Design characteristics of China’s early Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors, and
their reinterpretation in America

by

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ABSTRACT

Interior design and architecture of the Ch’ing Dynasty (1644-1911) is one of the most complex and glorious periods in Chinese design history. Though founded on prior aesthetic achievements, it successfully built upon and transformed them. Major constructions during this period included the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex (1625-1783), the expansion and repair of the Ming Forbidden City (1655-1911), and the Summer Palace (1750-1902).

This thesis focuses on the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex in China and the Telephone Exchange Building in San Francisco, CA, to understand 1) the design and artistic characteristics of China’s early Ch’ing Dynasty interior and 2) how they were interpreted when reconstructed in America. To explain the relationship, during the period of Emperor Kangxi Qianlong, the Ch’ing Dynasty government started to trade with foreign countries. In the later part of the Ch’ing Dynasty, Western cultures influenced Chinese interior design and construction, resulting in a nonlinear progression of design and a process of transformation. During this period many Chinese laborers moved to the Western world, including America, and in particular in San Francisco, and spread Ch’ing’s building design and construction ideas either intentionally or unconsciously.

This thesis research model is a comparative case study analysis and the research method integrates material culture analysis, iconographical analysis, archival analysis, and compare and contrast. Material culture analysis was executed through site visits, photo and video documentation, direct observation, artifact analysis and Rapport’s culture theory.

Findings show that the style of early Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors are fusions of Man, Han, Mongolian, and Tibetan arts and craftsmanship. Ch’ing interior design
emphasized splendidness and luxury, and was overly enthusiastic about details. In contrast, Chinese buildings in San Francisco’s Chinatown paid little attention to detail, focusing instead on color and large forms believed to be the most important representations of Chinese building and culture. Design attainments during the early Ch’ing Dynasty included: 1) practical articulation of spatial organization, interior form, and construction, 2) expansion of furniture and furnishing types, and crafts production, 3) formation of unified artistic composition of furnishing and interior decoration and, 4) reflection of entirety and humanity through interior design and construction.

Importantly, this research provides insight into today’s global architectural and interior expression, and the phenomenon of modernization, while retaining traditional cultural symbols of Chinese and other nations’ traditional cultural symbols.

Keywords: Early Ch’ing Dynasty, Interior, Chinese in America, Culture
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Since the First Opium War (1839-1842) between Great Britain and China, Chinese people in Ch’ing Dynasty had endured a great deal of suffering in everyday life due to warfare, social reform, and foreign settlement. Architecture of Ch’ing Dynasty including palaces and common residences had also gone through kinds of hardships. For instance, natural expiration occurred since these buildings were mostly build with wood; deliberate damages were induced in battles in and after the Ch’ing Dynasty and especially in conflicts during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Since most the survived traditional Chinese architecture was rebuilt or repaired during Ch’ing Dynasty, there is a common perception among Chinese that Ch’ing architecture is the traditional Chinese architecture. On the one hand, Ch’ing architecture indeed inherited from previous dynasties such as Ming (1368-1644) not only the wood construction techniques but also the ideology of achieving harmony and hierarchy through buildings. On the other hand, Ch’ing architecture and interiors were strongly influenced by Aisin-Gioro family’s ethnicity background, nomadic culture and later the western influence during the Ch’ing Dynasty. None of these influences are well understood, necessitating an investigation to identify the characteristics of the early Ch’ing Dynasty (1625-1735) interior, and by comparison to determine how the interior style was reinterpreted when Chinese buildings were constructed in America during that period.

To clarify, many architectural scholars in China, including the leading interior scholar Manjun Shen, argue that the early architectural and interior design of the Ch’ing Dynasty is a mere continuation of the Ming tradition. However, this study shows that Shenyang Imperial
Palace is an exception. In particular, the Shenyang Imperial Palace has a strong Manchu influence in that it was designed before the Aisin-Gioro family gained the political power over mainland China. The Manchu was ever a small minority race with minimum impact on Chinese culture. Before its history was completely changed by the Aisin-Gioro family, the Manchu people were able to include as many Manchu design elements as they would like without Han influence.

In 1930, the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture was established in Beijing. During the same year the society started to publish the Journal of Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture. Early Chinese architectural scholars 梁思成 Sichen Liang¹, 刘敦桢 Dunzhen Liu², 朱启玲 Qilin Zhu³, 范文照 Robert Fan⁴, and American architectural scholar Wilma Canon Fairbank⁵ started the research of Chinese ancient architecture. To this day, after the hard work of many generations of Chinese and American scholars, extensive research has been implemented regarding architectural forms, landscape architecture, and urban planning. Nonetheless, the study of Chinese traditional interior is still weak and has been overlooked for centuries (W. Huo 2007). There are a few recent master and doctoral thesis focusing on Ming and Ch’ing furniture, and others that discuss how Confucius ideas affected Chinese household living from the philosophical point of view. As far as the

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¹ 梁思成 (1901-1972), Chinese architect and architecture historian; Pioneer of historical conservation in China, author of History of Chinese Architecture.
² 刘敦桢 (1897-1968), Chinese architect, historian and educator.
³ 朱启玲 (1871-1964), Chinese politician and investor.
⁴ 范文照 (1893-1979), Chinese architect, most active in Shanghai region.
⁵ Wilma Fairbank (1909-2002), American, scholar of Chinese architecture and art, close friend of Liang and Huiyin Lin.
relationship between interior, architecture and architectural structure of Chinese buildings, Hong Kong architectural scholar Yunhe Li said:

*About the organization of interior space and segmentation, Chinese architecture has indeed accumulated many creative experiences that other building systems did not. The main reason is that ever since the construction techniques and immaturity of art started to form, interior and architectural designs were dealt with independently. Since architectural and structural design were combined to produce a standardized plan, separated and organized interior rooms were not included in the architectural design, and the interior segmentation was considered separately in a given building plan (Y. Li 2005, 295).*

In contrast to the exterior, the interior, including furniture, fixtures, furnishings, artwork, draperies and other types of interior subjects, has greater independence and freedom to be elaborated and tailored to personal tastes. Although developed somewhat independently, this study shows that there is a certain level of coordination between the traditional Chinese interior, exterior and structural design. At the same time, they are relatively independent regarding the design process. Therefore, a thorough research of treating Chinese interior as an independent object of study is not only necessary but also feasible.

### 1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the defining characteristics of China’s early Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors, as evidenced by The Shenyang Imperial Palace in Shenyang, the first Ch’ing Dynasty residence? My research will focus on one of the most significant buildings on the
site, Da Zhen Hall, and a set of screen paintings of Twelve Beauties from the palace museum collection, to investigate early Ch’ing exterior and interior hierarchical system, style evolvement, and development of fine decorative arts and furniture. This will make feasible a summation of the overall interior design characteristics of this time period (1625-1735).

2. As exemplified by the Telephone Exchange Building in San Francisco, this study asks how traditional Ch’ing Dynasty interior design and artistic aesthetics were re-interpreted in America’s “Oriental City”\(^6\), when Ch’ing Dynasty laborers constructed buildings there during the Gold Rush of the late 19\(^{th}\) to early 20\(^{th}\) century.

The Shenyang Imperial Palace in Shenyang, China and the Telephone Exchange Building (1906-1909) in San Francisco, California were both built by Chinese Laborers during the Ch’ing Dynasty (1636-1912). The Shenyang Imperial Palace was chosen mainly because it is the first Ch’ing Dynasty building with Eastern influence. It was the first Imperial Ch’ing Dynasty residence, which was built from 1625-1636 by Nurhaci Aisin-Gioro

\(^6\) Place that resembles the Western view of Orient.
(1559-1626), the founding emperor of Ch’ing Dynasty, and by his son Huangtaiji Aisin-Gioro (1592-1643), the second emperor. It had been the home and office of the Aisin-Gioro family from when they won the war with the army of Ming in Shanhaiguang Pass until they moved into Forbidden City in Beijing in 1644 (Zhao 1996). Between 1644 and 1912, It had been used as a place where Aisin-Gioro family members paid homage to ancestors and also as a home for the queens and concubines of late emperors, who had no offspring. It is amongst over 300 buildings, of which 114 are historically significant, within Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex. Amongst the 114 historically significant buildings, Dazhen Hall is the very first building solely designed and built by Aisin-Gioro family, whose aesthetics dictated how buildings should look like to promulgate and enforce imperial regulations that were rigorously followed by Ch’ing Dynasty people.

San Francisco’s Chinatown is the earliest Chinese settlement in North America due to the Gold Rush in the 1840s. Together with the Shenyang Imperial Palace, they are standing at the two opposite ends of the continuum to show Eastern and Western influences in Chinese design. The Telephone Exchange Building was built by Chinese laborers who were born and raised in Ch’ing Dynasty China and were influenced by the imperial-imposed building standards of the Ch’ing government. Originally, each building had a different purpose. Shenyang palace functioned as a residence and office for the ruling family, and the Telephone Exchange building functioned as a telephone switchboard center. Today the Shenyang Imperial palace functions as a tourist spot and the Telephone Exchange building is a bank branch, yet the two buildings remain significant examples of traditional Chinese architecture in China and America. The Telephone Exchange building is the one and only

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7 Confidential record, courtesy of the conservation office of Shenyang Imperial Palace
building in San Francisco’s Chinatown that was built from head to toe using wood and traditional Chinese construction techniques (Choy 2012, p. 115).

1.3 Research Method

The research model is a comparative case study analysis and the research method integrates material culture analysis, iconographical analysis, archival analysis, and case study compare and contrast. Material culture analysis was applied through site visits, photo and video documentation, direct observation, artifact analysis and Rapport’s cultural analysis.

When interpreting a genre of an art form, in this case, the Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors, it is vital to study and analyze the most authentic example of its kind. The Shenyang Imperial Palace (1625-1783) was the very first palace complex built during Ch’ing Dynasty. Since China was ruled by a feudal monarchy at this time, for as long as the ruling family was in power (1636-1912), this building complex dictated design characteristics of other buildings, including private residences, temples, pagodas, and government offices.

To define early Ch’ing Dynasty architectural and interior design characteristics, and how they were transposed in America, this thesis compares and contrasts the two buildings’ exterior and interior architectural finishes, colors and patterns, and analyzes interior structure and spatial arrangement, as well as decorative and fine arts. Exterior and interior analysis of the Shenyang Imperial Palace is centered on the Da Zhen Hall (1625-1626) and a set of
screen paintings – “Twelve Beauties”, which is a permanent collection at this palace museum. Comparing to interiors, Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors are well documented.

Research of early Ch’ing Dynasty interiors and their adaptation in San Francisco’s Chinatown not only focuses on background, evolution, stylistic characters, space, form, furniture and display, but also on the cultural, social, economic, and technological influences, to understand design variations of the Ch’ing aesthetic reflected in the Telephone Exchange Building.

The Ch’ing indoor environment created a unique personality and distinctive cultural characteristics. Therefore, this study is not limited to clarifying the Chinese Ch’ing interior to create a developed context, but also to exploring the Ch’ing Dynasty interior in depth to find its connotation in the arts and culture.

To interpret socio-cultural influences, the thesis draws upon research by American scholars and architect Amos Rapoport, who concluded in his book *Culture, Architecture, and Design* (2003) that cultural characteristics are the basis of the formation of the designed environment. When people communicate with the natural environment, the particular culture becomes the guiding force of meaning, communication and adaptation. Rapoport gave culture definition three categories: firstly as a nation’s way of life, including their ideals, norms, rules and daily behavior; secondly he explained culture as notation system that passes down by generations. It was usually achieved through enculturation of prosperity and acculturation of immigrants. This passing down usually uses language and examples, as well as a build environment and scenarios. Thirdly, he saw culture as a way to change the ecologic

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8 Amos Rapoport, American anthropologist and architectural scholar
environment and utilize resources, which is a part of human’s survival instinct. Later he also defined the usage of culture also in three categories. First of all is that culture provides a design of life by setting a variety of rules to guide people’s behavior. In this sense culture functions as a chain of commands. Second of all it gives a framework of particular meaning. Many individuals only have meaning when existing in a framework and interacting with each other. Third of all its purpose is to form a large group by uniting smaller groups or individuals. In this regard, culture means to distinguish between groups (Rapoport 1976, 34).

Amos Rapoport believes that there are four ways to conceptualize environment:

1. An organization of space, time, meaning and communication;
2. A constitution of scenario;
3. A cultural landscape;
4. It is composed of fixed and semi-fixed and non-fixed elements (Rapoport, 1976).

The first one is the most fundamental and abstract expression. It is illustrated by different aspects of cultural landscape, such as district, city, town, architecture, interior, as well as objects within them. Culture landscape, if formed by different scenarios and various activities, happens in those scenarios. Environment is structured by fixed and semi-fixed elements, at the same time those elements all come from non-fixed elements. It would appear that these four concepts not only are complementary to each other but also together they formed a cohesive system. This thesis uses Rapoport’s theory on culture to analyze how social and geographical changes affected Chinese immigrants’ choices when they designed their living and working spaces during the mid-19th and early 20th Century.
1.4 Significance of Project

Importantly, in 1987 the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex was enlisted by UNESCO as a world heritage site together with the Forbidden City in Beijing. This nomination established that the palace complex is valuable to civilization as a whole. On the official document, Shenyang Imperial Complex was described as follows:

*The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang consists of 114 buildings constructed between 1625–26 and 1783. It contains an important library and testifies to the foundation of the last dynasty that ruled China, before it expanded its power to the center of the country and moved the capital to Beijing. This palace then became auxiliary to the Imperial Palace in Beijing. This remarkable architectural edifice offers important historical testimony to the history of the Qing Dynasty and to the cultural traditions of the Manchu and other tribes in the north of China (UNESCO 2004).*

Similarly, the Telephone Exchange building is widely recognized by Chinatown residents as one of the iconic buildings from the “the Oriental City” state (post-1906 San Francisco earthquake). While many other Chinese-style buildings in San Francisco’s Chinatown are brick and mortar structure buildings with a Chinese style façade, the Telephone Exchange building is a wood structure building that consists of many traditional Chinese building techniques, in particular the use of Tou-Kung⁹.

The Telephone Exchange Building is critical to understand the preservation of cultural identity in an era of globalization. Liang stated several times that China is an ancient oriental country with many histories, as far as architecture is concerned, and if we completely lose its artistic characteristics, it could result in a lack of cultural performance and visual impact (Liang 2006, 253). This oversight of research on historical Chinese architecture and

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⁹ Tou-Kung, 斗拱, Bracket set, each is composed by layers of wooden members in cross and longitudinal directions. (Yuan, Cui and Mang 2009, 631)
interior is the crucial reality we are facing today, although often design and artistic creation cannot be completely divorced from the tradition throughout history and many great innovations were highly influenced by the tradition. Northern and Southern Dynasty’s Buddhist sculptures and Tang Dynasty’s temples are great examples. They are all inspired by Buddhism and originated from India that were completely foreign to Chinese ideology, but they later were transformed to a particular form of architecture and became well known to the world. Even when adopted a new shape or accepted a foreign idea, ancient Chinese people were able to show their original spirit. This thesis will look into the San Francisco’s Chinatown’s building and examine early Chinese immigrants’ ways of expressing their cultural identity through the architecture and interiors.

1.5 Literature Review

To understand my first research question, related to the early Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors characteristics, there are a few important scholarly works and events in Chinese architectural history to consider. The literature review looks at the following three research areas related to general Chinese interior and architectural history: Chinese architectural history, specific aspects of Chinese interiors, and works of researchers outside China.

1. **Scholarship on the Chinese Architecture History.** Most research on interiors is still limited as a part of Chinese architectural history, with insufficient attention given to interior development. Some of the important literatures on the Ch’ing exteriors are *The Pictorial Chinese Architectural History* by Sichen Liang, *History of Chinese Ancient Architecture* –
Ch’ing Volume by Dazhang Sun, and much more. They provided the detailed information on how Ch’ing exteriors are constructed and their differences comparing to previous dynasties. Although the application of interior design becomes more and more important among popular culture, the theoretical research of the interior has not been taken seriously for decades. Some of the pioneers in this field are Huiyin Lin (A few Characteristics of Chinese Architecture, March 1932) and Sarah Handler (Austere luminosity of Chinese classical furniture, 2001). Especially in China, the interior as an independent subject and profession started 50 years ago. In most of those years Chinese interior design professionals focused on catching up with western peers in the sense of practical application. The theoretical research on the subject only became available from the beginning of the 21st century. Some examples are Chinese Living Room 中国厅堂 (Chen 1994), Chinese Classic Patterns of Architecture and Interior 中国古典建筑室内装饰图 (Chen 1995), and Pictorial Analysis of Chinese Furniture 中国家具史图说 (Li 2001).

