

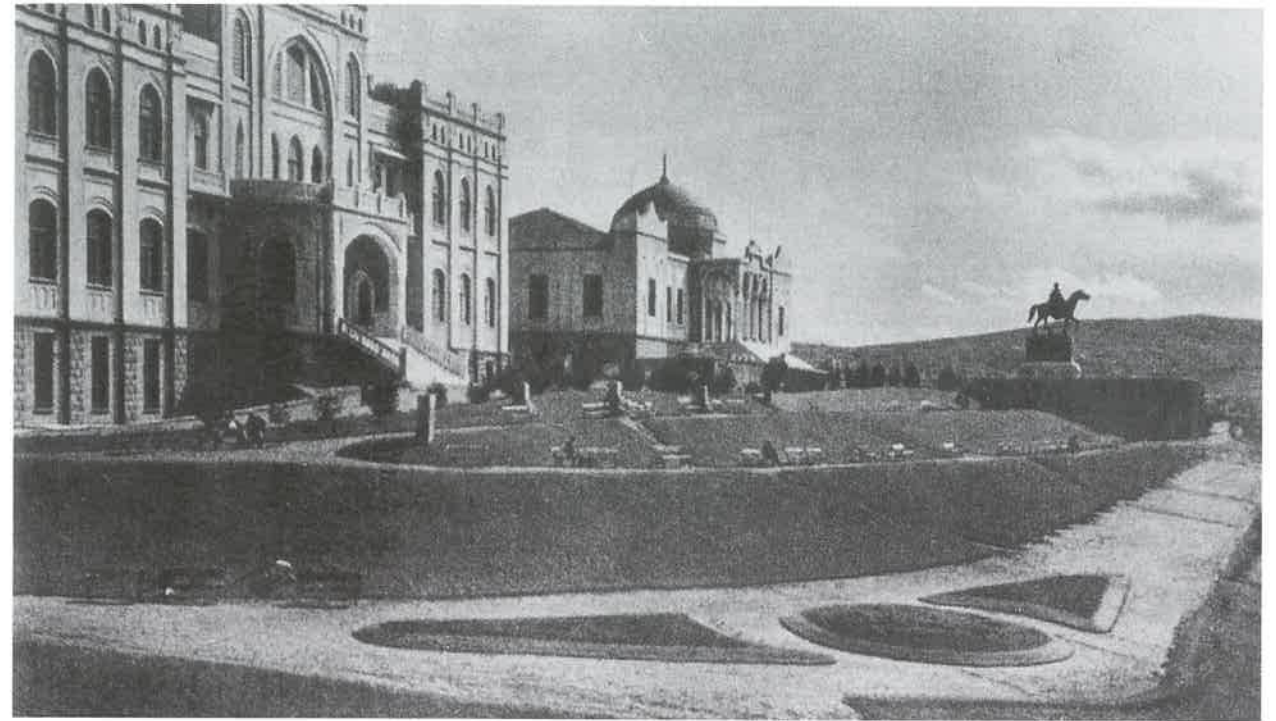
## 14 THE BEAUX-ARTS IN ANOTHER REGISTER

### Governmental Administrative and Civic Centers in City Plans of the Republican Era

“Since the municipal government is the administrative organ for the entire city, it merits the respect of Chinese and foreigners alike. . . . Given that architecture reflects a nation’s cultural spirit . . . municipal government architecture should be in a Chinese style to earn the respect of urban citizens.”<sup>1</sup> This 1929 injunction from the Shanghai Municipal Center Architectural Design Committee reflects the overriding concern of Republican state officials and city planners/architects that urban public buildings command universal respect as embodiments of the Chinese nation. These ambitions moved Chinese architects, many of whom had been trained using Beaux-Arts-inspired design ideals, to embrace Beaux-Arts classicism. As they did so, they also deployed characteristic Beaux-Arts practices, such as geometric centrality and the use of axial approaches and park-like surroundings, to design new monumental centers for China’s cities. Whereas previous chapters have generally examined individual architects and particular structures, this chapter modulates our discussion by examining the Chinese appropriation of Beaux-Arts design principles in a different register, the new governmental and civic centers designed and built during the Nanjing decade (1927–1937) and their significance as key components of the ambitious urban-planning agenda of the Guomindang (GMD; Nationalist Party). During this period the GMD’s consolidation of power enabled state officials to initiate a series of comprehensive urban plans for major, nationally prominent metropolises such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin, and Beiping,<sup>2</sup> and to promote modernizing schemes for smaller, provincial-level economic and political centers such as Suzhou and Hangzhou. In all of these efforts, state officials, architects, and an array of urban boosters aspired to exert an unprecedented level of ideological and corollary aesthetic control to remake China’s cities as exemplars of the Party’s vision of state-led economic and social modernization.<sup>3</sup> This essay surveys the novel governmental centers created by the influential Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Nanjing urban plans, as well as less ambitious (and thus more representative) efforts in Suzhou to implement Beaux-Arts-influenced city planning. This cross-section of Republican urban reconstruction projects underscores the close identification between city and nation in Republican politics. The mixed success and failure of these efforts highlighted the limited strengths and numerous weaknesses of Beaux-Arts techniques to engender vital modern cities amidst the financial strictures, political ferment, and imperialist onslaught buffeting Republican China.

