

City of Rebirth:

Revisiting the Place and Memory of Tainan's Multi-generational Homes

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis is an interdisciplinary exploration of how the multi-generational homes in Tainan, Taiwan, along with the objects and people found within them, play a fundamental role in shaping the city's individual and collective memory. The hybrid culture of Tainan formed as a fusion of multiple past colonization efforts on top of the residents' self-built mentality has allowed the people to establish a distinct and deep connection with their home and city as they continuously modify, refine, and build on top of the foundations of their predecessors. The city serves as a valuable case study for the phenomenology of place as it offers a perspective on the process of placemaking that is unlike other metropolitan cities around the world.

This research is inspired by my own memories of living in the city as a child and the encounters that I experienced during my recent visit to Tainan, supported by various literature reviews on the topics of the city's cultural history, the concept of home, and the process of placemaking. Interview commentaries made by the residents of the city will be used alongside the research to formulate the story of my hometown, weaving together a tale that ties together each layer of the city's history, culture, and personality from the broadest scale of the city's creation down to the most simple building blocks of the home. In today's world, where many urban metropolises have succumbed to the process of gentrification and westernization, Tainan has become a valuable and unique example of how traditional lifestyles can be maintained and how common people can hold active control and agency over the development of their city.

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To my thesis co-supervisors, Tracey Winton and Jaliya Fonseka, thank you both for the support that you have given me. The conversations that I have had with you allowed me to understand the contents of my research on a much deeper level than what I would have discovered on my own, which helped immensely as I tried to piece together fragments of my past into a complete story. Both of you are very knowledgeable and kind, but most importantly, your encouragement and guidance throughout this year have ignited a passion for my home that has been lost within me for a long time. Thank you so much for embarking on this journey of rediscovery with me, I am forever grateful for your time and patience.

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To my partner Erica, and my friends Alifiyah, Deepakshi, Ogulnabat, Sepi, Yara, Afnan, and Shiulii, who were here with me throughout every part of my thesis. We supported each other through many of the toughest challenges in these past two years. I would not have been able to complete this thesis without your companionship.

To my internal and external readers, Di Tang and Phat Le, though I have only spoken to the two of you briefly, the discussions that you have brought into this thesis were thought-provoking and insightful. I will definitely keep them in mind as I continue to explore the topic of my home in the future.

Dedication

*To mom and dad,
who never gave up on our origins.*

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Introduction

This thesis is an interdisciplinary exploration of how the multi-generational homes in Tainan, Taiwan, along with the objects and people found within them, play a fundamental role in shaping both the individual and collective memory of the city. Residents of the city take great pride in preserving the rich historical memory of the former capital of Taiwan. The hybridity in Taiwan's culture formed as a fusion of multiple past colonization efforts on top of generations of the residents' self-built mentality have allowed the people to establish a distinct and deep connection with their home and city as they continuously modify, refine, and build on top of the foundations of their predecessors. The city serves as an interesting case study for the phenomenology of place as it offers a perspective on the process of placemaking that is different from other metropolitan cities around the world. Because many of the homes in Tainan are self-built by the residents rather than developers across generations, their experiences and memories become imprinted in the spaces within their home. Each transformation of the home, even down to the simple task of placing an ornament, and each experience shared between residents, all become a contributor to the whole collective memory of Tainan. The amalgamation of such memories is what brings meaning to the home space for each resident and contributes to the growth, wellbeing, and strength of such communities.

This thesis book is inspired by my own memories of living in the city as a child and the encounters that I have experienced during my recent visit to Tainan. The research is supported by various literature reviews on the topics of Tainan's cultural history, the concept of home, and the process of placemaking. Interview commentaries made by the residents of the city will be used alongside the research to formulate the story of my hometown, weaving together a tale that ties together each layer of the city's history, culture, and personality from the broadest scale of the city's creation down to the most simple building blocks of the home. In today's world where many urban metropolises have succumbed to the process of gentrification and westernization, Tainan becomes a valuable and unique example of how traditional lifestyles can be maintained and how common people can hold active control and agency over the development of their city.

Unfortunately, this type of urban culture is gradually becoming scarce as profit-driven condominiums and high-rises make their way into the mainstream of the urban cityscape, destroying and overpowering homes that have harbored the tradition and stories for many generations. The goal of this thesis is to document the additive process in which each generation contributes to the overall urban fabric, so that future residents can understand the value of the city and continue to partake in this process. Through my research, I hope to shine a light on the multi-generational homes as complex vessels of Tainan's identity and an important precedent for future urban planning at a global scale.

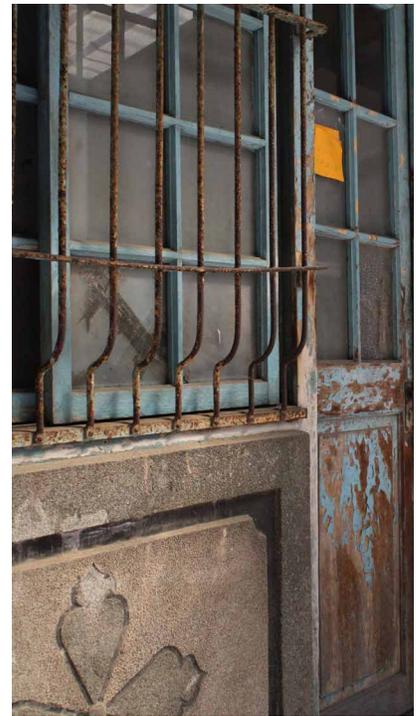


Fig. 0.1 - 0.6. Various cultural influences and materialities showcased in Tainan's neighborhoods. From top left to bottom right: A traditional Chinese rattan woven chair in front of a terrazzo backdrop. Shadow of wrought iron window guards reflected on a colorful set of terrazzo staircases. A Qing Dynasty home built 130 years ago decorated with paper cutouts and lanterns. An entrance to a Taoist temple behind a large golden censer. A Japanese Showa era residence adorned with wrought iron grills and concrete ornamentations. A washed terrazzo wall adorned with a flower pattern embedded on a wooden facade from the Showa Era.