2. Scholarship that Focuses on a Certain Aspect of Ch’ing Dynasty Interiors. Among researchers of the Chinese interior, the majority of them tend to separate different elements such as research on the spatial relationships or furniture, rather than analyze the interior of the different historical periods. There is a lack of research that considers a variety of reasons and meanings behind interior progressions, space, form, and decorative art. In other words, we are still waiting for a multi-dimensional study to reflect the Ch’ing interior’s overall style. For example, on Chinese traditional furniture and indoor display, the most significant work is Study of Ming Furniture (Wang 2008) and Furniture of the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties (Zhu 2002). It focuses on furniture and its important status within the Chinese traditional interior. After the establishment of Song Dynasty’s high-shaped furniture, its type, production level
and the design level have developed dramatically. Especially during the Ming Dynasty, furniture craft developed into its peak and influenced many other countries far beyond its border. Therefore many early scholars’ works focused on the study of Chinese traditional furniture. Some other books on this topic are: *Chinese Rosewood Furniture Graphical Study* (Ke Ai, 1991), and *Ming-style Furniture* (Shixiang Wang, 1987). Building upon these manuscripts more studies were published. For instance, *Ming Dynasty Furniture* (Jiaqing Tian, 1995), *Chinese Traditional Furniture* (Desheng Hu, 1997), *Chinese Ancient Furniture* (Wenyan Hu, 1988), Chinese Furniture Culture (Wenyan Hu, 2002), *Ming and Ch’ing Furniture Research and Critique* (Jiaqing Tian, 2003). Meanwhile, many scholars targeted the individual element of furniture, such as *From Drapery Decoration to the Wooden Decoration* by Shiqing Zhang in 2006, who focused on draperies, textile, screen and different types of beds. Also Hui Mei in the same year published his book *Sixteen Sounds between Flowers*, which is about those same elements but from a more romantic angle. More recently, there are books mainly on sculptures, carving and temperas used on traditional furniture. For example *Tempera Usage in Chinese Traditional Furniture* (Dazhang Sun, 2006), and *Sculpture and Decoration of Chinese Traditional Architecture* (Yuguang Zhuang, 2007). These researchers mentioned how their subjects of concern progressed into Ch’ing Dynasty. Although their discussions of the Ch’ing style are brief, they provided a good background knowledge.

3. **Scholarly Works of Researchers Outside of China.** Scholars from outside of China paid little attention to the Chinese traditional interior. British art historian Michael Sullivan mentioned in his book *The Arts of China* (2008) that Western literature does not have a scholarly study dedicated to Chinese architecture that matches up with Shizhen Liu’s *History*
of Ancient Chinese Architecture. For instance, in the well-known book by John Pile, *A History of Interior Design* (2009), the author barely mentioned Chinese traditional interior and only added a section talking about Asian and Islamic interior design in general. It is a brief introduction at best.

Scholarly discussion of the Ch’ing interior includes: *Interior Design Style and School* (Qiman Zhang, 2000), which discusses interior design methods in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, and vaguely describes how the Chinese interior differs from others, but not specifically Ch’ing Interior; *Chinese Interior Design History* (Guang Huo and Weiguo Huo, 2003), which has a chapter on Ch’ing interior with emphasis on furniture and decor; *Chinese Decoration- Traditional Housing* (Senlin Liu, 2004), which focuses on private Ch’ing Dynasty residences especially Siheyuan style living; and *Chinese Ancient Architectural Decor* (Qingxi Lou, 1999), which examines Ming and Ch’ing exterior decoration on traditional Chinese building such as brick and wood carvings. *Classical Chinese Doors and Windows* (Weidu Ma, 2006), like its title, focuses on openings of space, how they frame the view from the inside and look out to natural surroundings; *A Study from Yuan Ming Yuan’s Inner Eaves Decor to Beijing Mansion Interior* (Chang Liu, 2004) discusses many types of eave decorations throughout traditional buildings in Beijing; *China Furnishings – Traditional Civilians’ Housing Interior* (Senlin Liu 2006) is mainly about residential furniture; *Lectures on Decorations of Chinese Ancient Architecture* (Jiaqian Zhang, 2005) again emphasizes exterior decors, especially the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasties; and *Chinese Traditional Housing and Living Culture* (Hong Zhang, 2006).

Moreover, there are many works by Western scholars: *The Emperor’s Private Paradise Treasures from the Forbidden City* (Nancy & Elliott, Mark C. & Chang, Liu &
Yuan, Hongqi & Ng, Henry Tzu Berliner, 2010) has a complete list of paintings, displays and furniture in Forbidden City; *Art of Dynastic China* (William Watson, 1981) also has a broad picture of all art forms and indoor display objects from China. *Design of Chinese buildings, furniture, dresses, Machines and Utensils* (Sir Chambers, William, 2013) and A *Brief History of World Interior Design* (Chengbo Liu Edited, 2007) also talk about the Chinese interior in general. In addition, there are journal articles with more targeted study, such as *Palace Style in Ch’ing Qian Long Emperor Period* (Jinhua Ru, 2005) depicting palaces built during Qian Long Emperor period (1711-1799) with a focus on the architectural achievements, and *An Artistic View of Living- Ming and Ch’ing Artistic Design and Display* (Yanzu Li, 1998) on the significant relationship between environment, art, and design.

Those books and articles listed above examine exteriors, interior decoration, indoor display and special relationships on a different level. Journal articles are more focused on the cultural point of view to discuss the interaction between indoor and outdoor space. However, above all they were all targeted at mid to late Ch’ing Dynasty when its style and craft entered the most prosperous era. The first half of this thesis is aimed to analyze and provide a more complete summary of early Ch’ing Dynasty interior characters.

To further understand the second research question related to the Western adaptation of early Ch’ing Dynasty exteriors and interiors, I explored books including, *Pictures of Gold Rush California* (Jacob Smith, 2013), *New York before Chinatown* (John Kuo Wei Tchen, 2001) which discuss the societal change when Chinatown was established in New York, and; *San Francisco Chinatown* (Philip P. Choy, 2012) illustrates Chinatown buildings that were built later 19th and early 20th century. *Driven Out* (Jean Pfælzer, 2008) tells a story of a Chinese immigrant family during the Chinese Exclusion Act; *Old China-town: A
photographic calendar for the year 1946 (Arnold Genthe, 1946) showes photos of the San Francisco Chinatown between 1890 and 1910, and; Chinatown (Chalsa Loo, 1998) and San Francisco’s Chinatown (Judy Yung and The Chinese Historical Society of America, 2006) provided a very extensive background of Chinese living situation and social dynamics from mid-19th Century to early 20th Century. Some of them, such as Smith and Genthe’s photography, not only captured the American Chinese’s lives on a day to day base, but also presented the most authentic view of streets, houses, and people that lived in San Francisco Chinatown during that time. Not many comments were made towards the relationship between people and their living environments.

Research papers and treatises published regarding the history of China’s interior environment provide a brief history and/ or general history of the interior, but lack in-depth analysis. Some are dynastic history or achievements such as building form changes or furniture development. Overall there are a lot of gaps to be filled, such as the overall characteristics of early Ch’ing Dynasty interior compared to previous dynasties, cultural and political reasons behind the change in Ch’ing style, and how geological change affected interior. These are aspects that this thesis will address. Therefore, it is necessary to summarize the history of the interior environment in ancient China and to implement a more in-depth and comprehensive exploration of the blank areas, especially regarding to Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex that have not been considered as the early Ch’ing Dynasty interior.

To sum up, many researchers focused on the construction of the Ch’ing Dynasty building exteriors. They graphically documented almost all existing exterior shapes and elements, such as roof types, structures, columns, and facade. However, few researchers attempted to talk about Ch’ing Dynasty interior as a combined topic and tended to focus on
one or two elements such as furniture or space relationships. There are four major gaps: the lack of scholarly research on the link between early Ch’ing Dynasty building exterior and Ch’ing’s royal family aesthetic views, the lack of scholarly research on Chinese Ch’ing Dynasty holistic interior design, the lack of scholarly research on China’s early Ch’ing Dynasty interiors, and the lack of research on Chinese American design from the interior point of view. Focusing on Shenyang Imperial Palace and the painting of Twelve Beauties, this research interprets early Ch’ing Dynasty interior as a whole. Using the example of San Francisco Chinatown, it analyzes how people and interior influenced each other.

1.6 Synopsis of Chapters

Thesis chapter topics include: China’s pre Ch’ing Dynasty cultural, architectural and interior background, (Chapter 2); Ch’ing Dynasty exterior and interior finishes, interior structure and space arrangement, (Chapter 3); Ch’ing Dynasty decorative and fine arts, (Chapter 4); summary of early Ch’ing Dynasty interior characteristics (Chapter 5); and how Chinese design precedents were interpreted in San Francisco’s Chinatown (Chapter 6).
CHAPTER 2 CHINA’S PRE-CH’ING CULTURAL, ARCHITECTURAL
AND INTERIOR DESIGN FOUNDATION

Ch’ing Dynasty, the last imperial dynasty in China, played a role as the synthesizer of feudal culture. After a period of recovery and construction, mid-Ch’ing Dynasty reached a peak of economic development, and the advancement of craftsmanship reached unprecedented heights. Building construction and renovation technology made vast improvement, and achieved the highest building standards of the feudal society. It is the height of Chinese architecture. Meanwhile art and design development led to a significant period in the architectural history (Liang 2006, 253).

The interior design of the Ch’ing Dynasty has its unique history and distinctive features. It is the product of culture and dynastic art. Architecture and interior design are inseparable parts of a building but also have their significance. As an independent art and design category, a wide number of materials and elements were involved. Also specific interior decoration techniques, furniture, space configurations and artifacts such as screens, sliding doors, covers, curtains, lamps, and other types of objects are demonstrated throughout. Together they represented the culture and aesthetic taste of Chinese people from that time. In another word, interior design became a sidelight of history, which reflected a different style of art and design. Whereas the Ming style was mostly elegant, simple and emphasized lines, the Ch’ing style inherited the forms of Ming, yet became a lot more ornate and varied (Wang, Ming Shi Jia Ju Yan Jiu 2008, 13).
2.1 Pre- Ch’ing Cultural Background

People are usually defined by their culture. Therefore, the interior living environment they created was often influenced by the particular culture that they identified with. Any mature forms of the interior design should have climate and environment adaptation as well as cultural identification, therefore, they often have variety of shapes and styles. Residential interiors in Shanxi and Suzhou area are good representations of this adaptation. Just as their local opera style Qing Qiang and Kun Qu, one is resounding, and another is soft, entirely different.

As far as culture is concerned British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor pointed out that:

*Culture, or Civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society* (Tylor 1920 [1871], p.1).
Taylor’s definition included almost all human characteristics and is still applicable. Culture usually defines people, and since people create interior environments, interior design and culture relate to each other.

Figure 5 Ch’ing Dynasty Territorial Map, http://img1.bbs.163.com/mil/sx/sxbsjhsq/fd93f2856eddc217b382893f677c67cc.jpg, accessed November 2015, edited by Author

Ch’ing Dynasty’s culture was under influence of Han, Manchu, Mongolia and Tibet. The Han Chinese culture is an ethnic group native to East Asia. Han Chinese constitute about 92% of the population of China, 98% in Taiwan, 74% of the people of Singapore, 24.5% of population of Malaysia, and about 20% of the entire global human population, making it the largest ethnic group in the world. There is considerable genetic, linguistic, cultural, and social diversity among the Han, mainly due to thousands of years of immigration and assimilation.
of various regional ethnicities and tribes within China. The name Han comes from the Han Dynasty, which succeeded the short-lived Qin Dynasty (221 to 206 BCE) that united China in 221 BCE (Ning 2014, p.5). During Han Dynasty the culture of Han really formed and matured and influenced Chinese people even today.

The Manchu culture descended from the Jurchen people, who earlier established the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) in Northern China (Liu 1975, 56). The term Jurchen first appeared in documents of the late Tang Dynasty (618-907) dating to the 10th century AD, and related to the ethnic-Goguryeo State of Balhae\(^\text{10}\). The semi-mythological *Chronicles of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors*\(^\text{11}\) mentioned the Sushen, a Tungusic people, from the northern Manchurian region of North East Asia, who paid bows and arrows as tribute to Shun and later to Zhou. The cognates Sushen or Jichen again appear in the *Shan Hai Jing*\(^\text{12}\) and *Wei Shu* (Wei 1974), during the dynastic era referring to Tungusic Mohe tribes of the far Northeast. Manchu people were nomads, traveling on the horseback and moving around wherever nature would grant a living for them. Therefore it was important for the Manchu people to live in tents instead of any permanent forms of residence.

Mongol Chinese originated from an area now known as Mongolia, a landlocked country in East and Central Asia. The autonomous region of Inner Mongolia borders Russia to the north and China to the south, east, and west. Ulan Bator, the capital, and largest city is home to about 45% of the population. Mongolia's political system is a parliamentary

\(^{10}\) [Balhae (698–926) a mixed ethnic Goguryeo–Mohe empire established in northern Korean Peninsula and Manchuria after the fall of Goguryeo. It existed during the North South States Period of Korea along with Unified Silla.], *Zizhi Tong Jian*, vol. 213. This episode was first mentioned in the Old Book of Tang, chapter 199B, p. 5361 of the standard Zhonghua shuju edition.


\(^{12}\) *Shan Hai Jing*, 山海经, Chinese mythology book, author unknown, dated pre Han Dynasty.
Various nomadic empires ruled Mongolia including the Xiongnu\textsuperscript{13}, the Xianbei\textsuperscript{14}, the Rouran\textsuperscript{15}, the Göktürks \textsuperscript{16} and others. In 1206, Genghis Khan founded the Mongol Empire. His grandson, Kublai Khan, conquered China to establish the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). After the collapse of the Yuan, the Mongols retreated to Mongolia and resumed their earlier pattern of constant internal conflict and occasional raids on the Chinese borderlands. At the end of the 17th century, all of Mongolia had been incorporated into the area ruled by the Aisin-Gioro family. The Aisin-Gioro family considered Mongols as a strong and the most important ally. In order to maintain their control over this once powerful race the Aisin-Gioro family decided to incorporate many Mongol customs and war tactics into Manchu culture.

In 1206, the Mongols, who were vassals to Jurchens, arose in Mongolia. Their leader, Genghis Khan, led the Mongol troops to fight against Jurchens. The Jin Dynasty could not withstand the Mongols' attack and was finally defeated by Ögedei Khan in 1234 (Zhou 2003, p.73). From that time, the Jurchens of North China increasingly merged with the Han Chinese, while those living in their homeland started to be Mongolianized. They adopted Mongolian customs, names, and the Mongolian form of architecture – the tent (Bao 2014, p.104).

The Mongol domination of China was replaced by the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in 1368. In 1387, the Ming defeated the Nahacu's Mongol resisting forces that settled in Haixi area and began to summon the Jurchen tribes to pay tribute (Bao 2014, p.73). At the time,

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\textsuperscript{13} Nomadic race habited in Northern desert area from 209 BCE to 216. See Book of Wei for more information. (Wei 1974)
\textsuperscript{14} Nomadic people habited around North-West China, defeated Xiongnu around year 216 and was wiped out by Turfan in year 619. See Book of Wei for more information.
\textsuperscript{15} A branch of Xian Bei, 330-555. See Book of Wei for more information.
\textsuperscript{16} Also known as Ashina, nomadic confederation of Turkic peoples in medieval Inner Asia. See Book of Wei for more information.
some Jurchen tribes were vassals to the Joseon Dynasty of Korea, including the Odoli and Huligai. Their elites served in Korean royal bodyguard. However, their relationship was discontinued by the Ming government, because Ming officials were planning to make the Jurchens their protective border. Korea had to allow it since the country was in the Ming government's tribute system.

