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URBAN HYBRIDITY AND GLOBAL-LOCAL EXCHANGES

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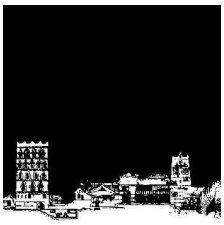

TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS WORKING PAPER SERIES

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URBAN HYBRIDITY AND GLOBAL-LOCAL EXCHANGES

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE CHINESE VILLAGE: A TRANSNATIONAL STORY OF THE JIANG FAMILY AND THEIR ANCESTRAL HOUSES IN XIAMEN

Ruoqi Yu

COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE CHINESE VILLAGE: A TRANSNATIONAL STORY OF THE JIANG FAMILY AND THEIR ANCESTRAL HOUSES IN XIAMEN

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Since ancient times, overseas Chinese have retained connections between their home and settlement regions through maritime trade and migration, longing to return. This transnational interaction has shaped the multicultural and cosmopolitan spaces of their home as contact zones. To investigate the consequences of these global flows on the built environment, this study analyzes the evolution of two ancestral houses maintained by a transnational Jiang family, who have cosmopolitan experiences spanning Southeast Asia with the maintenance of ancestral traditions. How did the hybridization of old and new, local and foreign elements occur, and how did they invent new traditions? How did different generations of transnational immigrants transform their homes into hybrid spaces? To address these questions, this study focuses on the multi-layered architectural history of two cases through interviews with Jiang`s descendants, archive and literature research, and spatial analysis. The Jiang family's story is a case representative of the lineage narrative within the broader scope of overseas Chinese history. It reveals how the first three generations of the Jiang family modified their homes during their emigration overseas and upon returning to their hometown. It then follows how the fourth generation continues to maintain a sense of belonging to their ancestral home across generations and borders by reshaping the places as a historical memorial to the family and a clubhouse for the diaspora. By examining the forming of two forms, one tradition and the other cosmopolitan, in the ancestral houses of the Jiang family, this piece also shows the coexistence of clan consciousness and the nostalgia for Chineseness by the diaspora, as well as the hybrid style manifesting the multi-cultural transnationality of being overseas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the notion of lineage villages as backward and closed units, rituals, customs and kinship networks facilitate connection beyond the region, transforming villages into active platforms for cosmopolitan exchange. The rise of "global villages" recognizes their participation in global production and is culturally and politically relevant.[1] In the past several decades, the cultural reinvention of traditional villages has become integral to the global Chinese cultural network. Reconstructing the Chinese overseas collective memory is deeply intertwined with shared perceptions of ancestral origins, historical experiences, and contemporary aspirations.[2] Tradition is actively reconfigured to engage with economic networks, diaspora connections, architectural interventions, and cultural imaginaries—particularly in sites that define village identities, such as ancestral halls and temples, which serve as anchors for the cosmopolitan mobility of individuals within collective frameworks of belonging.

The "transnational village" or "Overseas Chinese hometown", where a significant number of people have emigrated abroad, has become a focal point for cultural tourism and rural branding. This study turns the historical process of rural cosmopolitanism into a multi-generational narrative, by tracing the migration and settlement of the Jiang family between their hometown in Aotou Village, Xiamen, and locations overseas, from the late 19th century to the present. Their homes serve as a spatial archive, where cosmopolitanism emerges not by rejecting tradition but by reworking it, through architectural forms, spatial practices, and

symbolic attachments that span time and geography.

This Jiang family had built the three traditional South Fujian houses in their hometown of Xiamen, Fujian Province, in the 1890s, before the owner sought livelihood abroad. The preserved ancestral home has witnessed the family's many overseas migrations and returns to their hometown, as well as the expansion of the family lineage. In the past ten years, these two houses, passed down to the fourth generation, no longer serve as residences but are today hubs for the village's overseas connections and collection points for family memories. One is kept in the form of a traditional one-story South Fujian building with a courtyard. The other was a reconstruction project undertaken in 2003 by the third generation of the constructor after the original traditional form was damaged during the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. This multi-story structure is fronted with four composite columns and columned balconies in the main elevation, built with a classical Western aesthetic. It is a material manifestation of the modern-era hybridization of styles visible in Southeast Asian cities, where parts of the family have emigrated.

This paper is built around oral history interviews with family members about their migration experiences, memories attached to their family houses and ancestral village, decision-making in architectural construction and preservation, as well as perceptions of global-local entanglements. Besides, to contextualize family and architectural histories within the local context, this study refers to local gazetteers and genealogies, archival newspapers, regional development plans and oral history records, as well as individual collections of migration documents, letters, photographs and remittance receipts. Furthermore, this study conducts architectural and spatial documentation, including measured drawings, photographic documentation, and mappings of modifications, to demonstrate the historical layers of transformation.

Following the idea of "vernacular cosmopolitanism", this study rethinks how cosmopolitan openness can emerge from non-elite, local cultures and identity, with spatial-material evidence.[3] Although many rural communities in Fujian Province, and even southern China, share similar patterns of globalization, such as migration and remittance-driven construction, it offers a bottom-up perspective of the built environment and personal narratives within one family lineage that reflect how global flows are mediated and reinterpreted on the ground, and how cosmopolitanism is lived, remembered, and materialized in everyday built form.

2. LINEAGE, LAND AND LEAVING HOME (BEFORE THE 1900S)

Contemporary scholarship challenges the myth of the cosmopolitan as a rootless, secular and Western elite who travel, speak multiple languages, and identify with global rather than local identities.[4] It has moved beyond the universalist model of "world citizen", which imagines cosmopolitanism as a cultural logic emanating from metropolises through trade, empire, global modernity and related forces.[5] Thus, this study

proposes that the ancestral house in a lineage village may function not only as a repository of tradition and as a space continually shaped by family and translocal ties.

Aotou Village was originally under the jurisdiction of Tong`an County, Quanzhou Prefecture, located in the north of Xiamen Island across the sea. It was once a gathering point for sea vessels around 900 AD, and gradually developed into a trading port and settlement along the Maritime Silk Road.[6] Jiang and Su were the main clans in the village, accounting for most of the population.[7] They took geography advantage, including its natural harbors and integration into major transportation networks, to ship locally produced pig iron, celadon and other products to other port cities, ranging as far as Japan and Southeast Asia. For these transnational households, migration followed their trading networks across national borders, making it common for family members to live temporarily in different locations to manage business operations and expect to return home in prosperity.[8] The house (ancestral halls and family homes) in the lineage village connects migrations to their roots, reinforcing their sense of belonging to a larger kinship network.

There is a saying among the Southeast Fujianese: "Earn a lot of money, marry a beautiful wife, build a big house 探大甲，娶水莫，起大厝", reflecting their aspirations for economic success, family prosperity and the symbolic importance of their ancestral home. Dacuo (or Cuo) refers to local folk houses in southern Fujian. Its layout usually includes one or two large houses with three units (including a hall and two rooms), guard houses, wing rooms and an enclosed courtyard, with red bricks, strips of stone and wood as the main construction materials. Many wealthy families choose to build a larger house with more rooms, and incorporated decorated roof ridges (Swallowtail Ridge) that rise at both ends. Living in a grand house is not just about wealth, but also about social status and moral responsibilities. The dispersion of family members did not signify the dissolution of the household. Their "estate household" was sustained through shared contributions and benefits. Even those living away from home remained responsible for the family, obligated to remit a portion of their income. Consequently, the division of family property was not diminished by distance or time, as male heirs inherited equally.[9]

Back to the family we are focusing on, a descendant of the Aotou Jiang clan initiated the construction of his ancestral home in the 1890s.[10] This project included three local folk houses built on a narrow site that runs northwest to southeast, situated along the inland sea (now it is Huaiyuan Lake) on the west side of the village. The main house faced the lack and consisted of two large houses along with the guard house on the west side (see Xiangdong Cuo, the ancestral home of another Jiang family with two guard houses on both sides, located not far to the southwest). In the forecourt, Jiang set up flagpole stones (also known as flagpole clamps) symmetrical along the central axis. These finely carved stones, for secure flagpoles, symbolized the prestige and honor brought to the family by descendants who achieved success in the imperial examination system.

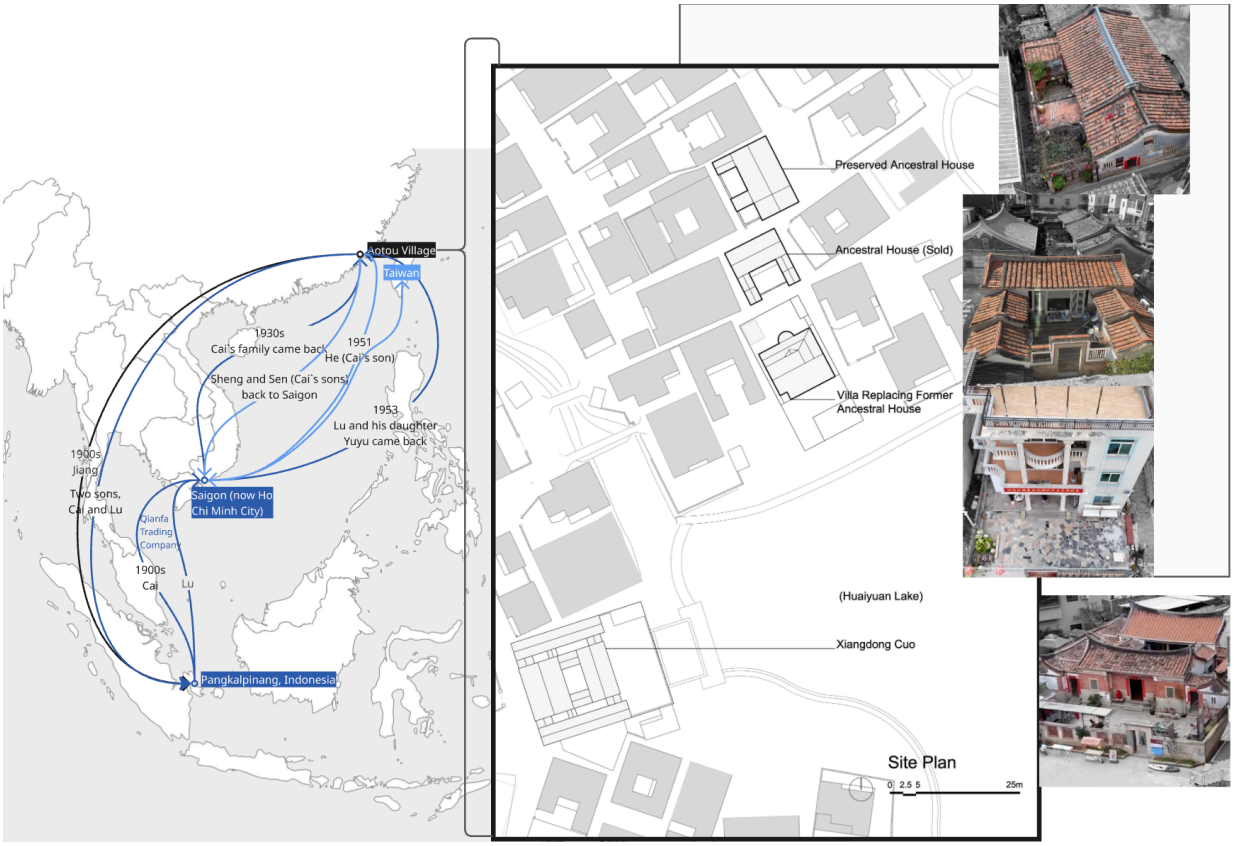

Fig. 1: Mapping generational movements and architectural heritage of Jiang`s family. (Source: Author, 2025).

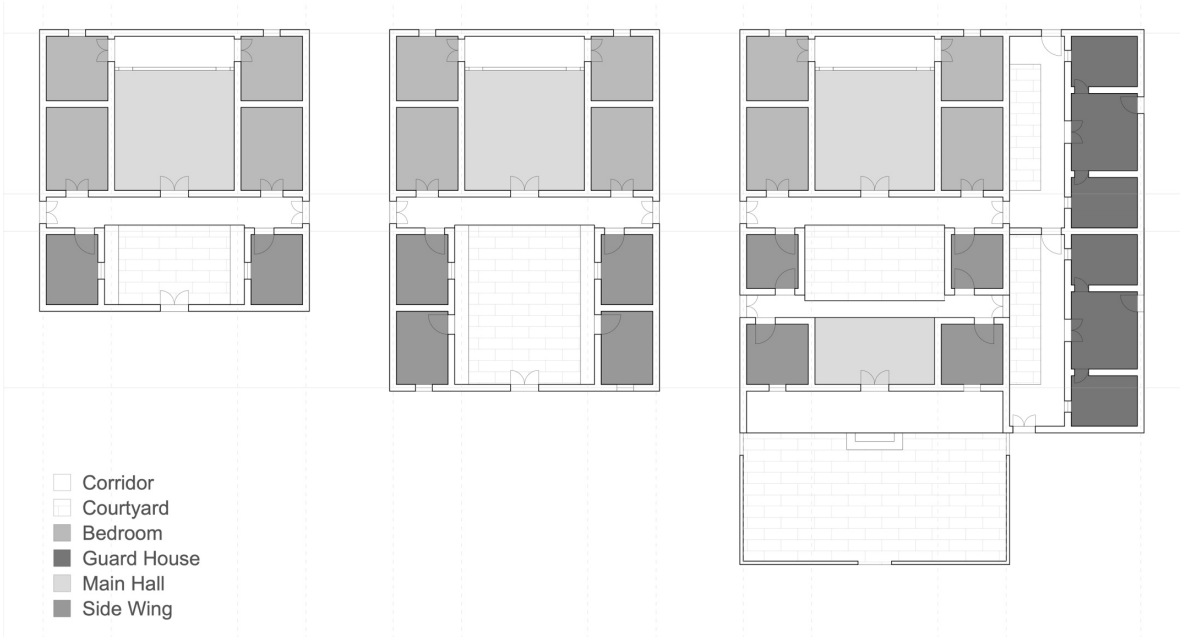

Fig. 2: Three Prototype Plans of Ancestral Houses. Four-room with two forward-facing side wings 四房二榉头, four-room with four forward-facing side wings 四房四榉头, and two-hall grand house (connected to guard house) 两落大厝带护龙. (Source: Research, 2025).

Compared with the main house, the construction of the other two U-shaped courtyard houses was relatively modest. They followed the typical residential layout of the Xiamen Region, featuring a one-hall and four-room structure with forward-facing side wings (see Figure 2). Jiang decided to pawn the houses behind the main house to a villager and travel to Southeast Asia in the early 20th century. His two sons, Cai Jiang and Lu Jiang, followed him to settle in Pangkalpinang, Indonesia, and later, they moved to Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), Vietnam, to earn a living.

3. INSTABILITY OF ROOTEDNESS (1900-1950S)

In the early 20th century, the Chinese population in Vietnam dominated trading, rice milling and banking. They maintained a strong sense of community, reinforcing cultural bonds through the family, which was seen as the core of their local social organizations. These organizations—based on clan, dialect, or other shared characteristics—grouped individuals by their region of origin in China, playing a role in maintaining cultural practices and providing mutual support services, including funding for schools, hospitals and religious sites under French colonial rule (1887-1954).[11] The two brothers from the Jiang family ran Qianfa Trading Company, engaged in the grocery business such as rice and daily necessities. Cai and his wife, Mrs. Su, had eight children. As second-generation individuals born in Vietnam to immigrant parents, they were more integrated into local society and often spoke both Chinese dialects and Vietnamese.

Xiamen became a strategic center of Fujian migration and a key destination for overseas Chinese investment from Southeast Asia, especially from the late 19th century to the Great Depression (1929-1933). Leveraging hometown ties, Chinese capitalists transferred funds back to Xiamen to avoid colonial taxes and navigate currency advantages.[12] By the 1920s, overseas Chinese capital dominated Xiamen's economy, driving major infrastructure projects and urban growth.[13] Returning migrants built hybrid Sino-Western residences on Gulangyu, an International Settlement from 1902 to 1943, transformed the island into a Sino-foreign urban enclave comparable to Hong Kong and Shanghai. Beyond investment, overseas Chinese elites gained political influence, reinforcing long-standing collaborations with local authorities and contributing to Xiamen's urban modernization.

In Southeast Asia, overseas Chinese businesses, particularly those in rice trading, went bankrupt due to the collapse of speculative enterprises.[14] Many of them choose to return to China. Unfavorable conditions made Jiang`s business operations challenging, and secretive sales by employees further hindered sustainability. After selling the goods, the family of the eldest brother, Cai, returned to their hometown to live, except for his daughter Hua Jiang, who married a Chinese in Saigon. They brought back a large amount of wood, cloth, clocks, copper and silver utensils and other supplies. As the eldest son, Cai inherited the main house. The

grand house they maintained, the foreign bicycles and dresses they used, as well as the short haircuts and multilingualism of the women, made this family even more unique in this underdeveloped village.

Due to the high family expenses and no income after returning home, the silver coins they brought back gradually decreased. Cai decided to send his eldest son, Sheng, and the second son, Sen back to Saigon to live with his brother, Lu, and his wife, Mrs. Huang. Then, under the planning of Cai and his wife, the daughters got married one after another - the first daughter, Mei, married a resident in Xiamen Island, and the third and fourth daughters married residents with the surname Su from the same village. After the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, the Japanese army launched air raids, shelling, and imposed sea blockades on Xiamen Island, and occupied the island the following year. Aotou Village, as one of the military fortresses, became a target of bombing. Many villagers fled to Southeast Asia. Cai and his wife took their two young sons to live with relatives in Xiadian Village and lost contact with their children on Xiamen Island and overseas. The couple died within two years of each other, leaving behind two sons, 12-year-old He and 9-year-old Yu.[15]

Once the war concluded in 1945, the two young brothers returned to Aotou Village. Because the main house was in ruins, except for the three rooms on the west side and the stone bases in the forecourt, they temporarily lived in their uncle Lu's house and were looked after by two married sisters from the same village. In 1949, with the liberation of Tong`an, Xiamen and other places, land and water transport gradually resumed. Two years later, Mei, the sister, returned to Aotou from Xiamen Island. Having lost contact with her husband who had gone to Southeast Asia, she had to make a living by sewing and taking care of her mother-in-law until now. Considering the family`s livelihood and the brothers` future, Mei sold her wedding ring to sponsor her brother, He, to go to Saigon to make a living.

The movement back and forth reflects the circulation pattern of Chinese migration, driven by the "chain migration pattern" [16] and "sojourner mentality"[17]. Through a mutual help system, individuals could easily migrate from their hometowns to other locations for work. Driven by a desire to return home, they often did so temporarily after saving some money and remigrating when financial pressures forced them to seek opportunities abroad. While those migrants faced more complex socio-political and identity challenges as nationalism and state-building intensified in the mid-20th century.

