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Orientations

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Weapons of the Emperor Qianlong and his Consorts
Liang Sicheng
Archway in Shandong
Monuments of the Past
Architecture in Anhui
Li Huayi
Gordon Collection

Orientations

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Two articles in this issue focus on aspects of the exhibition 'Splendors of China's Forbidden City: The Glorious Reign of Emperor Qianlong', at the Field Museum in Chicago from 12 March to 12 September 2004. Ho Chuimei reveals her findings from years of research into the private family life of Qianlong and Bennet Bronson explores Qianlong's strong interest in hunting, warfare and weapons. Of the 21 papers that will be delivered in New York at Columbia University's conference 'The Persistence of Traditions: Monuments and Preservations in Late Imperial and Modern China' on 2 and 3 April, three adaptations are published here. The joint article by Guolong Lai, Martha Demas and Neville Agnew looks at the life and career of Liang Sicheng; Eugene Wang and Zheng Yan comment on the paradoxical nature of a memorial archway of late imperial China; and Michael Nylan writes on the Chinese approach to preservation. Puay-peng Ho's article, accompanied by beautiful illustrations from Robert Powell, examines factors that contributed to a distinctive architectural style in Wannan. A selection of Li Huayi's landscapes, currently on view at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, illustrate Michael Knight's discussion of the artist's personal and artistic background. In a preface to an interview with Marvin and Pat Gordon, Robert Mowry introduces the rarest and most interesting Song dynasty ceramics in their collection. To mark New York's Asia Week, there are previews of gallery exhibitions, the Arts of Pacific Asia Show and the International Asian Art Fair. In his commentary, Milo Beach explores the Silk Road Project's integration of music and aesthetic space.

Cover: *Detail of Street Elevation of Wu Fang Ting, Chengkan Village*
By Robert Powell (b. 1948), 2003
Watercolour on paper
Height 75 cm, width 190 cm
Collection of the artist

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Valuing the Past in China: The Seminal Influence of Liang Sicheng on Heritage Conservation

Guolong Lai, Martha Demas and Neville Agnew

When and why did an awareness arise in China of the need for preserving cultural heritage? Certainly, at the end of the 19th century, the concept of preserving places and artefacts of significance was not officially sanctioned. Precious art, paintings, calligraphy and bronzes were in imperial or private collections; temples, palaces and other architectural complexes were in the hands of private owners, religious orders or the court. Perhaps more than anything, it took an awareness that cultural treasures were being stripped from the country to create an awakening as to the necessity of protection. Among the last ordinances of the moribund Qing, in 1909, was one that expressly covered protection of cultural property (*Baocun guji tuiguang banfa zhangcheng* [Measures for the Protection of Ancient Sites], collected in *Da Qing fagui daquan,* Shanghai, 1909). This is the earliest regulation concerning the protection of heritage, issued by the newly established Ministry of Internal Affairs. Acts of cultural exploitation at the Mogao grottos in Dunhuang by Aurel Stein (1862-1943) in 1907 and shortly thereafter by Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) may have been one of the triggers, since in 1909 the Qing government ordered Dunhuang officials to protect and inventory manuscripts, stelae and sculptures (Lin Jiaping et al., *Zhongguo Dunhuang xue shi*, Beijing, 1992, p. 3). Although no evidence exists for a direct connection between the depredations at Dunhuang and the 1909 ordinance, the coincidence is noteworthy, and the latter may fairly be said to mark the beginnings of a legal framework and a consciousness of the need to preserve the past from the exigencies of the times (see Bao, pp. 76-78).

(Fig. 1) Liang Sicheng and his wife Lin Huiyin on the roof of the Temple of Heaven, Beijing, during field investigations (After Fairbank, 1994, fig. 18)

