

Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the Yingzao fashi Building Manual. By Jiren Feng. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press; Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 304. HKD395.00/\$53.00.

The subject, *jianzhu* 建築 or “architecture” in China, as it is taught and as its history is researched, is fundamentally inflected with Western notions. As is well known, even the word itself is a Chinese reading of a Japanese translation of the European academic subject. The study of Chinese architecture thus takes an unusual place in academia, falling between categories and disciplines: between East and West, between the history of art as a humanistic discipline and the history of architecture as part of training for future architects, and between the study of aesthetics and the history of technology. The issues and concerns of each of these areas are at play in *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the Yingzao fashi Building Manual*.

Chinese Architecture and Metaphor is at its core a book about a book: the Song dynasty government-sponsored *Yingzao fashi* 營造法式 or “Buildings Standards,” which was published in 1103 by the court of the Song emperor Huizong 徽宗 three years after he came to the throne. Written by Li Jie 李誠, an official in the Directorate of Construction, the work is the earliest official court manual of building construction to survive in its entirety. Li Jie was not the sole author of this text. Indeed his task, given to him in 1097, was to edit a work that had been initiated in the early 1070s and completed in 1091 (p. 101). As we learn in the introduction, Feng seeks to place this “most important primary text for the study of ancient Chinese architecture” (p. 2) in the larger context of writing about Chinese architecture as well as in the context of the society in which it was written. Here Feng also provides a summary of important information about the text. He first reviews the transmission of the *Yingzao fashi* from its republication in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries after the fall of the Northern Song court, to its recompilation in the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 and the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, then he discusses the contents of the work, its significance in the West as a window into pre-modern technology, and its importance for understanding the relationship between the literati and craftsmen in the Song period. Much of this information is also detailed in Appendix A, discussed below.

Feng emphasizes that as an official, Li Jie’s additions to this text served to place Song court architecture within the tradition of canonical building as documented in the ritual canon as well as other writings about architecture. Li Jie accomplished this through a philological analysis of particular terminology. A discussion of the texts most frequently quoted in the work is therefore the subject of the first chapter. This chronologically organized overview is quite helpful not only in explicating the meanings of particular technical terms, but also for providing the broad scope of architectural writings available (from ritual texts, to poetry, to official statutes) and the symbolic significance of architecture through the Tang dynasty.

Although no other architectural manual is extant from the Northern Song, we do know that, from as early as the tenth century, others existed. This is the subject of Chapter 2. Feng begins with an overview of the most famous of these, the *Mujing* 木經, translated as “Timberwork manual” (p. 61), attributed to the builder Yu Hao 喻皓 who, although employed by the Song court, also functioned outside of court circles. Here Feng also discusses important official texts that included extensive discussions of building practice such as Nie Chongyi’s 聶崇義 *Xinding Sanlitu* 新定三禮圖 (962; images extant from 1175), the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (977–983), the *Erya shu* 爾雅疏 compiled by Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010), the *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (c. 1051–1071), the *Wujing zongyao* 武經總要 (c. 1044), and Shen Gua’s 沈括 *Xiucheng fashi tiaoyue* 修城法式條約 (1075; no longer extant). Rarely discussed as a group in architectural or art histories of China, Feng’s treatment of these writings clearly demonstrates that building practice and design was a topic of great interest to officials and emperors of the Song.

