

Modern vs Traditional Chinese Architecture

Traditional Lumber Architecture

Background:

- ❖ Began during the Zhou Dynasty (1045-221 BC)
- ❖ Stayed up until China adopted Western architecture in early modern times

Reasons:

- ❖ Using lumber helped to make foundations more flexible and resilient to recurring seismic activity
- ❖ If the buildings were damaged it was much easier to repair, reconfigure, and expand

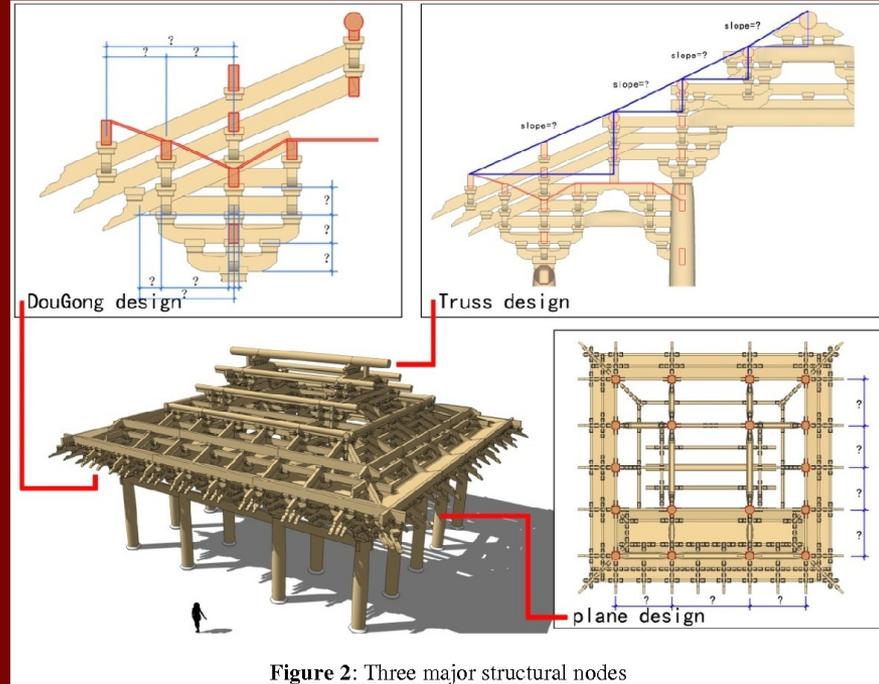
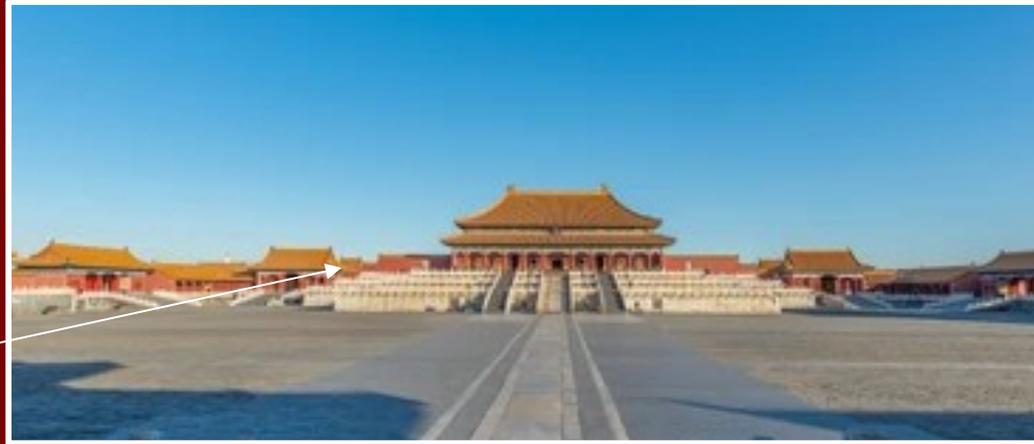