A century after, chaos started in Jurchen's land when Nurhaci, a chieftain of Jinzhou’s left guard started a long and hard military campaign against the Ming government’s ruling to revenge the Ming’s manslaughter of his father and grandfather in 1583 (Bao 2014, p.136). He reunified Jurchen tribes and established a military system called “Eight Banner,” in which he organized Jurchen soldiers as “Bannermen.” He ordered his scholar Erdeni and minister Gagai to create a new Jurchen script that referenced the traditional Mongolian alphabet (Bao 2014, p.87). In 1603, Nurhaci was titled Sure Kundulen Khan by his Khalkha Mongol allies. Thirteen years later (1616), he publically assumed the throne, proclaimed himself Genggiyen Khan of Later Jin Dynasty, and launched his attack on the Ming army.

After his defeat of the Ming and conquest of Liaodong, Nurhaci moved the capital of Jurchen to Mukden. In 1635, his son and successor Huangtaiji changed the name of the ethnic group Jurchen to Manchu (Bao 2014). The following year, Huangtaiji proclaimed himself the emperor of Ch’ing Dynasty. With General Wu Sangui’s support, the Ch’ing Empire broke through to mainland China in 1644. They defeated Li Zicheng and moved the capital to Beijing in the same year. Emperor Nurhaci started building the Shenyang Palace,

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17 吳三桂 (1612-1678), General of Ming Dynasty, later defected to Ch’ing.
18 李自成 (1606-1645), leader of rebellion force against Ming, later fled when Ch’ing force entered Beijing in 1644.
but his successor, Emperor Huangtaiji became was the chief architect after Nurhaci passed away. Emperor Huangtaiji advocated absorbing the Han culture and making Manchu and Han one people in every aspect. Uniting the two cultures was necessary for him to gain political favors, since 98% of the population he planned to rule is Han. One of the most obvious evidence is Ch’ing style imperial architecture. To showcase their sophistication and similarity to Han people, the Aisin-Gioro family largely inherited Ming Dynasty’s building style and interior arrangement.

### 2.2 Pre- Ch’ing Architectural and Interior Design Background

Ming Dynasty architecture and interior design were continuations of Song Dynasty style. They were mostly constructed by wood and followed strict rule of symmetry to achieve harmony within people’s living and working environments. They are quaint, forceful and rigorous in shape and simple in exterior and interior finishes. Furthermore, during the Ming Dynasty, Chinese architecture started to develop a new function and style reflected in the scholar’s garden. Pre-Ch’ing Mongolian architecture was mostly built with adobe bricks and had circular shape that resembled their traditional tent residence. Their uses of colors were mostly inspired by nature such as sky blue, grass green and sunny gold. Tibetan architecture had two types – the tent and the adobe building. Tibetan tents are mostly made of linen or cowhide. Their permanent buildings are flat roofed and have a lot of small windows. Although their buildings have simple and primitive shapes, religious influences are strongly presented by totem on the columns, ceiling beams and door frames.
Early Ch’ing Dynasty’s architectural buildings, like their Han predecessors are mostly built of wood. They absorbed and transmitted building techniques from Han, infused with Manchu’s economic and military ideas such as the eight banners system and polygon shaped (instead of square or rectangle) plan view. They represented religious ideas from Tibet through decors, patterns and details, and identified with the nomadic lifestyle of Mongols through tent-shaped buildings and encryption of Lamaism on many objects’ surfaces. Different from mid to late Ch’ing Dynasty (1735-1912) architecture that is ornate and extravagant, early Ch’ing style emphasizes scale, function and hierarchy (social classification).

Ch’ing Dynasty architecture and its interior were influenced by many cultures including Han, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan. The architectural style of Shenyang Imperial Palace displays an amalgamation of all four cultures (Chen 2003, p.12). When many Ch’ing Chinese laborers travelled to San Francisco during the Gold Rush Age (1848-1855), the Ch’ing Dynasty architectural and interior design vocabularies were transferred to America. Gold was discovered in 1844, and despite the harsh living and working conditions many Chinese decided to settle in the region. Throughout Ch’ing Dynasty China, people used bronze, silver, and gold to trade. These resources were controlled by the Emperor, and the discovery of private mining resulted in capital punishment. The severe punishment made mining abroad appealing, since only the act of mining was illegal in China, but not bringing in gold, so many Chinese labors went to America hoping to bring as much gold as they possibly could so their families could live much more prosperous lives. With the power of the Ch’ing Dynasty government impaired by the First Opium War, China was forced out of
thousands of years of isolation. Many Westerners came to sell opium and trade other commodities.

At the same time, information and knowledge of the West became available to ordinary Chinese people. Moreover, many traveled with Westerners as their servant or maid to Europe and America. As a matter of fact, the first recorded Chinese settler in San Francisco was a maid in 1840 (Choy 2012, 142). With many laborers present, Chinese merchants and entertainers came over to seek the business opportunity as well. In 1882, the US Congress passed a bill known as the “Chinese Exclusion Act”, which prohibited immigration from China for the next ten years. Moreover, it progressed further to the extent that no Chinese citizens were allowed to enter US border. This restriction was not lifted until 1943. For 61 years early Chinese settlers in the United States were separated from their parents, wives, children, and this longing for their family was eased mainly by telephone communication.

As a result, the Telephone Exchange Building was built in 1906 after the earthquake and finished in 1909. This building is located at 743 Washington Street in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood. Unlike many buildings in Chinatown, this one is not a Western brick and mortar construction with Chinese eaves added on. It was a true wood construction with traditional technique. At its prime time (1909-1943) it had over 30 Chinese ladies working there as operators, who memorized 2000 customers by their names and businesses (Choy 2012, p.145).
After the 1940s, it became common to have a personal telephone at one’s home. Therefore, the Telephone Exchange gradually went out of business. The building was remodeled in 1960 by the Bank of Canton, and it is now the United Commercial Bank.
CHAPTER 3 CHINA’S PRE-CH’ING CULTURAL, ARCHITECTURAL, AND INTERIOR DESIGN FOUNDATION

3.1 Hierarchy (Social Classification)

A clear hierarchical division in traditional Chinese architecture was strictly followed throughout Chinese history. Ancient Chinese rulers developed a set of laws and institutions or legal provisions that dictated permissible architectural form and scale in accordance with one’s social and political status, also known as the hierarchy of ancient Chinese architecture. It ensured a desired social and moral order, and improved building systems. The system existed from the Zhou Dynasty (1046BCE-256BCE) through the late Ch’ing Dynasty (Liu 1996), more than 2,000 years. The laws and institutions were strictly enforced in ancient Chinese society.

According to Zhou Dynasty historical records of Qin, the size and height of buildings belonging to warlords and kings differed according to status. The number of doors and rooms within an ancestral hall decreased as political status diminished. For example, only the emperor and highest level warlords could construct their most important exterior door as a city gate. The emperor had two watchtowers and a screen reflection wall outside the gate, whereas warlords had only one of each within their gate. Other courtiers were permitted to have curtains only. The emperor’s palaces and other ancestral halls had multi-eave hip roofs (重檐庑殿顶), red painted columns, and tempera on the beams and column feet. In contrast,
everyone else had a roof with two slopes, and their columns could only be painted black, blue-green or yellow (Wu 2004, 73).

Restrictions expanded throughout history, with emperors from different dynasties adding additional restrictions thought necessary in accordance with social and technological development. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) the system became so detailed that it extended to all buildings including commoner’s residences, as well as interiors. It dictated how many rooms one could have, how deep a room could be, the color of exterior and interior surfaces, and the type of roof and room decor. If an illegal building was reported, the owner would be forced to rebuild it or go to jail; this was a serious crime that could lead to capital punishment since it was viewed as an act of rebellion against the ruler (Fu 2012, 44-45).

The Ch’ing Dynasty’s hierarchical system was very similar to that of the Ming Dynasty, but it had a new development that classified roof design from high to low: multi-eave hip-roof, multi-eave gable and hip-roof, hip-roof, gable and hip-roof, overhanging gable-roof, flush gable-roof, curved-roof, single slope-roof, circular pyramidal-roof, eight point pyramidal-roof and four point pyramidal-roof [Fig. 6] (Fu 2012, 45). In addition to roof considerations, in the northern part of China all residence levels strictly followed three design rules: 1] The living room was to be in the front of the house and the bedroom at the back, 2] private spaces were to be separated from work areas, and 3] décor was to be minimized.
The Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex is one of two existing Chinese imperial complexes (the other is the Forbidden City.) It is the only royal palace built by the Manchu minority ethnic group. The Ch’ing Dynasty royal family was Manchu, a nomadic race that originated east of the Mongolian steppes or highland grasses region. When building the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex the Aisin-Gioro family was seeking an opportunity to leave the steppe region and rule Mainland China. They were very proud of their Mongolian tradition, often referred to themselves as a “Nation on Horseback,” and reflected this pride in their architecture.

Two of the most significant buildings in the palace complex are the Da Zhen Hall and the Chong Zhen Hall. Initial construction started in the year 1625 with Da Zhen Hall and was finished in 1636. It covers 60,000 square meters of land, has 114 buildings and over 600 rooms. Emperor Qian Long later ordered a major expansion which was finished in 1783, leaving us the interesting composition we see today: east, middle and west--3 axes parallel to
each other [Fig. 7]. Da Zhen Hall and Chong Zhen Hall will be discussed and are highlighted in purple and green on the site plan.

*Figure 7 Shenyang Imperial Palace Site Plan, photographed and edited by Author, summer 2012*
Between 1625 and 1644 the palace was used by the local opposition regime. From 1644 to 1911 it was the palace of alternate capital, and when the Ch’ing Dynasty was replaced by the Republic of China in 1912 it became a museum and remains so today. The palace complex was constructed by the Manchu people who transitioned from a fishing, hunting, and gathering economy to an agricultural one. They designed according to the nation’s social systems, customs, and aesthetics, and absorbed and learned construction techniques from the Han and other ethnic minorities such as the Mongolians and Tibetans. In the process they created an architectural masterpiece. Its layout of buildings, construction techniques, and decorative arts make it unique. It is considered to be an architectural example of all ethnic groups in the region, representing the highest achievements of architectural culture in Northeast Asia, and a model of ethnic cultural integration (Chen and Piao, Shengjing Gong Dian Jian Zhu 2007, 4).

3.1.1 Da Zhen Hall Exterior

Da Zhen Hall [Fig. 8] is located on the East side of the Shenyang Imperial Palace complex and is one of the compound’s most significant buildings, as evidenced by its elaborate construction.

Figure 8 Da Zhen Hall, photo by author, summer 2012
Its significance can be elaborated in three aspects:

1. It represents an eight-banner military system. The architecture has a distinct style incorporating social values, class and nationality. Nurhaci as a founding emperor reflected his ideas, culture, and beliefs in the design of Da Zhen Hall, especially the creation of an eight-banner military system. He gave the building an octagonal shape. Each side represented a banner he considered a symbol of state power, and he did it in a simple and straightforward way.

2. Nurhaci spent his entire adult life engaged in countless wars, and as a nomadic he stayed in tents most of the time. When his army set up camp he lived in a yellow tent at the center with each banner lord’s tent situated around him evenly (Chen and Piao, Shengjing Gong Dian Jian Zhu 2007, 5). This suggests that by mimicking the tent form, he believed it would motivate his army to fight and be ready for battle at all times. There is a large plaza in front of Da Zhen Hall where he gave many inspirational speeches to his army, and they marched from there.

3. Nurhaci built Da Zhen Hall as a monument to his accomplishments. During the Jin era the octagonal shaped pagoda was a very popular style and usually represented sublime significance. As a decedent of Jin, Nurhaci wanted nothing less than that.

   Hence, Da Zhen Hall is octagonal-shaped on a plan view and it is also known as the Octagonal Hall or Grand Hall. It is unique in terms of its architectural form, decorative techniques, and building technology. Some claim that other Eastside buildings are more simply designed to heighten the majesty of Da Zhen Hall (B. Wu 2012, 67). The main primary hall has the most nationalistic characteristics of any building in the Imperial Palace
Complex in Shenyang when considered from the perspective of the Manchu’s Ch’ing Dynasty. It expresses the full-bodied Manchu style, and it is identifiable by the integration of Han, Mongolian, and Tibetan cultural symbolism and architectural techniques (Zhang 2011). The building integrates the beliefs, religions or philosophies of Manchu and represents the historical Manchu rise period in the mid-17th Century.

Figure 9 Xumizuo (Sumeru) Pedestal, http://www.tupain58.com, accessed June 2013

Figure 10 Da Zhen Hall Roof, http://www.sketchup.tw/2010_12_01_archive.html, accessed June 2013

Da Zhen Hall sits on a 1.5-meter-high Xumizuo pedestal [Fig. 9] and has a multi-eave, eight-pointed pyramidal roof [Fig. 10]. These types of roofs demonstrate a strong Han influence, but with a twist. As mentioned earlier, in traditional Han architecture one finds features like multi-eaves and eight-pointed pyramids, but they rarely occur together. A pyramidal roof originated in traditional Chinese Buddhist architecture and is a design feature often found in Chinese pagodas, pavilions and terraces. Its main characteristic is a conical-shaped roof with ridges that focus on a point. The traditional Chinese pyramidal roof has several variations: single eave, multi-eave, circular, eight and four-point, and appears in different combinations [Fig. 11 & 12]. They were usually situated in outdoor spaces and were rarely used in palace buildings. On the other hand, multi-eave hipped roofs were usually
associated with very high status buildings and were only permissible in large palace buildings and ancestral halls: for example, the Tai He Hall in the Forbidden City, Beijing [Fig. 13]. It was used for important ceremonies such as the crowning of an Emperor and Queen, and for royal worship of ancestors and gods.


Figure 12 Taoran Pavilion in Beijing, http://a2.att.hudong.com/05/90/0130000165486121169907988454.jpg, accessed June 2014

Figure 13 Taihe Hall, the Forbidden City, Beijing, http://photo.hanyu.iciba.com/upload/encyclopedia_2/24/5d/bk_245d4e90818922fe55a1b54c34fbc9dd_YHaFY2.jpg, accessed June 2014
It is contended in the present thesis that the architecture of this period is a unique fusion of Mongol tent [Fig.14], Han pavilion and Nurhaci’s aspiration for great status and power. Nurhaci identified with the Mongol culture because the Manchu people had been highly influenced by its powerful rule since the 13th century, and they shared the same lifestyle as nomadic races, living in tents and constantly migrating through the high grasslands. He was fascinated by the Han culture because he grew up in the Han habitat area of Northeast China and served in the Ming military; he was unconsciously influenced by what he heard and saw. Last but not least, when he started building Da Zhen Hall in 1625, Ming was still ruling China; he could not build a hall like Tai He Hall without alarming the Ming emperor. However, his ambition to rule China did not allow him to build a mediocre building. He needed a palace to ensure his army and people that he was destined to rule, that he was a true dragon.
The eight-point pyramidal roof was the perfect metaphor for Nurhaci and his army. Yellow represented royalty in the Han culture, and green represented the Mongolian steppe, making this color combination and its artistic expression unique. Da Zhen Hall used yellow glazed glass tiles with green trim to showcase its unique Manchu characteristics [Fig. 15]. Along the eight vertical ridges at the top of the roof resides a statue of a mighty Mongolian warrior, symbolizing the unification of China’s old and new ruling forces. Eight vertical ridges extend upward, aggregating at the top of the temple center. They culminate in a roof crown composed of phase wheels, a zodiac sign of Aquarius, and orbs highly influenced by Tibetan Lamaism [Fig. 16]. At the crown’s center there is a statue of a dragon flying through the sky and sea. It is designed to elicit a solemn, majestic feeling—another strong Han influence from a people who viewed the dragon as a symbol of true royalty. The roof crown combined features of typical Buddhist architecture, Han ideology, Mongol’s power, Tibetan religious belief, and Manchu nationalistic symbolism.

