

Constructing the New Capital City

Chinese Architects and the Urban Plan of Nanjing during the Republican Era (1927-1949)

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Abstract

Based on ongoing postgraduate (MPhil) research, the conference presentation discusses features of modernization, identity, and nationhood within the narrative of Nanjing's urban planning during China's Republican Era (1927-1949). It accomplishes this through attention to native architect-planners, e.g. Lu Yanchi (吕彦直), Doon Dayu (董大酉), and Robert Fan (范文照). They were assistants of Henry Murphy, the chief consultant of the Capital Plan. The presentation will utilize primary Chinese sources such as newspapers, manuscripts, archives, documents, and old photographs, and so intends to analyze the works of the young Chinese architect-planners together with the political intentions and intellectual influences upon how the built fabric was shaped and meant. As the capital city of Republican China, Nanjing was to become the symbol of 'the modern country'. Its form and density were to be affected by considerations about the nature of the citizenry, the contemporary political atmosphere, Chinese traditional and modern culture, and financial funding. Collectively, these elements affected the development of Nanjing during the Republican Era and contributed in different way to its plan's successes and failures.

Keywords

Nanjing, Republican China, Native planners, Modernity, High density

How to cite

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INTRODUCTION

Through an examination of representative architects of the first generation of Chinese architects, such as Lu Yen-chi 呂彥直, Doon Dayu 董大酉, and Robert Fan 范文照, this paper will explore how the first generation of Chinese architects constructed Nanjing, the new capital of Republican China, under the impact of modernity and the wave of nationalism. By analysing the plans and architectural designs of the above Chinese architects who served as Henry Murphy's assistants or were influenced by his urban planning and architectural design concepts, the author hopes to delve deeper into the plans and perspectives of Chinese architects for the capital city of Nanjing in Republican era. This paper will explore Chinese architects' deeper understanding of Nanjing's urban planning through case studies of the macro city planning, monumental, governmental and public architectures.

These case studies will involve representatives of the first generation of professional architects in China, Lu Yen-chi, Doon Dayu and Robert Fan. Lu Yen-chi received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell University in 1918. After graduated from Cornell University, he was invited by Henry Murphy¹ to join his architectural firm (Murphy & Dana). In 1918, he was directly involved in the planning and design of the academic buildings and school buildings of the Ginling College for Girls (金陵女子大學) and Yanjing University (燕京大學) and was responsible for the architectural manuscripts. He was also responsible for drawing architectural plans.² Doon Dayu worked in Henry Murphy's architectural firm during his doctoral studies at the Graduate School of Fine Arts and Archaeology at Columbia University and graduated in 1927.³ In 1930, in the name of the architectural firm, Doon worked with Henry Murphy, on the foundation and structural detailing of the Memorial Pagoda for the Martyrs of the National Revolutionary Army (renamed Linggu Pagoda after 1949). Robert Fan graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, Department of Architecture in 1922. As one of the Chinese architects under Henry Murphy's tutelage, much of his architectural work in Nanjing was influenced by the 'Chinese Renaissance' style. Despite their different educational experiences, they all returned to Republican China for further career development.

After Nanjing was elected as the capital, the National Government formulated four urban planning plans for Nanjing.⁴ However, except for *the Capital Plan and the Adjustment Plan for the Capital Plan*, other plans did not receive adequate time and funds to put into practice. In the past, most studies on Nanjing's urban planning in Republican era focused on the influence of political factors and the views of senior officials. This article will start from the perspective of architects and aim at investigating Nanjing's urban planning during the Republic of China period from a micro perspective through the narratives of Nanjing's urban planning and architectural design styles by Chinese architects.

LU YEN-CHI AND THE DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE PLAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CAPITAL CITY

Lu Yen-Chi was one of the most important Chinese architects in the planning and construction of Nanjing during the Republic of China period. During his studies in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University, Lu received a Western academic architectural education. He thus initially understood and mastered the design concepts and methods of Chinese Renaissance architectural style, which combined traditional Chinese architectural styles with modern Western technology. The Chinese Renaissance style of architecture combines traditional Chinese architectural styles with modern Western techniques. As one of the most prominent Chinese architects in Murphy & Dana, Lu worked closely with Henry Murphy.⁵ He assisted to collate large numbers of architectural motifs for the Forbidden City in Beijing while working as Henry Murphy's assistant.