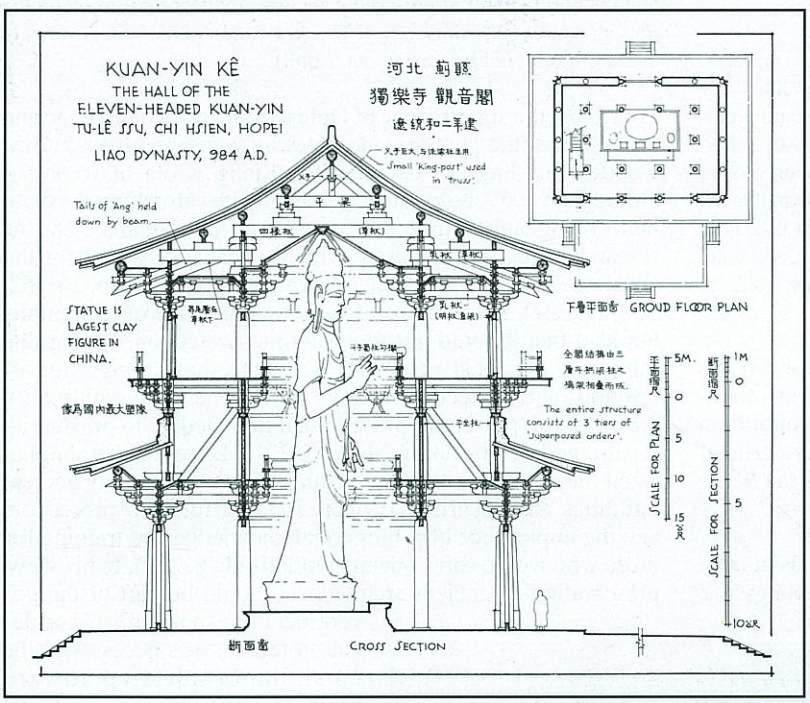
It was not until the 1930s, however, that modern heritage preservation concepts were introduced into China. The nascent conservation movement was led by professional architects and historians of ancient architecture, most of whom received professional training in the West or Japan in the 1920s and 30s. Among them Liang Sicheng (1901-72) (Fig. 1) was to emerge as the most influential figure in the field of Chinese architectural history and conservation, an educator and spokesman whose writings have influenced generations of practitioners (Chen Zhihua, 1996 [1986], 15-20; for Liang's life and career, see Lin, 1991; 1996; Lin, 1998 [1987]; Fairbank, 1994). Liang was a product of the ferment that accompanied the death throes of the Qing dynasty. His father, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), was a prominent reformer, bent on modernizing China. After the defeats and humiliations at the hands of foreign powers throughout the 19th century, culminating in the crushing of the Boxer Rebellion (July 1900-September 1901), it had become clear to many educated Chinese, some even within the isolated and tradition-bound court, that China had to break its rigid and sterile system of government or face continuing dismemberment and exploitation by the West.

Like so many of his contemporaries, Liang Sicheng went abroad for his graduate education, studying architecture at the University of Pennsylvania from 1924-27. In the 1920s, the university's School of Architecture was a stronghold of the Beaux-Arts tradition, dominated by the distinguished French architect, Paul P. Cret (1876-1945). As a student, Liang won several design competitions and worked in Cret's architectural office before he went to Harvard University in 1928 to pursue a PhD in the history of Chinese architecture. At Harvard, he found there was insufficient published material to complete his dissertation and therefore decided to return to China to do fieldwork, planning to submit his dissertation within two years (which he never did). En route to China, Liang and his architect-trained wife, Lin Huiyin (1904-55), travelled in Europe where they visited the architectural masterpieces, gaining experience of the monuments in the West and how they were being protected (Lin, 1996, pp. 24-26).

In 1931, after several years spent establishing the department of architecture at Northeastern University (Dongbei Daxue) in Shenyang, Liang joined the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture (Yingzao Xueshe) in Beijing, founded by Zhu Qiqian (1871-1964), an entrepreneur and government official who was interested in traditional craftsmanship and architecture (for a brief history of the Society, see Lin, 1995). It was at the Society that Liang, as Director of Research, began his lifelong mission to understand and record the history and evolution of Chinese architecture through study of the newly rediscovered Song dynasty (960-1279) building manual, *Yingzao fashi*, and field investigations of extant ancient buildings. In China, architecture was not traditionally considered one of the high arts (calligraphy, painting, etc.) to which the literati devoted study, but was ranked instead as a craft. Through his work Liang would transform the 'contempt of the educated class for matters of "masonry and carpentry"...into appreciation and admiration' (Liang, 1984, p. 36) and in so doing create two closely linked new branches of study in China: architectural history and architectural conservation.