Memories of an Alleyway

Recently, more and more memories of my hometown have been coming back to me. From the day I was born until well into my youth, my family and I lived in one of the hidden alleyways of Tainan. The city is crowded, busy, and loud, but in the alleyway it is always calm, like a nook in a flowing river. I remember how the elders in my neighborhood would always sit at their front doors shaded by poinciana trees, playing Xiangqi (Chinese Chess) and chatting with each other directly across the street; the smell of incense from the neighborhood temple lingered in the air; and bits and pieces of golden paper that we burn for worship would sometimes quietly flutter into our yard.

In my daydreams, I often remember myself strolling by, taking notes of the rows of houses that were stacked up on top of each other. Some parts of these multi-floor dwellings were built with modern materials such as concrete or corrugated metal sheets, while others looked like they have been forever encased in a different part of history, their wood or masonry facades chipping away with age. It was a colorful and complex mosaic showcasing the story of a community. In Taiwan, it is fairly common for families to build directly over their existing dwellings. Each generation would build on top of the foundations of those who came before them, thus creating an intricate and puzzle-like facade. The height of a residential building tells of its age, with every level marking another chapter in its family's history.

My memory would stop me in front of a set of wooden doors at the end of the alley. This was an artifact leftover from the Post-World-War era that my grandparents had lived through. The handles of the door were scratched and worn from decades of people coming home, and the red banners that we switched out every year at New Years laid on top of the remains of its predecessors. I took a deep breath and entered the house that was ever so familiar to me.

The foyer that greeted me when I opened the door housed various portraits of my ancestors, all of their faces stern and serious except for one. Below these portraits was an altar where we paid our respects to them, on it sat fruit offerings that were bought fresh from the morning market. I vividly remember the photo of my grandmother on the wall, smiling gently down at me from the ancestry altar in the living room. I remember how I used to smile back at the portrait every day after returning from school, and I would whisper to myself, "I am home."

As soon as I walked in, I would hear my grandfather's laughter ringing from the living room. He likes to drink tea with his friends, who come and go as they please throughout the day. Our front door was never locked, and all people had to do to enter was announce themselves before they would be welcomed by the residents of my home.



Fig. 0.7 Memory of my neighborhood with mismatched and colorful houses

I squeezed myself through the tight concrete hallways, crammed between the walls shared with our adjacent neighbors, before arriving at the kitchen. This room is always filled with activities as it is right in the center of the house; rarely was there a moment of rest in this space as people cooked, ate, and went about their daily activities. At the end of the evening, this is also where all members of the family gathered and discussed their days with each other.

As I passed the kitchen and began moving my way up to the second floor, the aesthetic of the interior was immediately changed from that of the first. The dusty stone floors were replaced by colorful tiles and the chipped concrete walls were instead covered with playful floral wallpapers. The large windows that lit the entire space were also decorated with intricate and detailed metal guards. These were the styles favored by my parent's generation during their youth. The second and third floors were inhabited by my aunt and uncle's family, who had decided to remain in the residence with their own families following the tradition. I remember as a child, I used to spend many hours playing with my brother and cousins on these two floors. At the foot of the walls, I can still see the crayon drawings that we had left from our make-belief adventures and the toys that we have long grown out of sat neatly in rows in cabinets, sun-bleached but still well kept as tokens of memory.

I would continue to climb up, and up, until finally, I came to the room which I grew up in as a child. A rooftop addition sitting at barely 200 square feet, covered with brightly colored metal decking walls on all four sides. This level of the house was built by my grandparents when my parents married. To them, adding another floor to the property symbolized an addition to their family. Soon after my mother and father wed, my brother and I also joined them in this room, and it became home for the four of us in the following years.

My mother, brother, and I shared a single bed, whereas my father slept on a futon mat on the floor. Although the space wasn't very big, we rarely felt confined or claustrophobic. The room itself had everything we needed, and with the comfort of family, it felt like a safe haven: a tranquil oasis in the loud, crowded and urban space below. At night, we could even see the entire city spread out around us like a field of warm-colored flowers that was ours to enjoy. I sat in the room, thinking back on all of the days that I have spent in here, all the memories made that were indispensable and resided with me even to this day. The room and the house felt like a nest that nurtured me until I was ready for the world. In this room I would feel more at ease, more peaceful than I have in any other place in the world. This house is my home, and these were the spaces and atmospheres that defined my childhood. Although I have stayed in many places since then, whenever I think of the word home, my mind has always wandered back to the house at the end of the alleyway, which quietly recorded the memories that my family and I shared in our home.

