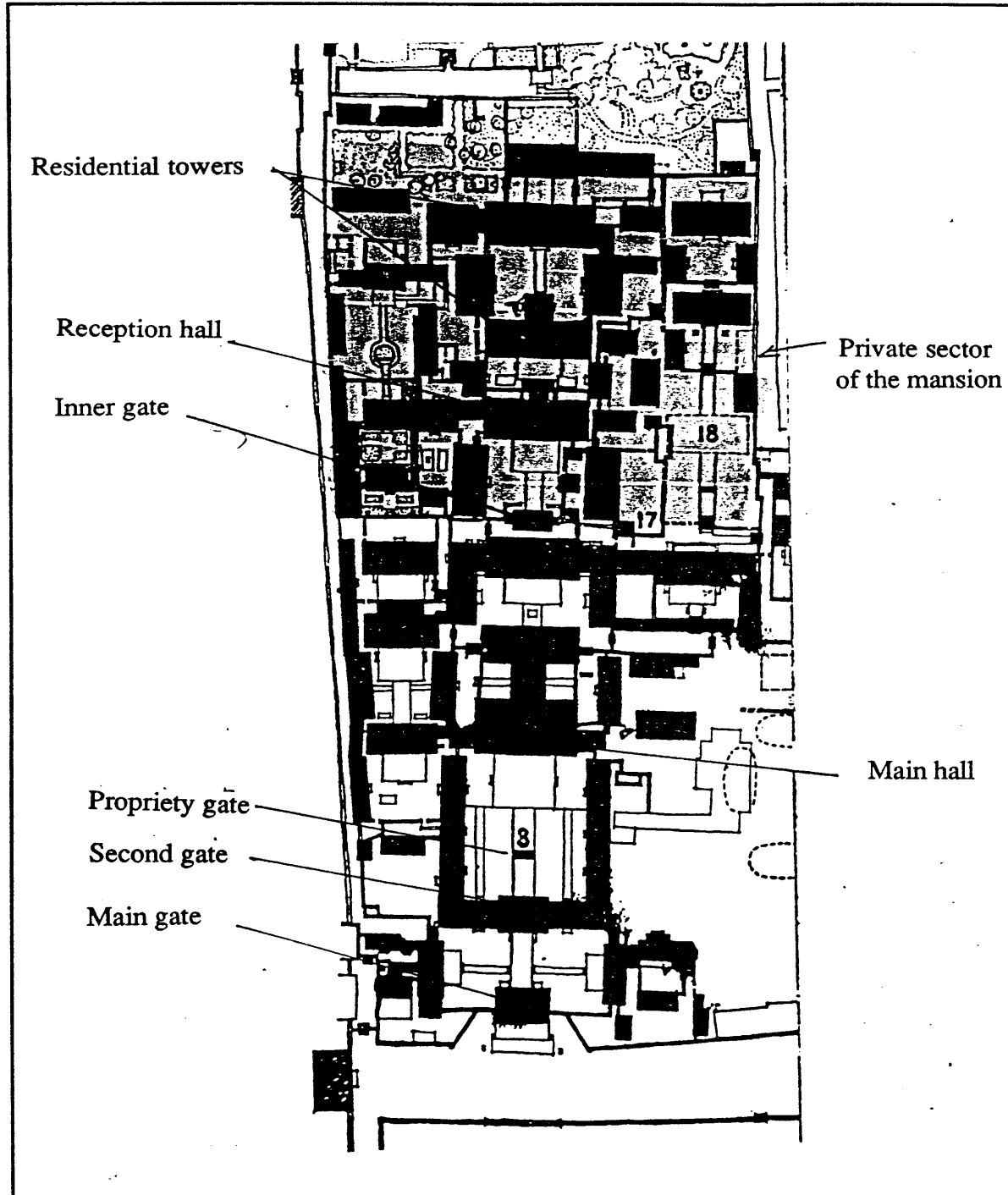


Fig. 3.9

Chapter 4

**Discourse of the Meaning of Traditional Chinese Garden  
--the Private Garden**

**4.1 Historical Background; the Ideal of Garden Making**

Private gardens were built attached to houses, usually large houses. The difference in forms between the house and the garden was obvious. While one experienced symmetry, order, straight lines, rectangular shapes in the residential part, he would find himself in a world of asymmetry, curves, and irregular shapes and natural forms in the garden.