Figure 2: Three major structural nodes

Staging Systems in Wooden Architecture

- ❖ A room was comprised of 4 columns and sandalwoods
- ❖ Always consisted of an odd number of rooms
- ❖ The class of architecture is higher, the more rooms it has
- ❖ An example of this is the Taihe Temple in the Forbidden City
- ❖ It contains 11 rooms and it's architecture is at the highest level



Taihe Temple in Beijing, also known as the Hall of Supreme Harmony

Single-Story Construction

- ❖ Goes hand in hand with lumber architecture as another way to combat earthquakes
- ❖ This was the preferred style of all buildings except for in the southeast corner as there is little to no seismic activity
- ❖ If buildings were two stories, they usually consisted of a balcony on the second story
- ❖ Higher buildings would signify the higher status of



Chinese Ritual Systems Incorporated into Traditional Architecture

This stresses:

- ❖ the hierarchical idea
- ❖ color
- ❖ scale
- ❖ pattern
- ❖ structure
- ❖ the ideology of the unity of heaven and man
- ❖ the mutual coordination and integration of architecture and nature



Memorial Arch (Paifang)

Exemplifies patterns of Chinese ritual systems:

- ❖ Common patterns include dragons, phoenixes, fish, bats, and deer.
- ❖ Dragons and phoenixes belong to a royal family
- ❖ Bats symbolize good luck and happiness as the 'fu' in bianfu sounds similar to 'fu' which means blessing
- ❖ Deer symbolize promotion as it sounds similar to 'lu' which means salary
- ❖ Fish represent passing an important exam
- ❖ Other patterns such as cypress, peony, water lily, etc express luck, longevity,



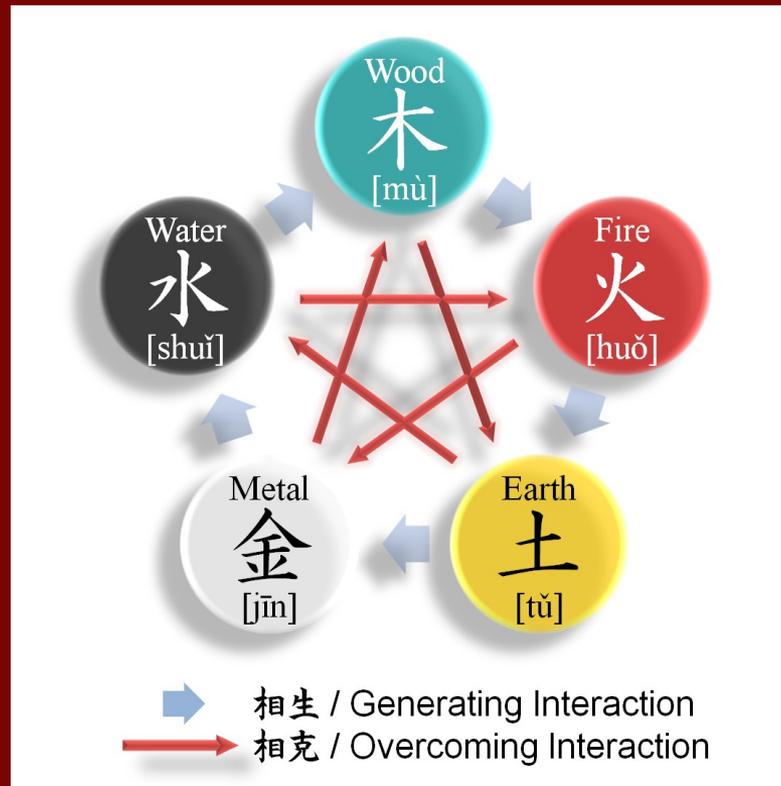
Summer Palace in Beijing

Importance and Symbolism Behind Colors

Five Primary Colors represent the 5 primary elements and directions

Having all five elements in harmony will bring peace to all directions

- ❖ Red - South - Fire
- ❖ Green - East - Wood
- ❖ Yellow - Center - Earth
- ❖ White - West - Metal
- ❖ Black - North - Water