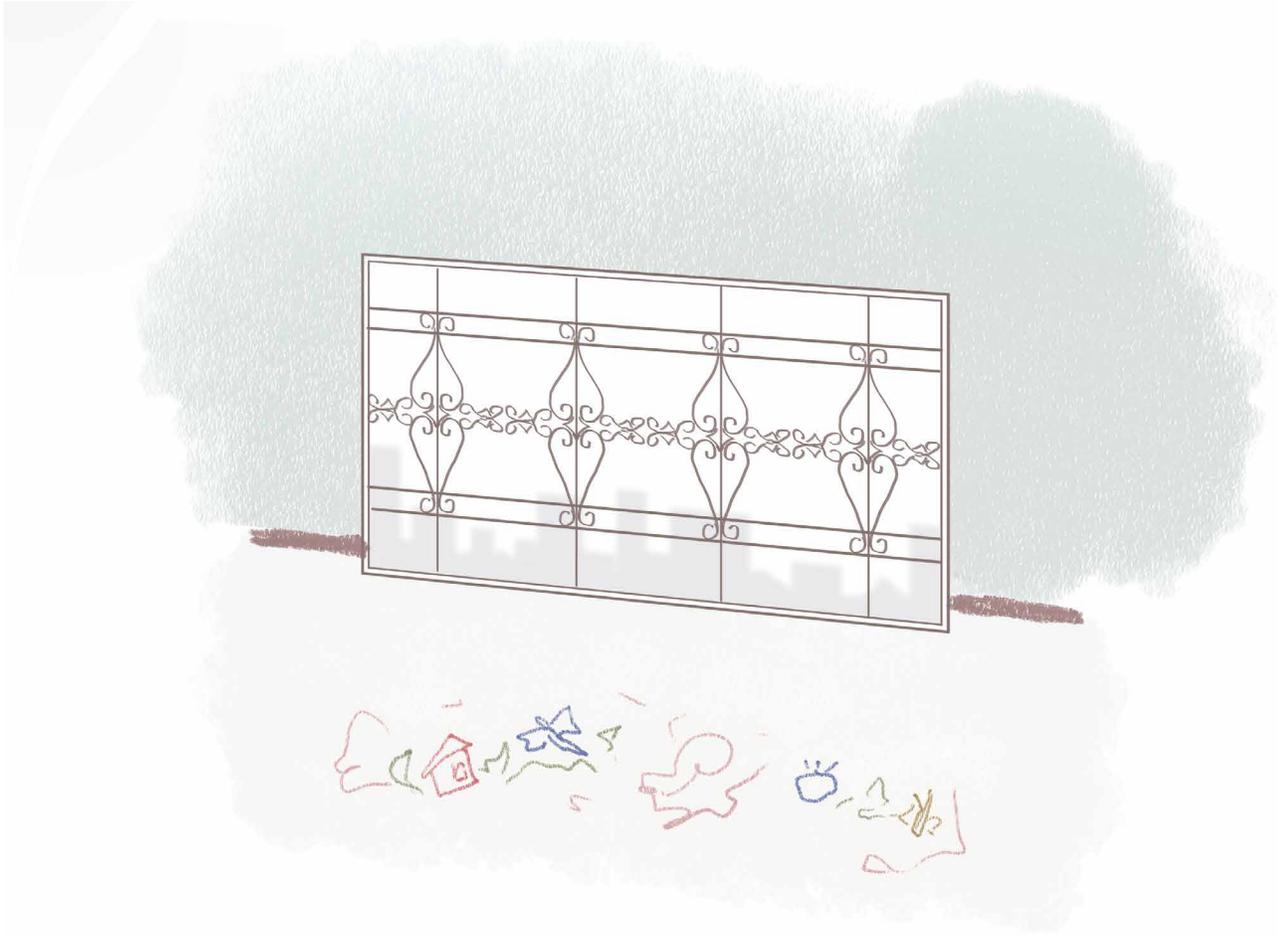


Fig. 0.8 Below the intricate window guards are some drawings from our childhood adventures.

These fond memories, which are not exclusive to me but are shared with many others who call Tainan their home, are what pushed me to tell the story that I am about to tell now. Through my thesis, I hope to share the scenery and ever-growing memories of my home and neighborhood so they may be passed down for generations to come.

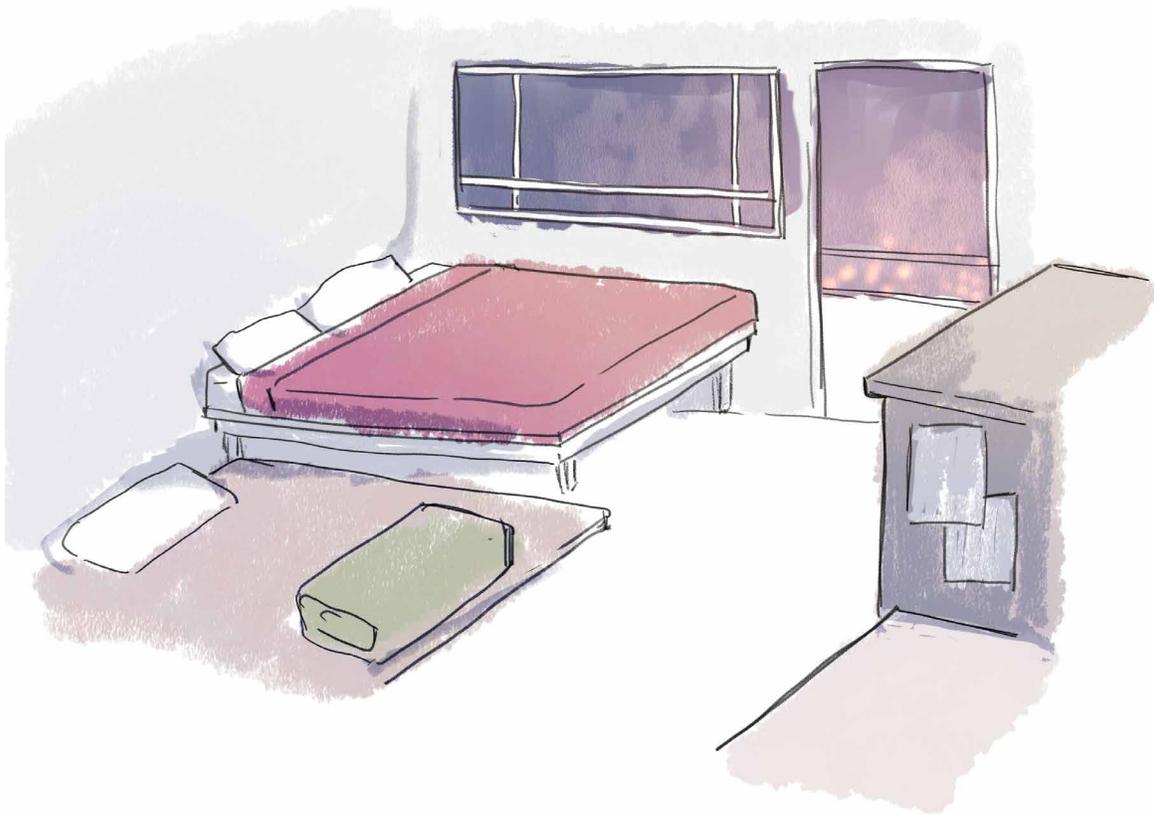


Fig. 0.9 The bedroom which my family and I shared, safe and secluded above the bustling city