At one level the Republican enthusiasm for Beaux-Arts planning reflects the tradition's wholesale dominance of modern (if not modernist) early twentieth-century architectural practice and pedagogy around the globe. At the same time it reflects the strategic calculation by Chinese architects that the French statist origins and Eurocentricism of much Beaux-Arts design could be overcome in order to create a salutary modern Chinese architecture and city form. In China, as elsewhere, the Beaux-Arts privileging of order, monumentality, and classical traditionalism resonated with the aspirations of GMD officials and individual architects to reorder society through the imposition of an ideological and aesthetic discipline fostering ethnonationalist pride and development. The method's insistence on developing one's skills in rendering elevations to a high level, the privileging of drawing as a means of analysis, and the reliance on "classical" structures as sources for contemporary design appealed to Chinese designers for their rigor and utility. These attributes affirmed the Beaux-Arts' seemingly objective, scientific nature, as did the potential plasticity of its classicism, which raised the question, what or whose "classical" tradition should form the basis for national design? Like their brethren in Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, and elsewhere, Chinese architects cannily appreciated the capacity of Beaux-Arts formalism to accommodate and develop one's own "classicism" as the basis for an endogenous, nationally resonant modern architecture

**Fig. 14.1.** Bandoeng Technische Hoogeschool, 1920. From P. H. Voerkerken, Jr., and R. Noordhoff, *Atlas Gambar-gambar Akan dipakai untuk pengadjaran Ilmoe Soemi* (Atlas of pictures for the study of geography) Amsterdam: S. K. van Looy, 1922; reprinted in Abidin, *Behind the Postcolonial*, 44.



**Fig. 14.2.** Turkish Hearth Building and Ethnography Museum. From *La Turquie Kemaliste* 12 (April 1936). Published courtesy of Sibel Bozdoğan.

(figs. 14.1 and 14.2). Indeed, particular Beaux-Arts attributes such as the privileging of centrality and the use of long vistas resonated with imperial architectural practice, further suggesting that the Beaux-Arts approach could be amenable to the development of Chinese national architecture.<sup>4</sup>

Chinese politicians and designers were also galvanized by contemporary foreign urbanist theory and practice, which, in the wake of the City Beautiful Movement, promoted the improvement of urban aesthetics as a means for effecting wholesale societal reform. Their enthusiasm provoked a broad push to complement economic planning schemes, embodied by the contemporary obsession with road improvement, the sine qua non of Republican-era city planning, with a more comprehensive sociocultural approach to urban development. This shift also resonated and drew strength from the Nanjing government's increasing reliance on cultural nationalism as a bulwark of its political program. Indeed, during the Nanjing decade, some cultural and urban critics argued that an exclusive pursuit of economic goals in planning was inadequate or harmful to nationalist goals. As one 1931 sociological tract proclaimed, "For the last several decades China has lagged behind the rest of the world in every aspect—architecture, particularly



aspects of design, is naturally no exception.”<sup>5</sup> The result was not merely aesthetically displeasing. Material construction without artistic expression, particularly in the city, the locus of modern society, would necessarily be incomplete and thus hinder the advance of civilization. Furthermore, urban design must aim to develop and represent the particular spirit of contemporary national culture, “not that which imitates traditional Chinese art, but artistic construction suited to the requirements of life in a revolutionary age.”<sup>6</sup>

In the eyes of the GMD, the current “revolutionary age” was a period of Party-led tutelage during which it would foster popular nationalism and mass participation in political life. The GMD’s vanguard role would allow it to tap the latent energies of China’s population, while its democratic goals (if not the often authoritarian strain of its politics) bespoke the progressive nature of the party and its “Three Principles of the People” ideology, that is, Sun Yat-sen’s program of nationalism, democracy, and people’s livelihood in pursuit of national autonomy, political reform, and economic development. New governmental and civic centers were key performative sites where the state and the reformed citizenry could enact local self-government and effectuate urban modernization. These areas were therefore at the aesthetic and discursive heart of most Republican-era urban plans. As Liang Sicheng and Zhang Rui noted in their 1930 comprehensive plan for Tianjin, public buildings should be sited together in a central location near efficient transportation “for the purposes of utility and sublime effect.”<sup>7</sup> Propinquity would allow citizens the ready access that was essential for the development of democratic practice and overall “intimacy” between the municipal government and local citizens. In addition, there was the matter of the architecture itself: “The grandeur and beauty [of the newly designed municipal center] should provoke an irrefragable sense of respect and love for the municipality among the urban populace.”<sup>8</sup> The design and overall aesthetic of civic buildings should therefore qualify as an essential aspect of state ideology.

Reflecting contemporary ideals regarding the linkages between national essence and the material environment, Liang and Zhang averred that China’s emulation of Western thought, institutions, and architecture since the 1911 revolution had partly exacerbated the problems of China’s cities. The modern Western structures that had come to characterize China’s cities were, they claimed, often uninspired or badly constructed with inferior materials. Such sentiments were widely shared: for instance, in a 1930 assessment of contemporary Shanghai architecture in the monthly *China Journal of Science and Arts*, a Western critic railed against the predominance of uninspiring “copybook architecture” and bemoaned the fact that “when seeking originality, some designers have gone too far

and produced ugly and grotesque results.” In sum, he noted, much of Shanghai’s modern architecture should unfortunately be judged as “anything but successful.”<sup>9</sup>

According to some critics, such failure was not necessarily rooted in deficiencies of skill alone. Arguing for the primacy of national aesthetics, Liang and Zhang observed that in the past few decades the enthusiasm for Occidental architecture had led to the hiring of European and North American architects, whose structures naturally reflected the cultural mores and needs of their home nations. Far from being desirable, the resulting cosmopolitanism was, they disparaged, an inelegant bricolage of inharmonious aesthetics ill-suited to the practical and spiritual needs of urban China. Given the formative role of public buildings in civic life, it was essential that state structures draw upon the superior beauty and function of China’s classical palace architecture—an outcome that Liang and Zhang, among others, judged likelier if the architect were himself Chinese.<sup>10</sup>