Beginning with a blank slate, and adopting the methodology of Western architectural history, Liang created the 'grammar and syntax' of ancient Chinese architecture. He brought to light the knowledge of building craftsmen by deciphering Song and Qing building manuals, defined Chinese architectural components and styles, and traced their historical development. With dedicated colleagues such as Liu Dunzhen (1897-1968), Chen Mingda (1914-1997) and Lin Huiyin, Liang carried out often gruelling fieldwork to locate and characterize the earliest extant buildings in order to trace the evolution of Chinese architecture. This methodology, which included archival research on historic gazetteers, field investigation, and thorough recording and measured drawings of the structures (Fig. 2), became the model for all subsequent architectural investigation in China (Lin, 1996, pp. 34-87; for a critique of Liang's approach to architectural history, see Han, 1988; Xia, 1993 [1991]; Lai, 2001)

In understanding the origins and early development of Chinese architecture, Liang was assisted by another discipline, modern Chinese archaeology, which was also in its formative stages in the 1920s and 30s (see Bao, pp. 75-76, 78-80; Liang Sicheng's younger brother Liang Siyong [1904-1954] was himself a Harvard-trained archaeologist). Thus, within two decades of the fall of the Qing dynasty, a new breed of professionals and academics was deeply engaged in a rich discourse with the past, utilizing new ways of investigation, interpretation and preservation. Although focused on the historical past, Liang and his archaeological colleagues were consciously taking part in the modernization movement that was impacting every aspect of life in China at that time.



(Fig. 2) Measured drawing of the Guanyin pavilion at Dule temple, Tianjin, typical of the documentation undertaken by Liang to record the buildings he studied
(After Liang, 1984, p. 53)

(Fig. 3) The Liao dynasty Guanyin pavilion, Dule temple in 1997
(© J. Paul Getty Trust)

'Keeping the present condition'

In 1932 Liang published the report of his first architectural field study, 'Investigation of the Guanyin Pavilion and the Gateway in the Dule Temple in Ji County' ('Jixian Dulesi Guanyinge shanmen kao', in Liang, 2001 [1932], vol. 1, pp. 161-223). Dule temple (in Tianjin municipality), first established in the Tang dynasty (618-906) and rebuilt in 984 during the Liao (916-1125), had been subjected to later interventions during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods, but two buildings, the pavilion and the gateway, remained largely untouched (Figs 2 and 3). Although Liang's focus was on the recording and study of this early complex, he was already thinking about how these buildings should be protected and preserved. In the last section of the report, entitled 'Future Protection', Liang put forth his ideas:

> Among the methods of protection, the first is to raise social concern, and let people know the value of architecture. Let people know the value of the Pavilion and the Gateway in Chinese cultural and architectural history; this is the root of protection. But this kind of understanding and awareness cannot be achieved overnight. It means raising the educational level of common people, and this is a problem that the architect cannot solve. Thus, for now the most important task is to preserve the present condition [*xianzhuang*] of the pavilion and gateway and prevent further damage. This is a technical issue (ibid., p. 221).

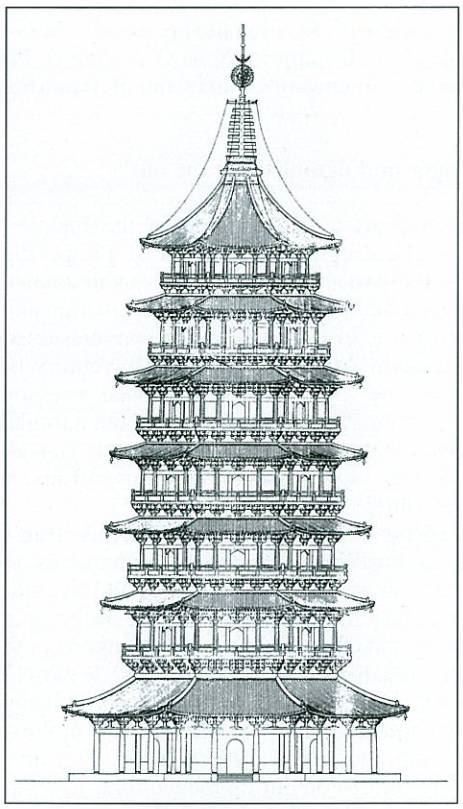
It is notable that at such an early stage Liang realized the importance of education in the protection of ancient monuments. Clearly he was aware that instilling in the public an understanding of the values of ancient buildings was a critical component in their protection. He goes on to discuss the 'technical issue' of preserving the pavilion and gateway:

> Only after the problem of leaking is solved can we talk about other problems. These problems can be classified into two categories: one is essential repair [*jixiu*], and the other is restoration [*fuyuan*]. The damaged parts should be repaired; for example, reinstating roof tiles, and mending windows and doors. Those that have lost their original condition [*yuanzhuang*] should be recovered; for example, the clay between the bracket sets under the inner roof should be removed, the Qing railings should be changed back to Liao style railings, and the wooden boards on the two sides of the roof should be taken away. Of these two categories, restoration is the more complicated. Only when the person in charge of the restoration knows the original state based on firm evidence can restoration be carried out. Otherwise, it is better to retain the extant elements and document the historical influence [later interventions] that a building has undergone. The issue of restoration is controversial in the field of architectural and archaeological conservation [*jianzhu kaoguxue*]. In the Ministry of Education in Italy, this is still an unresolved question. It is my humble opinion that the best method of preserving ancient architecture is to retain the present condition [*xianzhuang*]. The restoration part, if not absolutely certain, should not be carried out. (ibid.)