Cultural Background

Taiwan, originally named Formosa (meaning “Beautiful Island” in Portuguese), is a country that has experienced much change throughout its history. Today, the 14000 km² island holds a population of 23.6 million¹, making it one of the most densely populated places on Earth. The island’s architecture has been shaped largely by the process of imperialism and colonization, as the structural and psychological effects of each successive colonial project it has endured have directly contributed to the development of Taiwan’s self-image. Its mainstream culture has shifted throughout various periods of its past depending on the ruling party at the time, ranging from the earliest Indigenous communities scattered throughout the land, to colonizers such as the Dutch, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese Imperialists, until it has eventually absorbed these external cultures into the hybrid identity that we see today². The architecture of Taiwan showcases a series of struggles and coexistence between the notions of traditional versus modern, native versus foreign, and local versus cosmopolitan. In Tainan especially, being the initial capital city of the island but not progressing as quickly in the urban sphere as the new capital of Taipei, the persistence of these concepts operating almost in a constant state of tug-of-war has evolved the city’s urban composition into a unique situation where multiple cultures, religions, and styles can reside in harmony with each other within a limited amount of space.³

Figure 0.10 is an example of such diversity which I have found during my recent travel back to Tainan. In the photograph, a Chinese Confucian temple, a Japanese dojo, and a cross atop a Catholic church can all be seen within the same neighborhood, showing how these cultures, which have often been thought of as conflicting, have come together within the city. Taiwan has become rather welcoming toward such diversity, and the scenery of Tainan demonstrates that culture is alive and continuously evolving alongside the people. This evolutionary phenomenon has become a core component of the city’s culture, and such hybridity is not only reflected in the broader structure of the city but more so within the residential housing hidden around each corner. On top of being a representation of Taiwan’s ever-changing culture, each home is a vessel that holds much of the memories and lineage of their residents, who in turn contribute to the synergistic relationship encompassing the whole of the city’s memory as they transform, rebuild, and reconstruct their homes, recording each era that has passed and continuing to propel the city as a whole forward. Although the self-built dwellings found within the city are sometimes characterized as hazardous, chaotic, or slum-like, upon closer inspection one can see that they harbor much of the expression and creativity of their residents.



Fig. 0.10 A Chinese Confucian temple (red, frontmost building), a Japanese dojo (black roof), and a cross atop a Catholic church (green roof in the background) can all be seen within the same neighborhood amongst other more contemporary buildings.

The beauty of the residential homes in Tainan lies in their ability to absorb the knowledge and memory of each generation. Because of the informality of their building methods, one can begin to infer from them the history and story of the family that resides in each home based on the materials and styles that are present within the residential dwelling. The informal building resulting from a lack of government regulation, on top of the range of culture that Taiwan has been influenced by, has allowed for the emergence of a complex building typology unlike anywhere else. Neighborhoods are constructed almost completely by the will of the residents, decorated with elaborate ornaments that correspond with personal tastes influenced by the particular fashion of each era. Thus, these multi-generational homes have unconsciously created an index of the neighborhood's history through their architecture, where each of them becomes a direct representation of the families that live within them, as well as a showcase of the Taiwanese collective memory. These dwellings are not merely physical structures that can be defined by the scope of architecture, they are the result of an active and continuous process of placemaking that each of the residents partake in, the result of each resident's individual decisions and sensibility.

David Seamon, professor at Kansas State University, defines the “whole” in his essay *Ways of Understanding Wholeness* as something that is “ self-organizing so that each part enters into the constitution of every other part[...] There is an integral mutuality between the parts and the whole in an intrinsic interrelationship”.⁴ The house in figure 0.11 is a literal translation of this idea of the whole, as it is built with various materials and methods from different eras to create a personalized dwelling space that represents the resident's idea of a complete home. Likewise, to establish the whole, complete story of Tainan, one must first understand each level of culture, history, and sensibility that the city consists of in order to unveil a system in which each component continuously feeds back to one another, from the broadest scope of the city's history down to the smallest ornamental pieces within the home into each other to establish an engaging living environment. In the following chapters, I will address each of the components that make up the city, analyzing the relationship between memory, place, and people and looking into how they form a network that weaves together the story of Tainan.

I made a decision to travel back to my hometown, and after years of absence as I walked through the streets, I was re-experiencing my city in full and rediscovering what it means to belong, and why its residents shared such a strong bond with it. In Chapter One, I will discuss some of the overarching concepts which make up my thesis, establishing how the collective and individual memories of the residents form a system of placemaking that continuously gives back to their living environment. In Chapter Two, I will discuss the history of Tainan and the influence of each era on the formal and informal culture of the city, with an emphasis on the architecture, ornamentalism, and symbolism that each external culture brings and how they are ultimately connected to each other.



Fig. 0.11 A Chinese Minnan style home, identified by the red ceramic tiles and elevated edges on the roof, with several additional structures attached to it. The owner has decorated the exterior with various potted plants.

Chapter Three then analyzes the evolutionary relationship that connects the urban fabric to each of the cultures that it has been influenced by and how the form and spaces of the multi-generational homes have changed over time. Chapter Four introduced folk culture and explains how temples have become an inspiration for locals as well as an extension of their home. Chapter Five brings the focus into the home spaces and discusses how the interior spaces of a home resonates with their dwellers overtime. Chapter Six will look at ornaments as the smallest component that contribute to the whole, working network of Tainan and how they contribute to the larger built environment and culture. Lastly, Chapter Seven will be centered around a series of interviews with residents of Tainan and my own findings as I explore my hometown, using the story of each home as a guide to help readers understand the sentimental and cultural values that these multi-generational dwellings bring.



