

Original Paper

A Study of Overseas Construction of China National Image in Architecture Writing of Lin Yutang

Yang Sisi¹ & Dan Cui*

¹ College of Languages and Cultures of Ningde Normal University

* Dan Cui, Corresponding Author, E-mail: summerelephant@126.com

Received: June 18, 2023

Accepted: July 1, 2023

Online Published: August 7, 2023

doi:10.22158/csm.v6n3p50

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/csm.v6n3p50>

Abstract

*Lin Yutang's writing of Chinese architecture in *My Country and My People* is a short chapter, but it reflects his unique studies into Chinese personality and national spirit. Through the study of Lin Yutang's architectural writing, we can see the Chinese national spirit and image overseas. Many scholars have studied *My Country and My People* from different dimensions. However, literary writing of Chinese architecture hasn't been conducted so much since the popularity of Fan Zhongyan's *Notes of Yueyang Tower*. And therefore Lin's writing is conceived to be of high significance through which the Chinese personality has been analyzed thoroughly. By comparison and contrast, based on the thoughts of Chinese sages, this paper aims to (1) analyze the marrow of Chinese national spirit through Lin Yutang's architectural writing and (2) argue how Lin Yutang through his particular English expression of architecture has successfully delivered the image of China overseas, which has thus exerted a far-reaching impact on its overseas transmission. Through exploration and interpretation of Lin Yutang's writing, the authors aim to excavate Lin's appropriate in-depth interpretation of Chinese spirit embedded in Chinese architecture abroad in order to modify certain misunderstandings and mistaken cognition with the expectation to gain deeper comprehension of Chinese spirit internationally.*

Keywords

Chinese architecture, Chinese national spirit, Lin Yutang, China image

1. Introduction

As an important figure transversing China and the West during the history of cultural exchange in the 20th century, Lin Yutang has made his due contribution to making the world get to know China in a deeper sense through his works, among which *My Country and My People* has aroused great repercussions in the United States in particular. Many researchers have agreed on the influence of this

work in view of comprehending China, “Whether it is to understand ancient or modern China, it is enough to read *My Country and My People*” (Duan & Zhao, 2007, pp. 4-6).

In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang calmly and sharply analyzes the spiritual characteristics of Chinese people, and also indicates in certain specific detail various aspects of society, literature and lifestyle of China. In “Chinese architecture”, he compares Chinese and Western architecture, highlights the characteristics of Chinese architecture, and reflects over the national spirit of China. Through Lin Yutang’s English writing of architecture, he successfully spread the image of China overseas, which exerted a far-reaching impact on the overseas construction of China’s image. Through the analysis of the architectural characteristics written by Lin Yutang, we can excavate the Chinese national spirit and deeply think about the overseas shaping of China’s image.

Lin Yutang’s description of Chinese architecture mainly involves a comparative approach with Western architecture. Through contrasting these two architectural styles, he highlights the unique personality and national spirit of the Chinese people that is reflected in their architecture. To fully comprehend the distinct features of Chinese architecture, it is necessary to have knowledge of various architectural theories such as Building Architecture, Urban Design, and Chinese Ancient Architecture History. The essence of Chinese architecture is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, which is influenced by the teachings of ancient Chinese sages like Confucius and Laozi. Confucius proposed the doctrine of the mean, while Laozi advocated for the harmony and unity of man with nature, which are reflected in Chinese architectural designs based on Lin’s analysis. The differences between Chinese and Western cultures have resulted in distinctive architectural styles for both cultures.

Due to the huge gap existing between the East and West in view of geographical conditions and the pertinent other aspects, China had for long term left a mysterious impression on the west in view of Chinese architectural culture including symbolism, Chinese Pantheism and Chinese geomantic culture, meanwhile stereotypes “the Yellow Peril theory” (Li, 2014, p. 4) constructed by the west press led to misunderstanding of China’s image overseas. Lin Yutang made contributions to change the impression of China image with *My Country and My People* published in 1935. From the perspective of the characteristics of Chinese architecture, it is helpful to analyze the overseas image of China from the cross-cultural perspective. Different from western architecture that demonstrates “the power of money” (Lin, 1935), the beauty of Chinese architecture lies in its embodied traditional culture. The simplicity of western skyscrapers does not conform to Chinese aesthetic traditions and conventions. Chinese aesthetic tradition from ancient times to the present includes a kind of art, ranging from doors, roofs and windows to palaces, gardens to the temples. Perceived from the changing trend, western architecture has been greatly influenced by the religious sense while the cultural inheritance of Chinese architecture tends to be civilian and life-oriented. Chinese architecture shoulders the responsibilities of Chinese culture, contains cultural heritage and tradition and spreads Chinese spirit. The cultural appeal

embodied in Chinese architecture is a kind of world appeal. The personality of Chinese people influences the world's view of China image through the characteristics of Chinese architecture.

2. The Beauty of Construction

Lin Yutang mentions that “yet because we have to look at the houses we build for ourselves every day and have to spend most of our days in them, and because bad architecture can cramp the style of our living, there is a very human demand to make it beautiful” (Lin, 1935). As he writes, Chinese architecture represents Chinese residents' way of living. Chinese people expect the architecture to stand for the sense of family belonging and reunion apart from the residential function. As what Lin Yutang describes in this part, “a roof is not just a roof to shelter us from sun and rain, but something that effects our conception of a home, A door is not just an opening to get inside, but should be the ‘open sesame’ that leads us into the mysterious of people's domestic lives” (Lin, 1935). Hence one can see that the functions of Chinese architecture are not only to shelter Chinese people and protect us from being burned or wet, but to bear the weight of the personality of speaking the language of beauty in Chinese people's mind.