4. THE MYTH OF RETURN (1950S-2000)

After the depression, the Chinese in Southeast Asia didn`t fully reclaim their dominant role in trading and banking as Vietnamese entrepreneurs and French investments increasingly displaced Chinese influence.[18] The life of Lu`s family living in Vietnam was also difficult. After the closure of the former trading firm run by the

two brothers, Lu and his wife, Huang, made a living by handcrafting in Saigon.[19] They adopted a son named Yuan and gave birth to a daughter, Yuyu in 1949. They lived in a shophouse, a structure that combined commercial activities on the ground floor with residential space on the upper floor. This form commonly emerged in cities with large Chinese communities. It represents the ideal architectural form for small-scale entrepreneurship, reflecting features of family-centered living and self-sufficiency. After his wife, Huang, passed away in 1953, Lu and his son continued to engage in the iron barrel manufacturing business in the front room. The back room was the living area. In the attic, Lu and his daughter lived, while the downstairs was occupied by Yuan, his wife, their children and his mother-in-law, a total of seven people.

The Republic of Vietnam, under Ngo Dinh Diem regime, undertook a nationalist-driven effort to reshape the postcolonial economy.[20] In 1956, the government issued Decree 53, which forbade foreigners from participating in eleven key business sectors, including rice milling, grain trading, transportation and retail, which particularly affected the Chinese community. Chinese traders had to naturalization or transfer ownership to Vietnamese. Meanwhile, a series of political changes, including travel restrictions that curtailed return migration, and land reform that undermined ancestral ties after the founding of the People`s Republic of China.[21]

As the possibility of moving to and from the homeland and upward mobility in host countries decreased, many people considered ending their sojourning lives, including Lu. He left the shop to his adopted son and, with his daughter Yuyu, sailed back to China from the Saigon port in 1957. After a 40-day voyage, they arrived in Macau, then took a car to Guangzhou, and continued to Shantou, where they took a car to Maxiang Town. Finally, they hired a rickshaw to reach Aotou village, with the entire journey back to their home taking about two months. Since the ancestral house Lu inherited had fallen into disrepair, the two temporarily stayed in the house of Lu`s mother-in-law. Over a year later, the house was repaired. Lu then married Hong and adopted Cai`s youngest son, Yu, as his son. In addition to his family, he also invited his niece Gui and her family to live with them.

This only preserved ancestral house of the Jiang family adopts the architectural shape of traditional folk houses in southern Fujian, while its layout did not follow the regulations of the cuo, that is, the main hall faces the main entrance. Instead, the primary and secondary entrances were placed on both sides to better utilize the space. The walls on both sides of the building were constructed higher than the roof, forming a saddle shape that connect to the roof ridge. The main body of the building is a three-sided courtyard facing the southwest. The wall on the front side of the house is set back two steps to leave a walkway. The northwest end of the walkway is connected to the kitchen, and the southeast end is connected to the side room and porch that expands horizontally. Outside the porch is a front yard that serves as the main entrance.

The main hall is located on the central axis of the house. The back side is set with wall panels to separate the indoor corridor to connect the rooms on both sides. Each side room was divided into two rooms, front and back.[22] The front room on the west side was the daughters' bedroom, and the back room was the guest room. The front room on the south side was the parents' bedroom, and the back room was the sons' bedroom. A separate side room on the south side was the mother's bedroom.

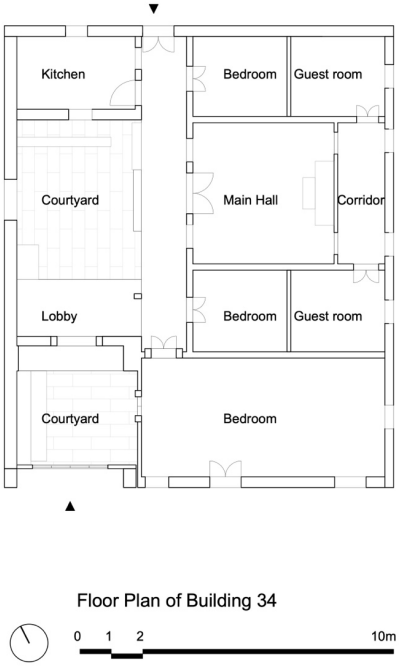

Fig. 3: Floor plan of the ancient house at No. 34, Shatang Li, Aotou Village. (Source: Author, 2024).

However, the lively gathering life in the Jiang family's ancestral house did not last long. After Lu died of illness in 1960, his daughter, as an overseas student, followed her brother Yu to study in Gulangyu until she graduated from junior high school. There appears to be a trend of declining treatment toward returned overseas Chinese students beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the next decade, as evidenced in existing studies. While early returnees were welcomed with privileges and educational opportunities, later returnees faced political suspicion, restricted access to higher education and forced labor during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

The Great Leap Forward, an economic and social campaign initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) between 1957 and 1962, led to a devastating famine. In addition, the sharp increase in production indicators and the decentralization of enterprise labor management rights to local governments have brought about rapid growth in the urban population, making it difficult to solve the food shortage problem.[23] In April 1961, the CCP issued the "Report on the Adjustment of the Rural Labor Force and the Streamlining of Decentralized Workers" to encourage the urban population to return to their hometowns to work in

agriculture. Yu, who had worked at Gulangyu Art School for two years, responded to the call and returned to Aotou to join the production team. He engaged in repairing farm implements, drawing posters and slogans, and constructing reservoirs and seawalls. In 1975, he took a job as a temporary school worker at the Fujian School of Arts and Crafts at Gulangyu.

The period from the 1950s to the 1970s was marked by political volatility and ideological campaigns that created an unstable environment for returned overseas China and disrupted China`s relationship with its overseas communities. In 1977, Deng Xiaoping's statement, *"*Overseas relations are a good thing*"*, marked a shift in China's approach to transnational engagement. This laid the foundation for the Reform and Opening-up policies initiated in 1978, which reconnected China with the global community, allowed Chinese citizens abroad to visit family, and facilitated the flow of remittances and transnational mail.

In 1992, Yu heard from a fellow overseas Chinese from his village, who had returned to visit family, that his second brother, Sen, and his family were in Saigon, Vietnam. He entrusted them with a handwritten letter and a family photo to deliver. A few months later, they received a letter from Sen, informing them of the death of their eldest brother, Sheng, who had passed away in 1985. Yuan (Lu's adopted son in Saigon) had also passed away many years ago, and his children had all moved abroad. Sen also mentioned that before the liberation of Saigon, they had made a living by working for others. The couple was selling fruit on the streets, struggling with their business. Despite their modest circumstances, after receiving the letter, the Jiang family quickly pooled together 100 US dollars and sent it via the Bank of China to Sen, to help him with household expenses. In 1996, Sen fell ill, and with no relatives or children abroad to rely on, he was forced to write to his brothers back home for help. In addition to covering his medical expenses, the Jiang family also sent money for his return trip home (at that time, traveling by train and bus from Vietnam to Xiamen cost around 800,000 Vietnamese dongs, while flying to Guangzhou required 330 USD). Unfortunately, due to a sudden illness, Sen and his wife were unable to return home as they had hoped.

5. FROM INHERITANCE TO REDISCOVERY (AFTER THE 2000S)

A shift from global openness to political exclusion once rejected the diasporic cosmopolitanism and ruptured the cultural and emotional meaning of the homeland. Family separation was not limited to the transnational sphere, producing different branches of the same family remembered, imagined, or experienced homeland in contrasting ways. Since 1963, Yu used paintings to record the panoramic view of Aotou before 1949, with the bombed ancestral house at the center. However, his sister Yuyu rarely returned to Aotou Village.

After retirement in 1999, Yu returned to Aotou and began preparing for the reconstruction of the family house. The project started in 2003 and lasted for 3 years. Although Yu returned to China at an early age, he

grew up hearing stories of transnational experiences within the family and held onto the hope that others would return to rebuild the ancestral house together. When he could finally afford to rebuild the house, he chose a mixed-style villa instead of rebuilding the traditional form. The building consisted of four floors and was one of the highest buildings along the lake at that time. It features arches, prominent columns, and balconies with decorative balustrades, reflecting classical influences. The villa not only reflects an architectural blend, but also Western-style elements with traditional Chinese features, such as a front courtyard and the use of local construction materials. The exterior walls are clad in light-colored tiles, presumably influenced by local craftsmanship and budget. Besides, Yu kept the remaining structures: the flagpole stones in the front courtyard and the northwest guard room. After he passed away in 2009, his two sons inherited the villa.

Fig. 4: The old photos in Shatangli, around 2008, show the completion state of the white villa. (Source: Caipei Jiang).[24]

Aotou Village, which is underdeveloped and has lost its supporting industries, has difficulty attracting younger generations to live here. The two houses of the Jiang family had been vacant for nearly ten years, and the remaining ancient house became a dilapidated building. Since 2014, Aotou has been transformed from a century-old fishing village and hometown of overseas Chinese into an international bay community featuring marine culture and tourism, supported by marine fisheries, and guided by marine high technology. In the same year, Jiang Yongtai, Yu`s eldest son, returned to Aotou to participate in the construction of an overseas Chinese hometown after retiring from Xiamen Media Group. He discussed retaining the ancient house with his relatives and financed its restoration as a base for promoting and displaying overseas Chinese culture.

At the invitation of the Xindian Town Government and community staff, Yongtai Jiang accepted the position

of president of the Aotou Overseas Chinese Friendship Association (AOCFA). The remaining ancestral house of the Jiang family became the office of the AOCFA and a museum, showcasing historical photos of Aotou and collections related to the family`s transnational history, such as records of migration and remittances. In 2017, the Friendship Association was chosen by the Fujian Provincial Overseas Chinese Federation as a provincial-level "Home for Overseas Chinese".

Fig. 5: Floor plan of the renovated ancient house, Building 34. (Source: Author, 2024).

Fig. 6: Interior views of Building 34. (Source: Author, 2024).

For the rebuilt villa, Jiang planned to transform it into a cultural and arts center for film and television and expand its usable space by altering the layout of the ground and top floors. This project aligns with his

proposal in 2016 to create Aotou Village as an art village, emphasizing the construction of tourism, ecology, food, cultural film and television arts and technology networks.[25] During a recent visit, the villa was under construction on the backside. The first floor is now used as a permanent exhibition hall to regularly display theme paintings, and as a base for community charity painting activities.

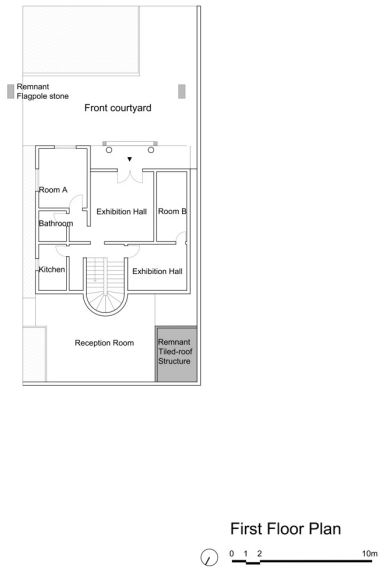

Fig. 7: Elevation drawings of Building 34-1, before and after renovation. (Source: Author, 2025).
Fig. 8: Floor plan of Building 34-1. (Source: Author, 2025).

The descendants of returned overseas Chinese grew up listening to stories from overseas and participated in the reconstruction of their villages as part of a cosmopolitan imagination. They now work to maintain the overseas network by preserving the family`s inheritance and engaging in cultural exchange through mutual visits, online activities, and information sharing. Aotou Spring Festival Gala program, directed by Yongtai Jiang, brought together overseas Chinese through the Chinese New Year, a traditional Chinese festival that carries the return home and family reunion, and also showed them the development and changes in their hometown.

6. CONCLUSION

The case of the Jiang family is one of the slices of China's grassroots overseas Chinese history, but it is unique in that each generation of the Jiang family returns to their ancestral home and re-establishes connections with overseas. Through tracing Jiang`s narratives — whether of migration, return, adaptation, or refusal — we

gain insight into how tradition becomes a platform for cosmopolitan engagement, and how cosmopolitanism is manifested through memory, obligation, and place-based identity. The first two generations of the Jiang family can be seen as an early form of transnational engagement, maintaining strong ties to their homeland but also integrating into global communities. The third generation, under political uncertainty, was forced to reconstruct identity through fragmented memory rather than direct connections with home. The identity was officially labeled and structured. For the fourth generation, cosmopolitanism is reclaimed as a tool for engaging in cross-cultural storytelling, reconnecting with heritage, as well as navigating global institutions, rather than a flexible identity resource.

Their family houses, as a foundation for immigrant families, witnessed the movement from migration as a survival strategy to a more global prospect, where cultural, social and economic boundaries became increasingly fluid. The act of returning, once related to belonging and traditional obligation, now could be through a more cosmopolitan lens by social media and symbolic participation. Therefore, tradition is no longer inherited by necessity but rediscovered through diasporic imagination, serving as a complementary rather than conflicting force between rootedness and global mobility. The lineage village may become a curated backdrop for cosmopolitan identity-making, promoting critical reflection on both the authenticity of tradition and the depth of cosmopolitan engagement.

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3. Pnina Werbner. "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2–3 (May 1, 2006), p. 496–98. "Vernacular cosmopolitanism" reveals that cosmopolitanism can be local, working-class, non-Western, and grounded in everyday practices. It considers migrants, minorities and marginalized groups as actors, and also recognizes not all travelers and migrants develop such openness.
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and political issues, see Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1785].

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7. C. K. Yang. *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition*. Cambridge: Technology Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1959, p. 11. The main clan refers to the "overwhelming majority of the village population and dominated the affairs of the community".
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9. Philip A. Kuhn. *Chinese among Others Emigration in Modern Times*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
10. The author cannot provide the name of the founder of this ancestral house because there are no records about him among the descendants and the house, and the village's Jiang family tree is incomplete after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).
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ARCHITECTURAL EXOTICISM THROUGH THE OTHERS' PLACES: CHINATOWNS IN THE US AND EUROPEAN TOWNS IN CHINA

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ARCHITECTURAL EXOTICISM THROUGH THE OTHERS' PLACES: CHINATOWNS IN THE US AND THE EUROPEAN TOWNS IN CHINA

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Chinatowns in North America and the Western style copycat towns recently built in China are two unique patterns of the built environment in today's urban contexts – the former emerged as the entry ports of "lands of opportunity" and an ethnic enclave in late 19th and early 20th century and later transformed as a tourist destination for leisure, shopping and entertainment and a symbol of multiculturism; the latter emerged in many Chinese cities the 1990s to the 2010s featured by buildings, streets and decorations in classic Western styles as a popular approach of new urban neighborhood development, reflecting an effort to marketize places for real estate growth by manipulating culture-based forms. Both have kept producing forms of architectural mimicry that make cultural exotism visible and create the physical features of being "foreign" or "other" from their surrounding contexts. Despite using different culture-based forms, the two have a fundamental commonality: they seek a strong visual contrast and attempt to promote the idea of being "different."

This paper qualitatively examines architectural exoticism through comparing the storybook renditions of symbolic urban forms in Chinatowns and the copycat town. Taking the Chinatown in Seattle and a copycat town in China as examples, this paper introduces the concept of "window" to understand the linkage between physical features of urban forms and the perceived meaning by users. By demonstrating the similarities and differences in the culture-based symbolic urban forms between Chinatowns and the copycat town for the purpose of creating "windows" for cultural exotism, this paper will provide a theoretical framework to understand the capacity of cultural resilience based on the community's changing needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, urban cultural frontiers refer to places in cities where different cultural groups, identities, and practices meet, interact, and sometimes clash – they are not only tied to physical spaces but also exist in social and mental spaces where cultural exchange, adaptation, and negotiation take place.[1] A urban cultural frontier typically emerged in immigrant communities that brought together people from different cultures to a small urban area, creating immediate cultural friction and exchange. As a material manifestation of urban cultural frontiers, ethnic enclaves were products of "spatial sorting"[2] driven by both the host cities' intentional planning and zoning policies and the individual immigrants' location decisions. In an unfamiliar and often hostile environment, new immigrants tended to live closer with their fellow immigrants from the same ethnic group to overcome the barriers for critical information and resources. This "spatial sorting" created an ethnic concentration in a neighborhood that had social and economic structures diverging from those in the surrounding areas while offering a protection against a generally hostile climate facing immigrants and ethnic minorities and provided a pathway for social mobility.[3] During the waves of immigration in the US history, there were many ethnic enclaves emerged in major cities, such as the Little Havana in Miami for Cubans, Little Italy in Manhattan, NYC, South Boston for Irish people, and the Greek Town in NYC.

Chinatowns in North America have emerged as a historically critical and dynamic urban cultural frontier in major cities such as New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston, where multicultural and multiethnic identities are clearly presented through the exotica of urban forms and distinct cultural and socioeconomic practices. Due to the noticeable differences of built environmental forms and human activities from the established mainstream norms of the host cities, Chinatowns are normally perceived as "foreign" or "other" places separated from their contexts, an ethnic enclave in the city. The "foreign" or "other" places marked both the physical and mental separation from the mainstream American urban contexts, which generated the mysterious and dangerous images of Chinatowns, as represented by Roman Polanski's 1975 film Chinatown and Michael Cimino's 1985 film Year of the Dragon.[4] Perceived as a "foreign" or "other" place, Chinatowns have always evoked strong voyeuristic curiosity among local residents and tourists – a mix of fascination, exoticization, and sometimes unconscious objectification of the "other."