The Xumizuo pedestal, also known as Sumeru, is the highest standard form of pedestal in traditional Chinese Architecture. The form originated in Buddhist culture and is
described as the seat for Buddha. The Sumeru pedestal is only found in Chinese Buddhist temples and Imperial buildings and was typically placed under the most significant building within a complex (Fu 2012, 34). When one walks around a Xumizu pedestal, he or she can observe many stone balustrades covered with engraved scripts, carved breast boards, baluster columns, drum-shaped bearing stones, and plinth stones. The balustrade is bordered by patterns of peony, chrysanthemum, lotus, Ganoderma, and typha fruit with grass or Ru-Yi design [Fig. 17].

![Figure 17 Da Zhen Hall Xumizu Pedestal, taken by author, summer 2012](image)

There are eight stone lions [Fig. 18] atop baluster columns at eight points where the stone railings touch the ground. Each lion’s back is carved with a Pan-Chang pattern of half seated lions with upright ears. The lions are on alert, looking as if they are listening for nearby sounds, and have the appearance of dignity rather than ferocity. This is a unique
characteristic of stone-carved lions. In historical Chinese architecture they were typically larger with a scary look, since their original and primary purpose was to scare evil spirits away from human habitats. Lion statues were also a sign of status, but not as limited as the Dragon. They are found in front of many traditional Han residences, including those of officials and wealthy merchants.

![Stone Carved Lions](image)

*Figure 18 Stone Carved Lions, photo by author, summer 2012*

The Da Zhen Hall structure is entirely made of wood; it has twenty-four outer columns and eight inner columns, all with gold paint and dragon totems. Two of the outer columns are located on each side the main entrance and feature two gold painted dragons swirling on the top of each column [Fig 19]. The dragon is an imperial symbol used throughout Chinese history dating back to 3000 BCE. In Chinese legend, a dragon gave birth to nine sons and only one of them was to become the true dragon possessing the power to rule. Chinese emperors represented this real dragon and they inherited its boundless rights and powers. The statues of floating and revolving shaped dragons showed that the emperor was vigorous and symbolized his longevity. The two dragons are in perfect symmetry, with
body and legs covered in gold powder. Their claws and horns are painted green, white and black. They are basically parallel, yet they are more separated at the lower end, creating an arch to signify the main entrance to the interior of Da Zhen Hall [Fig.19 & 20].

\[\text{Figure 19 Da Zhen Hall Exterior Columns, taken by author, summer 2012}\]

\[\text{Figure 20 Column Sculpture Detail, taken by author, summer 2012}\]

### 3.1.2 Da Zhen Hall Interior Structure

Symbols of status become even stronger upon entering Da Zhen Hall. Compared to earlier Han Chinese interiors the interior design of this hall has an overwhelming presence of Han, Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan influence like its exterior. Hip-rafters, purlins, tie beams, one-step cross beams, two-step cross beams and tenons connect columns, and are then layered upon each other to reach the desired height [Fig. 21]. Inverted V-shaped braces support a suspended column to create the pyramidal roof. The interior ceiling is composed of three parts, and like the structures mentioned above, are layered upon each other, gradually collapsing to conform to the exterior pyramidal roof shape [Fig. 21 & 22].
Near the entrance to the hall there is a space between the outer columns and the inner columns. The main aisle has an exposed tie beam (*Tou-Kong*), architrave, and ceiling tie beam, creating a trapezoidal plane. This plane is equally divided into five smaller planes, with eight sides forming forty ceiling planes in total. Upon those planes, there are paintings of dragons, phoenixes and Sanskrit, a strong indication of Tibetan Lamaism influence. Together, they reinforce the presence of imperial power and Buddhism ideas.
The second part is an octagon shape created by laying the gravel beam on top of the *Tou-Kong* (used for the inner columns). It positioned a series of structures on the gravel beams in the order of short columns and cantilever beams. The cantilever beams are positioned to support inverted V-shaped braces at one end and are connected to the hanging-lotus column in the *caisson*, the third part of the hall ceiling--the center section. The caisson is an important element of the palace building interior; it represents the most honorable and highest status among traditional Han Chinese ceilings. Other than making the space more majestic and grand, its practical functions are to divide the height of the room to control temperature and to prevent dust from falling. In Da Zhen Hall there are eight hanging-lotus columns in the center, and an eight-bucket caisson [Fig. 23], a type of caisson ceiling used in most large-scale traditional Han palace buildings, especially halls.

![Caisson in Da Zhen Hall](http://preview.quanjing.com/chineseview008/267-0107.jpg)  
*Figure 23 Caisson in Da Zhen Hall, http://preview.quanjing.com/chineseview008/267-0107.jpg, accessed June 2015*
The caisson walls are decorated, with painted composite brackets that lean upwards and gradually gather to bear the Spiegel, a circular reflective metal plane [Fig. 23]. There is a carved descending dragon at the center of the Spiegel. The dragon’s mouth opens as if it is trying to swallow something. Its front left claw grabs a precious orb with flames burning through it. Sculptors worked the body of the dragon with care and precision so that it would look as though it were alive. It was intended to intimidate, and again, announce that the imperial power was holy and irresistible. The circular shaped Spiegel has a chain of pearls surrounding it. Inside the pearls there is a totem of composited clouds and flying dragons. In some areas the totem is dense in composition and in other areas it is relatively loose. The designers used a crimson red background to accentuate the golden dragon that is partly hidden by clouds and partly revealed. The colors work well together; they harmonize without being monotonous. All elements of the caisson were well composed and carefully crafted to create the fornix called Qiong-Long, the name for the highest standard of Han Chinese traditional dome structures.

Figure 24 Ming Zhihua Temple Caisson, Beijing, http://36.media.tumblr.com/3c44297e2c1e70dfe91f1a037ab7fa54/tumblr_n04ssoQ1nT1rrabou01_1280.jpg, accessed June 2015
Compared to a Ming caisson [Fig. 24] the Da Zhen Hall caisson uses the same structural techniques, but is more ornate and colorful. The Ming Dynasty Zhi Hua Temple’s caisson has a prominent geometric shape; it focuses on clean line and form rather than ornaments of objects, patterns, and colors. Even by looking at the two dragon carvings in the center it is evident that the one in Da Zhen Hall has more movement and vivid color; this is the result of strong influences from Mongolian and Tibetan esthetics.

3.1.3 Da Zhen Hall Pattern and Motif

Manchu’s ornaments and motifs usually have vivid colors and auspicious meanings. They often use high contrasts and saturated colors. For example, many interior colors are red, yellow, and blue with transition colors of black, white, and gold to balance them. Another interesting characteristic is that they tend to use warm colors on the side facing the sun and cool colors on the others (Chen 2002, 02). Furthermore, as mentioned above, colors were strictly classified according to social class.

Motifs such as animals (lions, sheep, bats and dogs), plants (grass, wheat, and tree branches), encryptions (Manchu calligraphy and lucky numbers), people (warriors), and geometric forms are found in traditional Manchu households. They sometimes show up on their own or in combination (Chen 2002, 02). In Da Zhen Hall there are many unique motifs or combinations because of the cultural and religious influences of Han and Tibet: for example the dragon, peony, willow, lotus and chrysanthemum from the Han culture, and the
“卍” symbol from Tibet. They are symbols that reinsure the grand presence of Manchu power or happiness wishes for future generations.

Decorative surface paintings at Da Zhen Hall are also a fusion of Manchu, Han, Mongolian and Tibetan artistic methods and aesthetics. The hall’s outer-eaves are painted with tangent circular patterns [Fig. 26] and He-Xi patterns [Fig. 25], the latter also known as the dragon pattern. Those are two major patterns are usually found in buildings with high status, especially imperial buildings, official buildings or Buddhist temples, and are characteristic of the Han style architectural pattern. Tangent circle patterns are seen at penetrating ties, Baotou beams, hypostyle eave purlins and small tie-beams, whereas He-Xi patterns are painted on every other cantilever purlin and architrave (used with Tou-Kong).

Below the outer eave, tangent circle patterns are painted on each side of the central bay’s architrave. Moreover, a He-Xi pattern of two golden dragons playing with a fiery pearl is painted on the center architrave, and others are painted with a moving dragon, flame, and clouds. A combination of paintings and carvings showcased the middle tie beam [Fig. 27], a decorative technique traditionally used in Tibetan Buddhist temples. Furthermore, they introduced warm undertones in their patterns and used embossed painting in some areas to give more definition. The color and texture varied, yet worked well together.
Findings from the present research suggest that the Han style placed emphasis on material, form, and status, and that Tibetan and Mongol styles often used vivid color such as yellow, green, red and blue. Style was often associated with their religion. Many decorative pieces used in building exteriors and interiors were larger or smaller versions of objects they used for Lama Ceremonies. The Manchu style (1636-1735) mixed them all together. It used the Han style as a foundation, and then added many details, patterns and encryptions from the other two styles to create a unique early Ch’ing interior design.

3.2 Symmetry

Aside from interior structure and surface patterns, the interior organization of Da Zhen Hall followed the symmetrical organization demonstrated in the majority of Chinese
architectural styles from the Han, Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. These symmetrical features influenced space division, furniture, paintings, display objects, and almost all other decorative elements.

Buildings imbued with the highest status were often placed in the middle of a group of buildings out of respect. Most of the Han Chinese traditional architecture had a clear North-South axis and neat East-West symmetry (Pan 2001), and a form of beauty that celebrates moderation and justice. Many Han residential courtyards placed the parents’ bedroom in the middle and surrounded it by the children’s rooms, just as in palace buildings [Fig. 28].

At Da Zhen Hall, interior symmetry follows the outside shape and is enhanced by equally distributing display objects, furniture, and calligraphy either at the center or on each
side of the room. At the hall center is an octagonal terrace, about two-foot high, upon which a throne chair and a seven-panel screen are centrally placed [Fig. 29 & 30]. Both are hand-carved from a single piece of wood, a process that took about seven years. They are covered with gold leaf and decorated with the highest grade of green jade. Green Jade is considered the king of jade because it has the deepest green hue and rigidity (Zhongguo Da Bai Ke Quan Shu: 2nd Edition 2009, 112). The woodcarvings are complex and intricate. Carved patterns, such as dragons, clouds, flowers and other Chinese trim motifs cover the throne chair to enhance the Emperor’s royal appeal. The screen panels were carved using similar techniques and patterns. They are 3.5 meters high and seven meters wide, and were used to provide privacy when the Emperor used the hall space.

Figure 29 Da Zhen Hall Interior, photo by author, summer 2012
Motifs, like other decorative pieces in the space, are symmetrical too. A visitor would not only see peony motifs on the east wall but on the west wall as well; they were presented as a set. Another strong Han influence is located above the screen and between columns where a horizontal inscribed board hangs says: *Tai Jiao Jing Yun* 泰交景运. *Tai Jiao Jing Yun* means, “Meaningful human interaction and good fortune as beautiful as the scenery.” A set of vertically written couplets written by Qian-Long Emperor was placed along both sides of the board, and states that he will “follow his father’s footstep and create the most prosperous and peaceful empire that ever existed” [Fig. 29]. It represents two deeply rooted Confucius ideas in Han culture: 1] to filial elders, and 2] be loyal to one’s country (Nan 2003, 22). Its meaning is deeply rooted in the Han culture, and the writing uses Han characters instead of the Manchu language. Additionally, it was composed using Han customs. In China one can
still find this kind of writing on front doors and in living rooms, especially during the Chinese New Year [Fig. 31].


Figure 32 Da Zhen Hall Interior Displays, photographed and edited by Author, summer 2012
In front of the throne chair and at each side there is one wiry enamel censer, one iron crane to symbolize immortality, one wiry enamel elephant standing on top of a flat jade platform to symbolize peace, and a wiry enamel beast candle holder placed on a wood stool with gold paint [Fig. 32]. Unbalanced pieces were not an option; lack of symmetry would be seen as insufficient and illegitimate.

3.3 Chapter Summary

Da Zhen Hall was the primary palace hall for early Ch‘ing emperors from its construction until 1644. It was often used to hold large military and political ceremonies such as when an Emperor ascended the throne, issued a decree, announced a military expedition, and greeted soldiers in triumph. Such a place required the utmost formality and righteousness.

Like many other buildings from the early Ch‘ing Dynasty, Da Zhen Hall illustrated a fusion of Manchu, Han, Tibetan and Mongolian cultures. Early Ch‘ing interiors adopted most of the Ming (the last Han regime) styles because of the overwhelming presence of the Han style that had a long, continuous developing history, and deep-rooted philosophical and moral ideas in the region. It can be seen from large complex layouts to detailed motifs on display objects. The two most important ideas associated with Han architecture and interiors are hierarchy and symmetry; Ch‘ing inherited both, not only during its early stage but also throughout its entire regime.

Inspiration came from both the nomadic lifestyle they shared with the Mongols and their Lamaism beliefs that originated in the Tibetan region. It grew from a traditional Han
style, a mix of four cultures with completely different backgrounds and ideas, and developed into a unique style—one that not only focused on harmony and balance, but also expressed a longing for freedom, celebration and respect for their gods. The styles are mostly found in building exterior and interior details such as motifs, miniatures of ceremonial objects, and decorative elements.

The chapter showed that early Ch’ing interior design and decor expressed two characteristics: 1) a systematic approach to various classifications and rules to achieve balance, and to represent status according to the Han style, and 2) an interior design of early Ch’ing that became more and more complicated, colorful, and expressive, as it absorbed many design elements and religious ideas from Mongolia and Tibet, while incorporating new levels of technology as it became available.
CHAPTER 4 EARLY CH'ING DYNASTY FURNITURE AND DECORATIVE ART IN THE SHENYANG IMPERIAL COMPLEX

Thus far, the thesis examined how furniture, display objects, and art pieces were organized in spaces and how symmetry was achieved in Da Zhen Hall. This chapter presents an in-depth exploration of the furniture and decorative arts produced during the early Ch’ing period (1625-1735), and an analysis of their manifestation in the Twelve Beauties screen paintings in the Shenyang Imperial Palace.

4.1 Background

The Ming and early Ch’ing dynasties (1636-1735, pre-Qianlong Emperor) represent the height of Chinese traditional furniture development (Hu 2006, 73). As a prerequisite to this analysis, it is necessary to define a few important terms regarding furniture development during the early Ch’ing Dynasty.

4.1.1 Furniture Type and Style

Shixiang Wang argued that there are two ways to describe the differences between Ming and Ch’ing furniture: by period and by style. Broadly speaking, the Ming style includes furniture made during the Ming and early Ch’ing dynasties, as well as later versions that used the same craftsmanship and materials, and had similar aesthetic values. Ch’ing style furniture was crafted after 1735, from the time of the Qian-Long Emperor to 1912 (Wang 2008, 12). This thesis will be using the dynastic method instead of the stylistic method to delineate furniture development. Hence, Ming style represents furniture crafted during the Ming
Dynasty, especially from 1522 to 1644, and early Ch’ing style refers to a style developed between 1644 and 1735. Early Ch’ing furniture can be classified by function: seating, table, bed, cabinet, and screen.

4.1.2 Seating

Early Ch’ing Seating furniture can be classified as chairs and stools. There are two categories of chairs: with and without arms. Some of them have a waist beam and some do not. Important styles are Yi Tong Bei (一統碑) [Fig.33] and Deng Gua (燈掛) [Fig.34] (S. Wang 2008). Compared to the Ming’s Guan Mao chair [Fig.35], Yi Tong Bei and Deng Gua chairs are smaller, often without arms, and the lines of the chair backs are not parallel. The previous chapter of this thesis reported that the Manchu aesthetic favored vivid colors in accordance with imperial taste. Furthermore, materials from which the chairs were made gradually changed, with increasingly more redwood furniture entering peoples’ households.