Buildings and urban planning had the capacity to restore the cultural integrity of the cityscape and demonstrate that the GMD and society as a whole had transcended the still-recent imperial past while maintaining organic ties to national traditions. Such concerns were particularly prominent in discussions regarding the renovation of Nanjing as the national capital. The committee vetting plans for the central administrative district in 1929 praised the top-ranked submission for

following “the Chinese ancient style in that all the buildings project a feeling of magnificence and enchantment” (fig. 14.3).<sup>11</sup> Yet these imperial forms were not intended to provoke nostalgia for the Qing. Rather, the buildings were arranged systematically “to express [the] freedom and equality” of the new Republican order.<sup>12</sup> During the Nanjing decade, architecture and urban planning were not the only realms in which tradition was subject to an explicit and public transubstantiation to become the very substance of modern development: similar nationalist sensibilities dominated GMD political discourse and propelled the New Life Movement (initiated by Chiang Kai-shek; his wife, Song Meiling; and others in 1934), which sought to renovate the

**Fig. 14.3.** Alfred T. Palmer, photographer, Ministry of Communications, Nanjing, originally published in Julius Eigner, “The Rise and Fall of Nanjing,” *National Geographic Magazine* 73, no. 2 (February 1938), 214. Published courtesy of Julia Palmer Gennert.



Confucian values of decorum, righteousness, integrity, and sense of shame as the bases for modern Republican citizenship.

### The Shanghai and Guangzhou Municipal Plans

The detailed attention given to the design of state complexes in Republican urban planning reflected the contemporary significance of municipal administration as a novel, progressive form of government that would help inculcate democratic ideals and civic responsibility among the urban citizenry. These aspirations influenced China's earliest comprehensive planning efforts, which were initiated in 1927 for Guangzhou and Shanghai, two of the nation's first national-level Special Municipalities.<sup>13</sup> As the hub of the GMD-led revolution during the Beiyang period (1912–1928), Guangzhou had boasted the first modernizing Chinese-run municipal administration in 1918.<sup>14</sup> Shanghai, on the other hand, had long been governed by separate municipal entities in its foreign concession areas; GMD authorities aimed to establish an innovative, paradigmatic city government to give credence to their demands for the abolition of extraterritoriality and unification of the city under a Chinese administration.

The identification of Guangzhou and Shanghai with hopes for national rehabilitation and progress was most clearly manifest in the Beaux-Arts-infused designs for the massive comprehensive municipal buildings planned for each governmental center. As Daniel Burnham had done in his 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, and as other city planners had done as a result of Burnham's significant influence, Chinese architects combined all state functions in one grand structure that both reflected the majesty of the state and made government services readily accessible to the populace. The siting and design of these two buildings announced a significant break with previous modes and ideals of governance. The comprehensiveness of a unitary state administrative building, as opposed to the different county *yamens* that had divided and governed cities during the imperial period, underscored the novelty of municipal government as a Republican innovation. Chinese cities, for the first time in their history, were unified political units governed by special urban-focused state administrations dedicated to the propagation of popular democracy and the promotion of comprehensive modern reconstruction projects. This task was facilitated by the fact that due to state support, municipalities, unlike county governments, could afford to hire professional architect/planners and other personnel to oversee urban development. Both plans aimed to give the cities a new orientation by moving the governmental/civic center to a new location that would serve as the center point for the city's future development. The novelty of this vision was underscored by the state complexes' grand layout,

which differed from those of surrounding areas. Employing several characteristic Beaux-Arts devices, the municipal structures' aesthetic and ideological prominence was augmented by vistas created by placing the building amidst a park-like mall at the intersection of long broad avenues and axial approaches (see figs. 8.3 and 8.5).<sup>15</sup> Both the Shanghai municipal government building designed by Dong Dayou (1933), and its Guangzhou counterpart by Lin Keming (1932), reflected the desire to promote the nationalist integrity of the urban environment by using Beiping palace architecture.<sup>16</sup> Both feature upturned tile roofs atop foreign-style structures. Characteristically Chinese features such as vermilion columns and multicolored braces (*dougong*) were not structural elements, as they would be in wooden palace architecture. Rather, they had been transmuted into ornamental features of reinforced concrete structures, a fusion of foreign building technology and domestic form that created one dominant mode of Nanjing-decade modern national architecture. The huge scale and national referents of the structures created functioning monuments to city and nation. The two buildings were constructed, yet the suspension of both master plans left them significantly incomplete: both city reconstruction projects were forestalled by financial shortfalls and popular opposition, and the governmental centers proved to be the plans' greatest (and most lasting) achievements.