Fig.0. 12 A traditional masonry home with a modern facade attached to it, which was likely a result of the residents only remodeling a portion of their home.

Memory of the Disappearing City

In February of 2023, I made the decision to return to my hometown. As I traveled through the streets of Tainan, talking to its residents and urging them to speak about their lives and their homes. What I felt from these conversations, as the residents told me of their childhood, their struggles, and their lifestyles, was the immense love that these residents hold for their city.

Yet, the reality is that despite the efforts of Tainan's residents to preserve their communities and their city's culture, Tainan currently faces a dire crisis of losing these treasured homes. Though it has not happened as quickly as other metropolises around the world, the rush towards achieving economic prosperity in recent years has consumed much of the historical and cultural heritage of the city in the process. This has not only been an issue in Tainan, it is a recurring crisis worldwide. Anthony Tung, a writer and lecturer on the subject of international urban heritage, calls the 20th century "the century of destruction". It was no doubt the century with the most dramatic urban expansions that society has witnessed, yet at the same time the destruction of existing urban architecture was also unmatched in human history.⁵ In an age of so-called urban renewal where cities are stripped of centuries-old hand-crafted buildings and replaced with highways and anonymous structures, where even the most prominent monuments around the world suffered the fate of destruction⁵, the smaller details of the home — the collected artifacts and spaces filled with shared memories, which do not hold much permanence compared to larger architectural structures — are evidently more susceptible to this mass destruction process. Yet, such details are the building blocks of a person's imagination of their built environment, their existence is the proof that a human being has inhabited a space. It demonstrates the creative ideals of each individual and retains their lineage and identity, serving as the vessels of our remembrance of the home. As profit-driven urban developments continue to wipe away the life and unique charm of Tainan, a stance must be made for the preservation of the city's memory.



Fig. 0.13 Old Minnan-style home that has been partially demolished. Some of the interior ceramic tiles have been left exposed, and the space is now used as a parking lot. A new high-rise construction looms in the background.

Before I began this thesis, I called my mother and asked her about her memories of Tainan. Like me, she has been displaced from her birthplace for over a decade, thus she was overjoyed when I asked her to accompany me on a trip back to the land where our story began. As we reminisced about the city, a place which we call our home, a sense of bittersweetness washed over my mother's words. "The neighborhood has changed so much from what it used to be," she mentioned as she described to me her trips back to Tainan in recent years. In the pursuit of my education, I have missed many opportunities to travel with her. "Every time I return, something would be replaced or disappear. Do you remember the mango tree that used to grow in the alleyway? That has been cut down in order to make way for a new concrete house. And the family who owned the tofu shop across the street? That house has been there ever since you were born, but now they have sold it and remodeled it into a hair salon. Why do we need a hair salon!" She exclaimed in disbelief as she described the piece of memory that was torn away from her. This is when I came to the realization that the home that we remember so fondly may not last for as long as I had believed. As my mother's recollections echoed in my mind, I couldn't help but feel a profound sense of loss. It was not just the physical transformations of the city that troubled me; it was the erasure of the fading memories that once breathed life into the streets and houses of our hometown. The vibrant streets where me, my parents, and my grandparents played as children, the hidden alleys that whispered tales of generations past, and the familiar faces that greeted us with warmth and familiarity—each one seemed to be slipping away, fading into the recesses of forgotten history. With every demolished building and vanished ornament, a piece of our shared identity was lost. The cultural tapestry that once weaved together the stories of countless lives was unraveling, thread by thread.

As I reflected on my mother's words and the vanishing fragments of our shared history, I was reminded that the time to act is now, lest the memories slip away completely. Although I do not possess the ability to stop the procession of Tainan's fate, I can still contribute to the documentation of its story. I contemplated my conversation with my mother for a while at my apartment in Waterloo, thousands of miles away from the city that I reminisced about. After gathering my thoughts, I took up my pen and drew up my memory of Tainan, what made the city itself, what influenced its culture, and how people lived. As I poured all of my memories onto the page, I began to realize that I was not simply recounting my own memories, but also the memory of my loved ones, of my community, of my city, every layer down to the smallest pieces all held a significant meaning. This was the first step for what eventually became a journey toward rediscovering the city and my own sense of identity.