Figure 33 Yi Tong Bei Chair, Ch'ing, http://img25.artxun.com/sdb/oldimg/039c/039c1ff6a195f20279e693e2170736d3.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 34 Deng Gua Chair, Ch’ing, http://www.zw-j.com/hmwiki/uploads/album/201110/07e64a19a97f06ba758b55b5c9a463be.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 35 Guan Mao Chair, Ming, http://img25.artxun.com/sdd/oldimg/57b8/57b8a4385f9ef5bb679b603c6fa262ec.jpg, accessed June 2015
4.1.3 Table

There are three types of tables: 

*Zhuo*(桌), *An*(案), and *Ji*(几) [Fig. 36 & 37]. Each type comes in various shapes such as square, rectangle, circular, and half-moon. *An* [Fig. 38] is very similar to *Zhuo* but with its legs recessed inward. It is commonly built of wood, ceramic or copper. *Ji* [Fig. 39] mimics the shape of the Chinese character “几”; instead of four legs it has two planes supporting the surface plane (Wang 2008, 314). Ch’ing tables are more heavily decorated with pearls, metals, and carving compared to tables from the Ming Dynasty [Fig. 37].


*Figure 37 Zhuo, Ming, http://www.pagodared.com/redbook/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Table.jpg, accessed June 2015*

*Figure 38 An, Ch’ing, http://s11.sinaimg.cn/mw690/002cu8Lizy6KfS17qoa1a&690, accessed June 2015*

*Figure 39 Ji, Ch’ing, http://collection.sinaimg.cn/jjhm/yjzx/20130715/U5566P1081T2D120270F6DT20130715181037.jpg, accessed June 2015*
4.1.4 Bed

Three bed types were popular during the Ch’ing Dynasty, depending on the region and season: the Shelf Bed (架子床) in Southern China, the Babu Bed (拔步床) in Northern China and the Arhat Bed (罗汉床) used for summer time. The Shelf Bed got its name from the wood plane on top of the bed that functioned as a dust-stopper. Often intricate carvings of birds, flowers and grass covered all surfaces for aesthetic value as well as air circulation. It was popular in Southern China because of its cooling effect on hot and damp days, and for the same reason, it was not used as frequently in the North where it was cooler. In comparison with the Ming Shelf Bed [Fig. 41], the Ch’ing bed retained its basic shape and function, but the decorations were much more detailed [Fig. 40].

The Babu Bed [Fig. 42] was an expansion of a shelf bed. In front of the actual bed there were a few things built in to create a “bedroom within bedroom” effect. It usually had a bathroom, space in front of the bed for a table and stool, windows, and entryway. During the
Northern freezing winter nights, people used a small bucket of burning coal and a blanket to cover the bed shelf at the back. This way they had some insulation to retain heat without risking carbon monoxide poisoning. While the Babu Bed emphasized complex structures and function, the Arhat bed [Fig. 43] was famous for its casualness. This type of bed originated during the Han Dynasty. The user could sit or sleep on it alone or entertain others, very much like a chaise and sofa in Western furniture.

![Figure 42 Babu Bed, Ch'ing, http://www.cnwhtv.cn/uploadfile/2011/1214/20111214041308380.jpg, accessed June 2015](image)

![Figure 43 Arhat Bed, Ch'ing, http://photo.hanyu.iciba.com/upload/encyclopedia_2/3d/25/bk_3d259b11615b16a61b2082b4c9de0765_KwEiTG.jpg, accessed June 2015](image)

4.1.5 Cabinet

Cabinets were used to store books, cloth, food, and display objects. Ming cabinets [Fig, 47] often had a drawer on the top, and hidden spaces for storing things out of sight. In a Ch’ing cabinet the hidden space had a set of doors on the surface of the cabinet (Wang 2008, 224-227) to make it more convenient to use. As more materials and techniques became
available, Ch‘ing cabinets [Fig.44-47] became much more varied in terms of shape, structure, function, color, locking mechanism, and decor.

Figure 44 Cabinet, Ch‘ing, http://www.artfinding.com/images/lot/_292/carlton_hobbs_llc_qing_dynasty_lacquer_cabinets_12452814774481.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 45 Cabinet, Ch‘ing, http://www.bonninashley.com/images/products/che00017.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 46 Cabinet, Ch‘ing, Clars Auction Gallery, https://clars.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Clars.ChineseQingDynastCabinet.gif, accessed June 2015

Figure 47 Cabinet, Ming, http://st.houzz.com/simgs/41e1be2003447663_4-5686/asian-storage-cabinets.jpg, accessed June 2015
4.1.6 Screen

Screens and curtains have been used to divide spaces within rooms and provide privacy since the Han Dynasty. In the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties, there were four types of screens: screens on a stand, curved screens, table screens, and hanging screens. Screens on stands usually incorporated 3, 5, 7, or 9 pieces, and were hefty since the stand (base) was often made of solid wood to match the screen trim. Curved screens [Fig. 48] usually had 2, 4, 6, or 8 pieces and could be folded up to save space when not needed. Compared to earlier types, they had more flexibility. Table screens [Fig.49] had only one piece and varied in size; they could be as tall as 30 meters or as small as 20 centimeters (S. Wang 2008, 155-157). Smaller table screens for Zhuo, An, Ji were used as decorative displays.

Figure 48 Curved Screen, Ming, http://demo.luxuryworld.in/screens/n_room_dividers/3092_oriental_screen.jpg, accessed June 2015
4.2 Early Ch’ing Furniture Characteristics

In comparison to Ming furniture, early Ch’ing furniture had the following characteristics:

1] Ch’ing furniture used more varieties of materials than Ming Dynasty furniture. Therefore, the size, volume and weight increased dramatically. Ming furniture was more lightweight and displayed natural wood patterns; builders often used yellow rosewood that had beautiful wood patterns and was relatively lightweight and easy to work with. Ch’ing
furniture, on the other hand, tended to be made of hardwoods such as rosewood and redwood—woods that have deep color and could withstand intricate knife work during carving.

2] Ch’ing furniture was more ornate than Ming Dynasty furniture. The Ch’ing furniture makers employed decorative methods such as inlays, carvings, and painting to archive a luxurious, stable, dignified look. Ming furniture, however, was more straightforward, lightweight, and had more graceful lines.

3] Ch’ing furniture was more rigid in shape. Straight edges and lines replaced Ming furniture’s curves in chair arms and table legs.

In short, Ming furniture focused on function while Ch’ing furniture was primarily made for display. It is interesting that Ming style furniture was continued by the Ch’ing Dynasty, yet because tastes change among the upper and ruling classes, it became a showcase for wealth and status.

4.3 Furniture and Decorative Art in Twelve Beauties in Shenyang Imperial Palace

The screen paintings of 12 Beauties were commissioned by Emperor Yong-Zheng (1678-1735) for his private study. His death is commonly considered the end of the early Ch’ing period (Li 2001, 2). While many interiors from pre-1735 changed and adapted to later living situations, this thesis argues that the paintings authentically captured how people lived at that time. Their original installation was intended for a 12-piece curved screen.
In “Total Labor Record of the Ch’ing Dynasty Hall of Mental Cultivation Household Office” there are three records associated with the Screen of Twelve Beauties:

February 28th, 1731, imperial household explorer Wang Hai instructed to make a screen framed with red willow wood for emperor’s Shen Liu study under Yongzheng Emperor’s order. It is a total of twelve fans. This screen is constructed by the Imperial department of engineering, mounted by Beijing interior office and was finished by two days later and placed in “Shen Liu” study. The twelve paintings of court ladies were taken off the same year August 24th and passed to the treasurer officer Chang Bao for safe keeping, later handed over to eunuch Liu Biao. (Qing Gong Nei Wu Fu Zao Ban Chu Dang An Zong Hui 2005, 58)

August 22nd, 1732, according to a note from Yuanmingyuan, on this day, treasure officer Chang Bao and Chieftain Samuha took the twelve paintings out and said: Emperor ordered them to mount each painting with a scroll. Therefore, at the same day twelve Chinese fir scrolls were made and mounted the original painting with four paper underlays. After that, they were handed over to Chang Bao and Samuha and passed to eunuch Chang Zhouqi for safe keeping. (Qing Gong Nei Wu Fu Zao Ban Chu Dang An Zong Hui 2005, 374)

July 17th, 1735, Chief eunuch Zheng Aigui and Hu Yingrui gathered twenty-four paintings and calligraphies and handed over to Chang Bao and Li Yi to mount them into a booklet for the convenience of emperor’s viewing. (Qing Gong Nei Wu Fu Zao Ban Chu Dang An Zong Hui 2005, 672)

These three records show that the twelve paintings are believed to be either the twelve beauties on the screen in the Shen Liu Study Room or among the twenty-four artwork booklets for the emperor. Most contemporary Chinese Ch’ing Dynasty scholars including Meifeng Wu, Hong Wu, and Juhan Gao lean toward the former (Chen 2003, 56). The twelve paintings are ink and color on silk, and each one is 184 centimeter tall and 98 centimeter wide. They have various names such as “Yong-Zheng’s Consorts,” “Twelve Consorts,” “The Twelve Beauties,” “Beauties,” and “Twelve Concubines of the Emperor Yong-Zheng,” and so forth.

China has maintained a tradition of painting women since ancient times. Painting beautiful women is an attempt to convey the Chinese ideal, standard, and/or desire for beauty. These twelve paintings are particularly valuable because Emperor Yong-Zheng commissioned them and they represent an imperial point of view from the early Ch’ing Dynasty.
Furthermore, they not only reveal the costumes and accessories that women wore, they show how women lived during the Ch’ing Dynasty. From an interior’s perspective they graphically communicate interior furnishing and decors that were used in the upper and ruling classes.

### 4.3.1 Observation and Analysis of the Twelve Beauties

*Figure 50 A Beauty at Leisure: Murmuring to Herself While Reading, 1709~1722, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 12)*

*Figure 51 A Beauty at Leisure: Leaning on a Gate Gazing at Bamboo, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 14)*
The painting, *A Beauty at Leisure: Murmuring to Herself While Reading* [Fig.50], shows a woman holding a book with a page half revealed. It appears that she may be reciting to herself. Behind her there is a small colored landscape painting on the wall. The decorative leaf below the landscape painting is inscribed in cursive script with a poem by the famous Northern Song calligrapher and poet, Mi Fu (1051-1107). The painter intentionally incorporated Mi Fu’s poem into the painting to hint at the distress of the young woman’s efforts. The poem may be translated as: small mouth like a cherry, waist as slender as a willow; sitting relaxed in a spring breeze, a moment of laziness; in a mood to wile away the time; just opened the book yet again lost in thought. So, in this painting the poem explains both the subject matter and the meaning of the painting.

The painter implied that other thoughts compromise the young woman's concentration. Indeed, the poem open before her may have given her a moment of pause. It is a poem by the Tang Dynasty female poet, Du Qiu, who had a difficult life. Du Qiu was made a concubine at age fifteen. When her master unsuccessfully rebelled, she was taken into the palace harem. When the prince that she was given to was slandered, they cast her away. Although she was still young, she returned home feeling old and undesired. Du Qiu's poem, saturated with bitterness, while focusing on youth and metaphors such as plucking flowers as soon as they blossom. The woman in the painting may not suffer from a similar tragedy, but during that time it was common to devalue women as another object to display.

She has a silk scarf covering her head that is knotted on the coil at two corners, making it unlikely to slip. This custom originated in the latter part of the Han Dynasty and was popular during the Northern and Southern dynasties (220-581). Later, it again became popular in the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties (Huang 1993, 133). In the painting the beauty is
sitting on a wooden Ch’ing Dynasty drum chair finished with lacquer, mother of pearl, and upholstered with woven wickers--characterized by decorative material and technique. The table she rests her arms upon is a typical Ming Dynasty square yellow rosewood table, marked by the wood choice and minimum carvings on the table side and legs. More private spaces at the back of this painting do not show, but are suggested by a high-rise threshold and hanging curtains. In the background incense is burning in a cloisonné censer, likely emitting a pleasant earthy scent commonly available at the time. From the rounded window opening there is a preview of the bamboo garden outside, revealing the circular window and the view it frames beyond.

In the painting, A Beauty at Leisure: Leaning on a Gate Gazing at Bamboo [Fig.51], the courtyard is full of flowers, grasses, bamboo, and decorative scholar’s rocks. It has an array of miniature landscapes in ceramic or porcelain containers that include floral arrangements of orchids and Chinese roses. The beauty of this painting is leaning on the gate and wistfully gazing, perhaps with romantic yearnings, inspired by the spring flowers filling the garden.

The headband is an ornament that evolved from a head wrap used in the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220) and later became extremely popular during the Ming and Ch’ing periods (Wang 1999, 227). At first, women wore wraps made of palm fiber to keep their hair neat. After the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), however, these were increasingly made from silk yarn or floss. Gradually the broad band became narrower and evolved into a slender strip encircling the forehead, giving rise to the name "sable-forehead-cover", and in the vernacular, headband and "bridle" (Wang 1999, 249).
During the Ch’ing Dynasty these bands were popular with women of every social class (Bao 2014, 214). Court ladies often had gold and jade inlaid in their headbands while non-aristocratic ladies decorated theirs’ with colorful embroidered silks. The noble ladies had a variety of headbands: in winter they were made from the fur of martens or otters; in summer, fabric bands were more comfortable (Cao 2006, 41).

The painting reveals an important characteristic of the traditional Ch’ing Dynasty interior space arrangement aesthetic that is implicit. Usually adjacent spaces are openly connected, yet the visual access or perception from one space to the other is deliberately obscured. It is the most important idea behind traditional Chinese garden design (Wang 2006, 69-73).

The previous chapter mentioned that Chinese architecture and interiors from any period follow the principle of symmetry. This painting shows how symmetrical indoor space connects with asymmetrical outdoor space.
The third painting, *A Beauty at Leisure: Doing Needlework by Candlelight* [Fig.52] shows a woman sitting on a polished redwood *Yi Tong Bei* chair by candlelight. The chair was developed during the early Ch’ing Dynasty and was likely constructed of rosewood. It is thought to be rosewood because of the color and availability at the time. She is occupied with her needlework. Typically, needlework encompassed weaving, embroidering, and sewing. Needlework was considered one of the most important moral standards used to judge the
character of a Chinese woman (Ma 2009, 137). Any woman good at needlework was highly regarded. The beauty in this picture picks the needle in an elegant way and seems lost in thought as she sews. In the background, there is a red bat flying through the bamboo which represents good luck. In the Chinese written language, the word “bat” is a homonym for the word “blessing.” Needlework requires sufficient light, therefore an imperial style lantern hangs from the ceiling to provide candlelight and singular large openings in each wall provides additional natural light. It is very common in historical Chinese buildings to have multiple large or small openings since candles were not sufficient to provide enough light for reading or needlework.

Her hair-style is called a Chinese Chignon, looking like an overturned alms bowl and formed by dividing the hair into several strands before entwining them together and fixing them with a hairpin. The towering hairstyle could not come loose easily. It was popular with concubines and noble ladies of the Six Dynasties (300~600 B.C.E), and became fashionable once again during the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties (Ma 2009, 67).

The beauty in the painting, *Distant Thoughts among Antiquities* [Fig.53], is sitting on a mottled bamboo Tai Shi chair, glancing down and absorbed in private thoughts. The Tai Shi chair is a style developed in the Ch’ing Dynasty and is characteristic of the large size and detailed décor of Ch’ing furniture. In this case, the chair looks like it has been stained intentionally to create a crying bamboo effect. In Chinese mythology twin sisters married the same man and lived a happy life. When their husband died they cried nights and days while leaning against a bamboo tree, their tears staining the bamboo. This kind of bamboo marking symbolizes a woman’s loyalty and affection for her husband, a quality considered to be very important in ancient China (Li 2001, 312). Very often an object in a room reflects the
character of the person living there, especially when it is presented as artwork. Objects are not randomly selected; they are an artist’s conscious choice.

The beauty is surrounded by treasures displayed on shelves (八宝格), including fine ceramics. For example, behind her are a Ru ware style brush washer and a jade table screen; to her left are a red glazed monks-cap ewer and a bronze tripod wine beaker. All identified objects in the painting date back to the Kang-Xi and Yong-Zheng periods of the early Ch’ing Dynasty, and can be dated because of the materials and shapes chosen. They represent the quintessential opulent style of the imperial household (Chen 1994, 46). On the one hand, these treasures add credibility to the authenticity of the scene, on the other hand they convey the woman’s interest in antiquities.