### The Nanjing Capital Plan, 1929

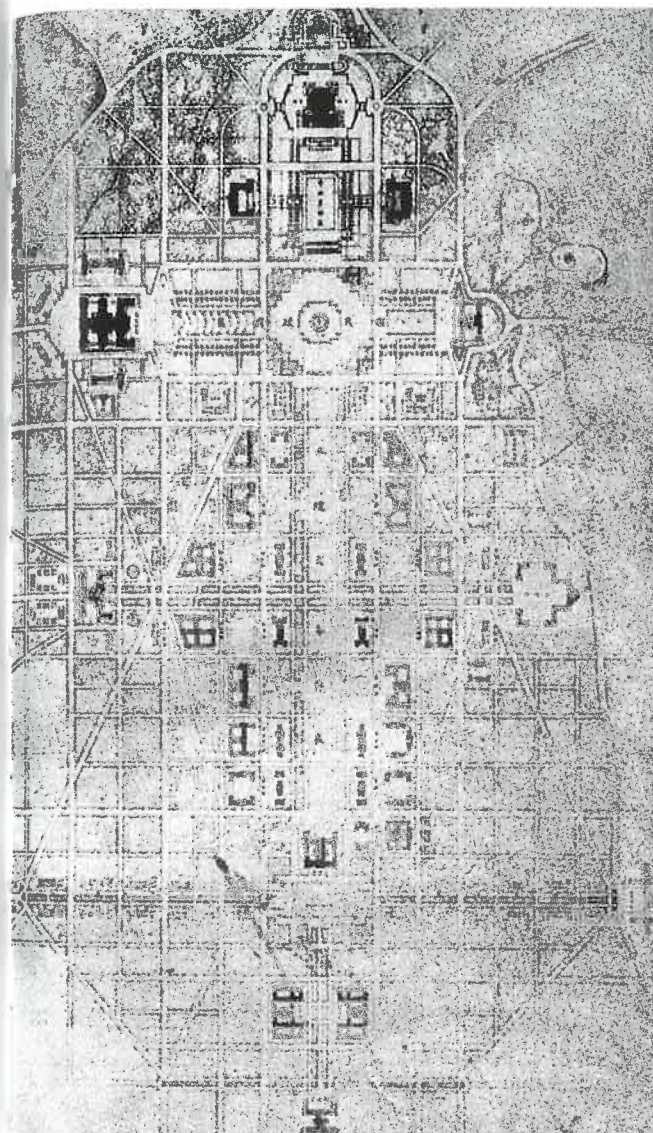
The Guangzhou and Shanghai city planning projects initiated the GMD's commitment to urban reconstruction as a focus of its economic, political, and cultural program. Nonetheless, the most ambitious and influential city-planning project began in 1928, when the Party declared that the new national capital, Nanjing, would be rebuilt in light of its role as the functional and symbolic center of the nation. Officials, urbanists, and others argued in the press that Nanjing, as the national capital, should constitute the pinnacle of Chinese city planning, that is, it should be a redoubt of advanced infrastructure, sublime architecture, attractive parks, and scenic historic monuments that might someday eclipse Paris, Washington, DC, and other celebrated capital cities. Indeed, GMD officials hoped that Nanjing's magnificent, ordered beauty would help recommend the Three Principles of the People as a basis for revolution throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> These ambitions were reflected in the plans for the new lavish governmental center to be built in an area within the city walls near the former site of the Ming imperial palace. One recalls from Delin Lai's essay that the state administration had originally been slated for the south face of Zijinshan (Mt. Zijin), the site of the Ming tombs and the recently completed Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, and that advocates contended



that the historical resonance and height of the site would imbue the state buildings with imposing majesty. Critics successfully countered that the area's relative inaccessibility was antidemocratic and that the inhospitable topography would prove overly costly to build on.

The 1929 *Capital Plan* aimed to create a verdant mall divided by a grid and two intersecting axes of avenues, which provided three distinct areas for the GMD Party administration: the National Government (Guomin zhengfu), the Five Yuan (branches of government, that is, the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Control, and Examination branches), and individual ministries (fig. 14.4). The general layout borrowed freely from foreign models, such as the Beaux-Arts-infused 1901 Senate Park Commission plan for Washington, DC.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the authors of the plan aimed to foster a distinctive "National Essence" cultural atmosphere through buildings that displayed "Chinese indigenous forms by placing Chinese ornamental methods upon a piece of foreign architecture."<sup>19</sup> The range inspired by this mandate can be seen by comparing two of the project's more celebrated buildings, Yang Tingbao's GMD Party History Exhibition Hall (designed 1934, built 1935–1936, now the No. 2 National Archives of China) and the Huagai Architectural Partnership's (Zhao Shen, Tong Jun, and Chen Zhi) Foreign Ministry (designed 1931, built 1933–1934) (figs. 14.5 and 14.6). The Exhibition Hall is an imposing imperial-style pavilion on a raised dais. The traditional appearance is belied, however, by the staircase. Instead of a centrally located dragon staircase, it extends to the right and left, allowing for a central door on the ground floor. This was explicitly a building for a republic; there was no place for an emperor here. The Foreign Ministry, by contrast, was designed in a Western classical manner, an acknowledgement of its function as a center of contact with other nations. Strikingly, it lacked a sloping tile roof. Nonetheless, it featured details from traditional buildings, such as exposed brackets (*dougong*) below the roof, to demonstrate a modern revision of past architecture.<sup>20</sup>

The authors of the Nanjing *Capital Plan*, like their Guangzhou and Shanghai counterparts, were not unconscious of commercial, residential, and other needs. The scope of their ambitions extended to all sectors of the built environment. In practice, however, the new governmental and civic urban centers were often the only aspects to be fully realized in design. Residential, commercial, industrial, and entertainment districts were dealt with in a cursory way, if at all. The Nanjing *Capital Plan* went farther than the other two in its provisions for commercial and residential uses. Despite its august status, the Nanjing capital city planning project was not immune to the state's financial limitations or to popular resistance to the land seizures and other dislocations required for urban reconstruction.<sup>21</sup> As a result,



**Fig. 14.4.** Nanjing Governmental Center, *Capital Plan*. From Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang jianzhu*, 126. Published courtesy of Fu Chao-Ching.

**Fig. 14.5.** (Top) Party Exhibition Hall, Nanjing. From Su Gin-Djih, *Chinese Architecture, Past and Contemporary*, pl. 140.