The third chapter focuses on the *Yingzao fashi* itself. Unlike other scholars who have studied this text for its insights into building technology and practice, Feng’s interest in this chapter is in Li Jie’s modifications to the text and how this reflects the nature of court architecture at the end of the Northern Song. An idiosyncratic feature of the *Yingzao fashi* is the assessment of individual building elements based on the number of man-hours necessary to manufacture them. The timing of the commissioning and publication of the work have long been recognized as reflecting times when New Policies were upheld (in the early 1070s and again in 1097, after the death in 1093 of a supporter of the antireformists, Supreme Empress Dowager Gao 高太皇太后), policies that required that craftsmen be paid rather than having them work as corvée labourers. How much did particular political agendas affect the contents of the work? Was Li Jie influenced in his introduction by the treacherous times? Provocatively, Wang Anshi’s 王安石 commentary on the earlier *Kaogongji* 考工記 portion of the *Rites of Zhou* 周禮 compares the proper building of cities with statecraft (discussed on pp. 28–29). Did he seek (perhaps to no end) to regulate building style and not just manage finances? Although the reader might desire a bit more elaboration on the political context of the initial project and the place of building construction in the reform movement, this is, admittedly, not the purpose of the study at hand. Rather, Feng focuses on the way in which Li Jie places Song court architecture into the history of building practice in China. In his discussion of the texts quoted by Li in “Zhazi” 筭子 and “Kanxiang” 看詳 sections, Feng effectively shows how the *Yingzao fashi* may have functioned not only to systematize building practice, but also to legitimate Song architecture as heir to the traditions of the Han and Tang dynasties.

The last two chapters of the book are the source of the title *Architecture and Metaphor*. Rather than discussing the *Yingzao fashi* as an example of the bureaucratization of a technologically sophisticated practice, Feng seeks to uncover the “social customs related to the building profession” and the “architectural conceptualizations [that] must have been involved in the creation . . . of these methods and terms” (p. 138). Through a careful technical analysis of traditional timber structures and philological analysis of the building terminology, in Chapter 4 Feng shows how, from at least the Han period, buildings in China were conceived as part of nature—sometimes as representations of the world, with beams likened to rainbows and bracketing likened to constellations, but more often likened to trees with petals and flowering branches emerging from the tops of wooden pillars, naturally seen as the trunks they once were. But these metaphors were neither singular nor simple, as we learn in Chapter 5. Here Feng shows how some of the terms used for bracket arms were related to the terminology used in poetry, and how craftsmen may have been aware of literati traditions and incorporated them into their naming practice. In this way Feng seeks to place the nomenclature of building in the tradition of “art” in China, including painting and sculpture during this period (p. 197). Literati interest in building can be most readily seen in garden architecture, to which Feng turns at this point. Although I would have liked more evidence from the Song period (much of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of the seventeenth-century text *The Craft of Gardens* [Yuanye 園冶] and its author Ji Cheng 計成), this is admittedly difficult to come by. Certainly it is important to emphasize that garden building is part of the tradition of Chinese architecture and that the eleventh century was an important time for the development of the literati garden.

In his book Feng shows how deeper research into the *Yingzao fashi* can change our perspective on the place of building practice in pre-modern Chinese society. Throughout the volume we see the desire to uncover the craftsmen behind the bureaucrat and the architecture cultures behind the standards manual. These questions reflect concerns of scholars of Chinese architecture today as well as the challenges of the text itself. Appendix A, a summary of previous scholarship on the *Yingzao fashi*, displays just how young a field Chinese architectural history is, and how much our understanding of the work was influenced by the tumultuous history of twentieth-century China. “Modern” scholarship on the text only began in the 1920s and comparisons of the text with historic buildings were first possible during a period of violent imperialism and civil war. By emphasizing the technical nature of the work, twentieth-century scholars could present the tradition of Song dynasty architecture as one of an advanced society with a “Classical” tradition, one perhaps comparable to the technically and artistically advanced Roman tradition documented by Vitruvius in his *Ten Books on Architecture* (*De architectura*) of the first century B.C.E. Rediscovered

in fifteenth-century Italy, the work was employed in architectural education in Europe from as early as the seventeenth century—an educational system that was the core of Beaux-Arts education for architects working in Japan and China (as well as Europe and the United States) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Students of architecture East and West were taught that this was *the* tradition of monumental public building; the discovery of the *Yingzao fashi* could allow the traditional Chinese architecture to be seen in a parallel light. Sinologists such as Joseph Needham (mentioned on p. 112) discussed the *Yingzao fashi* in the context of architectural engineering as part of his larger argument that China had “science” from an early period. This perspective can also be seen in the writings of Else Glahn, whose work on the *Yingzao fashi* was published in journals such as *Scientific American*. Although the twentieth-century reception of the *Yingzao fashi* is now the focus of research by scholars of modern Chinese architecture, and is thus outside the scope of Feng’s project, it might have been helpful (or at least interesting) if the appendix included a bit more information on the background of individual scholars studying the text, and their own interests in doing so.