Since the 1950s, many ethnic enclaves in the US have experienced significant transformations – some neighborhoods had experienced demographic shift with new immigrant groups replacing or mixing with the older ones, such as Boyle Heights in Los Angeles (from a Japanese neighborhood to a Hispanic neighborhood), or Southwest Detroit (from an Irish town to a Mexican town); and some were dissolved and transformed into new commercial /business districts to be a part of expanding downtown centers, such as Little Syria in NYC or Little Italy in Chicago. However, Chinatowns seem to be exceptional from this change.[5] Most Chinatowns remain active and vibrant despite challenges caused by urban renewals, demographic shifts, and urban gentrifications. Today, they are still serving as cultural anchors for both old and new Chinese communities and continue to attract new immigrants and investments. Some scholars considered the consistent arrivals of large numbers of new Chinese immigrants from the 1960s to the 1990s critically contributed to Chinatowns' survival when other ethnic enclaves were struggled in seeing new commers.[6] Some scholars stressed the significance of the "foreign" or "other" characters of the urban forms in Chinatowns that delivered an exotic experience for food, shopping and entertainment of foreign delicacy outside of the mainstream life.[7] [8]

While Chinatowns in the US have emerged and evolved due to migrations, segregations, and urban policies, urban cultural frontiers in China follow a different trajectory. Since the beginning of the 21st Century, a new kind of ethnic enclaves has emerged and become prevalent in China. During the past two decades, dozens of new urban neighborhoods have been constructed to replicate towns in Europe and North America, such as a replica of Jackson Hole, Wyoming located outside of Beijing, a German town in the outskirt of Shanghai, a Netherland village in Shenyang, and a twin of Dorchester, England in Chengdu. Most of those developments are in the suburbs of larger cities but also can be founded in China's 2nd or 3rd tier cities. Within those copycat towns, the forms of buildings, structures, landscapes, and streets are identical to their Western

prototypes, usually with idealized classical and vernacular Western architectural features. The entire town appears to have been "airlifted from their historical and geographical foundations" in Europe and North America.[9] Unlike other ethnic enclaves in the world where complicated social, economic, and political forces historically shaped their emergences and growths over times, the copycat towns in China are intentionally built in a short period of time to spoof places with imported cultural themes. Also, they are not used as theme parks but thriving communities where the daily lives of local residents take place. Through the imitated built environment replicating a foreign place, the copycat towns provide a vicarious experience of living in "foreign" or "other" places for the Chinese users, separating them from their indigenous contexts and cultural traditions.

In today's China, there has been many buildings incorporating Western architectural styles and features. However, the trend of developing copycat towns is not only a practice of mimicking the spatial morphology of foreign places to a much larger scale, but also a process of social and cultural constructions which treats a place as a commodity by branding it with symbolic forms for exotic experience. Each copycat town is a unique example of cultural frontiers or ethnic enclaves, where the alien sense of a place, or the sense of "foreign" is intentionally created and developed by remaking a place with imported symbols and elements of foreign architecture. Thus, building copycat towns is an architectural strategy of place-promotion to produce an intensified experiential dissonance by employing hyperreal Western architectural features and symbols. In each copycat town, it is the sense of "foreign" or "other" that is more critical than the replication of Western forms, signages, and lifestyle amenities.

In both cases of the Chinatowns in the US and the copycat towns in China, culture-based urban forms – Chinese architectural elements in the Chinatowns and Western symbols in the copycat towns – play significant roles by creating the architectural spectacles as well as additional channels and layers for cultural exchanges, hybridity, and conflicts. They are widely employed because they carry symbolic meanings to strongly assert the visibility of "foreign" cultures and "other" experience, which is essential for an ethnic enclave to reinforce its distinct cultural significance. Those culture-based urban forms create the image and experience of cultural exotism that make a place disconnect from its immediate surroundings and contexts and enable the formation of a unique value consumed by the users.

Built in a century apart, both the Chinatowns and the copycat towns have widely employed symbolic distinct culture-based urban forms to develop their communities and identities while different social, economic and political forces have shaped critical differences between the two cases in terms of spatial functionality, representations and identities. In addition, ethnic Chinese people are the targeted users in the emergences of both Chinatowns and the copycat towns. However, the changing demographics of users and shifting social,

economic, and cultural needs have led to reorienting and renovating the major features of the built environment for different purposes for both the Chinatowns and copycat towns.

Although subjects of architecture in Chinatowns have been well explored in the literature, current studies of cultural representations in Chinatowns tend to view their urban forms as a passive response to outside social, cultural and political forces. In the meantime, although China's copycat towns have been in the spotlights of social media and news reports in recent years, showing the visible tip of the iceberg of an interesting architectural phenomenon, they are still outside of the mainstream scopes of today's urban studies. Bosker, one of the few scholars who studied those copycat towns, considered China's copycat towns were social-cultural products that responded to the social change in China with the rising wealthy middle class attracted by providing visible symbols of success from the West.[10] However, Bosker did not explore the architectural implications of the culture-based forms. Therefore, this paper is aimed to examine the symbolic meanings of culture-based urban forms through the comparison of the two cases -- the Chinatowns in the US and the copycat towns in China. In this study, the focus is placed on how the idea of creating "foreign" or "other" experience have been achieved through the intentionally development of symbolic expressions of built elements from a different culture.

Seattle's Chinatown is a key example that is characterized by shifting images of a well-developed cultural frontier and ethnic enclave with changing culture-based urban forms while attempting to maintain a strong manifestation of Chinese culture. Started as temporary settlements in the 1860s, the Seattle's Chinatown (or the International District, renamed in 1999) is a historic neighborhood featured rich immigrant multiethnic cultures, colorful community lives, and home to many tourism-based amenities and ethnic Asian restaurants and businesses. Today's Chinatown in Seattle is still the primary home for many immigrants mostly from East Asia, such as Chinese, Filipinos and Vietnamese. It has become one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in Northwest US.

One China's copycat town, the Thames Town in Songjiang, an outskirt district of Shanghai, is used to compare with Seattle's Chinatown in this paper. This example reflects a major type of copycat towns developed in China: it has been driven by local governmental initiatives and resources as a new strategy to develop satellite cities. The development of the Thames Town has set up an example for similar approaches of other Western-style towns developed across China in later decade. From the choices of architectural elements to the branding approaches, the Thames Town provides many aspects of new town-planning ideas for Chinese developers, authorities and architects in the 21st century.

There are three analysis methods used in this study: 1) systematic review – his study systematically and explicitly examine the building forms from the three cases in the contexts of cultural, social, and historical

systems; 2) morphological analysis – this study dissects the complicate meanings of the culture-based into different spatial elements, each of which is qualitatively analyzed; and 3) comparative evaluation – by comparing the similarities and differences of the storybook renditions of symbolic urban forms between Seattle's Chinatown and the two copycat towns in China, this study investigates the development of architectural anachronism in today's architectural practices.

2. THE MAKING OF "FOREIGN"/ "OTHER" EXPERIENCE

A sense of "foreign" or "other" place emerges when a space is perceived as distinct, unfamiliar or separate from its surrounding contexts. This suggests a coexistence of at least two different spaces that become separated through a clearly defined boundary. Historically, architectural forms are one of the most powerful ways to define a sense of spatial foreignness. Through strong architectural contrasts between the two separated and different spaces, a visual and mental boundary emerges to distinguish the "foreign" places from the "local" places. Therefore, the emphasis of spatial separation is a foundational mechanism to create the sense of a "foreign" or "other" place.

2.1. Seattle's Chinatown

Seattle's Chinatown is located close to Downtown, the center of the city's civic life. However, the Chinatown offers unique architectural features characterized by various forms of Chinese elements, from the color of street-light poles and the unique storefronts to the street signs in foreign languages and decorations and peculiar souvenirs in oriental styles, which promote the perception of a "Chinese" place. Those urban forms have highlighted something that are visually different from the familiar and known mainstream norms – the Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. The noticeable architectural differences have marked the visual boundary of the "local" or "we" for the urban center occupied by the white-dominated population and the "foreign" or "other" for the Chinatown occupied by Asian immigrants. The unfamiliar urban forms based on Chinese culture and the perception of spatial foreignness or otherness create an excitement of a break from daily routine and encourage cultural exoticism and curiosity.

The differences between the "local" or "we" and the "foreign" or "other" initially can be easily recognized by physical distinctions from urban forms and the appearances of the population living in the Chinatown. More profound understandings of the difference are driven by different patterns of life behaviors, cultural practices, and perspectives, most of which can also be reflected in the built environment. Like other cities in the US, Seattle has been white dominated since its beginning. It is natural for the white residents to consider themselves to be the norm and the mainstream, the centered "local" or "we" while perceive everything else

beyond its central domain as the peripheral "foreign" or "other".[11] In addition, this perception of "local" vs. "foreign" and "we" vs. "other" also implies a sense of social power hierarchy with "local" and "we" regarded as superior and the "foreign" and "other" as inferior. As the dominating social group, the white residents initiated the separation of the Chinatown from the Downtown in the beginning and enforced the development of the boundary to reinforce the separation to eventually create a "foreign" or "other" place. For the Chinese immigrants, the marginalized group, they had to passively accepted the designated boundaries and separations. Therefore, the "foreign" forms of Chinese architecture were restricted within the Chinatown as socially inferior forms for a socially inferior place.

The beginning of Chinatowns in North America was a product of anti-immigrant movements in the 1800s and the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.[12] The inassimilable difference and the lack of language skills and social support reinforced their spatial marginalization and isolation from their urban contexts. The early urban forms of the Chinatown in Seattle were characterized by a concentration of Chinese immigrants and economic activities within one or more city blocks that formed a unique component of the urban fabric, which created "an idiosyncratic oriental community amidst an occidental urban environment" [13]and started the process of being "foreign" or "other."

The first noticeable culture-based urban forms used in Seattle's Chinatown was the physical boundaries that carried little cultural meanings or perceptions but was used to mark ethnic difference and cultural isolation for "foreigners" and "others". In the end of the 1880s and beginning of the 1900s, the anti-Chinese sentiment, exclusions from entering certain occupations and discrimination in the labor market led to the Chinese immigrants' concentration into certain retail and service occupations that were generally undesired by ordinary Americans.[14] Like many other Chinatowns in North America, Seattle's Chinatown was formed in a marginal and undesirable land near the Downtown center.[15] Railroad tracks and industrial warehouses from the west, steep terrain to the north and east, and the undeveloped lands to the south isolated the Chinatown from other urban communities both visually and physically, despite the close distance to the Downtown. The physical boundaries that varied in different formats ranging from railroad tracks to harsh topographies made the physical boundary of the Chinatown clearly defined as a "other" place and separated it from its immediate surroundings. This physical isolation not only marked the different social, economic and ethnic status of the residents in the Chinatown and pushed them away from the mainstream society but also fostered a strongly inward community that served as the cocoon of comfort zone and provided a home feeling to immigrants living there. It was the physical boundary that allowed ethnic cultural representations to be possible within Chinatown. Also, due to the Chinatown was physically isolated, the cultural & ethnic built forms of Chinese architecture could survive from the interventions from the outside forces and started to grow into the native urban forms of the Chinatown.

The immediate change of urban forms with the Chinese immigrants' moving-in was the increasing street signs in Chinese characters and store fronts decorated with simple Chinese architectural elements, which reflected the active attempts to attract customers with Chinese backgrounds. They demonstrated the increasing concentration of social and economici activities of Chinese immigrants within the Chinatown. Those early examples of culture-based forms were simple, humble, easily affordable, and attached to existing buildings, which echoed the general socioeconomic status of Chinese immigrants who lacked the economic and social /political resources to afford more complicated culture-based forms. Those simple architectural elements also reflected the symbolic separations of spaces caused by language barriers and boundaries of cultural practices.

The Chin Gee Hee Building (Fig. 1) built in 1889 at the 2nd and Washing Street by rich Chinese immigrants was an important example of how Chinese immigrants responded to being treated as "foreigners" or "others." This building was the first brick structure in Chinatown finished after the 1889 Great Seattle Fire. Its south façade was featured with a unique balcony that had a simplified Chinese hip roof with two Greek Ionic columns on both sides. This odd combination reflected an early example of grassroot approach towards a more cosmopolitan identity. The Chinese style roof indicated strong ethnic reflections of home culture while the Greek Ionic columns represented the desire of merging into the mainstream society. This example highlighted the dichotomous view hold by many Chinese immigrants: on one hand they wanted to retain their cultural connections to their homes, which implied that they acknowledged the imposed identity as the "foreign" or the "other," different from other residents of the city; but on another hand, they were eager to end the social and physical isolation to join the mainstream, which reflected the reality of being socially inferior.

Since the 1920s, residents of Chinatown had more financial and social resources and more confidence to celebrate their cultural roots. In 1924, the completion of the Chinese Grand Opera Theater marked the first building in the Chinatown designed by a Chinese American architect, Wing Sam Chinn who was born in San Francisco and received architecture degree from the University of Washington.[16] Its western façade, the main façade, used a simplified form of a traditional Chinese gateway – the façade had it central portion being taller and having more decorations sided by two identical portions, a typical design treatment used in traditional Chinese architecture to highlight the significance of the center. This form celebrated a stronger representation of ethnic elements, reflecting a stronger ethnic consciousness and defining a stronger "foreign" place. This style was also employed by several buildings in Seattle's Chinatown in later times. In addition, the development of a formal cultural facility for Chinese opera symbolized the fact that the Chinatown also became a center of Chinese immigrants' social activities.

Fig. 1: Chin Gee Hee Building. (photo taken by the author).

Since the 1960s, the City of Seattle attempted to remove the social and cultural isolation of the community and celebrate the new development of multiculturalism to promote tourism. With this changing context, the Chinatown was turned into an icon of "foreign" or "other" to be celebrated and protected. In order to demonstrating Seattle's multiculturalism, the Chinatown should be made more "Chinese" – in another word, to be more "foreign" or "other." Promoting architectural motifs and symbols of traditional China in urban forms becomes more reasonable and necessary as those distinct forms and elements create a strong sense of unfamiliarity, leading to a sensory stimulation and voyeurism.

The Hing Hay Park (Fig.2) was an example of efforts to commodify Seattle's Chinatown to be an affordable amusement of visiting a different culture by repackaging the "foreign" and "other" places. As the first formal public plaza within the Chinatown, the Hing Hay Park built in the 1970s was featured an authentic Chinese pavilion in the center and a unique pavement pattern based on the idea of Eight Diagram (Ba Gua), a traditional symbol of Taoism. The culturally based built forms used for the Hing Hay Park promoted the stereotypic image of the Chinatown being "foreign" and "distant", echoing typical visual perception of China by middle-class and upper-class white tourists.

After 2000, new developments have continued the effort to reinforce the definition of "oriental otherness." More full-scale culture-based forms have been employed to sell exotic experience. The construction of an authentic traditional Chinese gateway structure in 2007, the Chinatown Gate (Fig.3), marking the west entrance of the Chinatown is a noticeable example. The 45-foot-tall Chinatown Gate, located at the corner of

South King Street and the 5th Avenue, took the form of a traditional Chinese *Pailou* archway with authentic ornaments of various Chinese elements, highly similar to those in other Chinatowns in Vancouver, B.C., San Francisco, and Washington D.C. As a result, the border between Chinatown and Downtown Seattle was marked by a symbolic ethnic architecture that was used to epitomize cultural differences to boost local distinctiveness.

Fig. 2: The Hing Hay Park. (photo taken by the author).

Fig. 3: The Chinese style Gate marks the entrance of Seattle's Chinatown. (photo taken by the author).

2.2. Shanghai's Thames Town

Replicating European villages, American towns, and other foreign landmarks, the copycat towns in China cultivate a sense of "foreignness" or "otherness" through deliberate design and cultural branding associated with economic intentions and strategies. In the end of the 1990s, the Shanghai Government made an ambitious and aggressive urban plan to relieve the fast growth of its urban population by constructing nine satellite cities /towns around Shanghai. This plan, titled "One City -Nine Towns," intended to develop ten new cities, including one large urban sub-center (Songjiang New City) and nine urban towns to accommodate 5.4 million residents by 2020 in order to reduce population within the city center and to form a polycentric growth.[17] According to the plan, each city /town would provide urban infrastructures and amenities, job opportunities, and residences that made a closer linkage among work, live and play. Although there was no evidence of urban sprawl in China comparable to the US case during that time, the plan was highly inspired by the concept of New Urbanism that was prevalent among urban studies and practices in the West. With the ambition of not only demonstrating technically advanced construction for sustainability but also showing the developed urban aesthetics connected to predominantly Western lifestyles, the plan designated different themes to the ten new urban developments.[18] The theme of Songjiang New City was planned to be built into an English town while other nine towns were designated with different themes, including German town, Australian Town, Spanish Town, American Town, Dutch Town, Scandinavian Town, Italian Town, Euro-American Town, and finally, Chinese Town. This announced the beginning of copycat town development in China.

The Shanghai City Government has never released its purpose of building new towns with Western themes. Among the limited numbers of studies, some scholars attempt to provide explanations. Bosker considers architectural reproduction, or replication is a common practice in Chinese architecture, very different from the Western views of practice.[19] Hartog sees it as an effort of experiment to establish a theme of a new town in order to promote the sense of a place.[20] Hassenpflug noticed that the concept of New Urbanism was introduced to China during the period when the One City – Nine Towns plan was being developed.[21] As a result, he concludes that the development of new towns with Western forms is an effort of creating the pictorial representation of the culturally "typical" (he refers to typical American and European styles) urban planning and designs, which satisfies the emerging needs of China's increasing middle-class for modern life.

As a part of effort to make the Songjiang New City to be an English town, the one square kilometer big Thames town (named after the River Thames in southern England) was constructed in the west of the city with the intention of providing residences for 10,000 residents, most of whom were employees of the nearby Songjiang University District. Atkins Group, a British architectural firm, was in charge of planning and

designing the Thames Town from 2001 to 2006 where the majority of building forms were low density residences and single-family homes with massive green spaces (60%) and a large lake.

The entire layout and all building forms are unique – none of them can be found in any town (old or new) in China. The Thames Town is modeled after a rural British village in Berkshire or Surrey, filled with architectural forms from a variety of British styles, including Tudor, Victorian, Georgian, Edwardian, and Gothic. The majority of buildings are two or three floors tall with ground floors reserved for commercial or retail use. Almost all buildings are featured by textured wall surfaces and steep rooflines with many gables facing different directions. A large Gothic church, a replica of the Christ Church in Bristol, England, stands in the center of the town, becoming the most significant landmark of the Thames Town. To promote the presence of British ambience, status of famous British figures (historical or fictional), such as Winston Churchill, Shakespeare, Byron, Newton, Princess Diana, David Beckham, James Bond and Harry Potter, are placed around the town and all the streets leading to the church are named after a British town, like Oxford Street, Kent Street, and Gower Street. In addition, all the gated residential complexes also get British-sound names – Victoria Garden, Hampton Garden, Rowland Heights, Kensington Garden, and Chelsea Garden (Fig.4). Even the security staffs dressed like the British Royal Guards with the red jackets, black mandarin collar and gold trimmings, and the black tall cap.

Fig. 4: Buildings within the Thames Town borrow architectural forms from different British styles in history. (photo taken by the author).

In an attempt to create urban public spaces reflecting the historical changes of a British town, the Thames Town defines three centers for public activities with various architectural styles in different eras – the Historical Town Center featured by a Gothic church and an open square (called the Love Square) with buildings in Georgian and Victorian styles, the Waterfront District featured by buildings in red and grey bricks for small scale shops, stores, cafes, restaurants, and pubs, representing early Industrial era, and the Civic Square at the east side of the town, enclosed by more modern facades leading the view to the New Songjiang Sub-Urban Center across the lake.