**Fig. 14.6.** (Bottom) Alfred T. Palmer, photographer, Foreign Ministry, Nanjing, originally published in Julius Eigner, "The Rise and Fall of Nanjing," *National Geographic Magazine* 73, no. 2 (February 1938), 217. Published courtesy of Julia Palmer Gennert.



the state administrative area (itself incomplete, as not all the planned edifices were built) became the main bequest of the Nanjing *Capital Plan*.

### Suzhou, Creating a New Civic Center

During the Republican period, Suzhou was neither a capital city like Nanjing or Guangzhou, nor a major commercial city like Shanghai. State officials and urban elites nonetheless envisioned implementing a comprehensive urban plan that, though never repudiated, was eventually abandoned for piecemeal redevelopment projects that were more typical of Chinese cities as a whole. As elsewhere, the pursuit of modern planning in Suzhou was facilitated by an interlude of municipal administration (1927–1930) when provincial financial support allowed the local government to engage professional planners for the first time. According to Mayor Lu Quan and other officials, the impetus to “vigorously and thoroughly plan [the city] anew” was strengthened by its substantial bequest of late imperial structures: Suzhou’s “urban civilization, including commerce, roads, architecture . . . is all the legacy of feudal times . . . [and therefore] not suitable for producing [contemporary] urban culture and life.”<sup>22</sup> To overcome the undue influence of traditional buildings and values, in 1929 the city’s first municipal engineer, Liu Shiyong, crafted a plan to recreate the city’s Xuanmiaoguan, a Daoist temple, as a center for Republican political and economic life. With origins dating to the late third century CE, the temple complex had long been a center of urban worship, commerce, and entertainment, as well as a staging site for state and civil society initiatives. Liu envisioned surrounding the temple buildings with a swath of grass and trees, into which he would set fountains, greenery, and ponds, along with a greenhouse, music hall, and shops. The facilities would thus create a secular civic site for edifying recreation, popular education, and political participation by which the GMD hoped to beget a rationalist modern society and nation (fig. 14.7).

In the event, Liu’s civic center project was stillborn due to a lack of financial resources and ongoing conflicts over the widening of a main commercial street along the proposed park’s southern flank.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, his plan was revived in amended form the next year when city officials authorized the construction of a Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in the center of the complex. In addition to furthering the GMD cult of personality honoring Sun, “Father of the Nation,” the 2,000-person-capacity hall was intended to accommodate the mass political meetings and educational rallies that had become a hallmark of Party life. Like the new governmental architecture in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shanghai, the Memorial Hall endeavored to synthesize a heroic modern national edifice by grafting traditional palace forms onto a foreign structure.<sup>24</sup> The hybrid two-story building transformed the pillars



**Fig. 14.7.** ▲ Xuanmiao Daoist Monastery, Suzhou. From Haku Kosei, *Soshu meisho no annaiki*, photo 8. Library of Congress. Published with permission of the Library of Congress.

**Fig. 14.8.** ► Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Suzhou. From Suzhoushi difangshi bianzuan weiyuanhui bangongshi, ed., *Lao Suzhou: Bainian juying*, 121. Published courtesy of Suzhou Municipal Local History Office.



and braces of a traditional wooden pavilion into ornamental features and was topped by a grand upturned tile roof (fig. 14.8). Politicians and the local press applauded the Memorial Hall's design, scope, and siting at the center of the temple compound as inevitably producing a sense of awe and national pride. One can draw a comparison with I. M. Pei's Suzhou Museum (2006), which strikingly combines Jiangnan courtyard garden architecture with the sensibility and structural possibilities of modern steel building design; it is a contemporary analogue to the Memorial Hall in terms of its hybrid aesthetic, overt ideological aims, and media acclaim (fig. 14.9). Other commentators, such as the architect Liu Dunzhen, however, complained that the Suzhou hall's clumsy shape and proportions were a jarring travesty that neither lifted one's spirit nor expressed an understanding of China's traditional architecture. Liu, like his colleague Liang Sicheng, dismissed the Memorial Hall and other existing attempts to forge a distinctively modern Chinese nationalist architecture and mode of planning as general failures. The expansive nature of their criticism did not, however, reflect a renunciation of the Beaux-Arts or a loss of faith in the didactic function of national-style buildings. Rather, Liu, Liang, and others railed against the ignorance of architects and planners with regard to national architecture, which undermined the integrity of Beaux-Arts classicism and left Chinese cities bereft of national culture.<sup>25</sup>

fig. 14.9. I. M. Pei, Suzhou Museum. Photo by [unreadable] Wanyi.



### Beaux-Arts Planning in Retrospect and in the Present

In China, as elsewhere, the capacity of Beaux-Arts principles to magnify the architectural and ideological impact of state structures highlighted their inadequacy in accommodating urban residential, industrial, or commercial needs. Indeed, in many plans, arrangements for such nonstate concerns were barely elaborated, or, as in the case of Nanjing, soon abandoned as impractical in the face of limited monies and popular opposition. As a result, the monumental elements of these urban plans were not well integrated into the surrounding environment. Indeed, the piecemeal state of city planning and building meant that in every case the Beaux-Arts design for a governmental center was overlaid onto an existing urban plan. The incompatibility between these different grids, as well as the ideological and design conflicts between different interests, detracted from any improvements in urban circulation, aesthetic integration, or other benefits that may have resulted from Beaux-Arts city schemes.<sup>26</sup> The roots of these failures lay with the tendency of some officials and planners to emphasize state buildings to the exclusion of other needs, economic and political travails, and, given the quickening of Japanese colonialism and the outbreak of total war in 1937, a lack of time.