We now know that in the house the formality and the order conformed with social rules and norms, which were determined by Confucius' system of thought. What, then, was the concept behind the naturalistic layout of the garden? The question is critical to the understanding of the meaning of the traditional Chinese garden. A brief review of the historical backgrounds of the origination of the private garden and its flourishing age will be illuminating to this question.

The kind of private garden that existed until the end of imperial China originated in Northern and Southern Dynasties (317-581 A.D.), a chaotic period of more than three hundred years following the collapse of Han Dynasty. It was also a period that the established values were questioned, especially those of Confucianism.

Confucianism obtained its dominant position as an official ideology during the Han period. The Han dynasty maintained a strong, ordered and unified nation for about 300 years, rather impressive in comparison with the short lived Chin dynasty before it. As previously mentioned, the aim of Confucianism was to build an ordered society, and this was what Han Dynasty had reached for a certain period of time. This fact helped the Confucian school to flourish during the period.

With the collapse of Han, however, the values of Confucianism were questioned and challenged. What followed the stable order of the Han period was complete disorder. Tens of kingdoms fought each other, and wars seemed endless. No order was stable, and life in the world seemed to be uncertain too. The scholars, the *literati*, who had been the transmitters of Confucianism during the Han period, began to turn to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu for a new insight of life. During the period of Northern and Southern dynasties, studying Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu became a fashion among the *literati*.

As previously discussed, the system of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, Taoism, held the belief that man should indulge himself into the universe, into Nature, to become one with the universe. It despaired of order and moral values and kept distance from human society. Its ideal was widely accepted by the *literati* during the Northern and Southern period. "Standing aloof from worldly affairs" became a fashionable pursuit.

This idea of keeping away from the the human society is best exemplified in the life and idea of Tao Yuan-ming, a famous poet of the time. Tao once took an official post, but resigned after 80 days, an act he called walking out of the cage, and conducted a life as a hermit since. The Land of the Peach Blossom Stream, an imaginative land of peace created by Tao Yuan-ming was a classical escape land in Chinese literature, and

had consistently been referred by people of all kinds. The meaning of The Land of the Peach Blossom Stream is twofold. First, it was a refuge for people who did not want to stay in society. Its residents came to the land to avoid the reign of Chin, and had isolated themselves since. This brings us to the other aspect of its meaning, i.e. the Land represented a break out of the social order and conventional values. The residents in the Land were free from the orders and moral values in society, and conducted a life in their own ways, without the interference from any authority of any kind.