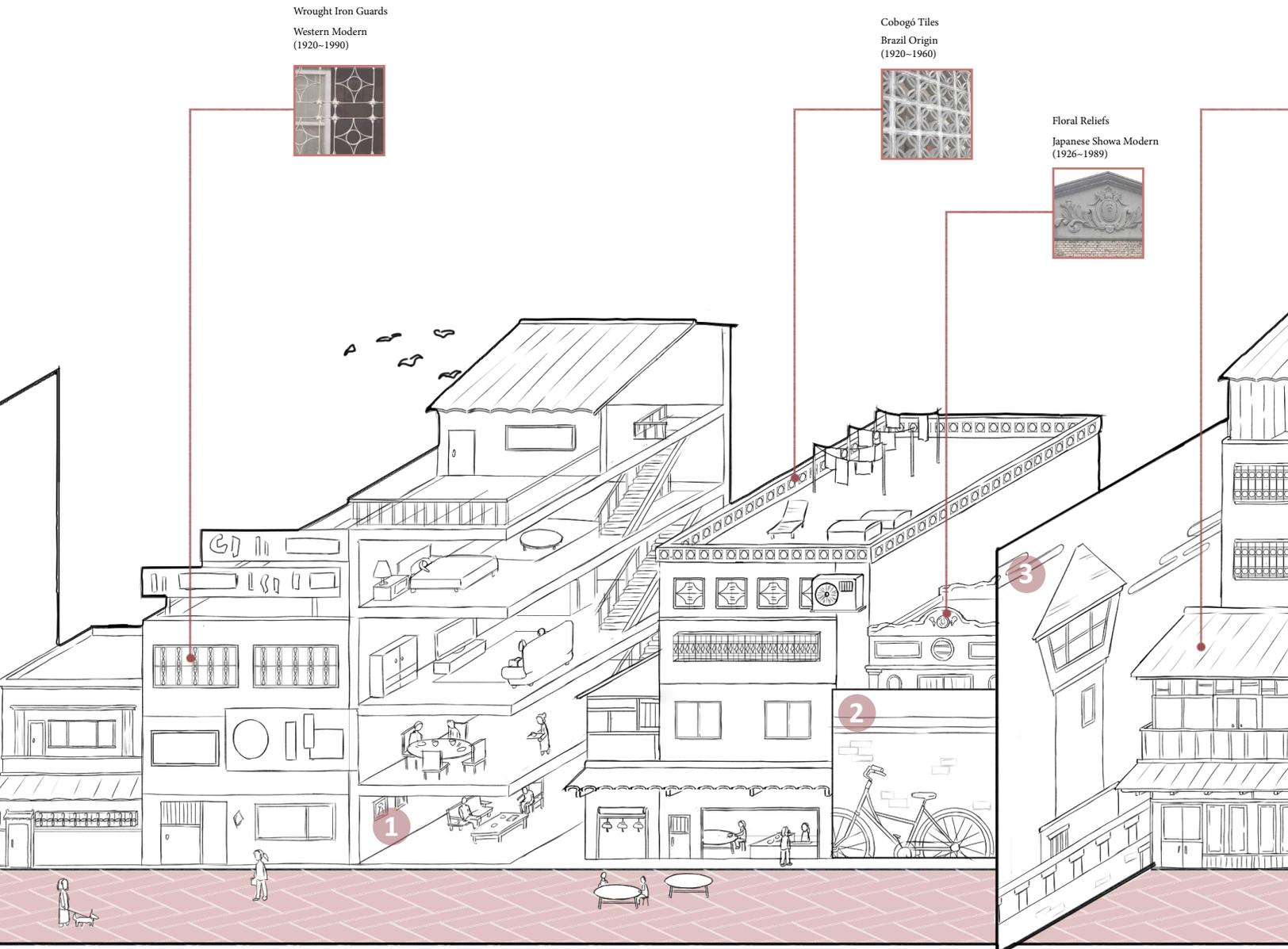


Fig. 0.14

The drawing that I sketched out after the conversation with my mother became a guiding point to refer back to for the rest of my research. It is filled with memories that stood out to me from my hometown; the memories that I have carried with me to this day even though I left the city as a child. From the larger monuments which Tainan is known for to outside visitors - attractions such as Chikan Tower, Hayashi Department Store, and Amping Fortress, highlighted with larger, two-dimensional panels - to the different styles, materialities, and ornaments embedded in each of the generational homes inhabited by locals. I have also included panels of specific scenes that I believe contributed to the ambiance of Tainan, such as the old man drinking tea in front of his house, the worn-down bike that has been kept for decades, and the royal poinciana tree which became the symbol of the city.

The drawing, though not to scale, encapsulated elements that I believed to represent the city's memory. Whether they be large or small, there was no hierarchical relationship to each of these elements as every level of the city equally contributed to the "place" of Tainan, making the city what it is today. As I set out for my return to the city, this drawing became a map that guided me to reconnect with my home.

Japanese Tiled Roof
Japan Origin
(1895-1945)



Washed Terrazzo
Japan Origin
(1950-1980)



Terra Cotta Clay Tiles
Chinese Ming Origin
(1661-)



Metal Decking
(1980-1990)



- 1 *View of the Interior spaces of a typical Taiwanese multi-generational Home, showing the space relationship from private to public.*
- 2 *A vintage bike sitting in front of a traditional masonry wall.*
- 3 *Fort Anping, one of two original Dutch settlements in Tainan.*
- 4 *Royal poinciana tree, the official tree of Tainan.*
- 5 *Hayashi Department Store, the tallest structure in Tainan during the Japanese colonial era.*
- 6 *Chih Kan Tower, one of the original Dutch settlements in Tainan.*
- 7 *A neighborhood temple.*
- 8 *An elderly man drinking tea on the roadside next to his home.*

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Tainan and Memory

The scent of the river wafted through our streets, as it has always done throughout the years.

The canal which flowed in days past, is now ours to call home.

My father built this home for my mother, they raised me with love mightier than the mountains. This house would soon be passed down to me, as I continue to tell its story.

We shall worship our ancestors, and thrive with our children here for generations.

My home is in Sai Kao Kin, our small dwelling filled with heartwarming sentiments ,

The creaks of the floors and ceilings are their ways of singing their joy.

My home is in Sai Kao Kin, come in, join us for tea as we pass our days.

Come here when you have nothing to do, though we are not wealthy, this house still brings us comfort.

*My Home is in Sai Kao Kin - Hsieh Mingyu (2013)⁶
Translation by author*

This is a verse from a song composed by Hsieh Mingyu - a popular singer and songwriter in Taiwan - of the author reminiscing about the memory of his generational home in Tainan. The song is composed in the traditional Hokkien dialect, and the name of the street where his house is located - Sai Kao Kin - translates directly to “excrement transport road” as the location of the street used to be one of the oldest sewers in Tainan used for this purpose, and throughout the years the locals have begun to commonly refer to this street as such. Despite the indecent name that his home was given, the author of the song still remembers it fondly. As he describes how the home is passed down from his parents and eventually to him, the listener can feel the sense of pride that he holds towards this place. This feeling of connection and belonging is not exclusive to this one song - popular media of Tainan often places an emphasis on the celebration of the home, the family bond, and the traditional ways. Compared to its counterpart of Taipei, the modern and fast-paced new capital, Tainan is often seen as the “old” city. Yet, despite the much more relaxed pace that Tainan operates at, it is still able to retain its population as residents are happy to live within the city.