Whether admired or criticized on their architectural merits—for recent critics have been kinder than many contemporaries—the Republican era's new state complexes did prove their worth by functioning as governmental buildings, often for several decades after 1949, if not up to the present.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, one could argue that the eventual defeat of the GMD in the civil war and the strength of popular enthusiasm for the vision of state and nation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) revealed the failure of these structures to achieve their lofty intended purposes, such as producing civilizational uplift and propagating the GMD's political program. Yet this defeat does not just underscore the travails and shortcomings of Republican planning; it also highlights the now oft-remarked insufficiency of urban master plans and monumental architecture, no matter how abstractly perfect or powerful, to themselves engender vital modern cities. Most Republican planners, however, were never despoiled of their faith in the mythic rationality and efficacy of rational urban planning. Through their abiding belief in science and rationality, they remained admirably steadfast in their commitment to use city planning to achieve social reform and national regeneration.<sup>28</sup>

Even a cursory look at early twenty-first-century Chinese cities demonstrates that despite the limited success of Republican-era planning, many of the preoccupations of Beaux-Arts-influenced planning continue to attract today's planners. Designers involved in recent projects in Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities retain a penchant for monumentality, centralized design, and axial approaches in

the planning of grand state and civic-use buildings, such as in the new National Concert Hall (2007) or the Olympic Green complex surrounding the National Aquatic Center (2007) and the “Bird’s Nest” Stadium (2007), all three of which are in Beijing. These characteristics are also found in commercial office buildings and other contemporary public spaces that speak to more recent shifts in the definition of the state, power, and the public interest. This continuity partially reflects the global imprint of the Beaux-Arts tradition on design practice and basic conceptions of urban grandeur. It also reflects a renewed interest among state officials, architects, and others in creating novel public spaces that reflect the affluence of China’s cities, as well as the nation’s burgeoning prominence in global affairs. These achievements stem directly from the last two decades of economic reform, yet they could also be viewed as a belated realization of the Nanjing decade’s long-denied aspirations. Contemporary urban planning, despite major differences in design methods and aesthetic, is thus in dialogue with Republican urban planning (see fig. 15.16).

Today, classical models may no longer command unchallenged respect as a lodestone of superior design or cultural values, yet significant high-profile urban projects such as Shanghai’s Xintiandi (2001) and the Shanghai Museum (1996), or Pei’s Suzhou Museum demonstrate renewed interest in incorporating the national

cultural patrimony within contemporary architecture (fig. 14.10). Indeed, the national referents of individual buildings, if not the nationality of the designer, emerged as a major point of controversy in Beijing in particular, given its status as national capital and host to the world during the 2008 Summer Olympiad. A raft of monumental architectural projects by foreign and Chinese designers has remade the city into a showcase of contemporary global design and attracted plaudits from critics and media.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the Republican examples that we have examined, most of these latter-day projects do not clearly cite the nation’s and the city’s imperial past by explicitly using Chinese palace architecture as a basis for design. While some argue that these new structures reflect China’s modernity and legibly represent some key traditional elements in abstract form, others decry the buildings as culturally deracinated interlopers that dilute Beijing’s historic and contemporary national resonance—especially given the continuing demolition—almost wholesale erasure—of the city’s traditional *hutong* neighborhoods.<sup>30</sup> The radical scope and magnitude of the city’s transformation during the past two decades can engender a sense of dislocation in those who knew it previously. Critics’ invocation of historicist, if not essentialist, ideals of local and national authenticity and a sense of place thus do have some visceral appeal.

Whether the new monumental architecture of Beijing and other cities will be judged so harshly in the future is another matter. It may be salutary to reflect on how closely such current criticisms echo Liang Sicheng’s and Zhang Rui’s Republican-era dismissal of modern Shanghai architecture as incommensurate with national culture—as they defined it. In the early twenty-first century, the self-same structures have achieved the status of icons in modern Chinese architecture and Republican culture as a whole. This transubstantiation does not deny the integrity and insight of Liang’s and Zhang’s nationalist and architectural ideals, but it does attest to the plasticity of such precepts over time. As such, Republican Beaux-Arts design and planning offer no clear guide to assessing contemporary currents other than the truism that the resolution of these debates will define today’s vision of urban majesty and reveal the congeries of current aesthetic and political notions regarding nation and citizenship. No matter what gulf exists between early twentieth-century and contemporary planning, Nanjing-decade ambitions—that urban planning both celebrate and affect the resurgence of the Chinese nation and people—remain current. Through its legacy of formal method and discourse, plans, buildings, and the urban lives that they have engendered, Republican Beaux-Arts planning itself has now been transmuted into an indelible component of modern Chinese tradition and a fundamental aspect of its continuing transformation.

Fig. 14.10. Shanghai Museum. Photo by [unreadable], GNU Free Documentation License.