However, the Thames Town is not just a simple replication of a British town. In contrast, it is a British town made in China. It still reflects many spatial features often employed by urban planning, design, and development in China. One important distinction between neighborhood spaces in China and Britain is the clear separation of private spaces from the public spaces. For example, most of the land in the Thames Town is occupied by gated residential complexes, a popular real estate type in China for middle- and upper-class population, where residential uses are well protected within the enclosed complexes through fenced buildings. Inside each residential complex, there is an internal garden, and a centered public space used only by the residents of the complex. The connection to the outside public life is only through several secured gates. Gated residential complexes have divided the whole Thames Town into multiple segregated pieces where the British inter-connected streets and neighborhood public spaces are converted into semi-enclosed or enclosed Chinese luxury residences. Within those private luxury residential complexes, most villas and single-family houses are placed along the south-north orientation with inner gardens and centers that can be found in most urban residences in Chinese cities. In addition, buildings that are used to enclose a gated complex are mixed used – the first floor (sometimes including the second floor) are normally used for retail /commercial purposes facing the streets while the upper floors are condo units accessed from the inside of the complex (Fig.5).

As a result, the Thames Town is not an essentially a replication of a British town. Rather, it is a "Chinese" neighborhood with "British" facades. Symbolic spatial forms are strategically extracted from their British contexts and are purposively repackaged into a Chinese neighborhood. In the Thames Town, the focus is not to make British residential forms to recreate another kind of residence but to make any form that look like "British" to be consumed for commercial /retails purposes. Hence, the British forms and elements are highly concentrated along the major streets where the most public activities are located, while all the Chinese elements are hide behind. By doing so, the Thames Town creates a massive theater set – users move around the three-dimensional built environment filled with symbolic British spatial forms to shop, to play, and to engage with other users. They are the actors of a reality show taking place every day on the main streets of the

Thames Town. In the meantime, the real life is also continuing in the backstage areas where the Chinese forms provide supports of daily needs for the Chinese residents.

Fig. 5: In the gated communities within the Thames Town, buildings are mixed used – the ground floor is primarily used for retail /commercial purposes while upper floors are residential units. (photo taken by the author).

It is the co-existence of the British forms and Chinese forms at the Thames Town that makes this neighborhood attractive to the targeted Chinese users. To a larger extent, the replications of British forms have created an assemblage of architectural images of a British town that satisfies the Chinese users' fantasy of being in a "foreign" place. However, the sense of a "foreign" place can only be achieved when a sense of "local" also presents. Hence, it is necessary to have the Chinese forms as the spatial carriers to support behaviors and activities that make the Chinese users comfortably stay in their daily life patterns while being visually in a "foreign" place. In addition, the contrast between the British forms and the Chinese contexts has further promoted the sense of "foreign" as the visual features and experience offered by the Thames Town is unique and exclusive. Consequently, a new cultural enclave has been created to offer exotic experience of British some towns.

The exotic forms at the Thames Town create an exotic image that makes the exotic experience possible. The Thames Town has immediately become a giant El Dorado of wedding photography site for Shanghai and its surrounding region.[22] Wedding services occupy many stores along the major streets. Every day, dozens of new married or soon-to be married couples are posing in front of buildings with clear British forms, presenting that they are in a foreign land. Sometimes, couples are dressed in their Western wedding suits

taking Victoria carriages clatter around the streets and alleys. Exotic experience is also promoted by exotic cultural practices and life patterns. Hotels, cafes, bars, restaurants, and tea rooms within the town filled with Western food, drinks, furniture, decorations, and signs allow Chinese users to taste a "foreign" experience without physically going overseas. Western art lovers can easily find many exhibitions, presentations, and talks at the two public museums, one public art gallery and multiple private art galleries on a daily base. In 2011, the church at the Historical Town Center, the most outstanding landmark of the town, opened to the public (Fig.6). A public Catholic mass led by priests and attended by hundreds of worshippers and visitors is hold every Sunday afternoon. Thousands of visitors are drawn to stroll around the Thames Town every day, seeking leisure, recreational, and cultural experience within the British style setting.

Fig. 6: A large Gothic church, a replica of the Christ Church in Bristol, England, stands in the center of the town, becoming the most significant landmark of the Thames Town. (photo taken by the author).

However, unlike the Disney Resort or Universal Studio, the Thames Town is not a theme park that only draws visitors from the outside. The town is also designed as a home for thousands of residents. Although it experienced some struggles in early years to attract enough home buyers, the population of the Thames Town has gradually increased from 900 in 2008 to 3,500 in 2022.[23] There are two grocery stores, one sports center with a large gym, a swimming center, and facilities for basketball, tennis, badminton, and ping pong. There are one post office, two daycares, an elementary school and a middle school. There are two bookstores, a clinic, budget hotels, and many convenience stores and small restaurants. Compared to many other newly developed urban neighborhoods, the Thames Town provides a far more comprehensive and better infrastructure to meet local residents' daily life needs. The Chinese forms ensure all residents to have their daily lives continue in the Chinese way like any other urban population in any Chinese cities, while the British

forms bring the residents a sense of privilege and prestige as there is no other neighborhood in China with the same or similar architectural features. Therefore, the Thames Town is regarded as a luxury neighborhood where the housing cost is more expensive than other places without the Western themes. The residents of the Thames Town also consider themselves to be more cosmopolitan and socially competent.

3. THE WINDOW OF LINKAGE FOR TWO CO-EXISTENCE WORLDS

As a product of social and spatial segregation, Chinatowns supports the transition of most immigrants to a new place by offering opportunities for housing and jobs through their internal institutions, informal ethnic economy, and culturally familiar urban forms. Being an ethnic enclave, Seattle's Chinatown creates a native authentic home culture in a foreign place to the immigrants, while, at the same time, giving a microscopic view of a foreign culture to the mainstream residents. In the urban center of Seattle, there are two co-exiting worlds: Downtown Seattle and the Chinatown. Although the separation of both is the focus of spatial policies in early times and the main selling point for tourism market in recent times, the Chinatown has always been a place for the contact and engagement of different ethnic groups.

In contemporary China, the Thames Town presents an example of new ideas and strategies for urban neighborhood development, particularly those imported from the West. Besides its British architectural features, the Thames Town indicates some superior features that are hardly found in other new developments in China: lower density, massive green spaces and public spaces, human-scale streets, pedestrian-oriented circulation, and rural style landscaping. It provides a great opportunity for the Chinese architects, urban designers, planners, policymakers, and developers to learn how to apply the Western design and planning principles to help modernize China's urban spaces. In addition, by employing Western forms, the Thames Town creates a tangible and physical product of a British fairy tale that meets the Chinese users' imagination of what Britain is like and what modern life is like. For British people and Western users, the Thames Town is a fake British town. But for millions of Chinese who have not travelled to the West, the Thames Town is real as it exactly reflects their mental images of a British town.

In Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 movie "Rear Window," the main character, Jeff spent his days and nights watching his neighbors through the rear window of his apartment. The window showed his neighbors' lives as images in a cinema-like view for Jeff. He was the film's spectator and watched from his chair. Here, Jeff's world co-existed with his neighbors' worlds. Through his window, Jeff stayed in his world while having a limited participation in other worlds by watching. For Jeff, it was not important about what he could see from his window. Rather, it was critical about what he wanted to see, and if he could see what he wanted to see.

As a basic physical spatial element, a window is a divider, defining, separating and linking the inside and outside. Therefore, windows, as a means of spatial element, dissect a space into two different kinds of fragments. It also marks the boundary between the two different spatial fragments. By doing so, windows divide the space users into two different groups, the insiders and the outsiders, according to their physical locations to the window. Windows control the possibility of access. When the windows are closed, the insiders are restricted to being inside while the outsiders stay outside. This paper considers both the Thames Town and Seattle's Chinatown perform as a "window" to deliver an opportunity of linking the two co-existing worlds that both the Thames Town and Seattle's Chinatown are attempting to divide.

As discussed above, with the prevailing references of Chinese forms in the Chinatown and British forms in the Thams Town, a strong Chinese and British imageries are constructed respectively to promote the cultural "difference" and the experience of a "foreign" or "other" place. However, the point of exoticism is not just about having the symbolic forms of Chinese or British elements. Rather, the sense of exoticism can be only achieved when the Chinese forms are placed into an enclave that are surrounded by non-Chinese forms and when the British forms are placed into an enclave that are surrounded by non-British forms. That means that the sense of exoticism can only be achieved through the co-existence of two morphologically different worlds – 1) the Chinatown and the outside world and 2) Thames Town and its surroundings. What matters is not the Chinatown is a presence of China, or the Thames Town is a reference of Britain; but the Chinatown is a presence of China in American contexts, and the Thames Town is built in Chinese soil. This suggests that the non-Chinese outsiders and the Chinatown's surrounding contexts are equally critical to the exotic forms in the Chinatown; the Chinese forms and contexts are highly significant to the exotic experience in the Thames Town. The two morphologically different worlds should be first clearly defined and then linked. Back to Hitchcock's movie, what was interesting was not about Jeff's neighbors' lives, or Jeff's behaviors. Rather, it was about how Jeff could watch his neighbors from his apartment and how we could watch Jeff's behaviors from our world that made the movie attractive.

Through a window, a meaningful linkage between two different worlds can be established. The differences of the two worlds are marked by the comparison of "local" forms in one world and "foreign" forms in another. A window is the interface between the two worlds, which allows people in one world to watch another world. In addition, a window makes it possible for people in one world to have a controlled participation to a different world with convenience and protection, just like we were watching Jeff watching his neighbors from his chair. Therefore, through windows, users can access exterior scenic views while still staying in safe & comfortable interior; bank tellers and clients can handle businesses while remaining in their own domains; and game players can explore virtual world while still being in the real world.

The Chinatown provide both the outsiders and the Chinese immigrants with a controlled participation in each other's world while staying within their own worlds. The Chinatown acts as a magnet for Chinese foods, gadgets, clothing, souvenirs, arts, and life patterns, offering various opportunities of affordable recreation, shopping, and entertainment that anyone can develop a controlled participation into Chinese culture without shifting their own cultural practices. A tourist can experience some kinds of Chinese culture without physically travel to China. She can order a Chinese noodle in a restaurant and purchases some Chinese gifts from shops in Chinatown. But eventually, she will leave the Chinatown and return to her own world. She can choose if she wants to come back or not later. In the meantime, the Chinatown serves as a haven and home for Chinese immigrants to develop their skills, confidences, and wealth that enable them to interact with the outside world. That means the Chinatown prepares Chinese immigrants to be Americans while allowing them to maintain the Chinese cultural practices and identity. They can try to find a job or go to a school outside of the Chinatown. If they do not feel comfortable being outside, they can always come back to the Chinatown to return to their old lives.

In the Thames Town, Chinese users are given a chance to explore Western customs and traditions without being forced to give up their own cultures and lifestyles. In addition to the visual forms that promote the British sensibility, the Thames Town offers the facilities like shops, café houses, restaurants, galleries, religious spaces, and public spaces that make the Chinese users exposed to the British cultural products and practices without traveling to Britain. With affordable time and cost, a regular Chinese can explore British history in an exhibition in a gallery, tour British architecture by walking around the town, enjoy a cup of cream tea with scones at a tearoom, read a chapter of A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens in a quiet corner of the street, and head to a restaurant for a nice meal of fish and chips. No matter if the Chinese user is a visitor to the Thames Town or a local resident, she will eventually return to her Chinese life routine. But she can always choose the time and the format how she likes to engage with the "foreign" culture again next time. For the local residents, the close proximity to a "foreign" culture and the capability of easily switching between the "local" and "foreign" worlds reflect a privilege that is exclusive to those who can only afford to purchase the housing units at the Thames Town. As a result, the physical forms of the British architecture also become the symbols of the wealth and social powers of the residents.

There are four layers of windows found in Seattle's Chinatown and the Thames Town:

1. Delivering exotic experience to tourists and visitors: the Chinese forms in the Chinatown and the British forms in the Thames Town become the window for outside tourists and visitors who seek exotic experience of Chinese and British culture respectively. Through street signs, ethnic architectural elements, and decorations, and the intentionally built ethnic landmarks (like the

Chinatown Gate and the Church in the Thames Town), the tourists and visitors can have a controlled exploration by experiencing certain foreign cultural products without travel.

2. Ensuring a controlled cultural exploration to the residents: For the immigrants living inside the Chinatown, the Chinatown serves as the home in a foreign land, offering safety and security and supporting the transition to a new place. In addition to allow the immigrants to identify and access key resources from the inside, the Chinatown also is the window through which the immigrants start to taste American culture and life outside of the Chinatown while knowing there is a cocoon of comfort base to back their explorations. For the residents of the Thames Town, the British forms provide a playground where they can comfortably engage with a "foreign" culture but the Chinese forms at the backstage are the real homes where the essential daily life is taking place.
3. Defining an anomalous and distort format of cultural representation: For the visitors from China, the Chinatown represents a place of cultural anomaly and distortion. In spite of the constructed "Chinese imagery," the Chinatown is still a neighborhood in a foreign setting, which demonstrates how the native Chinese culture is manipulated and changed to fit the perceived image of China by Americans. Therefore, the Chinatown presents a different kind of "foreign" or "other" to the Chinese visitors who are interested in exploring the marriage of Chinese culture and its American contexts. In the Chinatown, there are many buildings that present the ethnic Chinese architectural elements in unusual ways or combine Chinese elements with other non-Chinese elements.

   An interesting fact is that there is no Thames Town in Britain. The Thames Town is a unique product made in China, although it is designed by British architects. For people from the Britain and the West, the Thames Town is not only a distorted and comical reflection of British architecture with Chinese elements, but also presents a new way of architectural approach – it treats the entire culture and history of Britain as a grocery store where different products can be picked, ordered, and remade to create a distinctive product that fits the mental image of Britain by the Chinese people.

4. Becoming a means of place branding: Seattle's Chinatown today is becoming a colorful icon of multiculturalism for the city when its unique ethnic architectural forms continue making it visually and morphologically different from the surrounding contexts. Making the Chinatown more Chinese is not just the need of Chinatown's residents, but also a critical demand of the city. For Seattle, Chinatown is a symbol of cultural inclusiveness and cosmopolitanism, and an invaluable asset and showcase that celebrates its historical connection to Asia and its achievements of cultural and social diversity. Therefore, Chinatown is a window that promotes the positive image of Seattle.

   In Shanghai, the Thames Town is an unprecedented product of a pilot study that introduces new planning and design ideas imported from the West. It is a symbol that highlights the capability and

technology advancements of a Chinese city that can not only make new developments in the Chinese way, but also remake an entire Western town and beyond, which becomes the clear evidence of Shanghai's progress. Through the window of the Thames Town, Shanghai is making a powerful statement: it is and will be continuing to open to the world and is willing to absorb everything from everywhere.

4. CONCLUSION

Built a century apart, Seattle's Chinatown and Shanghai's Thames Town have been created and developed by totally different social, political, economic, and cultural forces. Although they are tremendously different in many aspects, they share one thing in common: the two cases have heavily and intentionally employed culture-based forms to create an "ethnic foreignness." Through the one century of enormous changes in Seattle's Chinatown and the recent development of the Thames Town in Shanghai, the symbolic forms of a foreign culture are borrowed, repackaged, and represented to highlight the visual and morphological differences of the place.

Since the sense of differences primarily comes from the visual and morphological differences, it is critical to pick spatial forms that can be easily recognized as a representation of a foreign culture. Therefore, the two cases are not simply a replication or a fake representation of foreign culture. Rather, certain spatial forms are carefully chosen from the assembly of architectural symbols from the whole of history. There is no Chinatown in China and there is no Thames Town in Britain. Both cases make a distinctive way to combine different architectural forms from a foreign culture for the creation of an exotic place. From this point, both Seattle's Chinatown and Thames Town are the original creation.

In both cases, the local forms are a significant integral part of the place, just like the foreign forms. The local forms contribute to creating a "local" world that is visually and morphologically different from the "foreign" world defined by the "foreign" forms. Only through the constant comparison between the local and foreign forms can Chinatown and the Thames Town successfully deliver the exotic experience to the users. Hence, both cases perform as a "window" where two visually and morphologically different worlds are divided but co-exist.

Both Seattle's Chinatown and Thames Town also play the role of a window by linking the two opposite but co-exited worlds by providing the opportunity to participate in another world in a controlled manner. The culture-based forms allow users mainly in one culture to explore a foreign culture with affordable time and cost. More importantly, the exploration is well controlled by the mixture of the local forms and the foreign forms.

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BRANDING THE DISTRICTS OF COSMOPOLITAN CAIRO: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DISTRICTS IN BRANDING MULTICULTURAL CITIES

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BRANDING THE DISTRICTS OF COSMOPOLITAN CAIRO: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DISTRICTS IN BRANDING MULTICULTURAL CITIES

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Branding cosmopolitan cities like Cairo is crucial for development. Cairo's multicultural nature makes it an ideal study medium. This research investigates the relationship between cosmopolitanism and place branding in three Cairo districts. It identifies district branding elements through literature and interviews with key figures. District branding components include social, functional, and historical dimensions. The study highlights district branding's significance in cosmopolitan cities, uncovering individualism, universalism, and multiculturalism that shape Cairo's identity. Findings have implications for urban planners and policymakers. with potential for future research on other districts in Cairo and other cosmopolitan cities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism refers to the coexistence of diverse cultures, ideologies, and lifestyles within a shared urban space. Place branding, on the other hand, involves creating and promoting a unique identity for a place to attract tourists, businesses, and talent. Despite their distinct focuses, cosmopolitanism and place branding share potential commonalities, particularly in their emphasis on individualism, universalism, and multiculturalism. This paper explores these relationships in the context of Cosmopolitan Cairo, a city known for its multi-layered heritage. Following this introduction, the paper outlines its research aim and objectives, details the methodology adopted, analyzes findings in light of existing literature, and concludes with implications for place branding and cosmopolitan city development.

2. RESEARCH SCOPE

This research investigates the relationships between cosmopolitanism and place branding by exploring different branding approaches for three districts in Cairo, namely El-Gamaleya, Heliopolis, and Nasr City.

The objective is to identify the elements of branding districts in Cairo. To achieve this, the research relies on a district branding model [1], followed by an empirical study incorporating semi-structured interviews with 21 key figures in branding, urban planning, and local residents. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, transcribed, and translated.