Feng also seeks to reveal the voice of the craftsman, the pre-modern architect as artist who was the source of the idiosyncratic nomenclature. As Feng has shown, the choice of architectural terminology was not random. In his initial investigation of the 1091 text, Li Jie went to the craftsmen working for the Song court to help him understand the multiplicity of terms used for individual elements of official buildings (pp. 8–9). Feng’s careful investigation of the origin of the terms used and comparison with the literature of the period gives the reader a glimpse into the thinking of the craftsmen and how they perceived the worlds they were building. Feng also suggests that this book might have been used by officials to “instruct the craftsmen who worked under the supervision of officials” (pp. 2–3). This is an interesting proposition. However, if a leading official in the imperial construction bureau turned to court architects for an explanation of difficult portions of the 1091 text, one might conclude (as Else Glahn did in 1981),¹ that the craftsmen knew well what they were doing without the text. Regardless of the intentions of Li Jie or his imperial patron, greater evidence is needed to determine whether the *Yingzao fashi* was used on site to inform builders or in the office to inform civil officials. Yet throughout, Feng has successfully shown how the *Yingzao fashi*, if explored in more detail, can allow for new insights into Song society and culture.

Overall this book is a great contribution to work on Chinese writings about architecture and to the understanding of the role of the *Yingzao fashi* in the Northern

¹ Else Glahn, “Chinese Building Standards in the 12th Century,” *Scientific American* 244, no. 5 (May 1981), pp. 162–73.

Song court. The work emphasizes that the structure and form of official buildings were of great concern to officials in Song China and beyond, and that the terminology was part and parcel of Song culture. Having provided a means to understand the *Ying-zao fashi* in new ways, the volume is certain to spark renewed interest in this critical text as a source of insight into the architectural imagination of pre-modern China.

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Memory, Violence, Queues: Lu Xun Interprets China. By Eva Shan Chou. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2012. Asia Past & Present: New Research from AAS, Number 9. Pp. viii + 333. \$25.00.

Anyone embarking on reading this book will soon realize the immensity and complexity of the secondary literature on Lu Xun (1881–1936), most of it produced since 1950, and still ongoing. In scale it is as if the whole of the literature on Shakespeare published worldwide over four centuries is compressed in six decades of literature on a Chinese author. Lu Xun exerted his influence as a writer of groundbreaking fiction and as an essayist-cum-journalist. If one looks for a twentieth-century counterpart to him in British culture, George Orwell comes to mind. Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* have much greater scope and lasting relevance than Lu Xun's fiction, and do continue to be noticed and admired, along with some of his essays, but the attention devoted to him is in no way comparable.

The most obvious cause of the difference is the state sponsored Lu Xun cult in force roughly from 1950 to 1980, visually made concrete in museums set up wherever he stayed any length of time, and the subsequent wave of reappraisals which followed the lifting of the halo from his brow. In this second life after death the main focus has shifted from mythmaking about his public life and works to fascination with his private life and personality. In contrast to Shakespeare, about whom there is little to be turned up in the latter regard, masses of new documentation relating to Lu Xun's private life have been able to be gathered. Any fresh study of him therefore requires a vast amount of reading not only of his works but now of his biography. Eva Shan Chou (hereafter abbreviated as "ESC"), having done her reading, concentrates on his inner life.

Clearly there is rich soil to be turned there, because Lu Xun's life was epoch-spanning. His first thirty years passed under the Qing empire; afterwards came the