The hairstyle in this painting is a variation on the tied chignon type. Hair is gathered from the top of the head, or from the back of the head, or from two sides. The clumps of hair are tied with cords and then configured into one or two chignons. The chignons were secured with hairpins. This style of coiffeur was popular in all periods and practiced since early antiquity. It created an aesthetic that was both clean and formal. The prominence given to the forehead also suggests that she is intelligent and talented (Chen 1994, 72). Jewelry such as bracelets were often crafted from gold or jade and inlaid with pearls and semi-precious stones. This shows an early Ch’ing period: workers had already developed advanced skills to master this level of detail on a piece of jewelry or clothing, and that ability could be applied to larger pieces such as furniture.
The beauty in Sitting beside a Chrysanthemum [Fig.54] is sitting next to a table in a study and is holding a fine enameled watch. The elegant and finely finished table is in the early Ch’ing style and is ornamented with red paint, carvings, and pearl inlay. On the table stands a vase holding several chrysanthemums: this indicates that the time is the eighth lunar month of the year which is the early autumn. The chrysanthemum is considered elegant and strong for their ability to resist the cold. It was associated with longevity and appreciated for
its simple beauty and purification. It is widely used to decorate hairs and rooms. Hanging behind her is a scroll with a poem by Ming Dynasty calligrapher, Dong Qichang (1555-1636). There is a European astrolabe on the small table in the next room and she is holding an enameled watch in her hand. Both are indications that Western objects were already becoming common and fashionable in the palace and were valued. This hairstyle was often adopted for ceremonial occasions. It shows the dignified and coquettish charm of this lady.

The beauty in the painting, *Wearing a Fur-Lined Coat, Looking in a Mirror* [Fig.55], wears a fur-lined outer coat with jade adorning her wrist, holds a bronze mirror in one hand, and warms the other hand by gently resting it on a brazier. In the background, there is a hanging scroll inscribed by Hermit Pochen. It was the sobriquet that the Emperor Yongzheng adopted when he was still a prince. It implies that he aimed to be pure of heart and had few desires. She is sitting on an Arhat bed carved out of yellow rosewood root. The pattern resembles a cloud, a very common pattern in traditional Chinese art and originated with Taoism. There is a teacup resting on a stool next to the bed. The stool is made of the same material and carved in a similar fashion, showing that Ch’ing Dynasty furniture often came in a set. Conversely, Ming Dynasty furniture was usually designed as a single piece. Ch’ing Dynasty furniture design started the trend of matching pieces.

Jade was the favored ornament of noblemen and ladies. According to The Book of Rites, gentlemen in ancient times wore pieces of jade in order to create a pleasant sound when they moved, or when they clasped their hands to make a bow on special occasions (Huang 1993). The characteristics of jade were used to indicate the moral character of a

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19 Pochen, 破尘 , defeating the dust of the world
20 Between 1678 and 1723.
gentleman. Jade, which naturally occurs in a variety of colors, was prized for its purity (white symbolized the purest virtue and truth), for its hardness (hardness suggesting the enduring principles of trustworthiness, justice, and loyalty), and for its lustrous finish (a gentleman's cultivation of benevolence, wisdom, and courtesy), which could be achieved only by arduous effort. The admiration for the stone and the many metaphors it inspired indicate jade's significance in dynastic China. Ch’ing Dynasty jade carving was a culmination of the long tradition of jade working, both in variety and quality (Huang 1993, 83).

Figure 56 A Beauty at Leisure: Lady Standing and Holding a Ruyi Scepter, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 29)

Figure 57 A Beauty at Leisure: Watching Butterflies in Summer, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 30)
The lady in figure 56 is depicted admiring the flowers in the courtyard while holding a Ruyi scepter. The auspicious Ruyi ("as you wish") scepters were a popular gift in the Ch’ing Dynasty (Zhu 2002, 34). Ruyi was originally a claw shaped object with long handles used to scratch backs; it originated during the East Zhou Dynasty. As mentioned earlier, in Ch’ing design many objects had auspicious meanings, and in this case it was no longer a functional tool--it became a display piece that indicated food preference and longevity.

Purple, pink, white, and red peonies are most prominent in the garden. The peony is called the Prince of Flowers for its opulence, grace, and fragrance, and is a symbol of an auspicious, thriving and prosperous future, while the Ruyi scepter carved from bamboo in the form of a Ling Zhi mushroom signifies wish fulfillment.

There are two large, spacious openings present in the painting. At the front is an octagonal bamboo opening with a flower growing into it. Bamboo is commonly used in outdoor spaces to make furniture and structures. The cloud shaped stone opening at the back signified it is the entrance to an indoor space. Through the opening can be seen an Arhat bed with a Ch’ing style chest sitting on top to store pillows and sheets, characterized by the pearl inlays on the surface. It is probably not a formal living or bedroom because there are openings without doors to close it off.

The beauty in Watching Butterflies in Summer [Fig.57] stands and is leaning on an An table reminiscent of the Ming style. Its ash wood construction and simple lines characterize it. It is an An, not a Zhuo, and as mentioned earlier, its four legs are recessed into the work plane instead of coming directly from the corner. An could be used for a variety of purposes
such as drawing and reading. In this scene it appears to be a Chess An. She has a chessboard sitting on the table with two chess containers made of marble (identified by its smoke-like surface pattern). Next to the chess board there is a Ch’ing style Red-White porcelain vase adorned with a Chinese rose. The common color of Ming porcelain is white and blue. The railing is painted green with a “亝” shaped pattern, and beyond the railing bright butterflies hover over decorative garden rocks and day lilies. Although the painting depicts a woman doing little more than indulging in summer leisure (suggested by the fan on the table), and because of the allegorical nature of the day lily and its implication of giving birth to a son (Dai 2014, 124), the scene suggests that the woman pictured is pregnant with a boy. She holds a small calabash, a gourd belonging to a group of plants that communicates flourishing growth and often used to evoke the notion of many sons (Dai 2014, 127-128). It reveals another important expectation of ancient Chinese woman: giving birth to a son. Having many sons meant prosperity for a family. Sons carried on the family name and provided labor, especially at a time when China relied heavily on agriculture. Grapes and pomegranate are other plants having similar supernatural implications. The day lilies in bloom beside the railing and the calabash in her hand render the painting not only visually attractive, but also manage to invite deeper meaning.

The hair of the lady in the painting is coiled in skeins arranged on the top of her head and fixed with a hairpin. This simple and attractive style was one of the most popular hairstyles in the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasty courts. The hairpin had two important functions for noble ladies, and especially for Ch’ing Dynasty imperial concubines. The first was decorative. The pearls, jade, and precious stones encrusting them made hairpins an important contribution to a woman's overall appearance. The second was functional. Without the long
golden pin, the elaborate hairstyles usually could not be fixed in place (Huang 1993). This painting is further evidence that in Ch’ing design, there is often suggested meaning beyond the obvious.

Figure 58 A Beauty at Leisure: Drinking Tea under a Parasol Tree, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 34)

Figure 59 A Beauty at Leisure: Watching Magpies from a Couch, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 37)

The beauty with a large gauze fan in her hand in *Drinking Tea under a Parasol Tree* [Fig.58] did just that. Since the Zhou Dynasty, drinking tea was a simple daily ritual. It became associated with the intellectual world when gentlemen combined sipping tea with discussions of global affairs and ideas, thereby elevating tea’s status (Lu 2003). The beauty sits on a blue porcelain stool dating to the Ch’ing Dynasty, decorated with patterns of flower
and grass. Inside the moon gate, which has been a traditional Chinese opening since the Song Dynasty, the black-lacquer bookshelf with gold décor is filled with books. The fascicles not only suggest an atmosphere of Confucian learning, they also combine with the elegant Famille rose porcelain cup in her hand to indicate she is culturally accomplished. Famille rose porcelain is often found in Ch’ing imperial collections because of its color; only the ruling class was permitted to use it. It was much thinner and harder to make in comparison with other types of porcelain pieces from that period. Both the upper class and scholars favored blue ware during the Ming Dynasty (Chen and Piao 2007, 172).

Women in the Ch’ing Dynasty, and most especially concubines in the court, took pride in wearing jadeite and precious stones in their hair. Most hairpins were designed with auspicious themes and finely crafted of carefully selected materials—they produced a dazzling effect in ladies’ coiffeurs. The gold Phoenix headpiece suggests she is a woman with royal status, as well as Yong Zheng’s ambition for the throne in a much-decreed way. It is another example of the suggestive meaning in Ch’ing designs.

The beauty in Watching Magpies from a Couch [Fig.59] is seated indoors on an Arhat bed and plays with a jade interlink. She is lost in thought while watching a pair of magpies calling outside. The artist meant to show the woman's happiness at the end of winter and the beginning of spring, but perhaps inadvertently he also conveyed a sense of stifling solitude and utter loneliness that many women in the household had to endure. The typical Ch’ing style stand screen behind her is inscribed with hundreds of different forms of characters for longevity (寿). Although the message is to extend life for hundreds of years, the viewer feels she would trade the life of an immortal for the devoted pairing of Mandarin ducks (on the left wall, symbolizes true love and eternal companionship).
The beauty’s hairstyle features strands of plaited hair that are looped and secured with a cord. This style of coiffure was fairly popular with noble ladies before the Han Dynasty and can be seen on some of the terracotta warriors of Qinshihuang's Mausoleum. Later it became a style used in paintings to depict female immortals. The addition of the chrysanthemum chain around her bun is solely to give her a pretty and lively look. Jade interlinks were play-things in the Ch’ing Dynasty (Zhu 2002, 171). They were carved from one piece of jade and suggest continuous interplay without limit. The linkage symbolized fidelity from start to finish, similar to the infinity symbol in the West.

Figure 60 A Beauty at Leisure: Watching Cats While Handling Beads, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 42)

Figure 61 A Beauty at Leisure: Watching Snow besides a Brazier, (The collection of the Palace Museum court painting of the Qing dynasty, 2001, 45)
The beauty in *Watching Cats While Handling Beads* [Fig. 60] is sitting upright, leaning slightly on the table, leisurely handling prayer beads and watching two cats play on a windowsill. The painter has us view the interior of the room from outside the round window, so the focal point in this painting is relatively small. However, since the painter adopted the western one-point perspective method, the foreground, middle ground, and background are laid out systematically, significantly expanding the sense of space and extending the charm of the scene. Next to the window there is a chiming clock. Cats are playing on the threshold of interior and exterior spaces. The painting shows that a traditional Chinese woman usually spent time doing suspended activities, and the days passed quietly. They were not allowed to step out of the house, and their feet were usually forcefully bound into a small size since childhood. They did not have the strength to walk or stand for long.

The lady in this painting wears a peony in her hair. Fresh flowers were popular hair ornaments among the ladies of the past; the flowers were fragrant, beautiful, and easy to acquire. Women chose the number of flowers worn according to the size of individual blossoms. The petals of this peony are large enough that the lady in the painting needed only one. She is saying her prayers to the Buddha by counting the rosary beads, or for counting the number of recitations of a sutra passage--additional evidence of Tibetan influence, especially the branch of Lamaism, which was the personal belief of Emperor Yong-Zheng. The number of beads varied, but eighteen was common, and one often sees strings of 108 beads representing protection from the 108 vexations (Zhao 2003, 91). The prayer beads also served as ornaments. Different types of wood, precious stones and intricate carving on a small bead were all signs of status. The variation of bead materials used is supporting evidence that Ch’ing designs strictly followed the principles of hierarchy, and were more
decorative and elaborate than the Ming style. This chapter shows that elaborate decor on furniture and decor stopped being just beautiful things to appreciate; it was a necessity for the Ch’ing people, especially the upper class, to socially differentiate them from the rest.

In the painting, Watching Snow besides a Brazier [Fig.61], the beauty is gently holding back a curtain while sitting on a rosewood shelf bed beside the window and admiring the snowy scene surrounding a blossoming plum tree. The jade-green bamboo is covered with frost and snow, and looks strong and fresh despite the cold. The white winter sweet is favored because the five petals of its blossoms are associated with five blessings including happiness, fortune, health, auspiciousness, and longevity. Additionally, it is celebrated in poetry for its life force (it blossoms in late winter before the snow has melted).

The hanging pearls that decorate the woman's hairpin were literally called "step-sway," a name that arose from descriptions of the pearls swaying slightly when the wearer walked or moved. The swinging string of baubles created a lingering charm that was captured in the literature of all periods. In five Tang Dynasty songs, the poet Gu Kuang’s descriptions of entertainers include the line, "Jade for a hairpin, a golden step-sway."\(^{21}\)

As discussed earlier, in a traditional Chinese bedroom the function of a bed was not limited to sleeping. The entire structure of a bed sometimes included a space to sleep, a small dining area, tea area, and a small toilet. The areas were divided by carved wooden panels and closed off with fabric curtains. The reason is that spaces were not identified by functions but as the units of “Jian”--a large room closed off by four walls. It gave them flexibility in space

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\(^{21}\)《王郎中妓席五咏·箜篌》by Gu Kuang (725-814)：“玉作搔头金步摇 (Jade for a hairpin, a golden step-sway), 高张苦调响连宵。欲知写尽相思梦, 度水寻云不用桥。”
usage and arrangement, albeit lacking privacy, and led to the elaborate design of screens in the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties to facilitate their desire for both aesthetics and function.

4.3.2 Summary

Observations of the 12 paintings suggest the following style characteristics of the Ch’ing period when compared to Ming design: 1] there are more material and color variations; 2] there are suggestive meanings that indicate status or the supernatural; 3] objects are designed as sets instead of single pieces; 4] there is elaborate ornamentation made possible by the development of new techniques and imaginative use of materials; and 5] there is an observable budding of Western influence. After the observation and analysis of the Da Zhen Hall in Shenyang Imperial Complex and paintings of Twelve Beauty, it is important to understand the early Ch’ing Dynasty interiors characteristics holistically.
CHAPTER 5 SUMMATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY CH’ING DYNASTY INTERIOR DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS IN SHENYANG IMPERIAL PALACE

Ch’ing Dynasty interior design, particularly during in its early stages of development (pre Emperor Qian-Long), inherited most of the Ming Dynasty interior design ideas for furniture and display object making including hierarchy, symmetry, wood construction techniques, and basic form. Yet, the chapter will show that it differs from Ming and/or other earlier Han styles in five categories: 1] decorativeness of the interior; 2] stylized design systems; 3] exquisite and complicated decor; 4] overall awareness; and 5] humanistic care.

5.1 Increased level of Decorativeness in the Interior – Aesthetics Valued over Function

During the Ch’ing Dynasty decoration became an overall design process instead of a stage. This chapter argues that perhaps during this period in Chinese design history artistic taste was more valued (not saying it is the best taste). Before Ch’ing, designs were valued mainly by their functionality, but with the Ch’ing, aesthetics and function became equally valued, from overall interior to isolated objects, as seen in Shenyang Imperial palace decorative arts [Figure 29, 30, and 32].

Traditionally, Chinese people used linen or silk curtains and screens to divide rooms, with a minimum of colored patterns applied to structural elements. Since Ch’ing, not only were buildings decorated with wood, stone, and brick carvings, the techniques found their way to furniture, textiles, displays, and artwork. Furthermore, the placement and combination of them were not limited. On ceilings, beams, walls, floors, columns, furniture, and textiles one could find painted carvings, dyes applied to wood, and geometric shapes layered onto
natural forms. The main purpose of any object in a room shifted from being only functional to also being pleasant to look as taste dictated.

Figure 62 Jade Chinese Cabbage, Ch’ing, http://img.ssswh.com/attachments/2013/09/37511_201309151313021ZMDc.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 63 Wood Carving, Ch’ing, http://img5.ph.126.net/aJvEi6lhV-PRFsz77oZEA==/6597175319773228675.jpg, accessed June 2015

Figure 64 Enamel and Gold Plated Copper Lid, Ch’ing, photo by Author, summer 2012

Figure 65 Enamel Pot Plant, display piece, Ch’ing, photo by Author, summer 2012

Figure 66 Porcelain Drinking Cup, Ch’ing, photo by Author, summer 2012
5.2 Politically and Socially Imposed Stratified and Stylized Design System

Pre Ch’ing interior design adapted by various social classes did not differ except for a hierarchical change in size and materials; construction techniques, patterns and themes were very similar. In Ch’ing design patterns, colors, and carvings were classified by imperial command and common sense. Since ancient times some patterns and colors used in Chinese building and decor had implied meaning. However, in Ch’ing design, there was no exception, making them easier to classify. For example, “bat” suggested “happiness” (originating from the Manchu culture) and “pomegranate” implied “prosperity of a family” (originating from the Han culture). Every social class had its accepted set of pattern and color combinations.