Our home and hometown are, in a sense, the first places we experience our lives. It is the nest that nurtures us and prepares our understanding of our environment, filled with the memories that our family has amassed before we were even able to step foot on or understand the world. It would be natural for humans to feel a deep connection to the place we call home regardless of our origins. However, in Tainan, this connection seems to be held at a much deeper level by its residents.

Why is this the case? Why do the residents of Tainan feel such a strong connection to their city, to the point where they refer to it as an extension of their home space? I argue that the reason has to do with the process of placemaking that Tainan has undergone - that is, the collaborative construction of spaces by the dwellers which places an emphasis on the local community’s strengths and culture, resulting in the creation of common spaces, such as parks, plazas, and streets, that enhance people’s health, happiness, and well being. Effective placemaking stresses the importance of sharing and collaboration in order to establish a sense of place, comfort, and belonging for all residents, strengthening the bond formed between the individual, community, and their living space in the process^{7,8}.

This is a concept that has been discussed by many urban planners and advocates alike. Iris Aravot, professor at Technion in her book *Back to Phenomenological Placemaking* (2002) characterizes the placemaking process as “a human need, essential for well-being and feelings of safety, security, and orientation, and a remedy against feelings of alienation and estrangement”⁸. The concept of placemaking is relevant on every scale; it is a timeless and communal action that encompasses every part of the city and its culture- from the public spaces down to the private sectors of the dwelling.

The residents of Tainan feel an especially strong tie to their city precisely because they hold an active and joint role in the construction of their living environment, which encompasses the heritage and lineage of their culture and loved ones. The intimate scale of the residential neighborhoods allows residents to extend their living spaces outwards into the streets which they share with their community. In addition, the unique history and personality of each home also make way for an interesting and more engaging urban environment.

Due to the self-built and multi-generational living mentality, residents have likely shared the same dwelling with their family for decades. As long-time residents of Tainan, they were able to witness the growth of the city alongside their own development, seeing the changes that the city undergoes throughout each era. Because of this shared connection with their physical environment and their communities, they were able to find a sense of safety and comfort in the city. Like their dwelling, the city is something that they can call their own. In this sense, the place of Tainan has become an extension of their home, which residents have come to consider a critical part of their memory and identity.

To elaborate on the relationship between Tainan as a city and people's memory further, the notion of place, memory, and identity are ultimately inseparable as humans rely on both concepts to form an understanding of our environment. Both Janet Donohoe and David Seamon come to this conclusion in their writing. Donohoe, a professor of philosophy at the University of West Georgia, argues that it is impossible to place these two concepts in any sort of hierarchical, chronological, or foundational order, as one always accompanies the other⁹; Seamon also states that a "human being is always human-being-in-place" not only in the sense of material and geographical environments that human beings are located in but also in the "indivisible, normally taken-for-granted phenomenon of the individuals experience of a place."⁴

The experiences that one receives within a place will have a direct impact on a person's memory and identity. Donohoe in her book *Remembering Places* (2016) describes "place" as a palimpsest that holds memory for both the collective and individual⁹. As new pages are added to the palimpsest of a place, one will still be able to see the imprints of text from previous pages. Such text is never erased and is always present in the background of our living spaces. The built environment is directly responsible for one's identity in the sense that it sets the cultural framework and environment for our personal growth. It encompasses the knowledge and happenings of all previous events. These events can be relived in the form of monuments, specific locations, or, in the case of this study, the home and hometown. As we interact with these places, our environment is constantly resonating with us, filling our bodies with forms of memory both new and old. As we stay in a place, we are creating new memories while at the same time retrieving the memories that have been created by others in the same location, and we form our understanding of the site and decide on how to interact with it based on the information we retrieve. As our memories are heavily reliant on our experiences, the notion of memory and place thus become tied to each other.

The Taiwanese film *Little Big Woman*¹⁰ is another example that portrays this view of Tainan as an extension of the home and how residents experience and remember different places. The plot follows the events of the Lin family after the passing of their estranged father, who left his wife and daughters behind and started a new life in the nation's capital of Taipei. Mrs. Lin, the mother who was forced to single-handedly raise her three daughters, now has to come to terms with their family's fragmented past and prepare to move forward into the future. The film grapples with various contrasting themes - the passage of time, different cultural and religious influences on the families, and the opposing views of Western Modernism versus the traditional values of Tainan - all beautifully executed in this film using environmental storytelling that is true to the local culture.



Fig. 1.16 An interior scene of the home encapsulates how different external cultures have influenced the private space: traditional Chinese wooden doors and red talisman, Japanese paper screens, European ceramic wall tiles can all be spotted in this one shot of the living room. Yet, not one of them feels out of place in this homely scene (Little Big Woman, Joseph Hsu, 2020)¹⁰



Fig. 1.17 A clash between a Buddhist (Right) and Taoist (Left) funeral is also a clash between the Northern and Southern parts of Taiwan (Little Big Woman, Joseph Hsu, 2020)¹⁰



Fig. 1.18 As the man is on his death bed, his last wish was to go home. What is not his home is Tainan as his home in this scene. (Li)



otable in this scene is that the man has lived in Taipei for decades yet still refers to
ttle Big Woman, Joseph Hsu, 2020)¹⁰

Collective and Individual Memory

There are two forms of memory that ultimately shape our perception of self, our built environment, and the phenomenon of (or the way that we experience) place: the individual memory and the collective memory.

Individual memories are unique to each person and have been directly experienced by the individual. This type of memory can be a personal memory or a memory shared with family members and friends. Collective memories, on the other hand, are shared by a community as a whole and are passed down through the lineage of a nation, city, or neighborhood¹¹. The individual may not necessarily experience these memories themselves but rather learn of them through oral communication, education, or social interactions. The city, which houses countless communities and families, contains the memories and experiences of all of its people. The homes that have already existed within the city since before we were born, and the communities that have already been established, are all memories left to us by the collective which serve as the basis of our own identity. Inversely, the individuals who dwell in the city also contribute to its collective memory through their shared experiences, rituals, and connections with each other. These two types of memory form a circular system that encapsulates the whole of the city's past, and present, and the memory that we hold of our city becomes the inspiration that helps us shape its future.