As a Chinese architect with a passion for building a new capital and a new nation, Lu left behind a city plan for Nanjing in addition to the design and construction of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. He directly involved in the city planning of Nanjing and formulated the Draft Outline of the Plan for the Construction of the Capital City (《建設首都市區計畫大綱草案》), planning the central government district and downtown area of the capital city of Nanjing, as well as the buildings of the national government.⁶ These posthumous works are vivid embodiments of urban planning ideas.

A year before the *Capital Plan* was launched, Lu made a clearer proposal for the location of the central political zone in the capital Nanjing. He drafted two works, 'Planning Scheme for the Two Districts of the Capital City (Central Government and Urban Area)' (首都都市兩區 中央政府和市區 規劃方案) and 'Aerial View of Architectural Design of the National Government (Including the Five Institutes)' (國民政府 (包括五院) 建築設計鳥瞰圖). Lu's conception of Nanjing was a manifestation of his hopes for the new modern capital city, as well as for the future of the nation. The Draft Outline of the Plan for the Construction of the Capital City is the most intuitive manifestation of Lu's thoughts on the planning and architecture of Nanjing. Lu's posthumous works showed the genius of this legendary architect's planning vision for Nanjing.⁷

In the overview, Lu divided Nanjing into three parts: the central government area, the capital city area, and the national park area. Regarding the location of the central government area, Lu located it at the site of the Ming Imperial Palace, so that it was 'suitable for the position of the centre.' Lu's plan for the Nanjing metropolitan area already had the zoning concepts of modern urban planning. However, as a Chinese architect, Lu's urban planning for Nanjing was still inspired by the concept of traditional Chinese urban layout. The placement of the central administrative district in the centre of Nanjing was still a continuation of the traditional Chinese urban construction concept. Regarding the location of the central political district, Lu's plan considered the traditional Chinese concepts and put it in the Ming Palace.



Fig. 1. Proposed Plan for Nanking, China's National Metropolis. Mr. Lu Yen Chi's last piece of work.

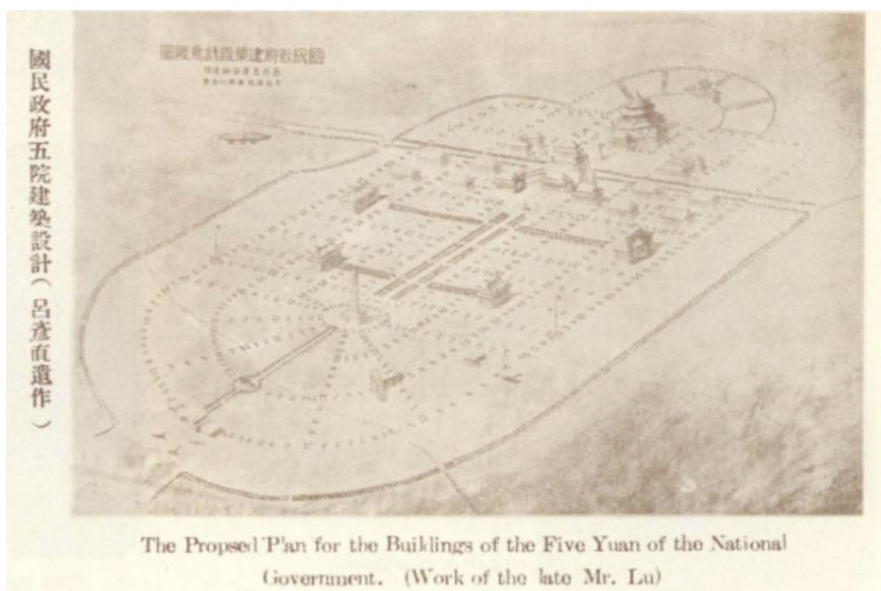


Fig. 2. The Proposed Plan for the Buildings of the Five Yuan of the National Government. Mr. Lu Yen Chi's last piece of work.

In terms of the city walls of Nanjing, Lu argued that although they were products of the feudal dynasties and hindered the modernisation of Nanjing. Nevertheless, it would be inappropriate to dismantle all of them due to the special historical and cultural value of the Nanjing city walls. He advocated the demolition of the eastern and southern sections of the Nanjing city walls to meet the needs of expansion. The western and northern sections of the city walls should be preserved, not only to isolate the smoke and noise from the industrial area, but also to protect the historical monuments. In the planning of the national park area, Lu only made a brief plan in his manuscript, placing the national park area in the northeast of Nanjing, with the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum as the core area.