Lin Yutang compares Western church architecture with Chinese one. He claims that “as European cathedrals are informed with a spirit and speak a silent language of the greatest beauty and sublimity to us? Chinese people adopts the best solution of this problem. Chinese architecture seems to have developed along a line different from that of the West” (Lin, 1935). Here still we take the door culture as a typical example. Since ancient times, China's traditional architectural center is mobile, and its essence is not space, but the psychological space that is formed in the process of use, with rich psychological feelings, just like many arts. The functions of doors are not only for people to go in and out, but also for the communication between indoor and outdoor space. While, the Gothic church is a representative one of western church. The slender and crystal clear entrance of Gothic church is combined with religious belief, which is the expression of people's spiritual yearning (Yu & Liu, 2020, p. 5).

Compared with the characteristics of Western cathedrals as the representative construction style, the characteristics of Chinese architecture mainly lies in conveying language of beauty on communication among people and people and space. Western architecture stresses on showing off the richness and wealth that represents the level of architecture, but Chinese architecture often attaches importance to representing communication aesthetics. The construction of the city often eliminates beauty as one of the elements that forces Chinese people to escape to the country. The negation of western urban construction and the persistence of Chinese architectural characteristics reflect the recognition and persistence of Chinese people. Furthermore, the recognition of Chinese architecture and this confidence in Chinese architecture has been spread abroad through Lin Yutang's writing. This kind of generous national self-confidence also affects the construction of China's image overseas.

In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang acknowledges that “its first principle was utility, and was often purely so even to today. Hence the unmitigated ugliness of the best modern factory buildings, school-houses, theaters, post offices, railway stations and rectilinear streets, whose oppressiveness accounts for the fact that we constantly feel the need to escape to the country” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). In his view, utility is the primary and leading principle that western architecture adheres to.

Western architecture has been characterized by the principle of utility, which emphasizes the functional needs of a building’s occupants. This principle has been evident in designing various structures such as factories, schools, post offices, and railway stations, which have been built to optimize the practical needs. Additionally, public spaces such as parks and plazas have been designed with utility in mind, providing functional spaces for people to gather and socialize.

However, Lin Yutang’s critique of modern Western architecture is that the principle of utility has been taken to the extreme, resulting in buildings that lack aesthetic appeal. According to Lin, modern factories, school-houses, and other structures are oppressively uninviting due to the emphasis on functionality above all else. This has contributed to a desire to escape to the countryside, as people seek relief from the oppressive nature of modern buildings. Lin’s argument is that, while the principle of utility is essential in designing functional buildings, it should not come at the expense of aesthetics. A balance should be struck between utility and aesthetic appeal, creating buildings that serve their purpose while also being visually pleasing. This balance can be achieved through the incorporation of decorative elements, the use of tasteful color schemes, and the integration of nature into building design. the principle of utility has been a guiding principle in Western style architecture, resulting in designing functional buildings that serve the practical needs of their occupants. However, Lin Yutang argues that this principle has been taken to an extreme, resulting in buildings that lack aesthetic appeal. A balance should be struck between utility and aesthetics, creating buildings that are both functional and visually pleasing.

Lin also points out that “The modern industrial age has aggravated the situation, especially with the invention of reinforced concrete” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). In 1750-1848, modern Britain was the pioneer of industrialization and urbanization in the world. Among the emerging industrial cities represented by Manchester, Birmingham and Liz, the problem of “urban disease” was particularly serious, thus leading to the urgent need for urban governance (Liang, 2015, p. 3). However, contrary to the standards held by Chinese architecture, as Lin Yutang stresses, “Utility is the answer. But utility is not art” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). In the process of urbanization, the serious impact of urban diseases under the western industrial revolution is also the consequence of over emphasis on utility principle. The reflection of the huge population of industrial city in the urban spatial structure is the dense interweaving of all kinds of urban buildings. In Manchester, within large factories with 500 or 1000 employees, there are extremely simple working class houses, grouped in rows or piles. There are also many small-scale cloth cutting fields, spinning mills, dyeing workshops and printing factories in the living rooms of the citizens (Liang, 2015,

p. 4). Therefore, during that period, Chinese people inevitably desired to escape to the country. Then Lin Yutang specifies that “Some even processed to see an inspiring beauty in the New York skyscrapers. If so, I have not seen any. The beauty is the beauty of the gold: they are beautiful because they suggest the power of millions. They express the spirit of the industrial age” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). When architectural standards focus on practicality, it goes against the personality and temperament of Chinese people and the aesthetics of Chinese architecture. As a matter of fact, Chinese architecture is often characterized by its use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, and its integration with the surrounding environment. The principles of feng shui are often applied in designing buildings, emphasizing the importance of harmony and balance. Traditional Chinese architecture also places great importance on symbolism and meaning, with buildings often designed to convey a particular message or represent certain values. In contrast, western architecture, particularly modern architecture, tends to prioritize practicality and functionality over aesthetics. This is exemplified by the skyscrapers of New York, which Lin Yutang argues are not beautiful in themselves but can only be conceived to represent the power and wealth of the industrial age. This type of architecture reflects a different set of values and beliefs than those of traditional Chinese architecture. Furthermore, Lin Yutang argues that this focus on practicality and functionality goes against the personality and temperament of the Chinese people. Chinese culture places a great emphasis on harmony, balance, and the natural world, and these values are reflected in traditional Chinese architecture. When buildings prioritize practicality over aesthetics and harmony with nature, they fail to resonate with the Chinese cultural identity. Chinese architecture places a greater emphasis on aesthetics, harmony with nature, and symbolism, reflecting the values and beliefs of the Chinese culture. When these values are not reflected in buildings, they fail to resonate with the Chinese cultural identity.

