

Grand Tour Report

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Introduction

Preface

Background of the topic:

The topic of our group is Chinese architecture. During the grand tour, we visited Shanghai, China and Osaka, Japan. We stayed in Shanghai for two days then spent three days in Japan.

In Shanghai, we visited The Bund, Nanjing Road Walkway, Shanghai Songhu Kangzhan Memorial Hall, Shanghai Railway Museum and Shanghai Yu Garden.

In order to study the characteristics of Chinese architecture, we focus on the architecture of Shanghai Yu Garden which is a typical Jiangnan garden.

Objectives of the project:

In this report, we would like to find out the history of the Chinese architecture first. Hence, we would find out the style and the characteristics of the Chinese architecture. On the other hand, we would compare the Chinese traditional architecture with the modern buildings in order to investigate the development of architecture in China.

Area of investigation



Source: Google map

Methodology

Choice of method

For data collection, our group have taken some photos and recorded some videos when we visited Shanghai Yu Garden.

We also have done our research on Shanghai Yu Garden through the Internet.

Classification of the studying target

The topic of our report is Chinese architecture.

In this report, we would focus on the style and the characteristics of the Chinese traditional architecture in the past. Then, we would narrow our focus to investigate more in the design of the garden. Lastly, we would compare the Chinese traditional architecture with the modern buildings. We hope to find out the differences between the Chinese traditional architecture and the modern buildings.

Problems faced and the possible solutions

As the schedule was very tight, we did not have enough time to conduct interviews with the locals. Also, the number of visitors in Shanghai Yu Garden is always high. Therefore, it was very difficult for our group members to record the video in Shanghai Yu Garden.

Literature Review

Information of Chinese architecture:

Ancient Chinese architecture is an independent institutional system. It has four features.

In Ancient Chinese architecture, the wooden structure is the main structure.

The China's wood structure system has adopted the structural principle of the framework system. According to the old and traditional Chinese buildings, there usually are four pillars. The pillars are the common characteristic of the Chinese traditional architecture.

Also, the Chinese traditional architecture usually is painted with sharp colours.

Bucket is a key part of the Chinese wooden frame structure. Its role is to extend the cantilever beam on the column to support the weight of the concrete part.ⁱ

Information of Yu Garden:

The Yuyuan, or Garden of Contentment, is one the best gardens in China. It is near a famous old tea house with a zigzag bridge in the heart of the old city of Shanghai. The garden was originally made, in 1559, for a retired scholar-administrator, but has often been damaged and rebuilt. Many of the garden features are excellent: the dragon wall, the moon gate, the long roofed corridor-bridge and a brilliant collection of garden windows and doors. The artificial mountain, made of yellow rocks, is thought to survive from the original design and to be the work of Zhang Nanyang.ⁱⁱ

Analysis

(1)



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Photo captions:

These are the big rockery in Shanghai Yu Garden. The big rockery is the relic of Ming Dynasty and it was designed and built by the famous designer Zhang Nanyang.

Analysis:

In the first section of the garden, there is a loftily named Grand Rockery (大假山), a 12 meter-high formation made of 2,000 tons of rare yellow stones. Each rock was fused to the other using a combination of rice glue and limestone. This created a unique view of a mini landscape of cliffs, winding paths and gorges compress in a small area in Yu Garden. Purportedly, the landscape is designed by famous garden artist of the Ming Dynasty, Zhang Nanyang. Before being titled the Grand Rockery,

the pavilion was known as “The Pavilion for Viewing.” At one time, it was the tallest structure in Shanghai, with a clear view of the Huangpu River.^v

With today’s modern architecture style which tends to develop in heights, skyscrapers are everywhere. The tallest building in the past is relatively short in comparison with these newly built skyscrapers. Chinese architecture loves to minify sceneries to see a bigger picture while modern architecture increases its height to achieve this goal. Through the big rockery, it can clearly show the design of the garden in the past. People in the past liked to make use of different materials to simulate the natural scenery. They admired the beauty of nature instead of purchasing trendy or new fashion.

(2)



Photo captions:

These are the dragon walls in Shanghai Yu Garden. The dragon walls are one of the icons of Shanghai Yu Garden.