As place branding combines physical attributes with intangible elements[2] like people [3]and culture[4], questions were crafted to elicit responses reflecting both tangible and intangible aspects[5]. The study employed a qualitative research design approach [6]. Through repeated readings of participant responses, key words were extracted, and answers were coded to identify main dimensions and secondary categories of place brand

dimensions. The findings suggest that place branding at the district level is multifaceted, and the results will be discussed below.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes the findings of the interviews through the lens of existing literature and authors' interpretation. The following discussion will categorize the findings into three dimensions: social, functional, and historical (Table 1). However, it is essential to note that these classifications are not exclusive, and significant intersections and overlaps exist between them.

	Dimensions	Categories	Sub-categories
District's Brand Dimension	Social Dimension	The People	Residents' characteristics
		The activities	Place-Specific Activities
			Time-Specific Activities
		The feelings	The feelings towards the district
		The stories	Media Portrayal
			Inherited stories and Myths
	Functional Dimension	Built Environment	Urban Features
			Architectural features
			Iconic buildings and star architects
		Accessibility	District's location
			Mobility
		Services	Commercial
			Craftsmanship
			Food Outlets
			Craftsmanship
			Educational
			Religious
	Historical Dimension	District's History	Medieval district
			Colonial district
			Modern district

Table 1 The dimensions of district branding (source: author).

The Social Dimension

The findings of this study reveal that the social dimension is a major theme, which can be further subdivided into four categories: the people, the activities, the feelings, and the stories.

The people

This study reveals a mutual connection between the place and its people, suggesting that they are inseparably linked and cannot be considered in isolation from one another. Interviews' responses emphasize that the district's identity is deeply rooted in its people and shaped by their practices and daily lives. The unique characteristics of individual residents significantly influence the identity of the district. People often form impressions of a place based on their perceptions of the people who live there. This discussion will explore the integral role that local communities play in shaping a place brand, with a specific focus on the distinct personalities of Heliopolis, Nasr City, and El Gamaleya.

The early residents of a district can enrich it with their cultural backgrounds and social practices. Heliopolis district is a prime example; P15 noted, "*Heliopolis is about the early residents who lived in it."* Participants tended to describe Heliopolis as *"the district of style", "subtly elegant" and "vintage*", while all implying the characteristics of the early residents that resided in the area.

P14 described Heliopolis as having a unique cultural mix of its residents, likening it to a person with a hint of French background who is well-dressed in a stylish French suit, yet speaks with a rusty Arabic accent. *"The district will always have a hint of European influence, because of its early residents*" she noted. Furthermore, participants highlighted the early and ongoing presence of Armenians, Levantines and Christian communities, which has significantly impacted the social and physical fabric of the area. The daily practices and buildings of these communities have left a significant mark on Heliopolis. In its origin, Heliopolis was an example of social integration with its mix of population consisting of Egyptian elites, government employees and workers and a mix of European nationalities [7].

Moreover, the people of Heliopolis have maintained a strong sense of community to this day, fostering a sense of belonging, inclusivity, and social connections that ultimately contribute to the district's distinct brand identity. The presence of a community, as well as its interactions and relationships among members, were evident in the interviews. For instance, P2 state, " …*the 'Heliopolisaweya'* [8]*community shows a deep commitment to their district*." This quotation illustrates how the participant used a name to reinforce the community's sense of belonging. Consistent with the literature, assigning a tangible element, such as a name, clarifies and distinguishes the community's identity [9].

Nasr City has a different story to tell about its residents. Originally built as an extension of Cairo [10], it attracted many Egyptians returning from work in the Gulf countries. This group of people shared common tastes, purchasing habits, and backgrounds, which imparted a unique flavor to the district (see also [11]). As P3 noted, "*Nasr City always reminds me of the Gulf countries. My connection to Nasr City is that it's where people who returned from the Gulf bought homes. For me, it's closely linked to the era when many Egyptians traveled to work in the Gulf and then returned to settle.*" Over time, specific areas in Nasr City became a hub for international students studying at Al-Azhar University [12], which has dorms in the area. P4, P20, and P21 noted the influence of temporary expat residents on the district. Many of these students come from Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, China and Azerbaijan, bringing with them their cultural influences and preferences [13]. This diversity is reflected in the social fabric of some areas in Nasr City. In recent years, the unstable situation in Syria has led to an influx of Syrian expats settling in various parts of Cairo, including Nasr City (see also[14]). These expats have been an added value to the social landscape of the district. According to P2, "*Nasr City is now home to a significant number of Syrian expats".*

For El-Gamaleya, participants' perceptions of the district remained rooted in its socio-cultural heritage. P14 described it as "*a woman wearing a Haid (Melaya Laf) or a man wearing a jellabah and tarboush.*" evoking a sense of timeless tradition. P7 echoed this sentiment, portraying the district's residents as "*friendly shop owners and locals whose exceptional hospitality, genuine friendliness and creativity in their interactions and product presentations make visitors feel welcome."*

Despite the impact of globalization and urban transformation in traditional and historical districts[15], participants' descriptions suggest that El-Gamaleya has managed to retain its authentic character. This is a testament to the importance of sustaining the district's social identity, which is deeply rooted in its people. Local residents play a vital role in shaping this identity and creating an authentic brand image that resonates with outsiders. El Hakeh, (2018) confirms that by engaging with local residents and embracing a grassroots approach, it is possible to conserve Historic Cairo's cultural heritage and deliver a genuine place brand that reflects its unique character.

Ultimately a place brand is influenced by both its original residents and the new ones, where both have an effect the character of the place. Previous research suggests that effective place branding requires starting with the people [16]. Residents are proven to be a critical active part in shaping a place and a place brand [17]. The interviews highlight the crucial role that people play in shaping the district's brand. A notion that was also highlighted in the literature [18].

This concept is echoed in cosmopolitanism, which encourages the formation of new, diverse communities that can transform a place's demographic hence the place's brand [19]. When residents are perceived with a

strong connection to their place, they transform into place ambassadors who promote and represent their place [20].

The Activities

The activities taking place in the area were among the cornerstones of the social branding dimension. Some of these activities were sporadic, while others were permanent. Some of which were closely associated with the buildings and the streets which were the place-specific activities. While others were time-specific or the occasional activities that occur in relation to certain occasions or events that are particularly iconic in the district.

To begin with, for the place-specific activities, many participants associated their answers with their previous social practices in the area with has created an accumulated overall brand of the district. For instance, running in streets like those on the periphery of the Egyptian Military Academy in Heliopolis and Child's Park in Nasr City was mentioned by participants. Typically, runners jog along the outskirts of these locations, a trend P2 highlighted, noting the connection between running and the place's brand. Additionally, some activities were tied to specific buildings, such as The Merryland in Heliopolis, which several participants recalled as a childhood recreational spot. P15 stated*:" The Merryland, is the spot that all of the residents used to go there to feed the ducks when they were kids"*.

In contrast, time-specific activities were associated with particular occasions. The Korba Festival, for example, was closely tied to Heliopolis' brand, according to multiple participants (P2, P3, P5, P12, P14, P15). Similarly, El-Gamaleya was linked to the Holy Month of Ramadan, with P3 emphasizing the area's significance during this time. Furthermore, certain events like funerals and wedding ceremonies were also notable P7 mentioned that specific mosques in Nasr City host funerals and wedding events, holding particular significance during these occasions, and hence closely related to the brand of the district.

These place-specific and time-specific activities reflect the concepts of cosmopolitanism, where individualism is embedded in the unique characteristics of each activity. This, in turn, imbues a place with its distinct personality and brand. Meanwhile, multiculturalism is represented through the cultural richness that these activities bring to the place, enriching places and giving it a vibrant life. This interplay between individuality and cultural diversity gives the place a distinct place brand, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of branding urban environments in a cosmopolitan city.

The Feelings

This study highlights the significant role of emotional connections in shaping participants' descriptions of a district. Many participants closely tied the district's brand to their feelings towards it. For instance, Heliopolis was often associated with feelings of elegance and richness (P1, P7, P12,P12,P14), attributed to its colonial character and blend of civilizations .The district as referred by the feelings its old residents *"as a reminiscence of a romanticized hideout from Cairo's chaos of Cairo's old quarters presented a European lifestyle in a magical oriental context"* [21] p.294. . In contrast, El-Gamaleya evoked a sense of rootedness and authenticity, as P14 noted, "*You feel like you're back to your true self. And more connected to your roots*". Nasr City, on the other hand, was linked to feelings of modernity and newness. The interviews revealed a strong correlation between emotional attachment and brand association.

The distinct character of each district highlights the concept of individualism within cosmopolitanism, where unique districts' characteristics evoke users' feelings. This individuality is, in turn, reflected in the district's brand, setting it apart and making it memorable.

The Stories

Many participants shared connections to stories related to the district. These stories came from various sources, including formal media portrayals such as movies, TV shows, and books, which showcased a strong cultural association with the district. Additionally, participants shared inherited stories and myths passed down through generations, rooted in storytelling and traditions, which will be discussed further below.

Media portrayal: Participants often link brand images with various forms of media portrayals, such as celebrity figures, scenes from TV shows and movies, and even novels. For instance, the presence of celebrities in a particular district can add to its value and prestige. Participant P7 mentioned, *"The area was known to host many celebrities, a metro station near me is named after Faten Hamama who used to live nearby"*. Moreover, P13 stated that Ismailia Square in Heliopolis has been a filming location for several TV shows and movies, which has influenced the district's brand.

The written works of iconic authors like Naguib Mahfouz serve as another influential form of cultural communication. Mahfouz's novels, such as "Bayn al-Qasrayn", vividly portray life in historic areas like Islamic Cairo and El-Gamaleya, shaping perceptions of these districts. Participants P2, P5, and P14 highlighted the significant impact of Mahfouz's literary legacy on their understanding of these areas, noting how his works become intertwined with El-Gamaleya's place brand.

Place brand literature emphasizes the significant role of media in shaping our perceptions of reality, making it a primary source of knowledge about places [22]. This phenomenon aligns with cosmopolitanism's concept of universalism[23], where ideas about a place transcend its physical boundaries, gaining recognition beyond its borders.

Inherited stories/ myths: Conversely, branding associations can also stem from myths and inherited stories passed down through generations. Participants P3, P7, and P11 mentioned El Baron Palace, sharing stories of its assumed haunting, which sparked curiosity among visitors after its renovation. According to legend, Baron Empain's wife and daughter, who died under mysterious circumstances within the palace [24]. These stories, along with the palace's abandonment for years, led people to believe it was haunted. Hence, visiting the palace allows users to share and become part of this mystery as participants explained [25].

Similarly, In the case of El-Gamaleya district P2 remarked, "*This place* [El- Gamaleya] *is rich with stories and myths that hold immense cultural value associated with the district*". These stories often revolve around past residents. P2 shared tales of the Mamluks who once inhabited El-Gamaleya area, reporting interesting narrations like power struggles and mysterious deaths that have become part of the district's folklore.

Previous literature highlights the role of stories in promoting place brands and hence leveraging stories and rumors as a branding tool to attract visitors to places rich in stories and legends [26]. Freire (2005), Strandberg and Styvén (2019) suggests that place brand agents use stories to shape perceptions, educate audiences, and create mental images of places, helping individuals make sense of complex environments through narratives and storytelling.

The people, activities, feelings, and stories encompassing the social brand dimensions intertwine with other dimensions which will be further elaborated in the following sections.

The Functional Dimension

The functional dimension is another strong pillar to which participants tended to relate the brand of the district. The functional dimension holds several physical and tangible brand dimensions which include the Built Environment, Accessibility and Servies.

The Built Environment

Some of the participants showed particular interest in the physicality of the district, besides its social value. For example, P6, a street photographer mentioned that she visits the streets very early in the morning to capture the plain spaces and buildings. She emphasizes that the district's true essence lies not only in its social

dimension, but also in its physical characteristics, such as its streets, buildings, architectural details, urban spaces, and ornamentation, which hold inherent value and significance.

The participants' answers highlight the value of the built environment along four main categories. Firstly, the urban features which include the urban fabric and the streets, secondly the architectural features, which emphasize the inherent architectural value of the built environment. Then, iconic buildings /star architects, which focus on notable buildings or associations with renowned architects that contributed to the buildings' significance. Finally, this section will explore buildings with embedded cultural value, as identified by the participants.

Urban Features: Many participants commended the morphology and urban form of the studied districts. This was reflected differently in each of the districts studied.

Participants, including P1, P15, and P6, praised Heliopolis's urban fabric, highlighting the seven squares and coherent design that enhance the district's imageability and legibility. Others, such as P3, P5 and P7, commended the axial connectivity of some streets in Heliopolis, which create vistas leading to landmarks like the Basilique.

Originally, the district's master plan features spacious squares, wide streets, and boulevards, with carefully placed buildings creating a visually appealing landscape [27]. Heliopolis' planning was influenced by the "Garden City" concept [28]. Many participants referred to the district in relation to trees and greenery, although these features are not as widespread after recent developments [29]. Nevertheless, the concept of urban green spaces and trees remains intertwined with Heliopolis' place brand. According to participants' answers, Heliopolis still maintains its reputation as a green, European-inspired district. Aligning with the literature describing Heliopolis as a distinctive blend or oriental and European styles [30].

Participants described Nasr City's urban form as characterized by an iron grid fabric, facilitating easy navigation and street permeability (P3, P5, P7, P14). Additionally, the district's design features similar neighborhood green spaces surrounded by residential blocks, schools, and amenities at corners, as noted by P4, P5, and P8. Nasr City's orthogonal plan, composed of "super blocks"[31] with equally distributed service centers, modern styled buildings and green spaces, reflects its high modernist development. This design, influenced by socialist ideals, embodies state-sanctioned modernity [32].

P2 and P5 described El-Gamaleya's urban fabric, characterized by narrow alleys, organically formed streets, and historic gates, reminiscent of Islamic Cairo's morphology. P10 noted that the fabric is designed to be welcoming, stating "*the fabric is designed to accept people",* highlighting the Gates, the Qasaba [33] and the landmarks.

Participants P2 and P10 described the entrance from Bab El-Fetouh, lined with large mosques and smaller buildings, creating a hierarchical streetscape with intimate urban enclosures. They also noted the open plazas in front of monuments and the changing street patterns when approaching important landmarks, all of which reflect the traditional urban forms of Islamic Cairo.

Architectural Features: the architectural features within a district proved to be an important category of the functional dimension of branding

"*The first thing that comes to my mind when you ask about Heliopolis is the old buildings and their architectural style, they are authentic and elegant, in a very subtle way*" (P13) stated. Many participants reflected on the architectural styles of buildings in Heliopolis, which contribute to the district's value. For instance, P6 acknowledged that Heliopolis possesses its own distinct architectural identity, evident in the aesthetics of its building elevations. P19 further emphasized this point, noting, "*There's even a style named after Heliopolis' buildings, known as the Heliopolis style".* This statement is technically incorrect however it shows participants' enthusiasm for Heliopolis' architectural style. The architectural style of Heliopolis reflects the colonial context in which the district was formed, a topic that will be discussed in more detail later. Heliopolis is characterized by a unique blend of Western architecture combined with details inspired by Islamic architecture [34].

On the other hand, participants referred to Nasr City's "*cube-like buildings*" (P14), which in turn reflects the socialist ideals that influenced the modernist approach to the district's design.

Finally, El-Gamaleya P2 noted that the district features numerous unique buildings, such as Qalawun Complex and Beit El-Suhaymi. These buildings showcase details reflective of Islamic architecture. Some of these monuments, such as the Fountain and the School of Abdel-Rahman Katkhuda, feature building typologies that are exemplary Cairene inventions [35]. The fountain, strategically located at a street junction in El-Moez Street, possesses a two-story public fountain surmounted by an elementary school. The monument has three exposed facades, built with detailed ornamentation that reflects valuable architectural detailing. Many participants recalled that this monument embodies the image they have of El-Gamaleya, with one noting, *"Taking a picture there is the ultimate goal of visiting the place" P5.*

These architectural features hold not only architectural significance but also play a crucial role in defining the districts' brand. This phenomenon is reflected in the concepts of cosmopolitanism, where the universal familiarity of modern buildings in districts like Nasr City coexists with the unique architectural individuality of the distinctive heritage district of El-Gamaleya. Meanwhile, the multicultural nature of Heliopolis's architectural heritage has resulted in a distinctive identity that sets it apart.

Iconic Buildings and Star architects: The iconic buildings and star architects were represented differently in different districts.

In Heliopolis, participants highlighted the importance of iconic buildings and renowned architects. The Basilique building, for instance, was consistently cited (P1, P3, P5, P7, P12, P13, P14) as an iconic landmark, distinguished by its design, scale, and strategic location. Notable architects, such as Naoum Shebib who is the architect of Sanit Catherine's Church built in 1950 and Tawfik Abdel Gawad who designed Mahallawy Building 1949 [36], were also highlighted. Participants noted that their reputation can shape perceptions of the area. As P2 observed, the designer's name can significantly influence one's impression of the district.

In the modern district of Nasr City, many participants, especially architects, referenced the planning of the district planning done by architect Sayed Karim, acknowledging his approach, philosophies, and design. P1 and P2 noted the strong relationship between the brand of Nasr City and the architect Sayed Karim.

On the other hand, El Gamaleya was strongly related to the iconic buildings. The area holds many iconic and significant buildings. The iconic buildings were due to the unique architectural features, location or strategic importance. Like Qalawun Complex, or El-Suhaymi house.

In line with this, participants highlighted some buildings that host cultural events. For example, Ghernata building in Heliopolis was mentioned to be part of the place brand as it frequently hosts cultural events. "*This place tells the story of Heliopolis and could symbolize a brand of the district* "as P3 stated. Likewise, El-Suhaymi house in El-Gamaleya was mentioned to be part of the place brand of El-Gamaleya as it hosts several cultural and musical events that as P7 described it *"caters for a vintage and traditional taste"*.

Previous literature also reveals that the connection of places to specific cultural events[37] as an important branding dimension [38]. This highlights the multicultural essence of districts within a cosmopolitan city, an element that can be leveraged to create a unique and authentic place brand.

Accessibility: The accessibility category was discussed in terms of the district's location and mobility. Participants emphasized the importance of Nasr City's strategic location, with P15 noting, "*Nasr City is near the city center and adjacent to the airport, making it easily accessible for locals and foreigners alike.*" The district's accessibility was also attributed to its main arterial roads, which connect it to various destinations. For instance, The Autostrad Road in Nasr City was highlighted as a crucial link between several districts. Similarly, El-Gamaleya's central location among Cairo's districts was noted, however, many participants mentioned the challenges of reaching it due to high traffic and congestion. Moreover, the availability of public transportation in three districts was a key category that many participants shared.

Services

The interviews revealed that the availability of services in each district significantly contributes to its branding potential. This manifests differently in the three studied districts: Heliopolis, Nasr City, and El Gamaleya.