For Liang, the significance of Dule temple resided in its age and rarity value (the pavilion and gateway were the oldest known wooden buildings in China when Liang wrote his report – although in 1937, he was to discover an older structure, the main hall of Foguang temple [857] at Wutaishan, Shanxi); and its research value (the material evidence that it provided for the study of the history of Chinese architecture) (ibid., pp. 161-62, 168-69, 221). He recognized the religious value of the temple, but also that it could not translate into protection, stating that 'although the local people of Ji County have some kind of religious and protective feelings toward the temple, in reality they have no power, no professional knowledge' to prevent its misuse and deterioration (ibid., p. 221). Liang further emphasized the role that government must play in preserving ancient buildings and ensuring adequate funding for their protection, and the importance of professional knowledge and training for those who would carry out any work (ibid., p. 222). In his view, preservation of ancient architecture should be part of the government's responsibility, and legal protection was necessarily the most important step toward achieving this.

(Fig. 4) The Liuhe pagoda, Zhejiang. The brick core dates to the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279); the outer wooden structure was built in 1900
(After Zhongguo jianzhu kexue yanjiuyuan, ed., *Zhongguo gu jianzhu*. Hong Kong, 1982, p. 110)

The conflict between conserving a building as found (Liang's 'present condition') or restoring it to a known earlier state was, as Liang points out, also current in international debates in Europe. Liang would continue to explore and work through the issues of conservation versus restoration in several studies in the 1930s, but these were variations and finessing of the basic ideas he set forth in his Dule study. In 1934 he was invited by the Zhejiang provincial government to develop a plan for the Liuhe pagoda. First built in nine levels in 970, and later destroyed, the pagoda was rebuilt in seven levels in 1153, during the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). In 1900, it was repaired and a wooden structure of thirteen levels was built around the Song brick core (Fig. 4). In the 'Plan for Restoration of

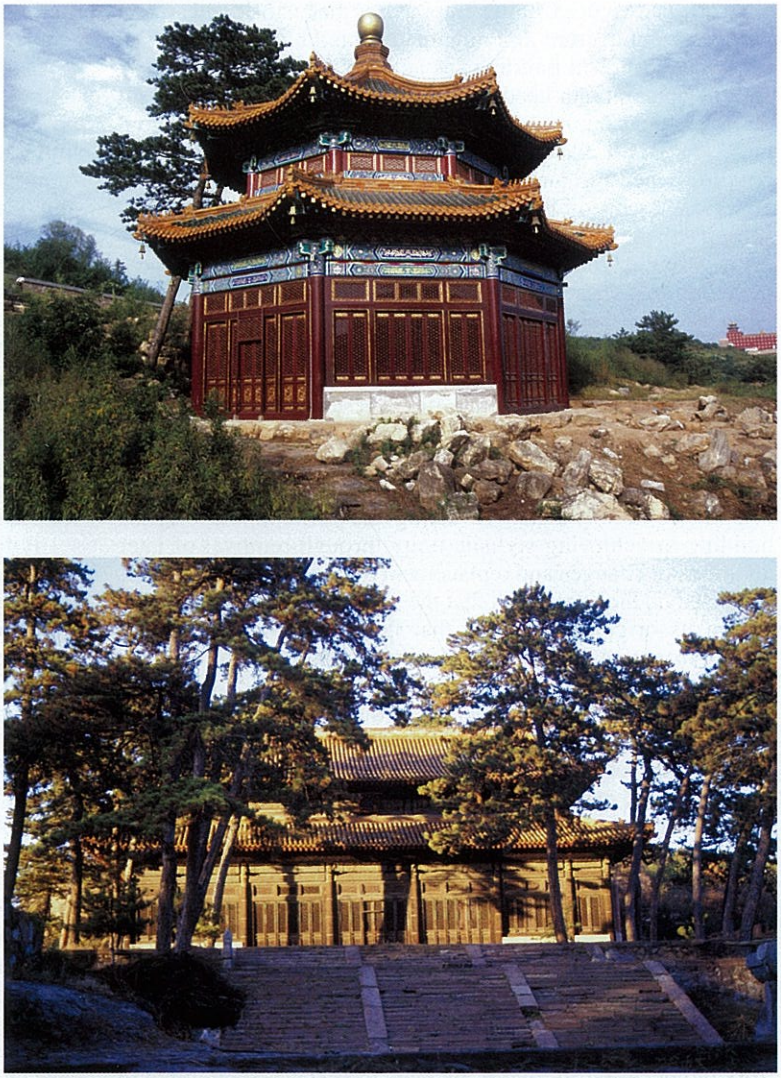


(Fig. 5) Line drawing by Liang of the Liuhe pagoda restored to the Song style (After *Liang Sicheng quanji*, vol. 2, p. 362).