The removal of the eastern and western city walls of Nanjing and the expansion of the metropolitan area to meet the requirement of placing the central political district in a 'neutral position' emphasised the need for other parts of the metropolitan area to be built to serve the construction of the central political district.⁸ This demonstrates Lu's keen insight as a Chinese architect mastered the design concepts and methods of Chinese Renaissance architectural style of China and the West. This proves that the Chinese architect also had a founding sense of national identity and urban layout in the planning of Nanjing. His life came to an end before he had the chance to plan the rest of Nanjing, but these manuscripts are still a powerful attempt by a Chinese architect to draw up a blueprint for Nanjing's urban planning.

DOON DAYU AND THE MEMORIAL TOWER FOR THE MARTYRS OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

Doon Dayu was an architect who left a number of inspirations and works for the urban planning of Nanjing during the Republican period. Although his main area of practice was in Shanghai, he was involved in a number of important project competitions in Nanjing under the auspices of the Nationalist government.⁹ After the National Government returned the capital to Nanjing in 1947, he served as the head of the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Planning Department.

The Memorial Pagoda for the Martyrs of the National Revolutionary Army (國民革命軍陣亡將士紀念塔) is an essential part of the National Revolutionary Army Martyrs Cemetery (國民革命軍陣亡將士公墓). Its design is modelled on the glazed pagoda of the Linggu Temple (destroyed during the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement), showing a traditional Chinese architectural style. The tower is octagonal in shape, with a diameter of 30.4 metres at the base and surrounded by carved stone railings. There are granite stone steps on the front of the tower, which connects with the passageway. The top of the tower is 200 feet high (about 60 metres), an antique pavilion-style stone tower with nine floors and eight sides, a cast-in-place reinforced concrete structure, and the tower façade is plastered with granite.¹⁰ The eaves of the tower are covered with green glazed tiles, which are gradually contracted upwards from the bottom, and the tower is surmounted by a spiral escalator going around the central stone pillar,¹¹ The exterior is decorated with Jinshan stone.¹² The memorial tower is characterised by a distinctive Chinese national style, with a beautiful, elegant and dignified shape, and it is the tallest surviving traditional pavilion-style tower in Nanjing.¹³

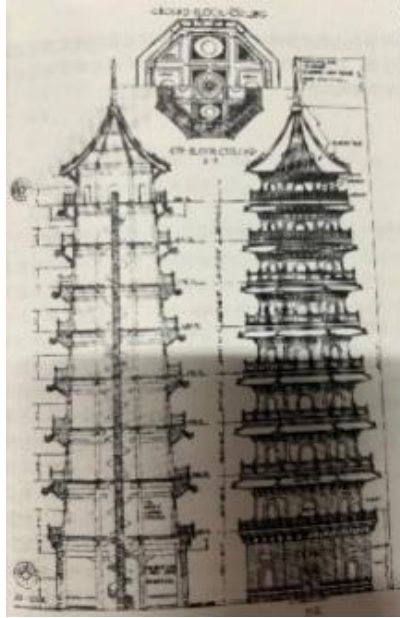


Fig. 3. Section, elevation, and ground floor ceiling plan of the Pagoda-Tower at Lingusi. Designed by Henry Murphy and Doon Dayu.

It is worth noting that, although the Memorial Tower for the Martyrs of the National Revolutionary Army exhibits traditional Chinese characteristics in its architectural style, the function is different from that of a traditional Chinese 'tower'. As a complementary building to the 'Cemetery for Heroes of the Revolution', it has the nature of a memorial in the sense of the modern national identity. The change in the function of the building can still be seen as a 'combination of Chinese and Western' on the form and function of the building. As it is a memorial building, Doon has reflected the stronger elements of traditional Chinese architecture in its design. This is also a reflection of the national government's requirement in the city planning of Nanjing that monumental buildings and government offices be designed as 'inherently Chinese architecture'. On another level, this is an interpretation and embodiment of the national identity. The restoration and design of the 'Zhengqi Hall', the memorial hall of the National Revolutionary Army Cemetery, was also a collaboration between Doon Dayu and Henry Murphy. It is also the only architectural conservation project of Henry Murphy in China.¹⁴

ROBERT FAN AND HIS REPRESENTATIVE BUILDINGS IN NANJING

Robert Fan also left several notable architectural works in Nanjing. He held significant positions in the urban plan of Nanjing during the Republican period. In December 1928, he was employed as a special member of the plan for the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. Moreover, he was a member of the Nanjing Capital Design Committee from 1929.