3. Nature Spirit

As Lin Yutang comments “its essential spirit is the spirit of peace and contentment, with its best private product in the private home and garden. Its spirit does not, like the Gothic spires, aspire to heaven, but broods over the earth and is contented with its lots” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). Lin Yutang contrasts Gothic architectural style against Chinese architecture, highlighting the difference between the atmosphere of Chinese architecture and Western architecture lies in “the spirit of peace and contentment”, “ broods over the earth and is contented with its lot”. Therefore, as Lin concludes, Chinese architecture is informed with the spirit of nature. Lin Yutang writes that, “The best architecture is that which loses itself in the natural landscape and becomes one with it, belongs to it” (Lin, 1935, p. 128). It may be inferred that nature spirit of Chinese architecture determines the distance and integration with nature. According to Lin Yutang, the best architecture loses itself in natural landscape and becomes one part of it, which emphasizes harmony with nature. This idea is rooted in traditional Chinese culture, which places great

importance on the relationship between humans and the natural world. By highlighting this aspect of Chinese architecture, Lin Yutang is showcasing the unique cultural identity of China and its people. However, Chinese people used to be conceived ignorant and vain, perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices. However, the idea of the unity of heaven and mankind in Chinese traditional culture, which Lin Yutang refers, showcases the objective side of the personality of Chinese people. This idea emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of balance and harmony, reflecting a deep respect for the natural world. By combining the concept of the unity of heaven and mankind with the spirit of Chinese painting, Lin Yutang's works showcase the unique cultural traditions of China and deepen the understanding of China's image overseas. By highlighting the importance of harmony with nature in Chinese architecture, Lin Yutang is challenging western perceptions of Chinese culture and demonstrating that China has a rich and unique cultural identity. By emphasizing these aspects of Chinese culture, Lin Yutang corrects western stereotypes and prejudices and deepens the understanding of China's image overseas.

3.1 "Jing" as Serenity

Lin Yutang proposes that "the problem of revealing or canceling skeleton structures is exactly similar to the problem of 'touch' in painting" (Lin, 1935, p. 128). Static "Jing" in painting can be interpreted to be a kind of voice, with pen and ink as the means and the picture as the carrier, all of which combine together to come up with their charm beyond the form. We can gain static state—"Jing" in Chinese painting aesthetics. In brief, the "touch" in Chinese painting is "Jing" (Feng, 2017). It can be seen that the tranquility of Chinese architecture reflects the inner "Jing" of Chinese people through the "touch" of Chinese painting. As a practice and spiritual belief, Laozi, the originator of Taoism, believes that emptiness and quietness is the origin of life, but people are vulnerable to external interference and temptation and lose their original mind. Laozi put forward the way of cultivating truth, that is, to teach people not to be confused and obsessed by the external material world, to seek from the outside to the inside, from the satisfaction of material desires to the improvement of spiritual cultivation, and to return to simplicity (Lu, 2015, pp. 26-27).

"Jing" permeates all aspects of the Chinese cultural spirit and leaves a deep mark on the national psychological structure. From the perspective of artistic expression, Chinese art appreciates "quietness", which is determined by thousands of years of historical accumulation and our cultural tradition. Chinese landscape painting pays attention to "verve", and Chinese architecture emphasizes "Jing" atmosphere (Vago & Zaidan, 2016, pp. 96-113). From the perspective of cultural tradition, "Jing" is not only the means that Chinese people adopt to comprehend and speculate this world, but also the way through which Chinese people conduct spiritual practice. It gives Chinese traditional culture a unique spiritual temperament (Li, 2015, pp. 67-73).

3.2 *Unity of Heaven and Mankind*

According to Lin Yutang, “its lines should soothe but not obtrude, its roofs should be nestle: quietly beneath the kind shade of trees and soft boughs should gently brush its brow. The Chinese roof does not shout out loud and does not point its finger at heaven. It only shows peace and bows in modesty before the firmament” (Lin, p. 321). As Lin points out, Chinese architecture is deeply influenced by Chinese painting aesthetics. It does not pay much attention to the volume, shape or perspective effect of a single building, but focuses on the feeling of “changing scenery step by step” thorough the sense of space between human and architectural environment.

The sense of space in Chinese architecture is determined by people’s perception of heaven. “There are many thoughts about space in ancient Chinese architecture. The height of architecture is determined by looking up into the sky, and the depth of architecture is determined by looking down onto the earth. It can be said that the Chinese people’s grasp of the natural distance shows the natural spirit of Chinese architecture” (Liu, 2015, p. 4). Therefore, Chinese architecture is mainly embodied in “emptiness” of space. It reflects the inaction of Taoism, and the characteristics of Chinese architecture in his works are also influenced by Taoism. In the writing of Chinese architecture, the integration of Chinese architecture and nature reflects a Taoist view of “the unity of heaven and mankind”. Lin Yutang also mentions, “It is a sign of the place where we human live, and it suggests a certain amount of decency by covering up our human habitations”. However, Chinese architecture attaches importance to the effect of internal space, showing some introverted and closed characteristics. Compared with the west, Chinese architecture emphasizes the external space as the main part, reflecting “the spirit of the opposition between the heaven and mankind and the determination that the human being conquers nature” (Wang, 2010, p. 45). The emphasis on internal space in Chinese architecture can be seen that Chinese people’s temperament is more introverted than the westerners.

3.2.1 The Origin of Unity of Heaven and Mankind

The unity of heaven and mankind" is a concept rooted in Taoism, which emphasizes the connection between humans and the natural world. It highlights the idea that humans are not separate from nature, but rather an integral part of it. This concept is reflected in various aspects of Chinese culture, including architecture. Chinese architecture often emphasizes harmony between man and nature, striving to create a balance between human-made structures and the surrounding environment. This reflects the belief that humans should coexist harmoniously with nature, rather than dominate or exploit it. The unity of all things and the emphasis on harmony in Chinese architecture are influenced by the Taoist principle of embracing the wonder and mystery of the natural world. As Lin points out, “Taoism, therefore, accounts for a side of the Chinese character which Confucianism can not satisfy. There is a natural romanticism and a natural classicism in a nation, as in an individual” (Lin, 1935, p. 300). Thus, Chinese architecture reflects Chinese people’s romantic thoughts in living through the combination of

Chinese architectural aesthetics and “the unity of heaven and mankind”.