the Liuhe Pagoda in Hangzhou' ('Hangzhou Liuheta fuyuanzhuang jihua', in Liang, 2001 [1935a], vol. 2, pp. 355-70), Liang proposed that the later Qing intervention be removed and the Song pagoda restored to its original form, but war disrupted execution of the plan (Fig. 5). Liang's argument rested on the rarity and aesthetic values of the Song dynasty pagoda, which had been lost as a result of the recent Qing alteration (ibid., pp. 355, 357). At this stage of Liang's thinking, he did not express concern about the destruction of later historical information in restoring to the earlier 'original state'. In fact, Liang referred to the Qing Liuhe pagoda as a 'fake' (*xujiapin*, lit. 'false object'), because 'the magnificent inner form of the pagoda was wrongly covered by the unwise alteration of the Guangxu era' (ibid., p. 357).

Liang's thoughts are further illustrated in his next article, written in 1935, 'The Architecture of the Confucius Temple Complex in Qufu and the Plan for its Repair' ('Qufu Kongmiao zhi jianzhu jiqi xiuqi jihua', in Liang, 2001 [1935b], vol. 3, pp. 1-107). Here, Liang states: 'We have the responsibility to preserve or restore the original state [*baocun/huifu yuanzhuang*] of the architecture of different periods', and: 'We should do our best to keep or restore the forms when these buildings were first built.' In the context of restoration, he draws a sharp contrast between 'our practices of today and those of the past two thousand years': 'Today what we are seeking is to extend the longevity of the extant structure, unlike ancient people, who demolished the old structures and built new ones.' Liang decried the practices of the past, observing that 'the only goal was to restore collapsed buildings to make them splendid and grand palaces and mansions; those who would demolish the old ones and build new ones would be praised as possessing unrivalled merits and virtues' (ibid., p. 1).

In his last article on the subject, in 1964, 'An Informal Discussion on the Repair and Preservation of Ancient Architecture' ('Xianhua wenwu jianzhu de chongxiu yu weihu'), Liang moved even further away from the restoration approach advocated in his Liuhe pagoda plan: 'I think in repairing architecture that has historic and artistic values, in general we must follow the principle of 'repairing the old as it is' (*zhengjiu rujiu*). There may be some difficulties in applying this principle to wooden structures, but when repairing brick and stone structures, it should be less difficult' (Liang, 2001 [1964], vol. 5, pp. 440-47). Again he contrasts the traditional practice of 'having a completely bright, new look' (*huanran yixin*) with the method he is promoting, that is, respecting the patina of time and the character and qualities with which the ancient is imbued (see, for example, Fig. 6). To illustrate the point, Liang cited the conservation of the Zhaozhou Bridge (Yu Zhede, 1956), pointing out that the historically weathered facade of the bridge had



(Fig. 6) Shuxiang temple complex at Chengde. The recently restored Baoxiang pavilion (top) provides a startling contrast with nearby Huicheng Hall (above), still in its 'original condition,' pending a decision to conserve or restore. (© J. Paul Getty Trust)

been improperly taken away: 'These small or big stones, uneven seams, and the weathered surface of hundreds and thousands of years, all gave this bridge an appearance [*mianmao*] that is suitable to its old age, and reflected its special quality [*pin'ge*] and character [*gexing*]. As an ancient building, the quality, character and appearance are indispensable parts of its historic and artistic expression.' It was incorrect in his view to attempt to 'rejuvenate it and make it look younger' (Liang, 2001 [1964], vol. 5, pp. 441-42).