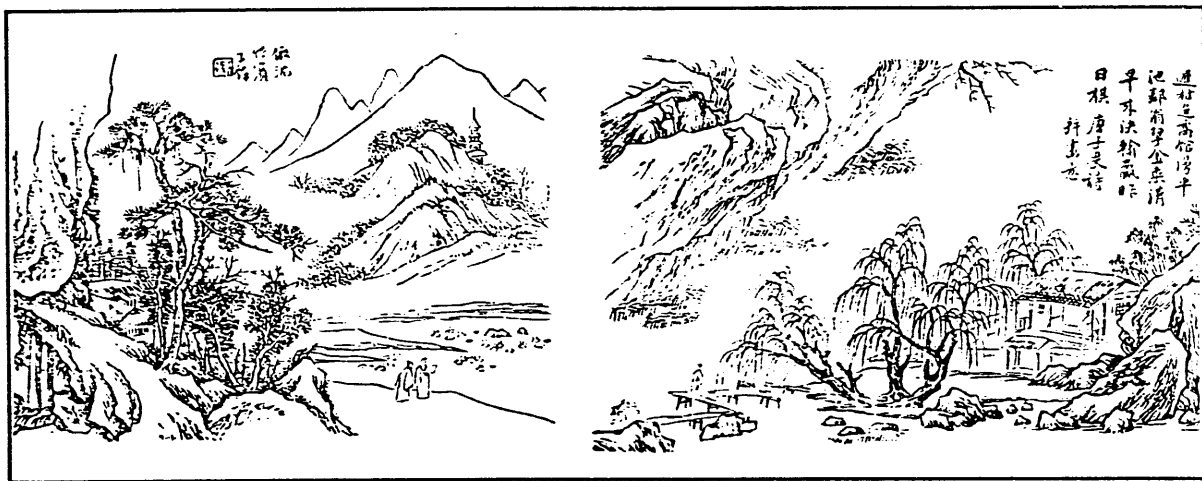


Fig. 4.1 Life in the mountain, by the water

This world created by Tao Yuan-ming was physically distant from human society, hiding deep within a mountain range. In other words, its residents placed themselves in a self-enclosed world far away from the "real world". In his own life, Tao Yuan-ming further developed this idea of self enclosure. He made his own retreat land right within "the world" instead of going far away into a distant mountain, It was in the middle of the human world, as he told us:

I built my hut beside a traveled road

yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.

how can that be?

In the remote heart, every place is a retreat.<sup>1</sup>

It was only in his retreat that he found himself. For him, the life within human society was a life in the cage. As he would tell us: "I lived for a long time in a cage. Here I am at last given back to myself."

This idea of retreating within human society had since become a tradition among the *literati* and official scholars. For them, the private garden provided an effective means for such retreat. Yu Hsin, a scholar in the Northern and Southern period wrote in his "my little garden" on his retreat:

I have a few acres, a shabby hut,

Lonely and still, beyond the world of men...

Late spring I shoulder my hoe along with friends.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly enough, the wealthiest man of the time, Shih Ch'ung, named his sumptuous garden as "retreat cottage". We can see that from its very beginning, the private garden had been regarded as a place for one to retreat to, and in the state of retreating, gain peace of mind. Fourteen centuries later, Ji Cheng, the author of *Yuan Ye*, a 17th century treatise on gardening, mentioned that the purpose of garden-making was to let one "live like a hermit even in the middle of a marketplace".

The fact that the private garden reached its peak during Ming and Ching periods further illustrates the point that the purpose of making gardens was for retreat. Ming and Ching times saw the strictest control over and repression of individuals, particularly the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, winter, 1980/1981, P. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Translation from A. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber*.

educated, and the hierarchical order was strictly enforced. The Neo-Confucianism, which originated in Sung dynasty and emphasized heavily moral values and hierarchical social orders, was carried on in an enforced manner during the Ming and Ching periods. The *literati* of the time suffered extremely from repression, because the imperial courts exercised high-handed control over them. Under the social condition of the time, many of them turned to the tradition of retreat exemplified by Tao yuan-ming to achieve peace of mind and the liberation of the selves, and to find themselves a world where man and the universe become one. That world was the garden.

Making a private garden, therefore, was a result of seeking retreat from human society, an idea that derived from the influence of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu's system, Taoism. This fact determined the nature of the private garden. As we have seen in chapter two, Taoism placed high value on the state of union of man with the universe. It opposed the moral standards that Confucianism valued so much, and replaced them with the standards of Tao. Man, from the Taoist point of view, was an integrated part of the universe. Chuang Tzu said: "Heaven and Earth came into being together with me, and the myriad things are one with me."<sup>3</sup> The garden was designed to be a place where one could reach such a state of union, and it was the representation of the universe and Nature. If one could not reach the union with the universe, at least he should observe the Tao of Nature. What existed within the enclosing walls of the garden, therefore, was more than just a natural landscape, as it appeared to be at first glance. It was the intellectual and philosophical interpretation of Nature, and embodied the concept about and understanding of Nature of the ancient Chinese.

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<sup>3</sup> Translation from Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber*.