3.2.2 The Application of the Unity of Heaven and Mankind

Lin Yutang once expresses that “taoist philosophy explains the unsatisfied aspect of Confucius in Chinese nationality, that is, imagination and romantic thought”. Therefore, Chinese architecture attaches importance to harmony with heaven, which reflects the imagination and romantic thought through the reservation of Chinese people. “from the harmonious development of the nature view, which is ‘Unity of Heaven and Mankind’ as the guiding ideology, with the Taoist architecture integration research and overall analysis reveal the application in spatial distribution” (Zhao & Shan, 2015, p. 2).

For example, the porch, hall and cornice in the North show the infinite sense of architectural space, and the visual experience is skillfully realized through the stone and wood structure. The Chinese garden architecture in the South shows originality, which increases the imagination of space through “changing scenery step by step” (Zhong, 2020, p. 18). Chinese people are obviously introverted. This can be explored in terms of Chinese garden architecture changes the landscape. “The changing scenery of Chinese architecture is not directly seen by opening the door or walking down the stairs, but indirectly felt through the contact between man and nature, which is also a way for Chinese people to express their romance and freedom implicitly” (Xu, 2019, p. 1). It is the influence of “the unity of heaven and mankind” that enriches the imagination and romance of Chinese architecture. The charm of Chinese architecture based on the idea of “the unity of heaven and mankind” also shows the imagination and romantic spirit of Chinese people. “From the architectural point of view, the spatial layout Chinese religious culture ecological thought related achievements applied in architectural environment, thus, carry on and promote the development of man, society and ecological environment construction” (Zhao & Bian, 2015, p. 2).

In contrast, traditional Chinese architecture is characterized by its enclosed and compact design, creating a sense of privacy and intimacy. The buildings are constructed around a central courtyard, which serves as a gathering place for family and friends, and the walls are often adorned with intricate carvings and paintings. The use of wooden beams and brackets, rather than columns, allows for flexible and adaptable spaces that can be easily reconfigured to suit changing needs. The Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City in Beijing are iconic examples of traditional Chinese architecture, evoking a sense of grandeur, stability, and harmony with nature. Overall, while Western architecture emphasizes individuality and openness, traditional Chinese architecture values community and harmony.

As a result, traditional Chinese architecture employs a more subtle approach to incorporating romantic ideas into its internal structure, often relying on the presence of people to bring the space to life. Lin Yutang’s depiction of Chinese architecture captures the essence of Chinese culture, which values peace and security within the home and stability and caution outside of it. The intricate carvings and paintings

on the walls and the use of natural materials such as wood and stone reflect a deep reverence for nature and a desire to live in harmony with it. In contrast to western architecture, which emphasizes individuality and openness, traditional Chinese architecture values community and privacy. Overall, the romantic ideas in Chinese architecture are more understated, reflecting the modest and reserved nature of the Chinese people.

4. Chinese Architectural Structure

The western perception of Chinese architecture often centers its role in manufacturing rather than innovation, particularly in the realm of original design. Although China has produced many exceptional architectural works in recent years, however, the majority of them are public or commercial buildings, and residential buildings' occupancy rate is relatively low. This lack of quantity seems to reflect a lack of quality and originality in design.

Chinese architects frequently prioritize studying western architectural design over incorporating Chinese characteristics into their work. They often view tradition as a relic of the past and discard it in favor of modern Western design, believing it is the best way to connect with the world. However, this approach does not always hold true.

It is crucial to recognize the value of Chinese traditional architecture and design and integrate it into modern architecture. By doing so, designers can create unique and innovative designs that reflect Chinese culture and values. Striking a balance between tradition and modernity is essential in creating original and functional designs that meet the needs of contemporary society. By following this approach, Chinese architecture will gain recognition and respect on a global scale, not just as a "made in China" product but as an original and innovative creation that contributes to the world's architectural heritage. Chinese designers often focus on studying western architectural design and neglect the importance of incorporating Chinese characteristics into their work. They tend to view tradition as the past and discard it in favor of modern western design, believing that this is the best way to connect with the world. However, this belief is not always true in certain circumstances.

However, there still exists the misunderstanding of lacking of creativity in overseas impression of China architecture. While Chinese architecture introduced by Lin Yutang shows the creativity that Chinese architecture needs instead of the commercial values as is demonstrated in western architecture. Lin Yutang stresses, "among the various strokes of a character, we usually choose a horizontal or a vertical stroke, or sometimes an enveloping square, which is regarded as giving support to the rest, and this stroke we must make powerfully and longer, more obvious than the others" (Lin, 1935, p. 130). Obviously, Chinese people use Chinese character structure in architectural structure.

Lin takes the example of the Palace Museum which "is located in the north to the south. The main buildings are arranged on a main axis, and other secondary buildings are distributed on both sides of

the main axis, facing each other from east to west, forming a concise organizational law. This neat arrangement is derived from the symmetry of Chinese characters” (Lin, 1935, p. 129). As we can see, the structure of the Palace Museum is created from Chinese characters. Ancient Chinese people gained much inspiration from Chinese traditional culture. Thus, Chinese architecture has the structure of Chinese characters, traditional color decoration and cautious layout influenced by the doctrine of the mean, breaking the stereotype of China overseas.