Commercial services: To start with, Heliopolis district is well known for its vibrant commercial scene, integral to its place brand. Participants emphasized its significance as a hub for various unique services and goods. As P1 noted, "*The commercial value is Heliopolis' most significant value".* For some, like P2, commercial activities evoke sentimental value: "*Beirut Street holds many unique commercial shops, with unique music tapes hard to find elsewhere".* This highlights the availability of specialized services uncommon elsewhere. P14 echoed this, stating, "*Heliopolis has everything: bakeries, supermarkets, tailors, and coffee shops".* P12 and P15 praised Medan El-Game'e for its comprehensive commercial offerings. This recognition extends beyond Egypt's borders, "*My friends living abroad come specifically to Medan El-Game'e in Heliopolis for its unique commercial offerings*". This highlights a universal essence in the commercial services offered within the district. Moreover, P16, a shop owner in Heliopolis, explained that he deliberately chose to open his first food and beverage branch in Heliopolis, aiming to *"leverage from the area's commercial strength and create a lasting association between his brand and the location, capitalizing on its distinct commercial character*" as P16 noted.

Nasr City was frequently described by participants as an area with a high concentration of commercial facilities. They noted the dense commercial activities in the streets and the numerous shopping malls throughout the district. P3 commented, *"Nasr is extremely consumer-centered, with countless shops and ads competing for attention."* P5 similarly observed, "*You can find everything in Nasr City, from small essentials to large items."* Both P5 and P10 used the Arabic phrase "*كل حاجه هتلاقيها من الابره للصاروخ" (*translating to *"from the needle to the rocket*") to describe the district's comprehensive offerings. P2 described Nasr City as "*self-sufficient*," elaborating, "*Everything is available, from restaurants to basic needs.*" P2 further stated that the ease of obtaining daily supplies made completing chores simpler. P15 echoed this, describing Nasr City as a place where *"mothers can buy what they need in seconds".* Furthermore, the presence of the Syrian community has, in turn, changed the commercial landscape of the district. According to P2, "*Nasr City is now home to a significant number of Syrian expats, who have introduced distinctive products that can only be found in Nasr City, thereby enriching its commercial landscape".*

Some participants strongly associated Nasr City with commercial malls, noting the district's significant growth in this area. P5 observed, *"In Nasr City, malls have surpassed traditional shops.*" P3 added, *"Notable buildings in Nasr City are mostly malls, such as El Akad Mall, El Serag Mall, and Tiba Mall.*" Certain malls, like City Stars with their many international brand shops, have gained international recognition, attracting foreign tourists (P15). This phenomenon reflects the universal familiarity of this shopping typology [39]. The significance of shopping malls

is especially clear in Nasr City, where the district's development coincided with the emergence of this building typologies, the privatized shopping malls[40].

El Gamaleya district was praised by many participants for its clustering of commercial areas. P7 noted, "*Commercial uses are clustered in El-Gamaleya, with well-known and distinct shopping zones for different kinds of products*". Specific areas like El Khayameya, El Nahaseen, and El-Atareen specialize in particular goods added to the district's distinct commercial offerings. This clustering intensifies commercial activity, making it more apparent. Several participants, including P13 and P5, highlighted the significance of the souq and Khan El Khalili in El Gamaleya. P7 emphasized, "*El Gamaleya's potential lies in Khan El-Khalili's products, which are the most common associations people make with the district.*" P10 described El Gamaleya as a *"localized souq and hub for unique trade, standing out in the Arab world"*. This commercial kind of activity represents the authentic and traditional commercial practice [41] and is a strong pillar to the place brand of El-Gamaleya.

Craftsmanship: Furthermore, another facet of the services is the craftsmanship present within the districts. In El Gamaleya, participants highlighted the enduring tradition of unique craftsmanship, passed down through generations. This notion was consistently noted by multiple participants (P2, P3, P5, P9, P11, P14, P15), who emphasized that El Gamaleya has preserved traditional craftsmanship. P7 further highlighted the district's significance, pointing to its abundance of craftsmanship and distinctive handcrafted goods. This emphasis on craftsmanship contributes to the district's distinctiveness and has a broader impact on the place's brand, as well as its universal recognition and appreciation

Food Outlets: Significantly, many participants associated the brand they envision for a district with its food offerings. For instance, P1 closely linked his childhood experiences in Heliopolis with its brand, which mostly involved frequenting food shops and indulging in street food. He emphasized, *"Kewider," "Chantey," "Evermans*," and "*Venus*" bakeries as establishments that have significantly shaped his perception. It's worth noting that these food outlets reflect the distinct European-Egyptian fusion flavor profile characteristic of Heliopolis district.

In contrast, P7 highlighted Nasr City's popularity, citing its diverse range of restaurants and caterers. The presence of Syrian expats has also contributed to the area's gastronomic landscape, introducing their distinctive goods. Conversely, participants fondly recalled El-Gamaleya's authentic restaurants, such as Umm Kalthom cafe, El Fishawy Cafe, and Farahat Grill, and local food carts like Zizo which serve traditional and authentic culinary reflecting El-Gamaelya's genuine and local characteristic.

Ultimately, this distinction in gastronomic offerings reflects the district's characteristic and highlights each district's individuality. Furthermore, the participants' spontaneous answers, which often mentioned a food

cart as the first thing that comes to mind when asked about a district, demonstrate the potential of gastronomy in branding a place. This finding aligns with the notion that gastronomy often serves as a foundational element of a place's brand [42].

Educational

The presence of educational services can significantly enhance a district's value, hence its brand. Educational facilities, ranging from institutions like Al-Azhar University's Nasr City campus to smaller, specialized local centers, can leave a lasting impact on the district's brand. These facilities not only boost the district's overall development but also contribute to the district's place brand.

In Heliopolis, participants highlighted notable schools like Lycée La Liberté Héliopolis which was established in1937 by The Mission Laïque Française which aims to spread French language and education in different parts of the world [43]. Participants also mentioned Notre Dame Des Apotres School Heliopolis that was founded in 1921 by French originated Sisters in Heliopolis [44]. And The Armenian Catholic Sisters' School which was established in 1937 by three Armenian Catholic nuns, aimed to provide education to the dispersed Armenian community in Cairo [45].

These schools were formed during the colonial era to serve the diverse population present since its foundation. These schools primarily reflect the district's multicultural nature.

In Nasr City, many associate the district with modern private sector schools like The Futures language Schools that was founded in 1993, with "*a mission establishing an educational model that would be replicable, affordable, and financially sustainable" [46].* And The Egyptian Language School which was founded in 1994 [47], as well as Al-Manhal Private Language School that was established in 1991 aiming to provide the *"best level of modern education to its students*"[48]. These educational facilities align with the modern socialist character of Nasr City. The emphasis on affordability and availability to all points to a clear direction in place branding, which is to emphasize the city's modern socialist character.

In contrast, El Gamaleya is characterized by traditional educational institutions, including Al-Azhar Mosque, which has served as a hub for learning for years. Additionally, Al Hussein University Hospital and the educational programs at Al Hussein Mosque further reflect the district's authentic and traditional approach to education.

Religious

Several participants emphasized the significant religious value of buildings in the district, which, in turn, gives the entire district with religious importance.

To start with, El-Gamaleya underscores its significant religious heritage, presenting a key category for the district branding. To start with, Al-Azhar Mosque, a pivotal Islamic institution, greatly contributes to the district's significance. Participants emphasized its importance, with P13 noting, *" Al-Azhar Mosque is a pivotal minaret and an important Islamic institution worldwide"*. Notably, the influence of this religious organization extends beyond the district's borders and the country, making a universal religious value. The area's religious significance is also rich by the presence of numerous iconic mosques, such as those found on El Moez Street. During prayer time, the street comes alive with the diverse and beautiful sounds of prayer calls radiating from each minaret, showcasing the richness of mosques in the area.

In Heliopolis district, participants recognized the significance of various religious buildings, including mosques and churches. P7 noted, "*Heliopolis has many important churches that attract visitors from afar, demonstrating a strong commitment to these institutions and highlighting the area's significant religious aspect.*" Notably, several churches are present in prominent squares, such as St. Fatima Church overlooking St. Fatima Square. Similarly, P12, P13, and P14 mentioned El Tharwa Mosque and Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz Mosque as frequent destinations for performing prayers, contributing to the district's brand they have in mind. Historically, Heliopolis has catered to diverse religious denominations, having mosques, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian, Coptic, and Protestant places of worship, as well as a Jewish synagogue [49] reflecting the multicultural nature of the district.

Moreover, in Egypt, religious buildings like mosques and churches are exempt from property tax under Law No. 56 of 1954 [50]. Specifically, Section (c) of Article 21 exempts buildings designated for religious worship, including mosques, churches, monasteries, and temples. Notably, Nasr City's development coincided with this law, resulting in numerous prayer corners and small mosques on the ground floors of residential buildings. This gives the district a distinct religious character. Participants praised this aspect, highlighting how the district comes alive with prayers during Ramadan, with mosques close enough for their calls to prayer to be heard in succession.

The Historic Dimension

Several participants referenced the historical dimension of the districts, which varied significantly between them. Each of the studied districts represented a distinct era in the city's history. As one participant explained, *"The beauty of Cairo lies in its diversity; the city has witnessed many eras, and that is reflected in its districts*" (P16). The following analysis will discuss participants' responses in the context of the three districts: El-Gamaleya, Heliopolis, and Nasr City, in light of their historical references.

El Gamaleya

El-Gamaleya's historical dimension stands out as unparalleled. Despite being intertwined with architectural features and craftsmanship, participants vividly referred to the district's historic dimension, describing it as: *"A piece of history that has stood for years, representing historic Egypt*" (P12). "*Walking through El-Gamaleya is like stepping into history"* (P1). These quotes highlight El-Gamaleya's profound historical importance.

As part of Islamic Cairo, El-Gamaleya has a rich history dating back to the Fatimid era. Al-Moez Street, built by Jawhar al Siqilli [51], is one of the most important Islamic sites in Egypt, featuring a variety of Islamic monuments and historical buildings.

El-Gamaleya is home to numerous historic monuments, including the Al-Hakim Mosque built in the Fatimid period (990-1013), Al-Aqmar Mosque build in late Fatimid period (1125), Madrassa of Al-Malik Al-Salih in the Ayyubid period (1242-1244), Qalaqwoon complex (1284-1285), Khanqah and Mausoleum of Barquq dating back to the late mamluk period (1399-1412), and the Fountain and School of Abd Al-Rahman Katkhuda- Ottoman period (1744) [52] .Each of these monuments has a unique historic context and some of which are considered a unique Cairene establishment [53].

The area has also witnessed the development of new building typologies in historic Cairo, including Walls, Gates, Sabil-Kutab and Madrasa. The historic city gates, such as Bab Al-Nasr and Bab Al-Fetouh, were reportedly constructed by an architect from modern-day Turkey [54].

Ultimately, the rich historic dimension of El-Gamaleya emerges as a strong pillar in place branding, highlighting the district's unique identity and historical significance. In addition to the universal significance of these monumental legacies.

Heliopolis

Participants praised Heliopolis' "*rich historical timeline*", noting its "*multiple layers of history*" (P6). This discussion will follow a chronological order, highlighting how Heliopolis represents these layers. As P16 stated, *"Heliopolis signifies 100 years, classical and historical."*

P3 noted, "*Heliopolis represents historical vibrancy, from Baron Empain's era.*" As the first suburban desert city in Cairo in the twentieth century [55], Heliopolis boasts a unique history. Notable examples representing this history include the Baron Empain's Palace and the Cathedral of Our Lady of Heliopolis also known as the Basilique Notre Dame d'Heliopolis, both built by Alexandre Marcel in 1910-1911[56]. These iconic buildings symbolize the city, and their simultaneous construction highlights their significance. The electric tram, a symbol of Heliopolis' early days, was mentioned by P7, P14, and P15. Although decommissioned in 2016 [57], the tram remains a significant element of the district's history. Today, replicas can be found in several locations, serving as a nostalgic reminder of the district's past. The Ghernata building, was also frequently mentioned by participants. Ghernata was built in 1928 as part of an entertainment complex overlooking the old horse racecourse, further highlighting Heliopolis' rich history [58].

For some participants, "*Heliopolis is Egypt in the 60s"* (P10), referring to a subsequent historical timeline. Over time, Heliopolis has been affected by political, economic, and social changes in Egypt. During the 1952 revolution, the government adopted modern socialist approaches, leading to developments like Merryland Park and housing blocks [59]. The Merryland Park, built in 1963 by Architect Sayed Karim, aimed to create Cairo's first modernist public park on the former horse racing course, catering to the broader public as a recreational and entertainment space, reflecting nationalist and socialist ideologies [60]. The park featured a children's area and facilities, leaving a lasting impression on many people who experienced the park's activities.

In recent times, Heliopolis has witnessed pivotal events, including the 2011 revolution. Participants like P12 and P13 recounted their experiences participating in demonstrations in front of El-Itahadeya Palace. The presidential palace, originally built as the luxurious Heliopolis Palace Hotel in 1910, has undergone significant transformations, including serving as a military hospital during World War I and later becoming the official presidential office during the times of Mubarak [61]. The significance of this location is further underscored by its proximity to key events during the revolution, as emphasized by P7, P12, and P15. The historical dimension of Heliopolis, spanning its various phases, appears to be a key dimension in branding the district.

Nasr City

Modern districts like Nasr City also hold historical significance. Participants highlighted Nasr City's original plan, which included several landmark buildings that serve as reminders of Egypt's recent history and its significance in the country's development [62]. That is to be discussed below.

Nasr City is closely associated with Abdel Nasser's era, as noted by P15, highlighting its role in Egypt's modern history. Established in 1959, Nasr City was part of the Egyptian government's plan to modernize and expand Cairo [63], with Abdel Nasser personally involved in its design [64]. The district's historical significance is reflected in its landmarks, such as the Cairo International Conference Center, the Unknown Soldier Memorial, Al Azhar University campus, and Cairo International Stadium, much of which was mentioned by the participants.

Al Azhar University Campus, built in 1962-65 by Tawfik Abdel-Gawad as a modernist campus for the ancient Al Azhar University [65]. The Cairo International Stadium, built in 1960 was commissioned by President Abdelnasser to the German architect Werner March who partnered with the Egyptian Michel Bakhoum. March had previously built the Olympiastadion in Berlin during Nazi rule. Abdelnasser wanted the stadium to be a new icon for Cairo. The Modern stadium was free from any historical connotation referencing any of Egypt's histories, reflected AbdelNasser's regime. It was seen as a modern symbol for a new socialist and secular Cairo [66].

The Military Parade stands, built by Abd Al-Hadi Hosny in 1960, witnessed President Al-Sadat's assassination in 1981. The Unknown Soldier Memorial across the military parade, were President Al-Sadat' was buried after his assassination. The memorial was built by Samy Rafea in 1975, it features a pyramid-inspired design, symbolizing Egypt's ancient legacy. The pyramid form is covered in stone cladding carved with the names of soldiers who took part in the war. Names were written with Kufic script; the monument refers to both Islamic and ancient Egyptian art [67]. Moreover, Rabaa Square and Mosque, which were closely tied to the events of the 2011 revolution, as mentioned by P2 and P3. Much of Nasr City's historical events have occurred recently, and many participants have witnessed them in one way or another, reflecting the area's modern history and Cairo's development since the 1960s.

The history of the district poses many elements of tangible and intangible heritage, including functional and social dimensions (such as urban features, buildings, craftsmanship, commercial activity, and others), all of which form a unique configuration that should be a focus in branding a place[68]. Furthermore, it became evident from the participants' answers that districts may embody multiple brand dimensions. One participant communicated this idea P7 described El Gamaleya to have:" *an interesting combination of history, the present state of*

the district, its products, and more." Similarly, P17 stated:" *but Heliopolis is big and can incorporate different brands".* Furthermore, P10 stated *"Nasr city holds a variety and diversity of everything*". This diversity within a whole was continuously mentioned on the scale of the districts, many participants have linked various brand dimensions to a single district.

Moreover, the participants' responses highlighted the districts' historical depth and uniqueness, reflecting Cairo's diverse cultural heritage. However, the historical dimension seems to be important in the place branding and in the cosmopolitanism concepts. Rojas-Méndez (2013) stated that place brandings ensure a real connection between the past, present and future creating multi-layers connections. While Cosmopolitanism is always cautious about preserving the old, while open in creating the new [69] . The historical dimension assures the presence of the real essence and the multiple identities of a place[70]. The historical dimension of a place is one of the primary methods to connect a place with its people [71].

The findings reveal a complex relationship between cosmopolitanism; individualism, multiculturalism, and universalism, and the dimensions of district branding, namely social, functional, and historical (see Figure 1).

The social dimension intersects individualism through the unique characteristics of residents and their feelings towards the area. It also intersects with multiculturalism, reflected in the variety of activities and the presence of diverse communities within a district. Media portrayal and inherited stories about the district bridge the social dimension with universal cosmopolitanism, lending universal significance to local narratives.

The functional dimension intersects with individualism through distinctive commercial activities, such as souqs. It also intersects with multiculturalism, evident in food outlets and architectural blends especially in the case of Heliopolis, and with universalism, embodied in iconic buildings and monuments.

Lastly, the historical dimension intersects with multiculturalism, as seen in the layered history of districts like Heliopolis. It also intersects with universalism, reflected in the human legacy and monuments characteristic of El Gamaleya and Heliopolis.

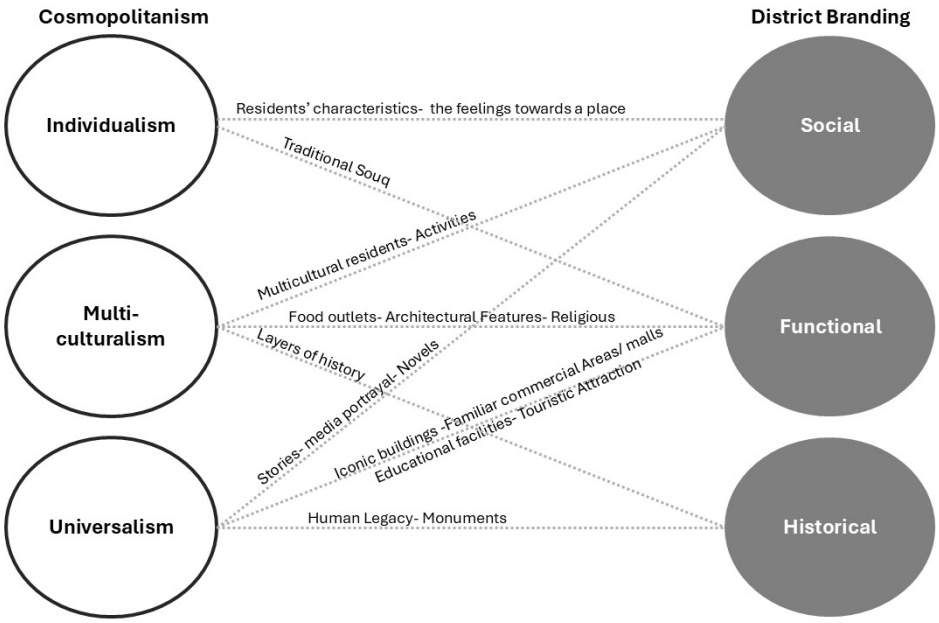

Figure 1 Relation between the concepts of cosmopolitanism and district branding dimensions (Source: author).