¹⁵ His most significant architectural works in Nanjing include The Ministry of Railways of the National Government (國民政府鐵道部) and The Central Health Facilities Experimental Office (中央衛生設施試驗處). The former was an official residence of the national government, and the latter was used as a public building.

The Ministry of Railways of the National Government was one of the first buildings designed and constructed in the 'Chinese Inherent Style' after the official implementation of the Capital Plan in 1929. The Ministry of Railways was personally supervised by Sun Ke, the first Minister of Railways of the National Government, and designed by Robert Fan in collaboration with Zhao Shen.¹⁶

The Ministry of Railways was divided into three parts: the Office Building, the Staff Residence, and the Minister's Residence. The office building was built in the traditional Chinese palace style, in keeping with the 'inherent Chinese form' called for in the Capital Plan. The building is a reinforced concrete structure under a heavy hipped roof, and the building plan is long and rectangular. The main body in the centre is three storeys high, and the annexes on both sides are two storeys high. The arch, beam square and frieze used as decoration are all painted. [The staff dormitory at the back of the office building is in the 'Chinese Renaissance' style, in line with the office building. The eaves have a large slope and are of the single eave overhanging hill style. The dormitory is two-storey high, with simple doors and windows. The minister's residence has a different appearance from the staff quarters, with red brick walls.¹⁷

The Central Health Facilities Experimental Office (中央衛生設施試驗處) (later renamed the Ministry of Health of the National Government), located at the corner of Huangpu Road, Zhongshan Road, Nanjing, was commissioned by the Director General of the Department of Health, Liu Ruiheng, in March 1931 to carry out the design and drafting of the building by Robert Fan. The original design was a three-storey building in the shape of the Chinese character 'mouth', but due to the 'Mukden or Manchurian Railway Incident' and the 'Shanghai incident of 28th January 1932', the project was shelved. Only a part of the building was constructed due to the urgent need to use it. The Central Sanitary Facilities Experimental Office was completed in September 1933, and the main body of the building is the Central Sanitary Facilities Experimental Office.

The main part of the building is in the shape of a zigzag, and the design is simple and Western modernist in style. The building has a flat roof (changed to a sloping roof after 1949) and is three storeys high, with the main entrance in the centre slightly raised above the two sides of the building. Under the influence of Bauhaus art, Van Wentzel only differentiated the colours between the floors. The base of the building is white, the main body of the building is brownish yellow, and the floors are accented with white stripes. The Central Health Facilities Experimental Office (later renamed the Ministry of Health of the National Government) is the only modernist work left by Fan in Nanjing.¹⁸ The styles of the above two architecture can reflect Fan's approach to different functional buildings. His design for the Ministry of Health of the National Government demonstrates the modernist turn in his architectural preference.



Fig. 4. A photo of the Ministry of Railways of the National Government, taken in 1937. This building was designed in the style of traditional Chinese style architecture.

CONCLUSION

The planning of Nanjing during the Republican period was also the result of a combined effort of mainly Chinese architects. The efforts of Chinese architects and their designs of Nanjing during the Republican period also reflect the process of political, social and emotional demands in the shaping and construction of physical space. At the micro level, the plan and architectural design are stylistic. However, they were 'seeking modernity while retaining Chinese characteristics' in the final analysis. Lu pursued the embodiment of national and ethnic identity. Doon's architectural work in Nanjing is predominantly eclectic, combining Chinese and Western styles, which suggests that his understanding of the capital city of Nanjing is more oriented towards a national identity. Fan's architectural works in Nanjing build up the momentum of his later transformation into modernity. It can be seen that the plans and concepts of Chinese architects for the new capital Nanjing, though modern, were still influenced by traditional Chinese concepts.