4.1 Color Decoration of Chinese Architecture

Lin Yutang simply describes decorative details of Chinese architecture. There are many innovations in the decoration of Chinese architecture. “Roof ridge decoration refers to the decorative components on the roof of ancient China. It has both humanistic connotation and aesthetic taste. It is called ‘top scenery’, which integrates traditional art aesthetics, national culture, feudal rituals, etc. Among them, totem culture temple is an ancient phenomenon. The original function of roof decoration is to press and hold the roof tiles, and then gradually evolved into a decorative symbol” (Jian, 2019, p. 8). In choosing color, ancient Chinese architecture is good at integrating a variety of colors, such as the color of the roof of Chinese architecture will change with the seasons (Gou & Wang, 2010, pp. 246-266).

In comparison of Chinese and Western architectural color decoration, the Forbidden City of China and the Palace of Versailles of France are often regarded as typical examples. The Forbidden City commonly adopts yellow, red, and white in its decoration. The reason why the Palace Museum chooses yellow glazed tiles is due to the symbolic significance of the color. Yellow represents the color of land and sunlight, embodying the central government, imperial power, hierarchy, order, and supremacy.

According to Wang Daili (2015), red is another significant color used in the Forbidden City’s decoration. Red is a full color that conveys warmth and awe and is recognized as the oldest color used by human beings. The use of red in the Forbidden City’s decoration signifies prosperity, auspiciousness, and happiness. In contrast, the Palace of Versailles in France features a more vibrant and diverse range of colors in its decoration. The interior features a wide range of colors, including gold, blue, and green, which reflect the luxurious and extravagant aesthetic of the French monarchy.

The differences in color decoration between Chinese and Western architecture reflect the differing cultural values and aesthetics. Chinese architecture emphasizes the symbolic significance of colors and their association with imperial power and hierarchy. In contrast, Western architecture emphasizes luxury and extravagance, with a focus on a diverse range of colors and materials to create a visually stunning effect. In ancient China, red also signifies the highest status. The white stone base decoration of the Forbidden City was also very exquisite. “In ancient Chinese Taoism philosophy, white and black represent Yang and Yin, and are regarded as the source of all things.” Among them, white is called “Yang color”, which represents the positive, enterprising, strong characteristics and the things and phenomena with these characteristics. While in the 17th century, the architecture of Versailles is

characterized by the worship of Roman style and rationality. “The appearance colors of Versailles Palace are mainly red, yellow and blue bricks, decorated with gold, giving people a grand and magnificent feeling” (Wang, 2015, p. 6). However, it does not have the rigorous color level as the appearance colors of the Forbidden City.

The decoration color of Chinese palaces is closely related to China’s political and cultural systems. It is symbolic, geomantic, and ethical, and has been used to signify superiority, inferiority, and social class division. As a result, the color decoration of Chinese palace architecture is rich and colorful but can appear relatively singular due to the rigid hierarchical system that existed in the past society. In contrast, the color and decoration of western palace buildings exhibit a greater degree of diversity and rationality, reflecting the pluralistic and ever-changing social culture of Western countries. As Wang Daili (2015) notes, western palace buildings tend to pursue artistic freedom and individuality, resulting in a more varied and diverse approach to color and decoration. The difference in color and decoration between Chinese and western palace buildings reflects the contrasting cultural values and aesthetics. Chinese architecture emphasizes the symbolic and hierarchical significance of color, while Western architecture values individuality, artistic freedom, and diversity.

4.2 Chinese Architectural Layout

Lin Yutang gives an example of the Forbidden City. There is a hidden axis in the design of Beijing, and the layout is symmetrical. The different layout of Chinese and Western architecture reflects the different expressions of national spirit: “in a large range and for a long time, ancient Chinese architecture was influenced by the Chinese doctrine of the mean and developed in a stereotyped style” (Wang, 2009, p. 14).

In the history of Chinese ancient architecture, Liu Dunzhen classified Chinese architecture into official architecture, residential architecture and garden architecture influenced by the doctrine of the means. In his article, Liu Dunzhen writes: “all these structural and external features, together with the balanced and symmetrical layout method, have formed the unique style of Chinese architecture, making it unique in the world architecture” (Shan, 2020, p. 5). As Liu Dunzhen points out, this kind of balance of layout is actually the expression of the Chinese people’s doctrine of the mean. Chinese culture is influenced by the doctrine of the mean, and Chinese people attach importance to checks and balances.

Confucius and Mencius believe that man is between heaven and earth, and “Zhi Zhong” is the best way of existence. “This concept determines that the characteristics of Chinese traditional architecture in site selection, planning, layout and shape are ‘seeking the middle’, with ‘middle’ as the standard of planning architecture, and all buildings are carried out with the middle line as the standard” (Yang, 2012, p. 24).

The rigorous layout of Chinese architecture reflects the doctrine of the mean. The core idea of the doctrine of the mean is to live in the right way, not biased, with natural pure human nature to improve

self-cultivation, treat everything. According to the doctrine of the mean, people's cultivation should be based on persistence and self-discipline. It should be consistent with the doctrine of justice and neutralization. "The layout of Chinese classical architecture is always based on a main axis, the main building is arranged on the main axis, and the secondary building is arranged on both sides in front of the main building, facing east and west, forming a square or rectangular courtyard" (Wang , 2009, p. 14). As long as desire and demand are moderate and in line with the doctrine of the means, they will also be in line with the principle of heaven.

Chinese architectural culture reflects the formation of Chinese architectural style, the reason of Chinese personality structure, and the influence on the overseas construction of image of China. Chinese geomantic culture has been misunderstood by western society, but it has been imperceptibly influencing the style of Chinese architecture. For Chinese people, it is more or less influenced by geomantic customs, such as unique views on the location of houses, the placement of furniture, and the location of doors. Furthermore, it plays a certain role in the yearning for good luck in Chinese personality. It is common for good luck symbols to appear in Chinese architecture, which reflects the application of symbolism to cause in-depth thinking. The role of Pantheism in Chinese architecture is also an indispensable part of Chinese architectural culture. As Lin Yutang writes, "It has supplemented this by the constant use of symbolic motives. And it has, through the superstition of geomancy, introduced the element of pantheism, which compels regard for the surrounding landscape" (Lin, 1935, p. 129). In short, Chinese architecture is influenced by these three factors: symbolism, pantheism and geomancy culture. With the continuous use of symbolism, pantheism emerged through geomancy.