## Notes

1. Fu Chao-Ching, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang xin jianzhu: Ershi shiji Zhongguo xin jianzhu guanzhibhua de lishi yanjiu* (China's classical style new architecture: Historical research on the governmentalist influence on twentieth-century new Chinese architecture) (Taipei: Nantian shuju, 1993), 149.
2. During the Nanjing decade, the first five cities became national "special municipalities," while the last two were designated provincial municipalities. See note 13 for more on the urban administrative hierarchy. Beijing (Northern capital) was renamed Beiping (Northern peace) in 1928 to reflect the fact that the GMD had moved the capital to Nanjing (Southern capital). Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Beiping 1934 urban plan was its attempt to exploit the city's store of imperial architecture and historic monuments, often derided as the symbol and cause of its incongruity with the Republican zeitgeist, for tourist-fueled economic growth. Plans in this regard had been promoted since the late 1920s. As with many other contemporary schemes, few elements of the plan were realized. Madeline Dong, "Defining Beiping: Urban Reconstruction and National Identity, 1928–1936," in Joseph W. Esherick, ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 132–138; Yue Jiacao, "Beiping jiu jianzhu baocun yijianshu" (Memorandum on the protection of old Beiping architecture), Dec. 24, 1928, No. 2 Archives, Nanjing, PRC, *quanzong* 12(6), juan 19824.
3. Changchun offers another exemplary case-study of Beaux-Arts-influenced planning during the Republican period, albeit for contrary purposes. The city was designed to serve as the capital of Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet-state established in Manchuria in 1932. See Guo Qinghua, "Changchun: Unfinished capital planning of Manzhouguo, 1932–42," *Urban History* 31, no. 1 (2004): 100–117; David D. Buck, "Railway City and National Capital: Two Faces of the Modern in Changchun," in Esherick, *Remaking the Chinese City*, 65–89.
4. See Lai Delin, "Zhongguo xiandai jianzhu jiaoyu de xianxingzhe: Jiangsu shengli Suzhou gongye zhuanmen xuexiao jianzhu" (Origins of Chinese modern architectural education: Jiangsu Provincial Suzhou Technical School Architecture Department), in Yang Hongxun and Liu Tuo, eds., *Jianzhu lishi yu lilun* (Architectural history and theory) (Beijing: CABP, 1997), 71–77; Ruan Xing, "Accidental Affinities: American Beaux-Arts in Twentieth-Century Chinese Architectural Education and Practice," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* [hereafter *JSAH*] 61, no. 1 (2002): 30–47; Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation-building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Mina Marefat, "Building to Power: Architecture of Tehran, 1921–1941," Ph.D. diss., MIT, 1988; Guo, "Changchun," 110; Jeffrey W. Cody, *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's Adaptive Architecture, 1914–1935* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2001), 180–181; re: the influence of Parisian Beaux-Arts planning on French colonial cities in Africa and Asia, as well as Buenos Aires, Rio, New Delhi, Chicago, and Cairo, see André Lortie, *Paris s'exporte: Modèle d'architecture ou architectures modèles* (Paris: Editions du Pavillon de l'Arsenal: Picard, 1995), 111–173.
5. Gu Yaqiu, "Jianzhu sheji yu dushi mei zhi guanxi" (The relationship between architectural design and capital city beauty), *Dongfang zazhi* (Eastern Miscellany) 28, no. 5 (1931): 49–51.
6. Shang Qixu, "Yishu jianshe fafan" (Modes of artistic development), *Dongfang zazhi* 28, no. 5 (1931): 43–44.
7. Liang Sicheng and Zhang Rui, "Tianjin tebieshi wuzhi jianshe fang'an" (Proposal regarding the material development of Tianjin Special Municipality), in *Liang Sicheng quanji* (Liang Sicheng collected works) (Beijing: CABP, 2001), vol. 1, 32–34.

8. Ibid.
9. George L. Wilson, "Architecture, Interior Decoration, and Building in Shanghai Twenty Years Ago and To-Day," *China Journal of Science and Arts* 12 (May 1930): 248–255.
10. Liang and Zhang, "Tianjin tebieshi," vol. 1, 32–34.
11. "Shoudu zhongyang zhengzhi qu dangxuantuan shuomingshu" (Guide to capital central governmental area plans), *Shoudu jianshe* (Capital reconstruction) 2 (Nov. 1929): *jihua*, 1, in Charles Musgrove, "Building a Dream: Constructing a National Capital in Nanjing, 1927–1937," in Esherick, *Remaking the Chinese City*, 146.
12. The Republic was declared on January 1, 1912, and the Qing court abdicated in mid-February, ending two millennia of imperial rule. The plan in question was by Huang Yuyu and Zhu Shengkang, yet it and another design shared third place, the highest award given; Musgrove wryly conjectures that the committee's high standards may have been a ploy to save money by avoiding the need to pay the more costly first and second place prizes. Musgrove, "Building a Dream," 144–146, 239 n. 49.
13. During the Republican era, the label "municipality" was a novel designation. Late imperial cities had generally not been integrated corporate political entities; rather, they served as seats for different county (and sometimes overlapping prefectural and provincial) jurisdictions that governed a portion of a city and the surrounding suburbs. Late Qing reformers admired the systems of municipal government practiced abroad and in some treaty ports for their capacity to foster urban development and popular political participation, both of which were seen as bolstering national strengthening. Steps toward municipal government were initiated during the last years of the Qing, but the first such administration was not implemented until the Republic, during which it remained rare. Its development was retarded when President Yuan Shikai suspended all forms of representative self-government in 1914. Several cities followed the example of Guangzhou and began preparations to institute municipal government in the early 1920s. On the whole, these efforts did not bear fruit until 1927, when the GMD established a system of national-level "Special Municipalities" (*tebieshi shizhengfu*), which were directly under the control of the national government as a result of their large population and national, political, economic, and cultural significance and received central state financial support for urban planning and development. Similar provincial-level "Municipalities" (*shizhengfu*) were also created in 1927. Few nationally or provincially prominent cities were granted municipal government status due to its heavy cost. Nanjing was the *primus inter pares* of Special Municipalities. On the impetus to establish municipal government, see Zhang Rui, *Shizhi xinlun* (New theory of municipal administration), Liang Qichao, ed. (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927), 1–2; Dong Xiujia, *Shizhengxue gangyao* (Principles of municipal government) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1928), *xu* (preface):1–2.
14. Guangzhou's exciting urban evolution remains less familiar to Anglophone readers. See Hans Wing Yeu Yeung, "Guangzhou, 1800–1925: The Urban Evolution of a Chinese Provincial Capital," Ph.D. diss., University of Hong Kong, 1999; Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity in China: Canton, 1900–1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
15. The American architect Henry Murphy offered such a vision in his "approved" but unbuilt 1927 plan for the Guangzhou civic center. Lin's later building fulfilled the same ideals. Cody, *Building in China*, 180–181; Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang*, 152–154; Seng Kuan's essay in this book.
16. Dong, who earned architecture degrees at the University of Minnesota and Columbia University, is discussed in Kuan Seng's chapter in this volume. Lin studied in Lyon from 1920 to

1926 and worked in the office of Alfred Agache. Jeffrey Cody, *Exporting American Architecture, 1870–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 161. Also see Lin Keming and Luo Jin, *Shiji huigu: Lin Keming huiyi lu* (Reflections on a century: Memoirs of Lin Keming) (Guangzhou: Guangzhou junqu silingbu, 1995).