It is worth noting that Chinese architects' conceptions of Nanjing's urban planning during the Republican period rarely involved the planning of civic neighbourhoods. Although there was a prediction of Nanjing's population growth over the next hundred years in the *Capital Plan*, the term 'high density' for Nanjing in the 1920s and 1930s was probably far from the case for residential areas.¹⁹ Even in 1928, Nanjing's population increased from 360,000 in 1927 to 479,000, and as the capital, its population size was still small in comparison to that of Shanghai.²⁰ The *Capital Plan* was the product of a group effort of Chinese architects and officials, advised by two foreign advisors, Henry Murphy and Goodrich. The projections of the total population of Nanjing one hundred years later were clearly influenced by European and American urban planning, but the extent to which Chinese architects were involved in this part of the planning remains open to further study due to material limitations.

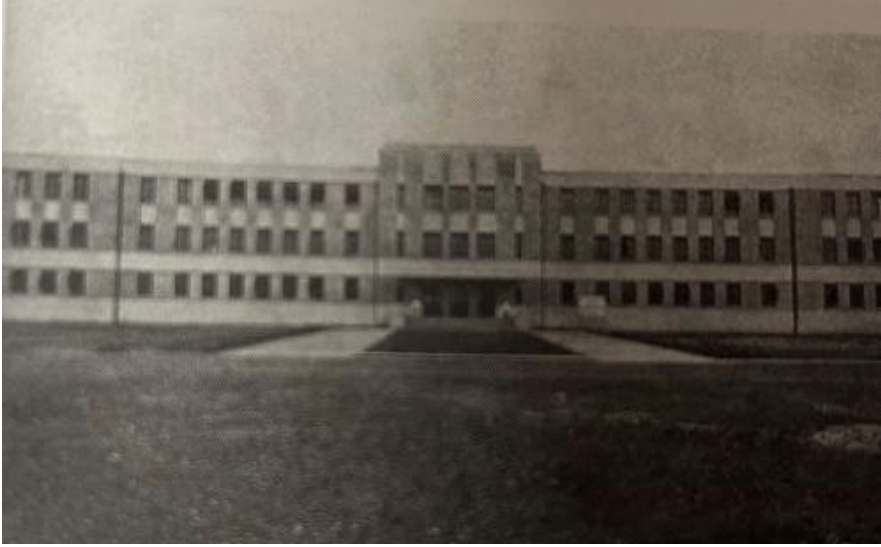


Fig. 5. A photo of The Central Health Facilities Experimental Office, this public building is more modern in its structure and uses traditional Chinese elements in its decoration.

Architecture is the language of narrative for architects. For Nanjing's urban planning in the Republican era, Lu made a macro-level attempt to plan the Nanjing metropolitan area. After this pioneer of first generation of Chinese architects passed away, architects such as Doon Dayu and Robert Fan were involved in the design of monumental and governmental buildings in Nanjing's urban planning. Nanjing's urban planning during the Republican period was not only supported by the government but was also shaped by a generation of Chinese architects' vision and practice of working together to build a new modern capital. From the master plan to the design of specific buildings, they demonstrated their hopes for Nanjing as a new capital and their desire to build a modern nation. Unfortunately, this dream of Nanjing, woven by the first generation of Chinese architects, came to an end with the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War before it could be put into practice on a large scale.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR(S)

WANG *Shu* is an MPhil student in the Department of History at CUHK. WANG

studies architectural and urban in Republican China, particularly spatial knowledge, and visual culture. She is working on the relationship between Capital Plan and the narrative and construction of national identity.

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[6] 《文化建設》(Cultural Construction), 1934年第1卷第1期(Vol.1, No.1, 1934)。
[7] 《時事新報》(The China Times), 1930年12月5日(December 5th, 1929)。 [8] 《良友》(The Young Companion), 1929年第40期(No.40, 1929)。
[9] 《申報》(Shun Pao), 1925年9月26日(September 26th, 1925)。

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ENDNOTES

6. 1 Henry Murphy was an American architect who first came to China in 1914 and began a practice there for more than twenty years. Prior to his role as chief consultant for the Capital Programme in Nanjing, he was represented in China by Tsinghua College (清華學校, 1914), Yale-in-China College (長沙雅禮大學, 1914), Ginling College for Girls (金陵女子大學, 1915), and Yanjing University (燕京大學, 1921-1926). He was also involved in the city planning of Guangzhou from 1921-1927. He was fond of traditional Chinese architecture and believed that he could find inspiration for his designs in traditional Chinese architectural styles. Henry Murphy's architectural style and philosophy had a profound influence on the first generation of Chinese architects, and Lu Yen-chi, Doon Dayu, and Robert Fan worked as his assistants in Murphy & Dana Architectural Firm.