Analysis:

The entire Yu Garden compound consists of more than 30 halls and is divided into six regions by tall white walls. Each region is separated by “dragon walls” which are rolling gray-tiled ridges of scales ending with a dragon head. The dragon wall surrounding the third region of the gardens is the most stunning. It is titled “Dragon crossing the clouds”. The serpentine tiling and ornate skull and claws are very delicate. A small toad is tucked beneath the dragon’s chin. This gives the sculpture more details on traditional culture. In Chinese mythology, the dragon often represents auspicious power and luck, while a toad represents longevity.^{vii}

Therefore, they always exist in different Chinese architectures. There are a lot of details in traditional Chinese buildings while modern architecture purses as simple as possible and the sense of science and technology. As a result, delicate sculptures are seldom found on the walls of modern buildings. For modern buildings, they give people a feeling of concise but at the same time they are boring. On the other hand, traditional Chinese buildings often carry in depth meaning. Take Yu Garden as an example, it was built by Pun Yunduan to his parents. He wanted his parents to enjoy lives in their golden age to show filial piety. Besides, details like toad sculpture are added to the garden. This shows Pun Yunduan’s blessings for his parents’ longevity. In modern architecture, designs are often drawn to maximize the practicality, making them do not include any affection unlike traditional Chinese buildings. There are more details, in-depth meanings and affecting in traditional Chinese buildings than in modern buildings.

In the traditional Chinese culture, dragon symbolizes power, dignity and honor. It also symbolizes lucky and success. Besides, dragon can represent the Chinese people and it implies the spirit of the Chinese people. Therefore, people in the past liked to use dragon as a decoration to decorate their home.

Conclusion

Main points

1. Chinese architecture loves to minify sceneries to see a bigger picture while modern architecture increases its height to achieve this goal.
2. For modern buildings, they give people a feeling of concise but at the same time they are boring. While, for traditional Chinese buildings often carry in depth meaning.

Stance

1. There are more details, in-depth meanings and affection in traditional Chinese buildings than in modern ones. As time flies, many relics gradually disappear. We may have fewer opportunities to see those valuable relics again. So, we should learn to admire those relics and try our best to conserve our culture.
2. Chinese architecture loves minifying sceneries to see a bigger picture while modern architecture increases its height to achieve this goal. Therefore, we should make good use of our creativity to combine both Eastern and Western cultures.

Reflection

22 March 2018

Today is the departure day. We all felt exhilarated that we were going to have our Grand tour. It would definitely be our most treasurable experience and memories in our life.

We all felt surprised that the somatosensory temperature in Shanghai was much higher than our expectation even the temperature was only 6°C.

After arriving the Shanghai Pudong International Airport, the first schedule was to have dinner at a local restaurant. We enjoyed the traditional Shanghai cuisines. Then, we visited The Bund and Nanjing Road Walkway. We were amazed by the buildings there. Some buildings displayed predominantly Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Baroque Revival, Neo-Classical or Beaux-Arts styles which created a strong visual impact to us.

23 March 2018

We visited the sister school, Shanghai Shibei High School, and had a brief understand of the school's motto of our sister school. We also sat in their biology lessons to experience studying in Mainland. We found out that the lessons in Mainland's high schools were more complicated and in-depth. We also discovered the shortcomings in the education systems of both Hong Kong and Mainland China. This was a very thought-provoking experience to all of us. Besides, we exchanged the contact with the students in Shanghai Shibei High School. We strongly believed that the bonding between King Ling College and Shanghai Shibei High School will be more determined in the future.

24 March 2018

We were going to Osaka in Japan today! None of us have been to Japan before. So, we looked forward to experiencing the culture, architecture and beauty of Japan. We visited the Osaka Castle. The castle is one of Japan's most famous landmarks and it played a major role in the unification of Japan during the sixteenth century of the Azuchi-Momoyama period. We also found some Japanese to help us make the celebration videos of King Ling 25th Anniversary. We were pleased that the locals understood our poor Japanese.

25 March 2018

Maybe we had too much deep-fried food, many of us suffered from sore throat. Today we attended the Yodogawa Cleanup Volunteer Activity. We also felt surprised that another secondary school in Japan participated in this activity. We had a great

conversation with the Japanese students. Furthermore, we understood the variation of the campus life in Japan and Hong Kong through communicating with them. We all wanted to experience the school life in Japan in the future.

We were also shamed because Japanese behaved so well that there was nearly no rubbish in Yodogawa. Unlike Japan, rubbish can be found everywhere in Hong Kong.

26 March 2018

Today we visited the Nara Park and Eastern Great Temple in Nara. We were amazed by the beautiful architecture of the temple. Also, we had a close contact with the Sika Deer in the park. They were so cute that they bowed for the deer-crackers. We had an unforgettable experience there and felt the essence of nature. Those experiences were so precious that we can never gain in Hong Kong.

By the way, the tourist guide was very considerate. She premediated that we had had a lot of fried food for the five days. She bought 2 boxes strawberries to ease our sore throat. She was so nice!

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