Moreover, systematic design made it easier to produce--similar to mass production in an industrialized Western factory. While it enhanced efficiency and productivity, it limited the freedom of design and resulted in all homes of a given social class looking alike.

5.3 Increased Complexity and Exquisiteness in Form and Ornament

The limitations imposed were only intended for common people, not the imperial family. The imperials wanted only the best and most expensive items in their palace buildings to ensure their status. Before Ch’ing, Chinese interiors were flexible; people rearranged their rooms according to their need for daylight and air-flow. Furniture was relatively light-weight and free standing, and easy to move. Since Ch’ing, especially toward the mid-late Ch’ing, furniture became almost impossible to move. It was often huge, heavy, and/or attached to the floor due to the addition of excessive decor [Figure 40, 41].
The detailed ornamentation from the Ch’ing period is almost overwhelming in its extravagance; the matureness of the craft and the rareness of the materials are powerful. However, one cannot help but wonder if this level of decor was necessary for everyday life. There is also some underlying disappointment at how predictable furniture pieces are in design.

5.4 Comprehensive and Unified Design

It has been mentioned several times in this thesis that Ch’ing furniture and display design developed a sense of sets, a complete look compared to Ming’s single piece design. This is evidenced in Shenyang Palace interiors [Figure 68]. Furniture pieces, especially larger items, were often made as a set to accommodate room measurements (Wang 2008). In upper-class households it was seen as a disgrace to not have a customized furniture set (Li 2000). This trend also spread to lower class households.

Figure 67 Zhuo Zhen Garden 36 Birds Hall Interior, Suzhou, Ch’ing. http://file26.mafengwo.net/M00/FA/1D/wwKgB4lJG5eyAQvxBA9oAiwRJ_I10.groupinfo.w600.jpeg, accessed June 2015
It is interesting to note that Ch’ing interior design tended to create an overall look. However, the Ch’ing people’s obsession with detail and decor distracts the viewer’s attention away from how unified the design was intended to be.

5.5 Increased Emphasis on Humanistic Concerns

Interior environments are created for people to live in. An interior’s primary purpose is to ensure human survival, and the people living therein are the focus of the designed interior environment. In ancient China, due to the poor availability of materials and
technology, the interior was regarded as a shelter. As the economy and craftsmanship
developed over the centuries, people were not satisfied with just bare essentials; they desired
more. Shelter was no longer only about survival; spiritual pursuits became important as well.
Still, compared to other art forms such as painting and sculpture, an interior’s artistic pursuit
could never actually exceed level of comfort. During the Ch’ing Dynasty, craftsmanship
developed to the extent that furniture comfort and tool limitations were no longer overriding
issues. Therefore, public taste turned to luxury and richness.
CHAPTER 6 ADAPTATION OF CH’ING EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR DESIGN IN SAN FRANCISCO’S CHINATOWN

6.1 Background

The Ch’ing Dynasty architectural and interior design vocabulary was transferred to America when many Ch’ing Chinese laborers traveled to San Francisco during the “gold rush” beginning in the 1840s. Many of them traveled to California on their own despite harsh living and working conditions, and leaving their families behind. Their initial goal was simply to find gold and return home wealthy. During the Ch’ing Dynasty in China people used bronze, silver, and gold to trade. The Emperor controlled these resources, and the discovery of private mining by an individual resulted in capital punishment.

To understand the Chinese mindset at this time, it is important to consider that the migration coincided with China being forced out of thousands of years of isolation as a result of the First Opium War (1839-1842) between the British Empire and the Ch’ing army, which caused the Ch’ing Dynasty's power to diminish. Many Westerners came to China to sell opium and trade other commodities. The Chinese considered Western styles and objects exotic and high class, hence the increased western style influence on Chinese buildings and lifestyle, especially among upper and ruling classes. The most famous example is the Yuanmingyuan Park in Beijing [Fig. 69]. The park’s construction started in 1709 and had numerous additions and expansions until it was burned-down by the British-French Allied Forces in 1860. Figure 68 shows the remains of Yuanmingyuan Park after the fire. Pillars and arches were built in Baroque style with Chinese traditional detailing.
The upper class gradually adopted western styles and dictated right and wrong among all aspects of Chinese society. As a result, knowledge of Western culture grew and influenced ordinary Chinese. Moreover, many Chinese individuals traveled with Westerners as servants or maids to Europe and America and saw Western cultures firsthand.

Typically, when first generation immigrants settle into an unfamiliar culture they tend to bring traditions and belongings with them. With the passage of time some traditions remain, some change, and some vanish through adaptation. These can be as general as the common knowledge they share, the morals they follow, the lifestyle they desire, the beauty they appreciate—and as precise as the language they speak, the holidays they celebrate, the way they dress, the food they enjoy, and the house they live in.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) wrote three texts in which he
developed his concept of memory collective (Halbwachs 1980), and which today occupies a central place in the study of cultural memory. He has two important and fundamentally different notions of collective memory:

1. Collective memory as the organic memory of the individual, which operates within the framework of a sociocultural environment.
2. Collective memory as the creation of shared versions of the past, which results through interaction, communication, media, and institutions within small social groups as well as large cultural communities. (M. R. Wang July 2010)

Before beginning analysis, it is important to reconsider what a traditional Chinese residence is. Throughout the Ch’ing Dynasty, a typical courtyard residence strictly followed the Shenyang Imperial Palace style, except on a smaller scale [Fig. 70].

Figure 70 Traditional Chinese Courtyard Residences, https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQVqyYXEvnJlkxW4h3pzq0UA30wBjfwnWhNV89DoE1rBnmMfNRbw, edited & accessed June 2013

Unique features of the traditional Ch’ing Dynasty Chinese courtyard residence
include the screen wall, sometimes referred to as the reflection wall. It is used to stop visual access from the street when the front door is opened. Another feature is the festooned door—a heavily decorated door that is used as a secondary defense. Every room and space is arranged according to Feng Shui and has a unique, specified and observed function. The complex can be downsized or expanded according to the family’s social status.

The largest Chinese settlement since the late nineteenth century is in San Francisco, CA. The majority of Chinese immigrants arriving in San Francisco were laborers and male. As mentioned above, they came alone leaving their wives and children at home, hoping to find gold to provide a better life for their family. They did not have the financial means or necessities to build a house, since they expected to go back to China once they earned enough money. After 1848 many Chinese who were not laborers came and some of them attempted to build houses patterned after houses in China, but the first obstacle they faced was land ownership. At the time none of the land was owned by ordinary citizens, no matter how much they were willing to pay; they could only rent land for a given period at an extremely high price (Dobie 1936). Building a courtyard house meant they had to pay rent to several landlords since it vertically cut cross street blocks. The sense of insecurity that resulted from knowing the landlord could take back the land at any time and that the immovable house would be lost was emotionally unsettling. They found a solution that was both economically sound and catered to their need to “feel at home”. They started to build their own version of a house—an equivalent to a single suite in a traditional Chinese courtyard residence complex.
Early in the 1870s the gold resources began to dry up and the presence of Chinese laborers was getting less and less welcomed. Violence against the Chinese became epidemic, and eventually in the spring of 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act provided for an absolute 10-year moratorium on Chinese labor immigration. For the first time, Federal law proscribed entry of an ethnic working group on the premise that it endangered the benefit of certain localities. Figures 71-73 illustrates that at the time, popular culture including newspapers, advertisements and political posters were transmitting a clear message that the Chinese were a danger to American society in every possible way.

Figure 71 The Problem Solved,” poster, White and Bauer, San Francisco, ca. 1870s. A Chinese grotesque is here depicted as the ravenous consumer of everything in sight. This highly charged political cartoon appealed to a variety of mainstream cultural anxieties.

Figure 72 “A growing metropolitan evil,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated, May 12, 1883. The representation of innocent white women victimized by non-white men has been a persistent means by which groups have been demonized and scapegoated (Wong Ching Foo Collection)

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22 Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1989.] pp. 82-85
The social and living conditions of Chinese laborers worsened and reached its lowest point in 1906 at the time of the San Francisco earthquake. The earthquake and subsequent great fire wiped-out Chinatown. Local landlords finally had a legitimate reason to chase the Chinese residents out. After several months of long and hard negotiations between the Chinese commerce council and local land owners, the owners agreed to continue to rent the land to the Chinese as long as they could generate enough money to keep up with the high rent in the area and bring business to the area so that the value of other properties could potentially go up as well. To achieve that, the Chinese Commerce Council decided to create an “Oriental City” on top of what was left of the fire. Figures 74-79 are photos and postcard images created around 1910 after the first phase of reconstruction, including the Telephone Exchange Building.
Figure 74 Chinatown Street 1910, https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/0a/af/ca/0aafca7e138e151cd161b1b0769c3b51.jpg, accessed June 2014

Figure 75 Chinatown Street 1912, https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcST1dqOBJCAXf6HGoOBo-980-027UCH_oGT3gVvKPMJH_ifu1, accessed June 2015


Figure 77 Sing Fat Co. Inc., http://www.timeshutter.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/640_tall/old_images/sing-fat-co-NB.jpg, accessed June 2013
6.2 The Telephone Exchange Building

There have been two Telephone Exchange buildings in San Francisco’s Chinatown. They were built on the same site. The first one was constructed in 1901 and later destroyed by the 1906 earthquake. The current Telephone Exchange was finished in 1909 as part of the Chinatown rehabilitation project carried out after the disaster. The building is located at 743 Washington Street in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood. The reasons this building has been chosen to compare and contrast with the early Ch’ing style are, 1] it was finished in 1909 and still within the period of the Ch’ing Dynasty, and 2] throughout the Ch’ing Dynasty the majority of architectural designs and interiors strictly followed the building...
manual imposed by the Imperial government--Ch’ing’s Ministry of Works\textsuperscript{23}. Although it has been over 150 years since it was first published in 1734, there had been very few changes made to the look of Chinese interiors. The overall look of the late nineteenth century that differentiated social classes was still in use, as referenced in an earlier chapter.

The Telephone Exchange was the busiest building in Chinatown. Operators had to memorize every customer’s name and address since in the Chinese culture it was an insult to refer to anyone by number. It became the lifeline between Chinese immigrants, their families, and their business contacts--especially after the Chinese Exclusion Act which forbade any newcomers to come from China, leaving those who came before 1900 separated from their families back home.

To accomplish the “Oriental City” look, the Telephone Exchange Building took the form of a Chinese pagoda and more [Fig. 78, 79]. The differences between the 1909 Telephone Exchange Building’s exterior and the Ch’ing architecture in China are:

1] It did not follow the hierarchical classification system demonstrated throughout traditional Chinese buildings. It has a three-tiered pyramidal roof with bright red-brown tiles, and green trim and corners. This tile color was to be used on imperial buildings and Buddhist temples according to Ch’ing’s Ministry of Works. The two columns in front of the building are also not standard. Commercial buildings in China could not have visible columns to support the roof; it was only permitted for government buildings.

\textsuperscript{23} Ch’ing’s Ministry of Works, 《清工部工程做法》, published in 1734 during Emperor Yong Zheng’ rule, it has 74 volumes, 2768 pages. This menu gave instructions and standards for all buildings built during the Ch’ing Dynasty.
2) It employed exaggerated size, ornamentation, and color but lacked craftsmanship and surface patterns. Intricate wood, stone or brick carvings or paintings are nowhere to be found. Instead, they used colors such as bright red and green, and an overly curved roofline with wave-form roof tip decor to extend the curve farther. Nevertheless, it still followed the laws of symmetry and was constructed entirely of wood using the same technique as in Ch’ing China (Choy 2012, 134). A newspaper article published the San Francisco Examiner on Sunday; November 17, 1901 described the interior as follows:

... The new exchange is in the three-story building at 743 Washington Street. The first floor is occupied by a store, which has been refitted and decorated by its owners to be in accord with the remainder of the building. The entrance to the exchange is up a long flight of narrow stairs, at the head of which is a gaily decorated sign in Chinese letters announcing the presence of the telephone, which, strangely enough, is one of the most popular of the American inventions among the Chinese.

On entering the ante-room one is met by a smiling and bowing functionary, whose sole duty it is to make visitors welcome. Close by the door is a richly carved teakwood table, on which are kept tobacco and cigarettes and a nest of tea bowls while in a silk-covered caddy rests a large teapot, which is always kept filled with tea of a good quality. Tea and tobacco are always served to visitors, a compliment of hospitality which no Chinese business transaction is complete.

At the extreme end of this room on an altar of considerable size and great richness, a richness of gold and silver and red lacquer, rests a joss whose special duty is to guard and care for the interests of those who send speech over wires. To many of the Chinese the telephone still holds, to a certain degree, its qualities of the supernatural, and the presence of a joss is not a luxury, but a prime necessity.

Before going into the telephone-room itself a brief inspection of the rear of the reception-room is not without interest. In the extreme rear is a kitchen, small but neat and complete. There is an equally diminutive dining room, and likewise a bedroom, where Loo Kum Shu, the manager of the exchange, lives with his assistants. They are always on duty and the exchange is never closed from year’s end to year’s end.

The front room, in which is placed the switchboard, is the most attractive feature of the place. It is gaily decorated with dragons and serpents of brilliant
hue; there are rare lanterns hanging from the ceiling, in which electric lights have been placed, making a contrast of modernity and antiquity.

The walls are hung with banners in red and yellow and gold. Along one side of the room is a row of teakwood chairs with cushions of silk, while near the switchboard are the small black stools which are to be seen all over the Chinese quarter. The switchboard itself is exactly like those in the other exchanges of the city, except that the operatives are men and Chinese. They used the same cry of "hello" in answer to a call—a pleasant tone, cheerful and good-humored..." [Fig. 80].

Figure 80 A postcard depicting telephone operators in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Dates before April 18th, 1906, the date of the Great Earthquake.
http://40.media.tumblr.com/d75c71da99c67e04086c57d8fdafe4792/tumblr_n1z0gqHX921rwjpnyo1_500.jpg accessed June 2015

There are three interesting characteristics that emerge from the article:

1] The arrangement of spaces is stacked instead of laying on a horizontal axis. The previous discussion mentioned that land acquisition in San Francisco was extremely difficult
at the time. In response, they adapted their architecture to the block plan imposed by American street design.

2] Traditional Ch’ing style furniture and decor were adapted to the new environment and demands. Figure 80 shows a Ch’ing style rosewood table sitting in the corner and decorated with elaborate wood carvings, and a row of wood stools in black wood, resembling neither Ming nor Ch’ing styles. It does not have curvilinear lines found in Ming furniture or intricate decor of the Ch’ing style. The present researcher suspects that it is a product of function-only design and meant for heavy-duty use. Furthermore, the article mentioned “a row of teakwood chairs with cushions of silk” which indicated a strong Western influence; traditional Chinese chairs would not have cushions or any kind of upholstery on them.

3] Modern technology has made its way into the interior. Lanterns with electric lights and a telephone switchboard along the wall gave this space a modern feel. Sadly, this magnificent building was destroyed during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and today one can only imagine its luxury through words and images.

Figure 81 the Telephone Exchange Interior 1909, https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRv-LXsM52p0f3U5La8hVd0FP-kXayHi6DoDxA8YwcDczS_Y3pjw, accessed April 2012
The second Telephone Exchange Building (1909) that can be seen today also has three stories. It introduced a skylight not commonly found in Ch’ing style ceilings [Fig. 81]. From the image we can see that the walls support switchboards, and there are only four small overhead windows. The skylight took the shape and location of a caisson ceiling, but instead of intricate carvings of a dragon or other auspicious patterns, it was filled with nine sheets of glass to introduce natural light into the space. There are exposed beams of red painted wood like many Ch’ing style ceilings. Below them are two painted dragon patterns above the telephone switchboard.