In the garden, therefore, the Chinese attempted to include all things in the universe, to achieve an illusion of the completeness and totality so as to experience Chuang Tzu's idea of "the myriad things are one with me". But the space in a garden was limited. However extensive a garden might be, it was impossible to include literally the myriad things of the world in it. This concept of making the all-inclusive garden--the garden of completeness was in fact reached through representing (illustrating) the Tao of the genesis and movement of things. Taoism believed that all things were generated from *yin* and *yang*, the two basic forces in the universe. The two forces first produced five agents, fire, water, earth, wood and metal, and then produced the myriad things through different combinations of the five agents by following the principles of *yin* and *yang*. If a garden could be designed in such a way that it included the *yin-yang* dualism and elements that represents the five agents, and also the interchangeable relations among things with different natures, then one could experience an all-inclusive pattern in it. This pursuit of all-inclusiveness made the private garden full of elements and spaces of contrast natures. High attention was paid to the interaction and transition between the contrasting elements. And because of this effort of expressing the all-inclusive pattern, the garden was not merely an imitation of nature, but rather the recreation of it, a creation that was based on the Chinese understanding of the way Nature worked.

In the design of the private garden, there was a seemingly strange phenomenon that was a result of the pursuit of "all-inclusiveness". Very often, the second floors of the buildings with two stories were not accessible. The meaning of this phenomenon is profound. As discussed, the garden design attempted to give one as many experiences as possible in order to achieve the sense of all-inclusiveness. It was, therefore, critical to

avoid providing any viewpoint that would provide a panoramic view of the garden. Sometimes some two-storied buildings were needed to enrich the scenery, but a bird-eye view was unwanted, thus the inaccessibility of the second floors. For those two story buildings with accessible second floors, arrangements were made to avoid panoramic views. Their views were often limited, or partially blocked from certain sides by hill, plants, or other buildings.(fig. 4.2) More frequently, such two story buildings are placed on the bank of water body of the garden,(fig. 4.3) the area that a view from high point would enhance the quality of design. As we shall see later in this chapter, water surface



Fig. 4.2 View from the second floor is partially blocked.  
(Fu-chui Tower in "Unsuccessful Politician's Garden")

Fig. 4.3 High viewpoint over water  
(Ming-she Tower in "Liu Garden")



was considered having the quality of peace and tranquility. It was meant to provide a sense of openness and depth to the garden. Looking down from a high point, one could fully enjoy this open, far-reaching and peaceful scene of the water surface.

Similarly, there was no high point where one could have a panoramic view of the whole garden. It was intended that one experienced the garden little by little, and eventually sense the richness and variety of the all-inclusiveness in the garden.

## 4.2 The Principles of the Garden Design

### the concept of harmony

By including "all the things" of the universe in the enclosed space, the garden became a place where one could eliminate conflicts and reach harmony. The key argument of Taoism was that things in the universe existed harmoniously together, and man should merge himself into this harmonious whole of Nature, to be part of it. Harmony, therefore, became the main principle of garden design. This called for elements to work in relation to each other. It should be noted that the association of elements was not so much a physical concern as it was a conceptual one. An incident in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* will give us some insight on this. In chapter 17 of the book, Bao-yu had an argument with his father over a place called the "Sweet Rice Village" in the garden. From the description of the book we know that the place was very nice all by itself. But Bao-yu disliked it. He thought the place was not in harmony with the garden. To use his terms, it was not "*takuan*". The term *takuan* means an all-inclusive grandview or grand prospect. This term often appeared in Chinese classics. The philosophical extension of the term *takuan* signified that all the thing in the universe exist in the way that they were all related. Bao-yu said:

A farm set down in the middle of a place like this is obviously the product of human artifice. There are no neighboring villages, no distant prospects of city walls; the mountain at the back doesn't belong to any system; there is no pagoda rising from some tree-hid monastery in the hills above; there is no bridge below leading to a near-by market town. It sticks up out of nowhere, in total

isolation from everything else. (Hawkes, vol. p. 336, my emphasis)

We can see that Bao-yu's dissatisfaction was not so much about the place itself, but rather about its not being in harmony with the other elements. The harmony that Bao-yu had in mind was a conceptual one, because he was referring to "neighboring villages", "distant prospects of city walls", etc, the things that one would associate with the vision of a village.