17. Chen Zhi, “Nanjing dushi mei zengjin zhi biyao” (Necessity of augmenting the beauty of the capital city Nanjing), *Dongfang zazhi* 25, no. 13 (1928): 38–41.

18. Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang*, 125–127.

19. *Shoudu jihua* (Nanjing: Guodu sheji jishu zhuanyuan banshichu, 1929) 33, in Luo Ling, *Jindai Nanjing chengshi jianshe yanjiu* (Research on Modern Nanjing Urban Planning) (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 41–42.

20. Luo, *Jindai Nanjing*, 98–104; Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang*, 125–133. For an insightful English-language analysis of Nanjing’s new capital architecture and its social and political import, see Charles Musgrove, “The Nation’s Concrete Heart: Architecture, Planning, and Ritual in Nanjing, 1927–1937,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002), passim, esp. 23–149; idem, “Building a Dream,” 139–157; Lai Delin, “Searching for a Modern Chinese Monument: The Design of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing,” *JSAH* 64, no. 1 (2005), 22–55.

21. On criticism and protest, see Musgrove, “The Nation’s Concrete Heart,” 134–146.

22. Lu Quan, “Suzhou shizheng de huigu yu qianzhan” (Past and present development of Suzhou municipal government), *Suzhou shizheng yuekan* (Suzhou municipal government monthly) 1, no. 10–12 (1929): *lunzhu* (articles): 2. On contemporary assessments of Suzhou’s built-scape, which was, perhaps, second only to Beijing in its historical scope and significance, see Peter J. Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 132–170.

23. Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity*, 225–251.

24. Erected throughout the country during the late 1920s and 1930s, the Sun Yat-sen memorial halls often constituted a city’s most celebrated example of new-style national architecture. Suzhou’s enjoyed this reputation when it opened in 1934.

25. Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity*, 157–170.

26. Guo, “Changchun,” 108–114; Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang*, 127–133; Musgrove, “The Nation’s Concrete Heart,” 81–149.

27. See, for example, Liang and Zhang, “Tianjin tebieshi,” 132–134; Musgrove, “Building a Dream,” 155; Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity*, 157–170; Guo, “Changchun,” 108; Fu, *Zhongguo gudian shiyang*, 91–161.

28. M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), passim.

29. For example, the July 2008 *Architectural Record* includes a feature section on “Beijing Transformed.”

30. Christopher Hawthorne, “Architecture; China Pulls Up the Drawbridge,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 2004, sec. 2, p. 1; Jim Yardley, “Olympics Imperial Historic Beijing Neighborhood,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 2006, online edition; Ruan Xing, *New China Architecture* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2006); Layla Dawson, *China’s New Dawn: An Architectural Transformation* (Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2005).

## 15 CHINESE URBANISM BEYOND THE BEAUX-ARTS

Beaux-Arts traditions in Chinese urbanism after 1949 were closely linked to authoritarianism, in which social values were promoted in architecture and urban design. However, after urban reforms were inaugurated in 1978, the nature of state power changed, resulting in the private and other sectors having greater importance in the country’s social and economic lives. In this chapter I shall provide a comprehensive overview of the forces and consequences associated with the processes that helped reshape China’s contemporary urban landscape, and I will suggest how the role of Beaux-Arts traditions in China’s urban landscape should be redefined. I will first examine the nature of urban developments in the country over the past twenty-five years. Localism, I believe, has been the central force throughout China’s contemporary urbanism, and it has created a hybrid, socialist market economy and has generated unique urban scenes at the city level. Then I shall focus on a few key themes related to this urbanization, including deindustrialization, consumerism, and property development as the main driving forces behind the privatization of spaces and the building of a consumerist culture dominated by individualism. It is in this context that I shall explain the dynamics of China’s contemporary architecture and urban spaces where the Beaux-Arts tradition, as is true of many other foreign architectural movements, has been reinterpreted in the new political economy. Finally, I come to a critical conclusion about this often-distorted urbanism.

### Rapid Unbalanced Urban Development

Over the last twenty-five years, China has experienced rapid urban development. By the year 2006, with its total number of cities and towns reaching 661 and an average annual growth of the urban population at 10 million, the level of urbanization was over 42 percent, much higher than it was in 1981.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, cities have sprawled. By the end of the 1990s China’s total planned urban areas accounted for 810,000 sq km, and built-up areas for 213,000 sq km, with an average annual growth of 11,400 sq km in the built-up areas, a size equal to the Île-de-France. Not surprisingly, approximately 60 percent of those new urban areas were comprised of farm land, which meant more of the rural population was forced into cities.<sup>2</sup> This trend continued until October 2004, when the State Council published a “Resolution on Deepening Rigid Land Management Reform.”

Despite the fact that the national government has been in favor of small-town development, large cities, especially those along China’s eastern coast, still play the most important role. By 1994 the three city regions of Shanghai, Beijing, and