4. CONCLUSION

At its core, cosmopolitanism celebrates the coexistence of diverse cultures within a shared urban space, fostering tolerance and diversity [72]. The findings reveal a strong connection between the concepts of place branding and cosmopolitanism. Place branding seeks to extend a location's influence beyond its physical borders, fostering a sense of global connection and shared identity. Similarly, cosmopolitanism involves surpassing specific communal, territorial, and cultural attachments to identify with the broader global community. Traditional place boundaries are becoming less relevant, and instead, cosmopolitans establish institutions and values that transcend national societies.

This research aims to extract brand dimensions for the districts of the cosmopolitan city of Cairo. Through empirical research, interviews were conducted with various participants, including place branding practitioners, urban planners, and officials from cultural and tourism organizations. Three districts were selected: El-Gamaleya, Heliopolis, and Nasr City. The study identifies three main branding dimensions: social, functional, and historical. Each dimension comprises several categories and subcategories, providing a comprehensive understanding of the districts' branding potentials. The dimensions were represented differently in each district.

By exploring the branding dimensions employed within Cairo's districts, this research uncovers the individualism, universalism, and multiculturalism that collectively shape the city's cosmopolitan identity.

Ultimately, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of branding practices in diverse urban contexts and contributes to the effective branding of cosmopolitan cities worldwide.

In conclusion, this research highlights the significance of branding in cosmopolitan cities, demonstrating its importance through the case study of Cairo. By understanding the branding methods employed in Cairo's districts, this study contributes to a holistic understanding of branding the city through its entities, thus aiding in sustaining a cosmopolitan identity.

The insights gained from this study have implications for urban planners, branding professionals, and policymakers seeking to foster a cohesive and inclusive brand for cosmopolitan cities. Future research includes studying different districts in Cairo and other cosmopolitan cities.

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COSMOPOLITAN TRADITION VERSUS IDEOLOGY: A CONCRETE MONTAGE BY PEARL RIVER

Yuqing Wang

COSMOPOLITAN TRADITION VERSUS IDEOLOGY: A CONCRETE MONTAGE BY PEARL RIVER

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This paper considers the modern architecture in Guangzhou formed in the twentieth century as a transregional assemblage. At the junction of the dual ideological margins of the Pacific Ocean and Beijing, the highest tower on the Pearl River, the Oi Kwan Hotel, its expansion and debates, could be read as a physical montage made from the built environment on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. The Oi Kwan Hotel works as a single case study. By examining its various components critically following a chronological sequence—such as the changes in façade, the name, and the nature of property, this paper discusses strategy adopted by growing cosmopolitan communities as political entities and their profound impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

Guangzhou is one of the oldest commercial cities on the southern periphery of mainland China. As the central city of the Lingnan cultural region, it is geographically separated from the northern regions by mountain ranges. The Lingnan region of mainland China geographically encompasses Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Hong Kong and Macau, historically known as "Outside the Mountains" - from the perspective of the mainland center, this region is exposed to the ocean beyond the protection of the mountains. For Guangzhou, the Pacific waterways have always been more accessible than crossing the mountains to communicate with the mainland. The mountain barrier also makes the climate of the Lingnan region different from that of the north - compared to the continental climate, the hydrothermal conditions here, and the resulting lifestyle of Guangzhou's inhabitants, are more tropical. The city's long history of trade has fostered a large, deeply rooted cosmopolitan community. Before the 20th century, this community consisted mainly of overseas Chinese families. Most overseas Chinese immigrants during this period were from this region, mostly doing business in North America and Oceania, with many sending their wealth back to their families in Guangzhou. In the 20th century, Guangzhou's international connections increased with advances in transport. It could be said that cosmopolitanism is an integral part of its residents' regional identity.

Since the Revive China Society uprising in Guangzhou in 1894, the city became one of the major centers of China's democratic revolution[1]. Sun Yat-sen established a military government in Guangzhou in 1917 to confront the Beiyang government; from 1929 to 1936, Guangdong was under the control of Chen Jitang's junta government and remained in a quasi-independent state during this period[2]. During these periods, urban development in the Guangdong region, particularly in Guangzhou, progressed smoothly and rapidly. The Guangdong government sought to legitimize and prove its excellence through "modern" and "progressive" urban development, essentially creating maximum differentiation from the Manchu government. During this period, the ruling powers of the Guangdong region also became part of this cosmopolitan community: their

development strategy stemmed from the region's cosmopolitan spirit, and their purpose was to ensure their own long-term survival. This characteristic was particularly evident in Chen Jitang's development strategy. Chen's administrative plan focused primarily on education and industrial development within Guangdong province[3]. The long-established cosmopolitan community actively cooperated with the local government's ambitious plans. The overseas Chinese community was very supportive of this plan and provided substantial economic aid to the Guangdong government. In 1929, the Xicun Shimin Cement Plant, the largest cement factory in southern Republican China established by the Guangdong government, received one million yuan from overseas Chinese[4], and through their personal connections, production machinery was imported from Denmark. During this period, Guangzhou developed rapidly under the participation of various forces and attracted numerous transnational intellectuals to participate in urban construction. The identities of these transnational intellectuals overlapped to some extent with both the earlier overseas Chinese groups and the emerging local government of the period. Most of them were students who had received higher education in other regions (such as the US, Japan, and other countries) during the democratic revolution period. In the first half of the 20th century, Guangzhou's cosmopolitan community gradually integrated power, resources, and transnational knowledge. The Oi Kwan Hotel, whose design began in 1931, can be seen as an entity produced around the social relations of this cosmopolitan community.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a case study method to analyze the actions and reactions of Guangzhou's cosmopolitan community throughout the 20th century. Through a lens of Actor Network Theory, the study traces the process that Guangzhou's 'communist modernism' was legitimized, developed and promoted. This study chronologically collects archives, drawings, documents and reports about the Oi Kwan Hotel from the 1930s to the 1980s, combined with writings from relevant architects and officials, to describe changes in the hotel's appearance, scale, ownership and function during this period, and to interpret the evolution of networks related to the building through temporal and spatial changes. Utilizing the Oi Kwan Hotel as a case study, this research investigates the shifts in power relations in Guangzhou from the 1930s to the 1980s, as evidenced by the transformation of the cosmopolitan community and its associated networks. It also provides insights into the dynamics of local collaboration in the context of modernist knowledge production in Guangzhou under Mao's communism.

3. PHASE I: NEW CONSTRUCTION

The Oi Kwan Hotel is located at the angle between the new and old riverbanks of the Pearl River, on newly reclaimed soft land. Between the 1910s and the construction period of the Oi Kwan Hotel, the Guangzhou municipal government undertook major municipal construction, demolishing city walls and building roads to advance urban modernization. During this period, most of the officials managing Guangzhou's municipal construction were returned overseas Chinese who had studied abroad. Sun Fo, the eldest son of revolutionary Sun Yat-sen, received higher education in the United States[5] ; during his tenure as mayor of Guangzhou, the municipal government attracted many transnational intellectuals. Changdi (Long Riverbank) Street, completed in 1920, became one of Guangzhou's most prosperous business districts during this period. In 1931, during Chen Jitang's time, the shallow banks of the Pearl River on the south side of this street were reclaimed. The corner where the Oi Kwan Hotel was located was very close to the former commercial district, and a high-rise landmark building here would have a significant impact.

The Hong Kong Oi Kwan Insurance Company, which acquired this plot of land, was founded in Hong Kong in 1930 by Chen Zhuoping, an overseas Chinese from Singapore. Chen Zhuoping left Guangdong for Singapore with his family during childhood and joined the Tongmenghui[67]. in Singapore in 1908. Chen Zhuoping later returned briefly to Guangdong to serve as a local official but soon resigned to continue his business. Before founding the Oi Kwan Insurance Company, he was mainly engaged in transnational trade between Singapore and the United States. The Oi Kwan Hotel in Guangzhou was a branch of Hong Kong Oi Kwan Life Insurance Company, which was founded in 1928 with headquarters in Hong Kong and a branch office in Guangzhou. The company had representative offices in New York, Singapore, and other locations. Additionally, before the Great Depression, the Chinese economy was relatively depended on overseas Chinese remittances and foreign investments[8]. Chen's Oi Kwan company was not the only Hong Kong company that disseminated in Guangzhou, however with the quality of the architecture, Oi Kwan Hotel became a most visible example of those capital. The Oi Kwan Hotel is located between Shamian Island, where foreign officials predominantly resided since the 19th century, to its west, and the important entry point of Haizhu Bridge to its east (Fig. 1). From Haizhu Bridge to Shamian Island, the riverbank of the Pearl River constituted the initial visual impression of Guangzhou for every visitor.

Figure 1. Oi Kwan Hotel's location based on a 1966 satellite map. (Source: U.S. Geological Survey).

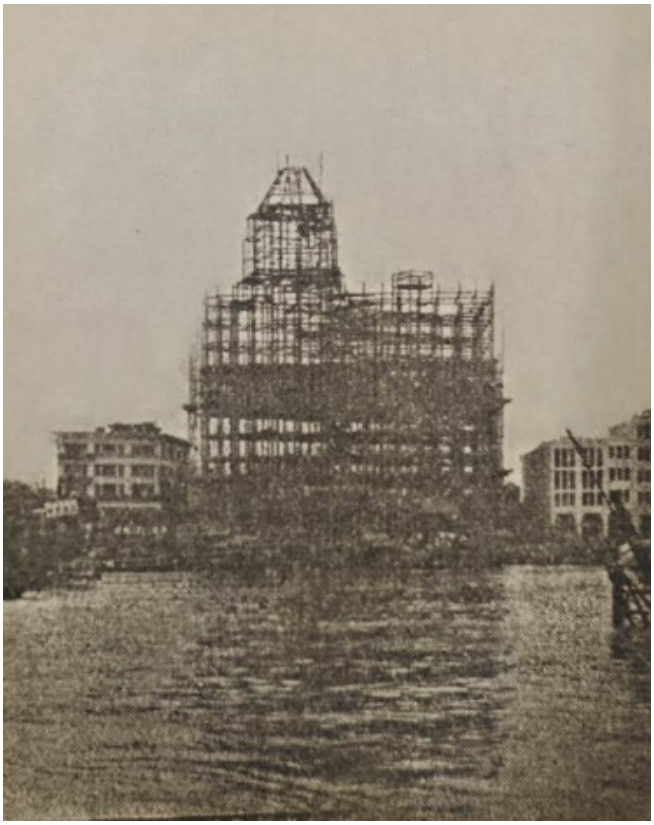

Figure 2. Oi Kwan Hotel under construction, 1934. (Source: Liu Hansheng, Guangzhou Aiqun Hotel Going into The New Century, 2000).

The Oi Kwan Hotel was designed in the autumn of 1931, began construction in October 1934 and was completed and opened in 1937, becoming the first steel-structure building in Guangdong Province[9]. The structural solution was to first complete the framework with steel reinforcing bars of various sizes (Fig. 2), followed by the pouring of concrete. This approach was a consequence of the soft soil of the newly reclaimed land and the considerable height planned for the Oi Kwan Hotel: the building was 65 meters high with 15 floors. The Oi Kwan Hotel had 88 column foundations and 404 reinforced concrete piles, each capable of supporting 75 tons[10]. The upper structure of the building used advanced steel construction technology of the time, using a total of 935 tons of steel, mainly imported from Germany. The chief architect of the Oi Kwan Hotel was Chen Rongzhi, a graduate of the University of Michigan who, like Chen Zhuoping, was born in Taishan, Guangdong. They may have known each other before. Chen Rongzhi naturally applied the American Gothic Revival decorative style popular at the time to the upper half of the hotel's facade, which consisted mainly of dense vertical lines and the elongated windows defined by these lines. Local conditions also influenced the appearance of the Oi Kwan Hotel, which can be seen in the *Qilou* on the ground floor.

In Guangzhou in the 1920s and 30s, the popularity of the veranda (Qilou) was the result of both climatic traditions and trans-regional influences. Due to the persistent tropical climate of the Lingnan region, architectural approaches to providing shade had existed since the Song Dynasty[11]. In the 19th century, similar forms (the five-foot way) were strongly promoted in new urban planning in regions under construction, such as Singapore[12]. Guangzhou's Qilou is similar to Hong Kong's Ke Lau. Compared to Singapore and Hong Kong, Guangzhou's Qilou construction was concentrated in a short period of time, mainly due to the planning intervention of the municipal government. In 1921, Guangzhou established a city hall modeled on the American city system, with Sun Fo as its first mayor. During this period, Guangzhou was politically unstable, and its economic development was relatively slow. The city hall's planning regulations included provisions to encourage landowners to build small shops with Qilou. Guangzhou's Town Hall period continued until the military junta of Chen Jitang took power in 1929. Chen's junta period was a relatively stable and prosperous period for Guangzhou in the first half of the 20th century[13]. The construction of the Oi Kwan Hotel was initiated in the early 1930s. Chen Jitang's government's urban planning no longer advocated for the construction of Qilou; instead, the modernist urban landscape with larger blocks was promoted[14]. Compared to previous commercial buildings, the Oi Kwan Hotel was the largest commercial building constructed on an independent block, with its Qilou integrated into the overall architectural façade design. The exterior, shaded by Qilou, was used as a showcase of its larger commercial operations, which fundamentally differed from traditional Qilou's small and private businesses. Before Oi Kwan, the Qilou of Guangzhou served as entrance of retailers. The Qilou form of the Oi Kwan Hotel was partly derived from traditional architectural forms of Guangzhou and South Asia, combined with early modernist urban planning ambitions, with its internal functions related to capitalist economy.

The interior layout of the Oi Kwan Hotel was pioneering among hotels in 1930s Guangzhou, as its form was closer to a modern commercial building than local traditions. This innovation could be observed by comparing the Oi Kwan Hotel with The Sun Company, which was built outside the historical city in 1918. The two buildings had similar types of investors - The Sun was established with capital raised in Hong Kong by Australian Chinese immigrants, entered Guangzhou in 1914, and its commercial building constructed in 1918 was located on the west riverbank, primarily used for comprehensive retail operations[15]. The newly built Sun Building was one of Guangzhou's first commercial buildings on an independent plot, whereas previously commerce in Guangzhou typically consisted of small retail shops scattered throughout the ground-floor Qilou of residential buildings. The ground floor portion of the Oi Kwan Hotel was similar in nature to The Sun, featuring a mix of retail and dining facilities, but due to changes in building technology, the ground floor layout logic of these two buildings was completely different (Fig. 3). The Sun's layout is traditional, with its core commercial area being an indoor lobby supported by columns, and enclosed by the building façade (Fig. 4); the Oi Kwan Hotel is closer to what we know of as a shopping center - the Qilou provides a kind of sheltered street with showcases as a boundary to the retail, while the main part of the interior mall was illuminated by an atrium. The architect of the Oi Kwan Hotel, Chen Rongzhi, referred the layout of early American skyscrapers[16] and further developed by consciously organizing and regulating the flow of various groups, and by using the equipped lifts for guest circulation and food transport respectively.

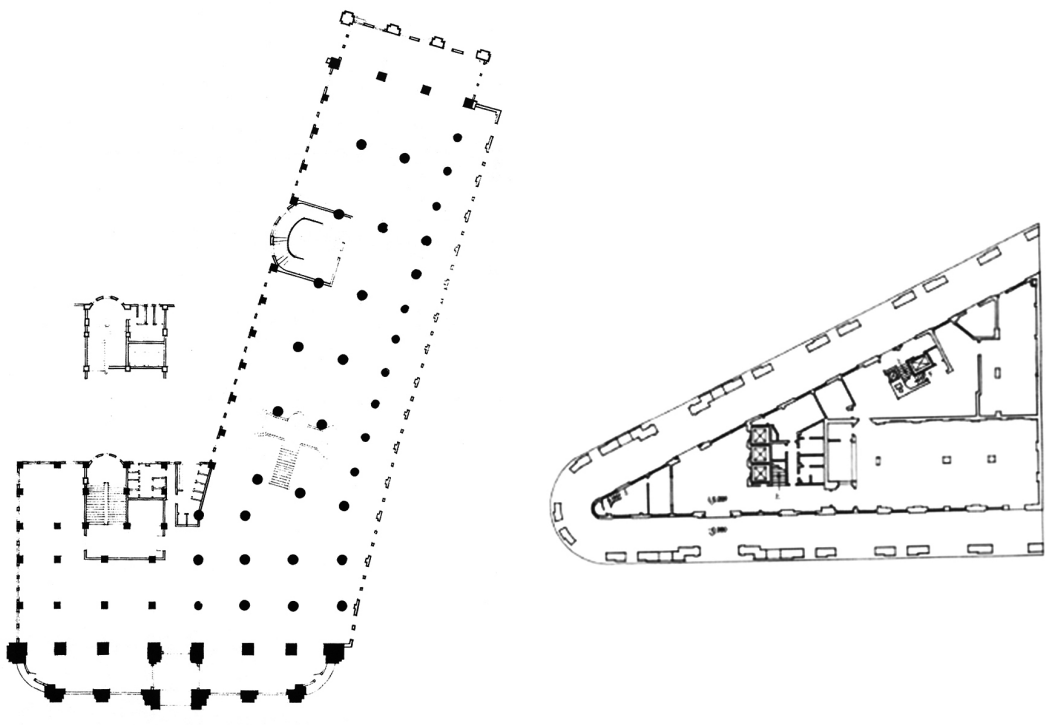

Figure 3. Ground floor plans of The Sun Building (left) and Oi Kwan Hotel (right). (Source: Zhongguo Zhuming Jianzhushi Lin Keming, 1991; Shi Anhai, Lingnan Jinxiandai Youxiu Jianzhu 1949-1990, 2010).

Figure 4. The Sun Building (left) and Oi Kwan Hotel from Pearl River during the Japanese Occupation, ca. 1937-1945 Guangzhou, 南支廣東 河南より望バンド大觀. (Source: National Taiwan University Library, accessed Mar 24, 2025).