5. Reflection on Chinese Architectural Culture

As Lin Yutang writes "it has supplemented this by the constant use of symbolic motives. And it has, through the superstition of geomancy, introduced the element of pantheism, which compels regard for the surrounding landscape" (Lin, 1935, p. 129). In short, Chinese architecture is influenced by these three factors: symbolism, pantheism and geomancy culture. With the continuous use of symbolism, pantheism has emerged through geomancy.

5.1 Reflection on Application of Symbolism

According to Lin Yutang's observation, Chinese architecture seeks relief from straight lines and makes use of symbolism to convey a psychological message. Animal images in Chinese architecture often symbolize the Chinese people's good wishes for life. For instance, Lin notes that the bat is a popular decoration motif in Chinese architecture because of its curved wings' versatility in design and its homonym for "good luck". Similarly, the lion's image appears in front of houses, gardens, and mausoleums in China, reflecting the Chinese people's optimism about life. Residential buildings often feature gentle and lovely lion images, giving people a sense of joy (Zhong, 2020, p. 18).

In ancient Chinese palaces, dragon is considered to be one of the most important symbols in Chinese classic culture, connoting power and longevity. According to Lin Yutang, symbolism in Chinese architecture contains within a few conventional lines the thoughts of age and the dreams of the race. Dragon is the most revered animal in China and a symbol of the emperor who always had the best of everything. The role of symbolism in Chinese architecture reflects the Chinese people's cultural values and beliefs and contains the age and hope of the nation (Lin, 1935, p. 300). Furthermore, one of the most representative works of symbolism in China is *The Classic of Mountains and Seas Anonymou*, which describes many rare animals in ancient China, for example, a crafty and villainous person and unicorn "Zheng". In fact, in Han Dynasty, a crafty and villainous person should have the meaning of auspiciousness. "In Han Dynasty stone reliefs, a crafty and villainous person often accompanied the Queen of the West. The reason why a crafty and villainous person is so extraordinary may be related to the fox's cleverness and beauty. Take red fox as an example. Red fox has a long fluffy tail. Its swinging posture can easily arouse people's imagination of 'nine tails'" (Xu, 2019, p. 4). In *The Classic of Mountains and Seas Anonymous*, the constituent elements of the images of rare animals are basically limited to the category of real existence in nature, and these constituent elements are basically real concrete images. Therefore, the way to endow surreal things with authenticity is often to transfer the concrete authenticity to imaginary things, which also shows the characteristics of sensibility and intuition.

However, the symbolic images of Western architecture are not as sensible and intuitive as those of China. The Chinese architectural symbolic images are abstract, and they were made up by rich imagination, while the symbolic images of western ancient buildings are more concrete, and most of them directly imitate the things in nature. "In the early days, they imitated the weaving patterns of flowers and leaves of plants, such as water plants, reeds and vines. In the Greek period, there were columns. In the middle ages, the church was dominated by saints or New Testament stories" (Yu & Liu, 2020, p. 5). Symbolism in Chinese architecture expresses Chinese people's good wishes for life and great imagination, through the mysterious symbolic images such as bat, dragon and a crafty and villainous person.

5.2 *The Influence of Pantheism*

Lin Yutang writes, "but then the dragon is not a purely mythological or antediluvian. To the Chinese, the mountains and rivers are alive, and in many of the winding ridges of mountains we see the dragon's back, and where the mountains gradually descend and merge into the plain or the sea we see the dragon's tail. That is Chinese pantheism, the basis of Chinese geomancy".

One of the mythical animals in Chinese architecture mentioned by Lin Yutang is the dragon. Dragon is the most revered animal in China. It is a symbol of the emperor. It is the most widely used in ancient Chinese architectural decoration, partly because it symbolizes imperial power, and partly because with

the passage of time, the image of the dragon is no longer a pure mythical animal, but is composed of the concept of the Chinese people. The Chinese people believe that mountains and rivers have gods, which is the manifestation of Chinese pantheism in Chinese architecture. The Chinese regard the dragon as a deity, and at the same time expand to mountains and rivers to charge them with deities.

Therefore, Chinese architectural culture is also influenced by pantheism. Chinese people's view of mountains and rivers as gods has a profound impact on China's image abroad. Maxine Hong Kingston, a famous Chinese American writer, once said: "for the west people, when I hear the word 'China', I immediately think of ancient rituals, exotic tea and superstition" (Wang, 2020, p. 2). The ancient rituals and superstitions in the overseas impression of China are influenced by pantheism. The image of the Chinese is superstitious in the West. However, Chinese pantheism is not the kind of superstition as Westerners think.

Chinese people believe, the mountains and rivers are alive and dragon is one of the due expressions. "But then the dragon is not a purely mythological or antediluvian. To Chinese, the mountains and rivers are alive, and in many of the winding ridges of mountains we see the dragon's back, and where the mountains gradually descend and merge into the plain or the sea we see the dragon's tail. That is Chinese pantheism, the basis of Chinese geomancy" (Lin, 1935, p. 310). Not only can dragon be viewed as god in China, but also the stove has been influenced by pantheism in Chinese folk culture. In ancient China, every house had a stove. The ceremony of offering sacrifices to the kitchen god during the Chinese New Year is mainly to "leave the kitchen" and send the kitchen god to heaven. The kitchen god went to heaven to report the performance of his family for one year to the Jade Emperor.