Liang's writings essentially bracket the two major European charters for the conservation of architecture, namely the Athens Charter of 1931 and the Venice Charter of 1964. Nowhere in his writings is there an indication that he was aware of either, and after the 1950s Liang seems to have had little professional communication with colleagues in the West. Although he died eight years after the promulgation of the Venice Charter, it appears to have been unknown to him (personal communication with Liang's student, Chen Zhihua of Qinghua University). The Venice Charter was translated and published in Chinese by Chen Zhihua in 1986 in *Shijie jianzhu* (*World Architecture*; pp. 3, 13-14). Nonetheless, the basic ideas prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s and known to Liang found their expression in these charters. The Venice Charter emphasizes the historic and artistic values of architecture and monuments, and highlights the importance of ancient buildings as authentic records of the past, and the concomitant need to respect 'valid contributions of all periods', since 'unity of style is not the aim of a restoration' (Art. 11). But it allows for revealing the underlying state of a building when the material being brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value' (Art. 11), an approach consonant with Liang's desire thirty years earlier to do away with the Qing alteration of the Liuhe pagoda. The much-quoted caveat of the Venice Charter is that any restoration must 'stop at the point where conjecture begins' (Art. 9), which echoes Liang's reservations in his article on the Dule temple.

Liang's concepts were subject to the same tensions and ambiguities as those in the Charter. These are embodied in his two key phrases 'preserving or restoring to the original condition' (*baocun/huifu yuanzhuang*) and 'keeping the present condition' (*baocun xianzhuang*). Restoration of a building to its original condition meant revealing the form of the original building or achieving stylistic unity through removal of later additions or changes and replacement of missing elements. It is premised on the conviction that the significance of the building lies in its original form and that later additions or changes detract from that significance. The attraction of restoration has always been strong in architectural conservation, and Liang's interest in it was clearly related to the historic and research values of the early buildings that he was 'discovering' and categorizing for the first time.

For Liang, rarity was a principal value, but so too was the beauty and ingenuity of the early buildings, compared with the formulaic and rigid approach of the later Ming and the Qing, as expressed in his tripartite architectural chronology: The Periods of Vigour (e.g., Tang and early Song), Elegance (late Song to early Ming) and Rigidity (later Ming and Qing) (Liang, 1984, p. 37). It was galling, therefore, to have found a rare Song pagoda sheathed in a commonplace Qing mantle. But he also recognized the dangers of restoration and insisted that a precondition was to know with certainty the original state based on firm evidence. Furthermore, he was dismissive of attempts to restore an original but aged building to a 'bright, new' appearance, recognizing, as we have seen, the value of the patina of age. Thus, despite the attractions of revealing the 'original,' Liang's deep scholarly interest in buildings as a witness to the past meant that the principle of 'keeping the present condition' came to take precedence in his approach, as is evident in his 1964 article, which comes down strongly in favour of 'repairing the old as it is.'

'Constructing the new and demolishing the old'

Immediately before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the new regime made efforts to protect the material evidence of the past, but this attitude was to change within a few years when the conflict between conservation and development became acute. In 1948 Liang was commissioned by the People's Liberation Army to prepare an inventory of important architecture, and for a time he continued to enjoy respect and stature, participating in the design of the national emblem and the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square (Lin, 1996, pp. 113-23), but his opinions and advice were increasingly set aside.

Liang was baffled by the new order, by the leadership's indifference and even hostility to historical monuments as manifestations of a decadent and outmoded past, and by criticism of his ideas on architectural design and urban planning in Beijing (Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang, 'Guanyu zhongyang renmin zhengfu xingzheng zhongxinqu weizhi de jianyi', in Liang, 2001 [1950], vol. 5, pp. 60-81 and Liang Sicheng, 'Guanyu Beijing chengqiang cunfei wenti de taolun', in ibid., pp. 85-89; see also Gao and Wang, 1996 [1991]). The final humiliation was his victimization during the Cultural Revolution, when he was labelled a 'reactionary academic authority' and 'traitor' (Lin, 1991).

Beginning in the 1950s, other voices emerged, their messages often constrained or driven by political ideology and campaigns, manifested for instance in the debates on 'what to preserve and how to preserve' in the 1950s (Chen, 1955; 1957; Wei, 1957; Chen Sheng, 1957). In the spirit of 'constructing the new and demolishing the old' or 'deconstructing superstition', the official aim of preserving architectural monuments became 'to recognize the achievements of the ancient working people in architectural creation and to critically evaluate the national tradition and embrace its good aspects, thereby developing a modern "socialist" architecture' (Chen, 1955, p. 6).