Figure 5. Guangdong Kawamura Trading Company, Qilou and Oi Kwan Hotel, 1939. (Source: https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Sun_JP_17.jpg, accessed Mar 24, 2025).

4. PHASE II: TRANSITION OF POWER

Located in Guangzhou's historically most prosperous commercial district, the Oi Kwan Hotel was for a long time the tallest reinforced concrete building along the Pearl River and, to some extent, a landmark of Guangzhou. As a result, the Oi Kwan Hotel, as a non-human presence, actively participated in several important power transitions in the 20th century. When it first opened, the Oi Kwan Hotel operated mainly as a high-end commercial hotel, hosting Kuomintang officials and the most elite members of society. When the Japanese invaded Guangzhou in 1938, the Oi Kwan Hotel was occupied and immediately renamed the Japanese South China Area Army Headquarters and its exterior painted black. The clear change in name and appearance signaled the presence of the new regime, and it was then that the Oi Kwan Hotel became a symbol of the violent presence of a foreign power. In 1945, after the Japanese forces left Guangzhou, the Oi Kwan Hotel resumed its function as a commercial hotel, and after the Second World War it became a place where overseas Chinese and American Volunteer Group veterans returned to Guangzhou to visit their families, and where Hong Kong businessmen stayed when visiting Guangzhou. In addition to ordinary people, the hotel also hosted Kuomintang officials migrating southwards, and some embassies were housed in the building.

YEAR	ABSOLUTE VALUE	1929=100	1936=100	1950=100
1929	16,572	100	87.50	115.67
1930	18,742	113.09	98.96	128.93
1931	24,022	144.96	126.84	167.67
1932	18,939	114.28	100.00	132.19
1933	17,685	106.72	93.38	123.45
1934	12,882	77.73	68.02	89.91
1935	18,661	112.61	98.53	130.25
1936	18,939	114.28	100	132.19
1937	26,599	160.51	140.45	185.67
1938	35,511	214.28	187.50	247.86
1946	27,028	163.09	142.71	196.71
1947	35,947	216.91	189.80	250.90
1950	14,327	86.45	75.65	100
1951	20,096	121.26	106.11	140.27
1952	24,161	145.79	127.57	168.64
1953	14,947	91.32	79.91	105.63
1954	13,074	82.49	72.18	95.42
1955	16,165	108.41	90.29	125.39
1956	12,218	70.06	71.69	94.77

Table 1: Guangzhou overseas remittances amount, in thousand dollars. (Source: Guangzhou Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 1964).

In the 1930s and 1940s, except during the war, the Oi Kwan Hotel continued to operate as a commercial hotel. During this period, the Guangzhou cross-regional merchant community, benefiting from their resources and high integration with urban power, held significant status and authority. The Oi Kwan Hotel, being the most visible building along the Pearl River, naturally maintained its function as a commercial reception venue. Prior to 1950, remittances from overseas Chinese communities in Guangzhou exhibited an upward trend, though they were affected by the war during 1938-1945, recovering swiftly to pre-war levels thereafter (Table 1). However, during the period 1950-1956, the amount of overseas remittances to Guangzhou was clearly affected by the regime change. Meanwhile, Hong Kong, neighboring Guangzhou, was experiencing rapid population growth[17]. The new regime and its attendant social structural changes caused this trans-regional cosmopolitan community to begin to migrate outwards; its remaining part in Guangzhou adopted different strategies in the following decades to find an anchor point between the still unstable CCP ideology and the inherent characteristics of Guangzhou.

In the second half of the 20th century, the cosmopolitan community network in Guangzhou experienced a period of decline, and the Oi Kwan Hotel became a site of deeper social structural change. When the Communist Party entered Guangzhou in 1949, a huge portrait of Chairman Mao was hung on the Oi Kwan Hotel. This portrait was divided into thirty portions, completed separately in Hong Kong by the artists and eventually delivered to Guangzhou by train[18]. This massive portrait was painted by the Renjian Art Society of Hong Kong, an organization that was under the control of the CCP's South China Bureau in 1949. The Renjian Art Society was established in Hong Kong in 1946, at a time when Hong Kong was a major cultural battleground during the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, with both parties conducting extensive propaganda activities there. The main members of the Renjian Art Society were from mainland China, most of whom had fled to Hong Kong during the war. This artists' organization had strong political intentions - it was directly directed and supported by the Communist Party organization in Hong Kong, and many of the artist members were themselves Communist Party members. The Renjian Art Society had its own publishing house, and the artists also contributed to these publications and various newspapers[19]. In 1949, the giant portrait hung on the Oi Kwan Hotel by the Renjian Art Society also became part of this propaganda battlefield (Fig. 6). Another change came in 1952, when the Oi Kwan Hotel was renamed Oi Kwan Tower.

1952 was the period of the CCP's socialist transformation, and the main reason for the name change was the transfer of property ownership, or nationalization. Oi Kwan Tower was then taken over by the Military Control Commission of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Ye Jianying[20], the first mayor of Guangzhou, often received visitors from Hong Kong, Macau and foreign representatives at the Oi Kwan Tower. Oi Kwan Tower also regularly hosted diplomatic receptions for various foreign consulates in Guangzhou on behalf of

the authorities. In a very short time, the building became an exclusively political venue, transforming its previously luxurious and modern interiors, required for commercial functions, into symbols of a progressive and modern regime.

Figure 6. Artists of Renjian Art Society and Mao's portrait on Oi Kwan Hotel. (Source: Art, No.1, 1950).

In 1966, the third renaming of Oi Kwan Tower pushed its nature as a political site to the extreme. Prior to the third renaming, the authorities had viewed its past representation of economic vitality as something of a source of urban pride; however, after 1966, when Oi Kwan Tower was renamed People's Tower, these commercial achievements became the target of criticism. The concept of "people" in 1960s China was more commonly used to discuss class antagonism, referring primarily to the nominally proletarian workers, peasants and soldiers, but in reality, to the ruling class under the CCP regime; this concept did not include the intellectuals and businessmen gathered in Guangzhou. Before the 1970s, private property trading had significantly declined as a result of socialist property reforms. The name People's Tower was adopted immediately after its expansion was completed in 1965.

	1952	SEPTEMBER 1955	DECEMBER 1955
WHOLESALE	66	7	4
RETAIL	83	55	29

Table 2: Percentage of total commercial trade under private ownership. (Source: E. Vogel, Canton under Communism).

5. PHASE III: MODERNIST EXPANSION ON THE EVE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Between 1957 and 1961, Oi Kwan Tower was mainly used to host foreign guests during the China Export Commodities Fair in Guangzhou, also known as the Canton Fair, which was first held in 1957. During this period, Sino-Soviet relations was on its way to deteriorate. The CCP's main purpose in hosting the Canton Fair in Guangzhou was to explore new trading opportunities, primarily targeting merchants from Southeast Asian countries and overseas Chinese businessmen. Before the Economy Reform and Opening Up in 1978, the Canton Fair was China's only public channel for foreign trades. As the scale of the Canton Fair grew year by year, a series of hotel construction projects emerged in Guangzhou to accommodate guests, including the 1965 expansion of the east wing of Oi Kwan Tower[21].

Oi Kwan's expansion project was mainly led by Mo Bozhi (1915-2003), who was born in Vietnam, educated at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou and worked briefly as an engineer in Hong Kong. Mo Bozhi worked for the Guangzhou Municipal Planning Bureau from 1952. In addition to Mo Bozhi, other prominent architects working in Guangzhou were involved in the extension of the Oi Kwan Tower, almost all of whom were members of the Guangzhou Tourism Group[22] and were familiar with each other. The Guangzhou Tourism Group was an informal and loose network of overseas-educated architects, organized and supported by the local government; the long-term social turbulence that has occurred in Guangzhou since the 20th century has resulted in the presence of a heterogeneous group of intellectuals, defined by the CCP as a unified

class, yet exhibiting diverse identities. This group includes individuals who speak both Cantonese and Mandarin, and their lifestyles are influenced by their regional origins, overseas experiences, and subsequent integration into the local community. Guangzhou's local government provided many of the practical opportunities that held this loose network together. From the 1960s onwards, they were responsible for many new buildings related to trade, diplomacy and other important tasks in Guangzhou. The appearance of Guangzhou's newly built areas was largely determined by this cosmopolitan community. Before 1965, members of the tourism group mostly used their spare time from their government positions to design, employed engineering teams from departments such as the Garden Bureau for construction. According to the regulations of the time, the extension of Oi Kwan Tower had to be designed and built by specialized government departments such as design institutes and construction bureaus, but this extension did not meet these requirements. It can be said that at this time, the Guangzhou local government also involved in this long-established cosmopolitan community and reached a central-local balance with the CCP central government—the expansion of Oi Kwan was designed by a temporary team within the Urban Planning Department, constructed by a housing construction company managed by the Housing Administration Bureau, somewhat breaking away from CCP's central management, which was usually realized through design institutes in terms of architecture. The Guangzhou local government occupied a middle ground between the central government and local intellectuals. In the 1960s, when funding for large projects was restricted, the local government urgently needed to enhance the city's strategic position by integrating regional resources. In Guangzhou, this unique regional resource was the distinctive cosmopolitan community brought about by geographical conditions, encompassing abundant commercial resources and a network of local intellectuals who had gathered during the war period. In the years leading up to Oi Kwan Tower's expansion, the local government gradually absorbed these transnational intellectuals, forming a mutually supportive and symbiotic relationship.

The expansion of the cosmopolitan community provided considerable freedom for local officials and architects. In 1965, China was at the end of its economic recovery period; prior to this, Chinese society had just experienced severe damage to its economic structure from the Great Leap Forward. In other words, 1962-1965 was a period when the CCP adopted a more relaxed ideological approach, slightly tilting toward the market to gain economic vitality. In 1962, the CCP's ideological control over intellectuals slightly loosened, allowing many intellectuals in Guangzhou to offer their opinions on the political situation in satirical ways; however, being similar to the resulting Anti-Rightist Movement that followed the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956, this relaxation instead intensified the CCP's sense of crisis as well as its internal division, which in some ways led to the Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966. The year 1965 was particularly special, as it was both the final year of the economic recovery period and the prelude to intensified internal party struggles and political chaos within the CCP. The expansion strategy of Oi Kwan Tower that occurred

this year almost perfectly illustrates the decisive role of the cosmopolitan community in regional and internal affairs - when facing political risks, a cosmopolitan community with considerable history and scale could gather its existing resources, such as knowledge and power, to counterbalance these pressures to some extent.

Figure 7. Oi Kwan Hotel, between the old and the new Qilou and façade, 2024. (Source: Author.)

The expansion strategy of Oi Kwan Tower was quite unusual: instead of attempting to harmonize with the 1937 section, it incorporated an International Style sunshade that ran horizontally across the entire façade, creating a completely new building combined with horizontal window sequences. The ground floor retained the Qilou space of the district. The Qilou in the new section had an unusually complex design, even more decorative than the 1937 section (Fig. 7). This was possibly a choice made to balance with the International Style of the upper façade, and to retain to some extent the luxurious and sublime impression of Oi Kwan Tower, or People's Tower. After its extension, People's Tower became Guangzhou's first high-rise building to adopt the design principles of International Style. Located in one of Guangzhou's most prominent areas, its seemingly radical design for 1960s China has generated much debate. The horizontal sunshades were technically necessary because building materials for high-rise buildings were unavailable in the 1960s' mainland China, requiring additional rain protection for the windows in the extended section; however, during the Cultural Revolution period that followed the extension, these horizontal lines came under severe ideological criticism[23]. Similarly, the door and window components that the local government purchased from places like Hong Kong in collaboration with overseas Chinese merchants were criticized[24]. In addition, the

tower of the extended section was slightly taller than the tower of 1937 (Fig. 8), which the Tourism Group explained as a metaphor for the new society surpassing the old, that is, the new building rising above its original section. The extension of the People's Tower included elements independently decided by this network, as well as aspects that were specifically designed to respond to political requests.

Figure 8. Oi Kwan Hotel in 1965. (Source: Shi Anhai, Lingnan Jinxiandai Youxiu Jianzhu 1949-1990, 2010.)

6. PHASE IV: 'CORONATION', 1984

After facing the turbulence of the 1965 expansion and the subsequent Cultural Revolution, the cosmopolitan community associated with the Oi Kwan Hotel maintained its vitality. Although many rhetorical approaches to self-protection were employed during the expansion period, the personnel associated with the Oi Kwan Hotel were still affected by the Cultural Revolution. In 1966, Lin Xi, the Guangzhou local government official who led the Tourism Group, was criticized and suspended for constructing "bourgeois revisionist" architecture[25]. However, the construction of high-rise modernist towers in Guangzhou continued: Guangzhou finished its 27-story Guangzhou Hotel in 1968, based on Oi Kwan's experience. Mo Bozhi continued his architectural design work during this period and quickly collaborated again with Lin Xi after his position was restored. In 1971, the State Council decided to build a series of foreign trade projects in Guangzhou, namely modern and luxury hotels for foreign trade. Because of the urgent need for officials with

rich construction experience and personnel networks, Lin Xi managed to escape these accusations. The personnel involved in Guangzhou's foreign trade projects were almost identical to those in the Tourism Group, and the projects were completed through collaboration with state-owned design institutes and their staff based on this foundation.

Figure 9. Current Oi Kwan Hotel with the revolving restaurant. (Source: Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences.)

After 1978, Guangzhou's real estate became very active with the massive inflow of capital after marketization. From the late 1980s, one third of Chinese exports came from Guangdong province[26]. During this period, the People's Tower maintained its characteristic of constant renewal in response to social changes - Guangzhou used Hong Kong capital to renovate numerous hotels, including this one. This renovation replaced floors 15-

18 of the 1960s extension, transforming them into a large revolving restaurant (Fig. 9). In 1988, the People's Tower was again renamed the Oi Kwan Hotel. After half a century, Guangzhou and the Oi Kwan Hotel once again witnessed the influx of foreign capital and a market-driven economy. The cosmopolitan community involved in this process - or rather the transnational and trans-regional network of intellectuals, merchants and local government - has continuously adapted and expanded through half a century of geopolitical fluctuations, spreading its influence and accumulating tangible and intangible resources through both formal and informal means, while constantly shaping Guangzhou's urban landscape. The Oi Kwan Hotel is the most explicit physical montage of this long process.

7. A GROWING COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITY

During the half-century described in this paper, Guangzhou has consistently been a crossroads of interregional and international forces. Even in the 1960s, the city served as a window for the CCP to explore new diplomatic possibilities. Since the 20th century, Guangzhou's urban landscape and development patterns have never been isolated; it has been an intersection of numerous cross-regional power relationships: it inherited the arcade-style architecture prevalent in Southeast Asia during the colonial period, and in the 1930s, it transplanted the newly emerging high-rise towers from the pre-World War II era; from the 1960s to the 1970s, Guangzhou saw the emergence of a series of high-rise hotels open to foreign businessmen, whose appearance reflected architects' typical understanding of simple and practical modern architecture after World War II, while also incorporating the Communist Party regime's requirements for correctness; finally, when China's market was formally opened up through Guangzhou, the active, market-oriented real estate industry created numerous luxurious commercial spaces. If Guangzhou's modern architecture can be read as a specific form of knowledge production, then within this chain of knowledge production - social actor interaction[27], there has always existed a dynamic cosmopolitan community that acts and reacts quickly to various interconnected factors, coexisting with the city's urban and geographical characteristics.

The earliest construction investment for the Oi Kwan Hotel came from overseas Chinese merchants, a group that mostly originated from southern China and maintained a particular regional loyalty to their hometown[28]. This sentiment was related to Guangdong's geographical and historical conditions, where both the Manchus in the north and foreigners in the southeast were seen as the other. In the early 20th century, many reformers and revolutionaries like Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen came from Guangdong. Although they came from different cities and spoke different dialects, earlier contact with other ethnic groups from the central plains led Guangdong to develop a shared and united regional identity relatively early—especially when these people became part of the diaspora, living outside mainland China. The vast majority of their investments in China have returned to their birthplaces[29]. A similar situation occurred among groups of intellectuals who received

education overseas in the first half of the 20th century, naturally aligning themselves with overseas Chinese merchants. The first section of the Oi Kwan Hotel was built within this nexus. When the CCP entered Guangzhou, the situation became tense to a certain extent—from the perspective of the Party agenda, both intellectuals and merchants were subjects that needed to be guarded against, controlled, and even re-educated. During this period, the overseas Chinese intellectual network expanded during the crisis (through Party officials), utilizing the luxurious appearance of Oi Kwan Hotel and its modernist potential for extension to demonstrate to the central government the benefits Guangzhou could offer for economic and diplomatic relations. Before the 1970s, the Canton Fair in Guangzhou was China's only opportunity for foreign trade, and it never ceased even during the Cultural Revolution; the economic benefits that Guangzhou and the Canton Fair brought to Mao's China were mutual, which was the fundamental reason why the CCP showed such tolerance here. After Guangzhou demonstrated its broad economic and diplomatic possibilities, starting from this location and through the 70s and 80s, pragmatic CCP revolutionaries used it to open the door to the Hong Kong market and its connected transnational capital.

8. CONCLUSION

Due to its geographical characteristics and long history of trade, Guangzhou has maintained a substantial cosmopolitan community, and these cosmopolitan groups have possessed considerable local resources. Through observing the Oi Kwan Hotel, it becomes apparent that these global communities have maintained significant de facto influence over an extended period of time, both during the Chen Jitang era and the Mao Zedong era. The radical social structural reforms that took place during this period—top-down structural changes of the society—did not fundamentally alter the weight of the cosmopolitan communities in the balance of the Guangdong region. This phenomenon could be partly attributed to the regime's ability to benefit from the characteristics of these overseas Chinese and transnational intellectuals. During Mao's China's diplomatic difficulties, the CCP needed to obtain foreign exchange from overseas Chinese groups as much as possible, thus showing them to be welcome in order to create a positive national image; meanwhile, the transnational intellectuals gained their new positions in society through forming power-knowledge alliances with local authorities. On the other hand, these cosmopolitan groups themselves emerged spontaneously and continuously due to Guangzhou's geographical characteristics and the resulting trading traditions. This spontaneous emergence led to diverse circumstances, and the policies or management approaches that corresponded to this diversity had to remain relatively flexible. In this context, cosmopolitan communities and politics became intertwined and influenced each other, connecting a series of factors involved in knowledge production, and establishing a unique landscape in modernized and communist Guangzhou.

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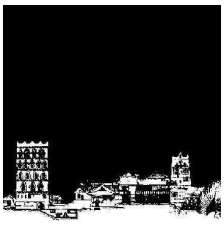

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