5.3 Chinese Geomantic Culture

Chinese architecture has been criticized by Western missionaries and colonists for its use of geomantic culture, which was considered as witchcraft and deception. However, FengShui, as a traditional standard for layout and object placement in the natural environment, has a great spiritual and architectural value in Chinese architecture, as noted by Lin Yutang. He acknowledges that geomancy is a superstition but emphasized its advantages in Chinese architecture (Mu & Zhang, 2020, p. 3). Compared to other cultures, the geomantic omen pattern in Chinese culture has unique features, such as a preference for "hiding" and "defending" and an attachment to the nature of mountains and rivers. These features deeply reflect the poetic and introverted personality of the Chinese people and are different from the characteristics of "showing off", "attacking", and "extroverting" of European Christian culture (Ding, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, the use of Chinese geomantic culture in architecture tends to reflect a personality that is "hiding" "indirect", and "defending".

Through Lin Yutang's writing on Chinese architecture, the misunderstanding of Chinese culture overseas is more clarified, and the important role of geomantic culture in Chinese architecture is highlighted. The use of symbolism in Chinese architecture reflects the hopes and cultural values of the

Chinese people, while FengShui provides a spiritual and architectural basis for Chinese architecture. Since the middle and late 20th century, with the global environmental and ecological crisis highlighted, the environmental governance concept of Chinese FengShui conforming to nature and respecting nature has been gradually recognized by western scholars. FengShui is regarded as “a way for Chinese people to understand, perceive and deal with the real world” (Ding, 2003, p. 1). FengShui culture embodied in Chinese architecture has also been recognized to a certain extent. “The aesthetics of Chinese geomancy has therefore a very close bearing on Chinese architecture in the broad sense of the world.

6. Reflection on Overseas Construction of China’s Image

The west has historically held a polarized view of China’s image, characterized by two extremes: the image of peasants who are perceived as lacking ambition, innovation, and expressiveness, and the image of villains who are viewed as being ambitious and destructive. The former is rooted in a lack of understanding of China’s development, while the latter is based on demonization fueled by a lack of understanding. Lin Yutang’s writing on Chinese architecture offers a unique perspective on China’s national spirit and contributes to breaking down these inherent prejudices. By highlighting the characteristics of Chinese architecture, Lin Yutang offers insight into the Chinese people’s cultural values and beliefs. This, in turn, can increase mutual understanding between China and the West.

However, it is important to note that the singular image of China overseas is not solely a result of western biases. China’s own image transmittal strategies, as well as geopolitical factors, should also take up the responsibilities for China recognized internationally. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of the multiple factors that contribute to China’s image overseas is necessary. Lin Yutang’s writing on Chinese architecture offers a valuable starting point for this understanding.

6.1 Prejudice, Respect, and Accept

The characteristics of Chinese architecture in Lin Yutang’s works show the national spirit of China, and overseas views on China’s image have changed. The efforts of Chinese architects in Chinese architecture have also attracted overseas attention. “Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin, the couple of architects, received art education overseas, and their understanding of architecture reached a balance between Western learning and the study of ancient Chinese architecture”. The west understands Chinese architecture, respects and accepts the aesthetics of Chinese architecture, which makes Chinese architecture more widely understood and studied. The stereotyped image of China overseas is actually the prejudice caused by the lack of cognition of China overseas. Through the efforts of Lin Yutang put into the Chinese architects as a way of communication between Chinese and western architecture, the prejudice against China has been lightened and China’s overseas image has been refixed to a great extent.

6.2 Absorption and Impact

The absorption and impact of Chinese architecture on Western construction styles in Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries was significant and far-reaching. The influence of Chinese architecture can be seen in various aspects of Western architecture, including the use of decorative motifs, the incorporation of oriental elements in building design, and the adoption of new construction techniques and materials.

One of the primary ways in which Chinese architecture impacted Western construction styles was through the use of decorative motifs. The intricate designs and patterns found in Chinese architecture, such as the use of dragons, pagodas, and other ornate motifs, were highly sought after by Western designers and architects. These motifs were incorporated into the design of buildings, furniture, and other decorative objects, giving rise to a new style known as “Chinoiserie”. Another way in which Chinese architecture impacted Western construction styles was through the incorporation of oriental elements in building design. Chinese architectural features, such as the use of curved roofs, intricate lattice work, and the integration of nature into building design, were admired by Western architects and designers. These elements were gradually incorporated into Western building design, leading to the emergence of a new architectural style known as “Orientalism”. Finally, the impact of Chinese architecture on Western construction styles can be seen in the adoption of new construction techniques and materials. The Chinese were pioneers in the use of materials such as porcelain and silk in construction, and their use of bamboo scaffolding and other innovative construction techniques were also highly influential. Western architects and builders were quick to adopt these new techniques and materials, leading to the development of new construction technologies and methods.

In conclusion, the absorption and impact of Chinese architecture on Western construction styles in Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries was significant. The influence of Chinese architecture can be seen in various aspects of Western architecture, including the use of decorative motifs, the incorporation of oriental elements in building design, and the adoption of new construction techniques and materials. The legacy of this influence can still be seen in modern Western architecture today.

7. Conclusion

My Country and My People had played an important role in transmitting the image of China. Thus, many scholars have studied the book on Chinese national spirit and image from different dimensions. This paper studies the chapter of architecture in *My Country and My People* to analyze the characteristics of Chinese architecture that reflects the Chinese national spirit, Chinese personality and overseas shaping of China’s image through the comparison of Chinese and Western architecture. Chinese architecture focuses on representing and conveying beauty and seeking harmony with nature. Through Lin’s writing about serenity of Chinese architecture, Chinese architecture expresses nature

spirit, reflecting Chinese people's personality "Jing" and "unity with man and heaven" combined with ancient Taoism theory. Furthermore, this paper analyzes Chinese architectural structure, including color decoration and layout. Chinese architectural culture influenced by symbolism, pantheism and geomantic culture that reflects Chinese unique charms and features.