Gardens

Represent the connection between humans and nature

- ❖ 3 main kinds of gardens
 - Aspire Conception
 - Royal gardens
 - Signifies virtue and moral principles
 - Immortal Conception
 - Some royal gardens and temples
 - Belief that people can be immortal through ascetic practices
 - Natural Conception
 - Private gardens
 - Focuses on the balance of humans and nature and all creature's relations



Modern Architecture

Overview:

- ❖ Change in style occurred from 1840 (Opium Wars) to 1949 (People's Republic of China)
- ❖ Blend of Chinese and Western style architecture
- ❖ Traditional Chinese architecture was still more common and influential
- ❖ Around the 1980s, the architecture switched to focus more on compatible, multiple, and open designs



This building incorporates beautiful designs from the Song dynasty with a modern spin

Modern Architecture

- ❖ Emphasis on traditional factors incorporated and mixed with modern factors
- ❖ Heavy influence from western design styles and other parts of the world
- ❖ More sleek and futuristic feel

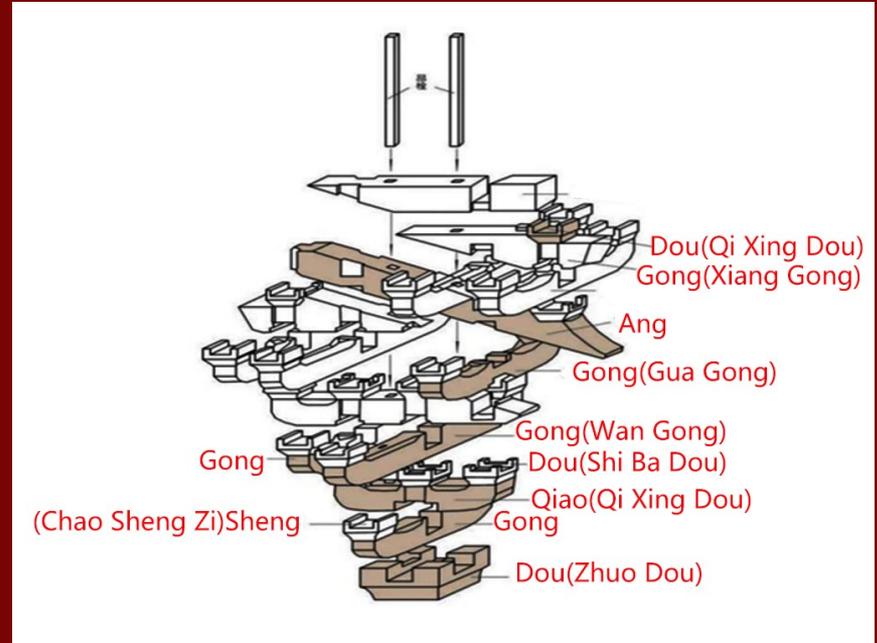
Bilateral symmetry



Jin Mao Tower, Shanghai, China

Dougong

- ❖ Originated in traditional designs (Tang and Song dynasties)
- ❖ Still incorporated into modern designs today
- ❖ System of wooden brackets (w/out the use of nails)
- ❖ Used to support the overhanging roofs
- ❖ So sturdy and successful, this technique is used in modern designs today



Feng Shui

风 = wind
water

水 =

- ❖ The art of arranging buildings, objects, and space in an environment to achieve harmony and balance
- ❖ This has been done from ancient times and still exists today
- ❖ Both modern and traditional styles of architecture incorporate feng shui into their designs



HSBC Building, Hong Kong

Conclusion

- ❖ Overall, there are some factors and similarities between traditional and modern Chinese architecture.
- ❖ However, it is hard to continue building in a traditional style as the population is growing and space is limited.
- ❖ Therefore, modern building techniques have to focus on open concepts and building upwards to make sure the space is being used efficiently.
- ❖ Open concepts counteract the traditional style of multiple buildings with small sectioned off spaces.



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