Political pressures on conservation thinking were also exemplified in the debate on whether to demolish Beijing's ancient city wall to make way for modern development. The government's line was succinctly expressed in the 1954 'Draft on Reconstructing and Expanding Beijing Municipality' ('Guanyu gaijian yu kuojian Beijing shi guihua caoan de yaodian'), which stated that 'the major danger is an extreme respect for old architecture, such that it constricts our perspective of development' (see Tung, 2001, p. 158). Adapting the government line, some professionals argued that since the technology of a city wall is rather simple and therefore provided little in the way of historical information, the wall was not worth preserving (Chen, 1955, p. 8; 1957). Although Liang fought vehemently to preserve it, recognizing its symbolic value and its role in preserving the integrity of Beijing, his proposals were ignored. The negative analysis of his colleagues was further reinforced by Soviet planners, advising on the reconstruction of Beijing. This view prevailed, and Liang's proposals to preserve the wall and the historic architectural core of Beijing were rejected (Tung, p. 159; Gao and Wang, pp. 40-42).

Liang's concepts did eventually find their way into governmental orders and regulations in the key phrases 'preserving or restoring to the original condition' and 'keeping the present condition' (for instance, in the 1961 'Provisional Regulations

on Protection and Administration of Cultural Relics;' and the 1974 'Circular Concerning Strengthening Work in Protection of Cultural Relics') and in the literature on conservation. A milestone for cultural heritage preservation was the 1982 'Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics'. In this legislation, the two alternative positions posited by Liang were transformed into one principle of 'not changing the original condition' (*bu gaibian wenwu yuanzhuang*). Since then, this has become the most frequently cited principle of conservation, enshrined in the law (including the 2002 revision), all subsequent regulations and ordinances, and the literature.

The origin of this change is not known, but the intent appears to have been to recognize 'the valid contributions of all periods' (to borrow the phrasing of the Venice Charter), and to resist a tendency toward restoration to an earlier or original state or a rejuvenated appearance. The interpretation of this principle, however, has been and remains problematic. As defined by scholars since 1982, 'original condition' is generally understood to refer to what is often called the historic condition of a building, that is, 'the changes and additions made in the past that are valuable should be kept, and there is no need to "restore to the original state"' (Yu, 1998; Yun, p. 124), but the phrase has been subject to other interpretations (see, for example, Qi, pp. 170-71; Chai, 1999 [1982]). In essence, 'original condition' is taken to mean the state of the structure 'as found' or when listed as significant (formerly referred to – both by Liang and in earlier legislation – as 'present condition'). Thus, while the basic intent of the principle of 'not changing the original condition' may be clear to the discerning practitioner (respect all contributions and original fabric), it has been unsuccessful at conveying the nuances involved in any decision to conserve or restore a building or site.

Contrary to the intent of 'not changing the original condition, the scholastic origins of conservation in providing historical information for the study of architecture have given rise to notions of 'scientific restoration or reconstruction', defined by Luo Zhewen (a former assistant of Liang) as *in situ* restoration or reconstruction based on 'scientific evidence.' 'Although under the current situation we do not promote it,' Luo wrote in 1999, 'in principle it should be permissible. Sometimes, even necessary' (Luo, 1999). A recent example of this practice is the Dabei pavilion in Longxingsi, Hebei. Built in the Song dynasty and repaired in the Yuan, Ming, Qing and early modern periods, between 1997 and 1999 the pavilion was restored to the Song style (Luo, 1999). This form of 'scientific restoration', in which all later alterations are removed to restore an original form, derives from Liang's ideas on restoration, as expressed in the plan for the Liuhe pagoda and in reconstruction drawings of other buildings, without reference to his more pronounced emphasis on respecting the historical contributions of later periods.

Conservation professionals today still struggle with putting theory into practice, especially when it comes to preserving timber architecture. Indeed, the problems are far from being resolved. One example is the issue of how to deal with external decorative paint. The paint serves a protective function and has both aesthetic and historic value, but itself is short-lived. In the case of Qing architecture, structures are routinely repainted, but for Ming and earlier structures, such as Dule temple, no repainting is done or allowed. The reasons for these decisions derive from the foundation laid by Liang: Qing architecture is common (and in the minds of many, commonplace) and has lesser historic, artistic or research value; Ming and earlier architecture is rare and therefore of greater value. Born in 1901, Liang was of the Qing and had little historical perspective from which to judge it. Today, Qing architecture is still viewed as the poor cousin, but the passage of time and distance and dramatic changes in the world have led to different ways of valuing Qing architecture and cultural heritage generally.

(Fig. 7) The stone ruins of the European-style palaces (above) are the visible face of the Yuanming Yuan and have dominated perceptions of it for nearly 150 years. The stone platform of a timber Chinese-style building (right) is an invisible ruin, understating its historical significance and tempting reconstruction.
(© J. Paul Getty Trust).