Fig. 4.4 Some examples showing water as the main theme of the main section of the garden.

## Layout

The private garden, whether large or small, was always divided into segments with different themes. The main purpose of this thematic zoning was to achieve a sense of infiniteness within a limited space (the garden) through a variety of small divisions and themes. This was closely associated with the central concept of the garden design: to achieve an all-inclusive vision. The zoning could be achieved by the particular function of a section, which was provided with appropriate scenic arrangements. For example, a studio or a tea-drinking hut could possess a zone and had scenes arranged to suit it. The other way of zoning was to have a scenic disposition first, and assigned functions according to different scenic spots.

In almost all the private gardens, the main sections, which occupied the largest space, consisted of water and artificial hills that represented mountains, and very often with water as dominant element. (fig. 4.4) Such an arrangement was more a conceptual consideration than an aesthetic one. Water and Mountain were perceived as two major forces by Chinese. Water was considered the blood of Heaven and Earth, and mountain the bone. Taoists were particularly fond of water. Lao Tzu once said: "the highest virtue is like water".<sup>4</sup>

Water and mountain were regarded symbols of *yin* and *yan*, and they were always placed together in the garden. Therefore, rocery, and artificial hills, which were very often formed by piling up stones, coexisted in the main section as a complementary element to the water.

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<sup>4</sup>Lao Tzu, *Tao-te-ching*.

The open, flat surface of water provided a tranquilizing quality to the garden, which help to create an atmosphere in the garden that eased the heart. The following scene from *The Dream of the Red Chamber* shows the quality of water surface beyond its beautifulness:

One was struck by the circle of the bright moon in the sky above and the shadow of the moon within the pond. vying vertically in brightness. It was as if one were transported to a crystal palace, the abode of mermaids. As a light breeze blew by, making rippling patterns in the dark green water, it made one feel that his soul was purified and his spirit refreshed.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 4.5 The rippling water

As previously mentioned, the garden was more than a beautiful landscape. It

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<sup>5</sup>Translation from *Plaks, Archetype and Allegory of the Dream of the Red Chamber*

spoke the Tao of Nature, of the universe. Because of this concept, the selection of its elements and layout were not solely based upon aesthetic standard, but more on the consideration of expressing the Tao. This explains the reason that water and "mountain" were so prominent in the garden, and that flowers, plants, and lawn were relatively less important. We praise the stone raising in the Chinese garden today of its powerful form, just the way we appreciate abstract sculpture. The ancient Chinese, however, expressed the force of universe through it, and experienced the Tao of Nature from it.

Surrounding the main section of water and hill there were various small spatial segments with different themes. Elements that divided spaces could be walls, buildings, plants, hills, etc. (fig. 4.6) Each segment was a meaningful entity because of its own

theme. But the separations were not made in the way that isolated the individual segments. Continuity and interrelation were taken into consideration while divisions were made. All the segments with various themes, including the main one, were organized into a whole through the touring route, providing a variety of experiences to the stroller in the garden. Hence one would attain the



Fig. 4.6 Division of the garden

realm that "the myriad things are one with me", as suggested by Chuang Tzu.



In laying out segments of the garden, the touring route played a critical role. While zoning provided various themes to the garden, the tour route managed the orders of the themes, organized and balanced the ways one perceived and experienced them. The main purpose of the route arrangement was to enrich one's experiences in the garden, and it was in accordance with the concept of the garden as an all-inclusive world. One of the ways to enrich the experiences was to show variations of the same element, i.e. to guide one to experience the same thing from different perspectives. Fig. 4.7 (The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician) shows how the same element could be perceived from various points, with different reference frames. A well designed touring route would make zoning more significant. In arranging a route, the designer usually followed the very basic principles of gardening, balance and harmony. One would find a full display and transformations of contrasting themes, shapes, forms, colors, textures and various elements along a route.