![Figure 82 the Telephone Exchange Interior 1940s,](http://www.chinesegardenscene.com/media/400_0/media/ChineseTelephoneExchange.jpg, accessed March 2013)

The colored postcard image from the 1940s [Fig.82] shows that the dragons are painted in gold on a blue background and facing each other, enhancing the feeling of symmetry within the space. At the center of the room there is a Japanese style shrine gate connected to the railing and also painted gold. Needless to say, it is not common to have this
kind of feature in a Ch’ing interior. On the left side of the photo there is a door connected to the back of the space. The door has a traditional “?” shaped pattern in the upper section and Western hardware.

The booming telephone exchange business required a significant increase in switchboards between 1909 and 1940 [Fig.82]. The wall where the door used to be was taken down, and the wall space at the back of building was expanded for additional switchboards. Interestingly, in the 1909 image, all staff and managers were men. In contrast, in the 1940 image only women were working in this establishment.

After the Second World War the telephone became increasingly more common, especially for business transactions, and the telephone exchange became obsolete. In 1949 it was closed and purchased by the Bank of Canton as a Chinatown branch. At that time the building [Fig.83] underwent a major adaptation and renovation. The columns in front were
changed from support systems to decorative pieces. The wooden front was veneered with white slabs to provide more security and the wooden door was replaced by a glass door—just like any other bank building in the United States. Currently it is the East West Bank building, but the exterior and interior remains unchanged since the 1940s.

Important to consider is that in Western cultures there are clear differences between the concepts of a house, home, and family, whereas in Chinese culture, the definition of home and family are tightly associated with the house they live in. When Chinese immigrate to other countries, they are often forced to let go their familiar form of house and can rarely build their new residence according to what they are used to. Often, so-called Chinese-style buildings are centralized in one district where they are later given a well-known name: Chinatown. If the collective memory theory is sound, then one would expect Chinese immigrants not to abandon a familiar living environment, which is the one element that resonates with so many personal and social memories, but the telephone Exchange shows they have to make major adaptations. This building applied and adapted Chinese architectural forms by using the similar construction technique and mimicking the basic shapes and forms of a Chinese Ch’ing Dynasty building. With no social restrictions but limited land availability, choices of patterns and colors are limitless. Moreover, instead of the traditional Ch’ing Siheyuan layout, spaces within the building are stacked on top of each other to follow the San Francisco’s block arrangement of streets.

6.3 Chapter Summary

The Telephone Exchange building is widely recognized as one of the iconic buildings from the “the Oriental City” state (post-1906 San Francisco earthquake) of Chinatown. While
many other Chinese style buildings in San Francisco Chinatown are brick and mortar buildings with a Chinese style façade, the Telephone Exchange building remains a wooden structure that demonstrates many traditional Chinese building techniques.

With that said, is that the Telephone Exchange building shows that there are still many differences between a Chinese style building in the United States and the typical Ch’ing style building found in China: 1] the Chinese building built abroad maintained the basic shapes and forms of Ch’ing Dynasty buildings. The structures and crafts are similar such as the curved eaves, exposed ceiling beams, and wooden construction. The builders mimicked what they remembered from China but did not follow the exact standards and measurements used there. Moreover, intricate carvings and luxurious pearl inlays disappeared from the Chinese building abroad due to the lack of skill and raw materials. 2] The clear classification of materials, colors, patterns and space dictated by social status diminished. Designers had more freedom to create the appearance of exteriors and interiors as they saw fit, since Ch’ing’s power did not exist in America. 3] Symmetry remained a significant characteristic. The horizontal axis transformed into a vertical one to accommodate land restrictions, and spaces were stacked on top of each other. 4] Western and modern influences grew increasingly more evident in Chinese interiors abroad. The increasing exposure to Western products and technologies while living abroad allowed them to incorporate new designs into their living environments, especially the interior, such as upholstered seating and electric lighting.

It is interesting to observe that when the original Ch’ing style traveled to the United States, its style first changed in response to material availability, craftsmanship, social structure, and local restrictions. Yet, those who came and created new buildings and interiors held on to what was familiar, hoping to make it represent the culture they identified with, and to maintain a
measure of it. One cannot help but wonder if combining two cultures works like a chemical reaction: it dilutes at first and after reaching the most stable state it creates a new compound and becomes stable again.
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Interpretation and Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates that early Ch’ing Dynasty design characteristics were rooted in Ming design, but formed a unique style through the development of technology and aesthetics, related to the mixing of cultural forms, ideologies, and beliefs of multiple ethnic tribes in the ruling family’s region. Analysis of the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex shows that early Ch’ing Dynasty exterior and interior design amalgamated Manchu, Mongol, Han and Tibetan cultures in building shapes, exterior patterns, and applied hues. In this way, the Shenyang Imperial Palace Complex is an architectural example and model of cultural integration of all ethnic groups in the region, and represents the highest achievements of early Ch’ing Dynasty architecture in Northeast Asia. Da Zhen Hall, the main ceremonial hall within the palace complex, adopted an octagonal form to represent the Ch’ing Dynasty’s eight banner military system. All banners merge together in the pyramidal-shaped roof, to reflect the unity of the highest political power – that of the Aisin-Gioro family. The roof crown combines features of Buddhist architecture, Han ideology, Mongol’s power, Tibetan religious belief, and Manchu nationalistic symbolism. When viewed comprehensively, the structural form resembles that of a Mongol tent, visibly symbolizing Nurhaci’s personal aspiration for great status and power.

Similar to exteriors of Ch’ing Dynasty buildings, analysis shows that Ch’ing Dynasty interiors, particularly in the early stages of development (pre Emperor Qian-Long), adopted Ming ideas of hierarchy, symmetry, wood construction techniques, and basic forms of furniture and display objects. Further that, they yet varied from Ming and/or other earlier Han styles in
five primary ways: emphasis on decoration, stylization of design system, complexity and extravagance of décor, holistic design approach and value of humanistic concerns.

**Emphasis on Decoration.** This study shows that during the Ch’ing Dynasty decoration became a primary focus and distinguishable system of the comprehensive design process. The Ch’ing Dynasty design reflects a period in Chinese design history when artistic taste was highly valued. Before the Ch’ing period, designs were valued mainly for their functionality, but after Ch’ing, aesthetics and function were valued the same whether in an overall interior or a single object. For example, prior to the Ch’ing Dynasty, Chinese people used simple linen or silk curtains and screens to divide rooms, and applied minimal colored patterns on structural elements. By contrast, analysis of the Shenyang Palace reveals that Ch’ing Dynasty room dividers and structural elements were highly ornamented with wood, stone, or brick carvings, and that versions of these decorative techniques found their way to furniture, textiles, displays, and artwork. Furthermore, unlike Ming design, Ch’ing Dynasty designers did not limit the placement or combination of elements. One may find ornament such as painted carvings, dyed wood, and geometric shapes layered on top of nature-inspired forms on ceilings, beams, walls, floors, columns, furniture, and textiles. Hence, in Ch’ing design, the main purpose of any object in a room shifted from function to aesthetics, based on contemporary taste.

**Stylization of Design System.** Pre-Ch’ing interior designs adopted by various social classes did not differ significantly except for hierarchical versions related to size and materials; construction techniques, patterns and themes remained similar. By contrast, analysis of the Shenyang Imperial Palace shows that in Ch’ing design, patterns, colors, and carvings were classified by both imperial command and common sense.
Since ancient times, certain patterns and colors used in Chinese building and decor had implied meanings, yet in Ch’ing designs, there were no exceptions, making them easier to classify. For example, “bat” suggests “happiness” (originating from the Manchu culture), and “pomegranate” implies “prosperity of a family” (originating from the Han culture). Every social class had its acceptable set of patterns and color combinations. Moreover, systematic design made it easier to produce; it was similar in idea to mass production methods in the industrialized West. The Ch’ing design systems enhanced efficiency and productivity but limited freedom of design, resulting in a standardized look across class levels.

**Complexity and Extravagance of Décor.** The study shows that in Ch’ing Dynasty design, stylistic limitations were prescribed for all except the ruling class. Analysis of the Twelve Beauties paintings captures the living environment and skilled craftsmanship of the early Ch’ing Dynasty people and communicates the elaborate and luxurious décor that was necessary for upper and ruling classes to socially differentiate themselves from lower social classes and potential competitors. The paintings confirm that Ch’ing rulers wanted to ensure their status by having only the best, largest, and most colorful items in palace rooms.

The author’s images of Shenyang Palace interiors confirm that with the Ch’ing period, and especially toward the mid to late Ch’ing Dynasty, furniture became more massive, heavy, and almost impossible to move. Some pieces were attached to the floors due to excessive add-on ornament. The study’s research indicates that before the Ch’ing Dynasty, Chinese interiors were flexible and people could easily rearrange rooms according to their need for daylight or air-flow because the furniture was relatively light-weight and free standing.
Analysis of the two dragon carvings in the Da Zhen Hall interior illustrate that Ch’ing design has more movement and more vivid hues than were present in Ming design, reflecting strong influences from Mongolian and Tibetan aesthetics. The materials, forms and calligraphies of the Dragon carvings also indicate strong Han influence.

**Holistic Design Approach.** This study’s analysis of the Twelve Beauty paintings and of actual interiors in the Shenyang Imperial Palace complex indicates that Ch’ing Dynasty furniture and other decorative and fine arts were displayed in sets, rather than as a single piece. This reinforces Wang’s (2008) findings that the overall concept of fabricating items in coordinated sets was a departure from the Ming Dynasty’s single-piece design approach and that Ch’ing furniture, and particularly large pieces, were often made as a set in proportion to a room’s measurements. This thesis also supports Li’s (2000) finding that in upper-class households it was a disgrace to not have a customized, furniture set. The trend of having sets also spread to lower class households. It is interesting to note that while Ch’ing Dynasty interior design sought to create an overall look, its obsession with detail and décor often distracted from the intended unification.

**Value of Humanistic Concerns.** The present research finds that a primary purpose of the Ch’ing Dynasty design was to ensure human survival, physical and political from the imperial point of view, and that people were the core focus of the exterior and interior environments. In ancient China, due to the poor availability of materials and technology, buildings and their interiors did just that--provided shelter. As the economy and craftsmanship developed over the centuries, people longed for more than just bare essentials. Buildings in the Ch’ing Dynasty were no longer about survival alone—spiritual and political pursuits became as, or more important. Still, compared to other art forms such as painting and sculpture, the artistic
pursuit of the Ch’ing Dynasty interior, did not exceed its need for psychological and physical comfort.

To summarize the study’s findings thus far, Ch’ing Dynasty design adopted certain design principles from the Ming Dynasty, yet Ch’ing exteriors and interiors developed holistically to create a unique design system with auspicious decoration, forms, patterns, motifs, and hues. During the Ch’ing Dynasty, craftsmanship developed to the extent that furniture comfort and tool limitations were no longer overriding issues. This facilitated the turn of imperial and public taste toward luxury and richness. As the analysis of exteriors and interiors shows, patterns, colors, display objects and artwork often implied meanings beyond the obvious. When looking objectively at the detailed ornamentation from the Ch’ing period, the matureness of the craft and rareness of the materials are powerful, yet almost overwhelmingly extravagant. There is also some disappointment in the underlying predictability of Ch’ing design and in the understanding that the level of decor was not necessary for everyday living.

While the first part of the thesis identified the characteristics of the early Ch’ing Dynasty’s exteriors and interiors, the second part demonstrated how the stylistic characteristics of early Ch’ing Dynasty interiors were interpreted in another culture. It did so by comparing and contrasting the design system of the Shenyang Imperial Palace in Shenyang, China with that of the Telephone Exchange building in San Francisco’s Chinatown; both buildings were constructed during the Ch’ing Dynasty.

The study finds that in comparison to the typical Ch’ing Dynasty style demonstrated through the Shenyang Palace in China, the Chinese building analyzed abroad - Telephone Exchange Building in San Francisco - tended to maintain certain basic shapes and forms of
Ch’ing Dynasty buildings, diminish or remove clear classifications of materials, colors, patterns and spaces according to social status, retain symmetry as a significant characteristic, and

Incorporate more Western and modern influences in Chinese interiors abroad.

**Maintain Certain Basic Shapes and Forms of Ch’ing Dynasty Buildings.** The Telephone Exchange Building incorporated similar structures and craft elements such as curved eaves, exposed ceiling beams, and wood construction. Essentially, they mimicked what the builders remembered from their previous Chinese lives, but they did not follow the exact standards and measurements for buildings they constructed in China. Moreover, intricate carvings and luxurious pearl inlays disappeared from Chinese buildings abroad due to a lack of skill and raw materials.

**Diminish or Remove Clear Classifications Of Materials, Colors, Patterns and Spaces According to Social Status.** After leaving China, people had more freedom to create the look of exteriors and interiors as they wished since the Ch’ing Dynasty’s power did not extend to, or exist in America. This was reflected in a broader range of materials, hues, patterns, and spatial layouts.

**Retain Symmetry as a Significant Characteristic.** Due to the restriction of land use in San Francisco, the horizontal axis of the traditional Ch’ing Dynasty building type transformed into a vertical one. As a result spaces in the Telephone Exchange Building were stacked on top of each other.

**Incorporate More Western and Modern Influences in Chinese Interiors Abroad.** In the United States, the increased exposure to Western products and technologies such as upholstered seating and electrical lighting caused designers of the Telephone Exchange Building
to incorporate many new elements on the façade, and particularly on the interior. Also, the utilization of the natural light by introducing a skylight, possibly a Beaux-Arts influence from Americans who studied in Europe, was introduced out of necessity for natural light in a tall vertical configuration.

In sum, by comparing and contrasting the two buildings, the study identified key similarities and differences. Findings show that both the Shenyang Palace building and the Telephone Exchange building were fabricated in wood and employed similar construction methods. Chinese immigrants took pride in the Telephone Exchange Building early and considered it an authentic Chinese style because of its wood construction techniques. Furthermore both buildings shared similar shapes and forms. Importantly, they both achieved interior symmetry, which is the most important idea in Chinese philosophy and harmony in all aspects of life.

The analysis revealed that there are also many fundamental differences between the two buildings. Materials and craftsmanship of the Telephone Exchange Building are at a different level than those of the Shenyang Imperial Palace due to the availability and cost. In 1906, it was hard to find skilled builders or carvers in San Francisco to re-create the elaborate designs of Ch’ing Dynasty China. Therefore, the level of ornamentation of the Telephone Exchange Building was minimized. In addition, in the Telephone Exchange building, the hierarchical order was diminished or disappeared. Being outside the reach of the Ch’ing imperial power and amongst people with similar or equivalent social status, the Chinese social hierarchy became irrelevant. Hence, early Chinese immigrants had much more freedom to choose their color palettes and patterns. Lastly, the Telephone Exchange Building had much greater influence of Western design, reflected most visibly in the addition of a skylight.
In conclusion, through analysis of the Shenyang Imperial Palace in Shenyang, China and the Telephone Exchange Building in San Francisco, this thesis demonstrates how the cultural conditions and social needs of China’s Ch’ing Dynasty people influenced development of the Ch’ing design system and how the system changed when adapted for a Western country with a less rigid social hierarchy. It suggests that similar reinterpretations of immigrant buildings may be found where different ethnic groups concentrate, including in enclaves of major Western cities such as Korean Town, Little Italy, Japan Town, and so forth. As shown through the Telephone Exchange Building, cultural expression of immigrant communities may not be as authentic as what one finds in native countries, but may still be in a recognizable, yet amalgamated form. The study finds that changes in geography and society force immigrants to deal with obstacles such as lack of skill and materials, less money, and lower status compared to other local groups. These conditions can restrain the potential to create authentic interiors, but as shown it does not stop them from communicating what they believe is the essence of cultural expression. Important to consider is while architecture and interiors are an important part of cultural expression, similar adaptations may be demonstrated through food, street decor, customs, festivals and religious rituals.

There are three potential directions to further develop research on this topic. First is the study of additional buildings in the San Francisco’s Chinatown and/or other early Chinese settlements in the United States. Second is to research in more depth the Chinese American living environment since the Gold Rush. Third is to develop more awareness of restoration and conservation of the early Ch’ing Dynasty sites so the culture and design of this unique historical period can be preserved for further generations.
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