(Fig. 8) Taishan, Shandong, one of the five sacred mountains of China, overrun by visitors and communication installations (© J. Paul Getty Trust)

New value and perspectives

At a methodological level, there is a strong tendency in international conservation practice today toward a values-based approach to decision-making. This means that decision-making begins with a thorough assessment of the values of a place (historic, artistic, scientific, social and so on), followed by an understanding of the physical condition and threats, and only then proceeds to a determination of what should be done. Assessment of values allows for a clear understanding of why a place is important – a rare and ancient form; extant original fabric; a representative type; an unusually well-preserved example; a unique construction technique; of social value to local residents; historical associations; nationalism, and so forth. Decisions based on principles such as 'not changing the original condition' emphasize the research and historic values of ancient buildings and 'valid' changes to them, and while those values will always be important attributes of ancient buildings, they are today competing with other values and uses that could hardly have been imagined in Liang's time, or even as recently as the early 1980s.

Nowhere has this ferment of competing values been more evident than in the debates on how to conserve, restore and present the Qing palaces and gardens of the Yuanming Yuan, with few physical remains, except the stone ruins of the European-style buildings, but an emotionally wrought history. How to bring forth the many meanings and contending values (historic, nationalistic and political) of this largely 'invisible site' can no longer be answered with reference to the principle of 'not changing the original condition' (Fig. 7). Indeed, the debate has involved a wide-ranging discussion of values (Zhou Jianren in *Beijing wanbao*, 17 December 1981; Fu Tianchou and Wang Daocheng in *Yuanming Yuan*, 2 [1983], pp. 15-16, 18-19; Cong Weixi in *Beijing wanbao,* 22 October 1998; see Wong, pp. 188-94). It has also been a very public debate, carried out in newspapers as well as scholarly journals. Contending opinions have ranged from maintaining the site as a ruin to complete reconstruction of the Chinese-style buildings and gardens.

Competing values are also evident at sites such as Qufu, where efforts to hand over management to tourism agencies have had disastrous effects; or at Taishan, where massive domestic tourism and resultant development have degraded the environment and the quality of visitors' experience (Fig. 8); at the Imperial Summer Resort of Chengde, where heavy local recreational use and urban development have had a significant impact on aesthetic and historic values (Fig. 9); and at hundreds of other sites throughout China. China's vigorous thrust to achieve its economic and political place on the world stage poses many pitfalls for the authenticity of its heritage. The emergence of two forces operating in tandem – economic benefit and national pride in a magnificent past – have tended to drive reconstruction and over-restoration (Fig. 10). The result is often compromised style, craftsmanship and materials.

(Fig. 9) Local residents taking morning exercise in the Imperial Summer Resort at Chengde, which holds great social value for the community as a place of recreation (Photography by R. Ross, © J. Paul Getty Trust)

Thus, while we still ask how to preserve the original condition of these sites because their historic fabric and settings and their research potential are being quickly destroyed, there are many other issues that must be addressed. The need for principles to address the complexity of conserving and managing places of significance today led to the development, beginning in 1997, of a set of professional guidelines, known as the 'China Principles'. The Principles, issued in 2000 by the China National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (China ICOMOS), are to a large extent a codification of practice in China, initiated by Liang in the 1930s (Agnew and Demas, eds, 2002). They comply with legislation and therefore prominently feature the concept of 'original condition' (understood in the Principles as 'historic condition'), but they also provide for the first time a decision-making and planning process for heritage sites. Perhaps of greatest importance is the requirement that 'assessment

(Fig. 10) A place of local significance in Dali, Yunnan (stated by locals to have been destroyed in the Cultural Revolution), the Guanyin temple has been reconstructed in concrete and its bell tower made oversize to accommodate more tourists.
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of the significance of a site should be given the highest priority throughout the entire process' (Art. 5). On this assessment rest the decisions for conservation, use and management.

When Liang began his pioneering work, the significance of places lay in their historic, symbolic and religious associations, and the memories they held. Through creating the discipline of architectural history in China, Liang gave birth to a new set of historic, research and aesthetic values based on a careful study of the physical fabric and form of buildings. Today, China's vast and ancient heritage of archaeological sites, monuments and places of cultural and historical significance are increasingly under threat from rapid development and the pressure of tourism, local recreational and religious uses, exploitation for economic gain, changing mores and values, and new ways of engaging with history and the outside world. Far from making Liang's work obsolete, these ways of valuing the past and the threats to heritage today lend an even greater urgency to the need for a thorough examination and assessment of the historic and research values that are central to an understanding and appreciation of the past.

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