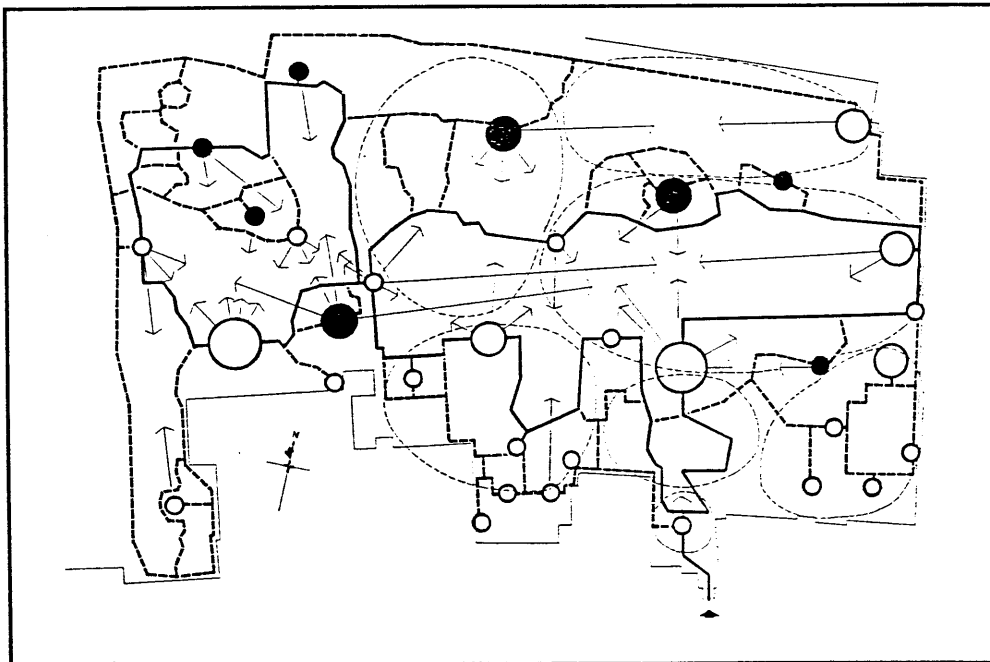


Fig. 4.7 Scenic sections and touring routes of the "Unsuccessful Politician's Garden"

The idea of utilizing themes and elements that were contrasted was rooted in the *yin-yan* dualism. It could be achieved at the perceptual level by using contrasting elements, such as mountains and water, flowers and stones or solid walls, red and green, etc. It could also be reached at a more abstract and intellectual level, through shaping the space, such as void vs. solid. There is a good example in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* showing one way of incorporating contrasting elements. In Chapter 76, Dai-yu and Xiang-yun were enjoying the sight of full moon in a mid-autumn night, and Xiang-yu commented on two buildings, one with a convex shape, and the other concave:

You can see that when they built this garden, they truly had artistic mastery...Obviously these two spots; one up, one down, one bright, one dark, one high, one low, one on a mountain, one near water, were arranged with the specific purpose of enjoying the moon in mind.<sup>6</sup>

But contrasting did not mean conflicting. The contrasting elements were supposed to work in a complementary way, serving as a foil to each other, because the *yin-yang* dualism was based "not upon mutual opposition, but upon mutual harmony".<sup>7</sup> In other words, balance was important. A 17th century scholar Chi Piso-chia once wrote on how he built his own garden, and there is a passage in his account which may give one some idea about balance in the garden. He wrote:

In general, where there is too much space, I put in a thing; when it is too crowded, I take away a thing; where things cluster together, I spread them out; where the arrangement is too diffuse, I tighten it

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<sup>6</sup> Translation from *Plaks, Archetype and Allegory of the Dream of the Red Chamber*.

<sup>7</sup> Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilisation*,

a bit; where it is difficult to walk upon, I level it; and where it is level, I introduce a little unevenness...it is like a great writer writing essays, not permitting a single unharmonious sentence.<sup>8</sup>

To sum up, the private garden was a self-contained entity for literati to seek for personal liberation, for peace of mind. It was based upon the Taoist world view. It was a microcosm of the universe where one could reach the state of union with Nature. It has to be pointed out that while the garden was mainly influenced by Taoist thought, it also embodied some Confucianist values. The symbolism that was imbedded in certain kinds of plants was an example. Plants like pine, bamboo, plum were assigned Confucianist ethical values. For examples, Bamboo and pine were symbols of unbending and upright characters, and plum the noble and unsullied. The Taoist system, as discussed, held the belief that all things in the universe were equal. While Taoists did emphasis certain things, e.g. mountain and water, it was not because of their ethical values, but rather because they spoke the Tao of Nature more clearly. Since that most private gardens were built for Confucianist scholars, it was not surprising that some of the Confucianist values were incorporated in them.