7. 2 Yin Lixin, *The Architect Lu Yen-chi* (Beijing: China Architecture Industry Press, 2019). 67.

8. 3 《Republic of China Daily》(民國日報), 1929.03.23, *Continuation of Lu Yen Chi's Story*.

9. 4 They were (The four city plans formulated after Nanjing became the capital are the Great Plan of the Capital (《首都大計畫》1928), the Capital Plan (1929), the Adjustment Plan for the Capital Plan (《首都計畫的調整計畫》, 1930-1937) and the Nanjing Metropolitan Plan Outline (《南京市都市計畫大綱》, 1947).

10. 5 Cody, Jeffrey W, Nancy Shatzman. Steinhart, and Tony. Atkin, *Chinese Architecture and the Beaux-Arts*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011). 210.

11. 6 Wang Xiaoxi, *The Great Craftsmen Building Traces: Representative Professional Architects of Nanjing and Their Works in the Republican*

12. *Period*, (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2014). 157.

13. 7 According to scholar Huang Jiande, there are many discrepancies between the Draft Outline of the Plan for the Capital City District published in the first issue of Capital Construction in October 1929 and Lu's manuscript, for example, the replacement of the word 'country' with 'party state'. For example, the word 'state' (國家) was changed to 'party state' 黨國.

14. 8 The location and planning of the central political zone in *Capital Plan* were more for the protection of the built-up urban area of Nanjing, especially the area within the city walls. Therefore, the central political zone was chosen to be located at the southern foot of Zijin Mountain in the north of Nanjing. However, this plan was abandoned by the Nanjing National Government either due to political disagreement or the high cost of the construction budget.

15. 9 The main project competitions in which Doon Dayu was involved were: the design competition for the central political district of the capital (August 1929, the prize for excellence); the design competition for the memorial tower of the Zhongshan mausoleum (November 1930, the fifth prize); and the design competition for the National Central Museum (1935). Competition (November 1930, Fifth Prize); Design Competition for the National Central Museum (1935)] as Henry Murphy's assistant in the design of the Cemetery Complex for the Martyrs of the National Revolutionary Army (also called the Chinese Arlington).

16. 10 Nanjing Local Records Compilation Committee, *Nanjing Architectural Records*, (Beijing: Fangzhi Publishing House, 1996) .224-225.

17. 11 Wang Xiaoxi, *The Great Craftsmen Building Traces: Representative Professional Architects of Nanjing and Their Works in the Republican Period*, (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2014). 80.

18. 12 Xu Chunling, *A Biography of Henry Murphy*, (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2019). 49.

19. 13 Pan Guxi, *The Architecture of Nanjing*, (Nanjing: Nanjing Press, 1995). 3.

20. 14 Xu Chunling, *A Biography of Henry Murphy*, (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2019). 47.

21. 15 Lai Delin, Wang Haoyu, Yuan Xueping, and Si Chunjuan, *A Record of Modern Philosophers - A Directory of Important Architects and Architectural Firms in Modern China*, (Beijing: China Water Conservancy and Hydroelectric Power Publishing House, Intellectual Property Publishing House, 2006). 31.

22. 16 Sun Ke personally supervised the construction of the Ministry of Railways, and his request was to show the nationalistic elements in the building. Fan also responded to his request by applying the tradi-

tional Chinese palace form to the design of the Ministry of Railways of the National Government. Cited in Wang Xiaoxi, *The Great Masters of Architecture: Nanjing's Representative Professional Architects and Their Works in the Republican Period*, (Nanjing: Southeast University Press,2014) .86.

23. 17 Wang Xiaoxi, *The Great Masters of Architecture: Nanjing Professional Architects in the Republican Era*(Nanjing: Southeast University Press,2014),87.

24. 18 Ibid,86.

25. 19 As a result of the Taiping Rebellion and the wars of the early Republican period, the population of Nanjing was relatively small before it became the capital. *The Capital Plan*, (Nanjing: Office of the Commissioner for Design Technology of Capital), 1929,p 17.

26. 20 According to the customs survey data in the Capital Plan, the population of Shanghai had increased to over 2.6 million in 1928. *The Capital Plan*,(Nanjing: Office of the Commissioner for Design Technology of Capital), 1929,p 19.