Acknowledgment

Writing this paper was like successfully surviving a long and arduous journey. I was able to make it through this journey because I had the unwavering support of so many people along the way. The deepest and sincerest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Prof. Dan Cui, for her continuous and invaluable guidance throughout my research. She gave me much aid through timely responding to my questions, providing insightful feedback, offering a number of professional revising suggestions, and leading and pushing me to think harder and deeper. I am deeply impressed by her seriousness and rigor of academic research. It is of a great honor for me to be given an opportunity to complete my paper under her supervision and guidance. In addition, I extend my gratefulness for my mother for her support, both mentally and financially. My final thanks go to all my friends for their encouragement and motivation.

References

- Ding, W. J. (2019). *Architectural Environment Design and Ancient Chinese Fengshui Theory*. Hohai University, Nanjing.
- Dou, Y. X. (2016). Imitation and plagiarism of urban architecture and "Chinese design". *Beauty and the Era*, 7.
- Duan, Z. J., & Zhao, D. N. (2007). *The World Expression of Chinese Architecture—A Cultural Reflection on the Present Architectural Presentation of Central China Architecture*, 4-6.
- Feng, B. H. (2017). An Analysis of Stillness in Chinese Painting. *Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts: Research Direction of Chinese Classical Flower and Bird Painting*.
- Gou, A. P., & Wang, J. B. (2010). *The development of roof color in ancient China*, 35(4), 246-266.
- Jian, X. K. (2019). Analysis of the Ridge Culture of Ancient Chinese Architecture. *Modern Horticulture*, 8.
- Li, B. (2015). Xu Jing and the Freedom and Transcendence of Spirit: The Way to Cultivate Chinese Spiritual Culture. *Northwest Humanities Review*, (67-73), 20.
- Liang, Y. (2015). *Research on the Evolution of Industrial City Planning in Modern Britain*. Nanjing: Department of World history, Nanjing University.
- Lin, B. B. (2014). Looking at the Stereotypes of China in Western Society from American Dramas: A Case Study of "Desperate Housewives". *News World*, 4.
- Lin, Y. T. (1935). *My country and My people*, 128.

- Liu, X. (2015). *Research on the Construction of Ancient Chinese Aesthetic Space*. Shaanxi: Department of Languages of China and Literature, Shaanxi Normal University.
- Lu, S. (2016). The Stillness of Chinese People. *Popular Psychology*, 26-27.
- Mu, K. X., Zhang, C., & Ji, J. (2020). *Comparative Study on Characteristics and Development of Chinese and Western Architectural Culture*, 4.2.
- Mu, X., & Huang, Y. (2012). *Study on Traditional Chinese Architecture*, 2008, 11-15.
- Shan, D. X. (2020). *The Reference of Chinese and Western Landscape Architecture Environment to Interior Landscape Design*, 5.1.
- Vago, D. R., & Zeidan, F. (2016). *The brain on silent: Mind wandering, mindful awareness, and states of mental tranquility*, 1373, 1, 96-113.
- Wang, C. H. (2010). Unique Chinese and Western classical architectural styles. *Residential technology*, 45.
- Wang, D. L. (2015). A Brief Discussion on the Comparison of Architectural Color and Decoration between China and the West—Taking China’s “Forbidden City” and France’s “Palace of Versailles Palace” as examples. *Shang*, 6.
- Wang, L. (2009). The Influence of Chinese Classical Architecture on Contemporary Architecture. *Art of Cryogenic Architecture*, 14.
- Wang, X. T. (2020). *Transnationalism in Maxine Hong Kingston’s China Men and Amy Tan’s The Joy Luck Club*, 4.2.
- Xu, L. H. (2019). An Analysis of the Images of Exotic Animals in the Classic of Mountains and Seas. *Journal of Nanjing University of the Arts (Art and Design)*, 4.
- Xu, X. N. (2019). *Chinese Classical Gardens and Gothic Architecture*, 4.3.
- Yang Jianhai. (2012). My Opinion on the Differences between Traditional Chinese Architecture and Western Classical Architecture. *Technology and Enterprise*, 24.
- Yu, B. K., & Liu, P. X., & Zhuang, H. R. (2020). A Comparative Study of Architectural Decoration Culture between China and the West: Taking Doors as an Example. *Beauty and Era*, 5.
- Zhao, B., & Shan, D. (2015). Unity of Heaven and Mankind below Architectural Space Layout in Taoism. *Chinese Spirit in Modern Strength* (2018), 58, 154-188.
- Zhong, G. (2020). Classical Aesthetics in Chinese Architectural Decoration Design. *Architectural Structure*, 18.

Note(s)

Note 1. This paper is the periodical research result of Project on “A Study of English Major Course System Construction With Value Shaping Based on ‘Global Village’ as the Foreign Language Lab” sponsored by the Academy of Foreign Language Teaching Attached to the Institute of Higher

Education of China (No: 21WYJYZD08); of Project on “A Study of Routes Applied to Cultivate the Inter-cultural Competence of English Major Students” (No: GJJX20201130); of Project on “The Establishment and Practice of Vista Mode of Development and Transformation of English-major Teaching Faculty’s Proficiency under New Arts Prospect” sponsored by Chinese Private Higher Education Association (CANFZG22417); of Project on “The Construction and Practice of Mode of Development and Transformation of Foreign Language Teaching Faculty’s Proficiency in International Studies of Universities under Multiple-Discipline Background” sponsored by Jilin Higher Education Association (No: JGJX2022D316); of Project on “A Study on Cultivation Mechanism of Foreign Language High-quality Students Based on Inter-discipline Crossover and Integration Under Value Guiding” sponsored by Jilin Education and Science Leading Office (WT22143).