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<sup>8</sup>Translation from Lin Yu-tang, *My Country, My People*, London, 1936.

## Conclusion

In ending this study, I would like to pick up the theme of the participation of the individual in the process of design and in the building of his own home environment. It will help us to understand further the natures of the two worlds in a traditional Chinese house compound.

Sometimes a house, or a garden, was not completed at one time. And more often than not, the house and the garden would undergo a series of processes of change over time. The ways that changes took place in the house and in the garden were very different. The changes in the house echoed the changes in the family structure. The process was dominated by the social experiences of the family and the ideology of imperial society. Personal comfort and the needs of the individuals were not the issues that would bring changes to the physical arrangement and the spatial distribution in the house. The changes in the garden, on the other hand, involved a personal creative process. The individual participated in the process of design of the garden from the very beginning, and made additions and modification to it from time to time, according to his own taste and understanding of nature.

Such a difference supports the hypothesis of the mental existence of two worlds in the traditional Chinese home environment, and points to the main concepts behind the two entities. The house was the microcosm of society, and the garden the microcosm of the universe. Reading beyond this level, we find one was built upon the demand of control over the individual; the other upon the desire of the individual for relief from tight control. From the point of view of the individual, the house was where he experienced repression, and the garden was where he could be himself. In the house the physical layout was meant to control the individual psychically. It represented the order of the society. In the garden, it was the concept of totality of the universe that dominated. One had to sense the intangible from the tangible elements, to discover and understand the Tao of Nature.

The two worlds in the home environment represented the world of men and the world of nature. In the world of the house, i. e. the world of men, the individual had to deal with all kinds of human relationships, by following the social rules that were designed to sustain the hierarchical structure of the society. In the world of the garden, i.e. the world of the nature, the individual became one with the universe, by following the ultimate standards of Tao.

This study has used many materials from literature, which helped to establish the link between Chinese mentality and the physical environment of residence. Yet the reference to the literature has mainly concerned with texts. One other possibility of using literature in architectural study, which is left unexplored in this thesis, is to inquire into the formal structure of literary works, i.e., to explore the similarity in formal structures of different types of cultural products.

The question is, do architectural and literary works share some common principles? The answer should be affirmative. The quotation of Chi Piso-chia on that making a garden should be like writing an essay in chapter 4 is one example. In the case of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, an examination would show that the ways the book is structured are quite similar to the ways a garden is formed. For example, the stories of the book are not developed along a single thread, and work toward a climax; instead, there are several threads co-existing simultaneously, and there seems to be no climax in the book. The stories of the book are developed along some axes with opposite elements. All these axes are piled up and mixed so that the narration of the stories has a strong sense of layering. The structure, together with the stories, presents a cyclical pattern. All these are the qualities one will find in a garden. As discussed above, the garden-making utilizes principles such as interweaving of axes, layering of spaces, the sense of infiniteness in a limited space, etc. Therefore the study of comparison between the formal structures of literary works and architectural works is a topic worth exploration, which would open up new perspectives in the consideration of architecture in its cultural context.

## Sources of Illustrations

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Fig. 1.1

Hawkes, Story of the Stone

Fig. 1.2, fig. 1.3

From Guan, Hua-san, 1982

Heng Lou Meng zhong de jiang zu (Architecture in Dream of the Red Chamber), Taipei.

With minor modification.

Fig. 3.1

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Fig. 3.2

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Fig. 3.3

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Fig. 3.4

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Fig. 3.5

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Fig. 3.6, Fig. 3.7

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Fig. 3.8

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Fig. 4.1, Fig. 4.4  
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