I have created a diagram that showcases the relationship between collective and individual memory (Figure 1.19), in which I divide the memories into four categories: personal, family, neighborhood, and city, according to the scale at which the memory is held. Then I identified these categories as either collective or individual memory based on the nature of each. The influences of each type of memory would trickle down until they eventually become a form of influence on an individual's identity. Similarly, the individual memories of each person living in a particular society would also become building blocks of a much greater collective identity. The two forms of memories continuously give back to each other and work together to make up the history of a society. While memories cannot be completely concrete—especially the collective which contains multiple perspectives of specific events, places, or objects—they nevertheless provide a crucial site for the exploration of links between the individual and social frameworks of society. It is through the sharing of memories that individuals can become connected, communities can be formed, and homes can be built¹².



Fig. 1.19 The different layers of memory are all connected to each other in a symbiotic relationship



Fig. 1.20 A diverse range of roof styles and heights tell of the history of each home. Chinese terracotta roofs from the 19th century share their space with more recent Japanese kirizuma (meaning gable) roof can also be seen.



*...ne and form a microcosm of different cultures within the neighborhood. Traditional
...nt additions of corrugated metal roofs and balcony spaces. A modern mimic of the
...hidden behind one of the Chinese homes. (center of photo)*

Over time, Tainan has become a symbol for homeliness, comfort and hospitality for not just its own residents but also the people of Taiwan as a whole. Tainan offers a model of placemaking that draws upon our universal connection towards the home. This is a quality that may have been lost in certain urban regions around the world as mass developments replace the process of generational homemaking. Examples of such urban landscapes include the suburban culture of North America and the rapid gentrification of Chinese cities. In his book *Suburban Nation*¹²(2010), Andres Duany, American urban planner and the pioneer of New Urbanism, brings up that the success of a typical American neighborhood is measured by the economic value that it brings, not by the quality of life and community within the area. In subsequent discussions, he then goes on to criticize the urban sprawl of North American cities as communities become dominated by mass construction of identical homes and the increasingly inhumane living conditions that this phenomenon instigates compared to more traditional neighborhoods. Beijing amongst many fast-developing cities in China has also seen this erasure of its culture in the face of urban development. The promise of a “New Beijing” amidst the 2008 Olympics came with a massive governmental reconstruction project of the city center¹³, stripping the city of many vernacular neighborhoods and replacing them with either artificial replicas or generic buildings as they plowed through traditional dwellings and historical sites that have been standing for centuries in an effort to “update” the city for international visitors.¹³ Many traditional Chinese neighborhoods that were deemed unsightly or outdated were either demolished or simply blocked off behind freshly constructed walls so that visitors would not be able to see them as they focus on the Olympic attractions around the city. In recent years, the commercial exploitation of traditional cultural sites has run rampant in various developing countries, creating soulless, culture-less cities that distance their residents rather than connecting them.

Because Tainan’s urban fabric is not solely dictated by mass commercial developments, with the government setting out regulations to aid the preservation of heritage which past community members have established in residential regions, the city was able to retain much of the historical artifacts and structures in its built environment, and residents as a result retained much of their memory of their city. An example of such regulation being the *Cultural Heritage Preservation Act* of 1982¹⁴, which was “enacted to preserve and enhance cultural heritage, ensure the universal and equal right to participate in preserving cultural heritage, enrich the spiritual life of the citizenry, and promote the cultural diversity”.

Ethan Kent, founder of Placemaking X and an advocate for the global place making movement, makes the argument that places “are most dynamic—and most enduring—when they showcase and boost a community’s unique public life, economy, and culture. This is especially true when the people using them are involved in their creation, continual re-creation, management, and governance”¹⁵.



Fig. 1.21 “Soulless subdivisions, residential ‘communities’ utterly lacking in communal life; strip shopping centers, ‘big box’ chain stores, and artificially festive malls set within barren seas of parking; antiseptic office parks, ghost towns after 6 pm”

-Andres Duany, Suburban Nation¹²

In this sense, Tainan becomes a valuable precedent for the creation process of an engaging and effective living environment, which is in direct contrast to settings in various other metropolises where sprawl typologies and high-rise apartments have forced individuals to become estranged from their environment and lose the sense of connection with their city and community. In the next chapters of the thesis, I will begin to analyze how each level of Tainan's urban fabric, from its history and architecture to the homespace, ornaments, and individual, all contribute to the placemaking process and the network of memories within the city.

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Chapter 2: History and Architecture



City of the Phoenix

This chapter will expand on the background history of Taiwan, and look into how different external influences became integrated into the mainstream culture, eventually becoming influences for Tainan's urban fabric and identity.

The locals of Tainan have affectionately dubbed their city the “City of the Phoenix,” named after the Chinese mythical bird symbolizing rebirth. There are many rumors about where such a nickname originated. Some sources point to the idea that Tainan's complex history of comebacks, redefinitions, and renewals is what inspired this popular name, while other historical sources speculate that it is because the topography of Tainan resembled the form of a phoenix spreading its wings. In addition, the large-scale planting of royal poinciana trees around the city, which produce a bright fiery-red flower, further strengthened this image. Local legend has mentioned that the locations of many major landmarks and temples have been selected based on the physique of the phoenix-like landscape. For example, the famous landmark Chikan Tower was built on the eye of the phoenix, and the Jade Emperor Temple and Wufei Temple were built on the wings of the phoenix¹⁶.

Regardless of the origin of this name, the phoenix has become an indispensable symbol and a point of pride for the residents of Tainan. For them, the representation of the phoenix is also symbolic of the process of change that Tainan has gone through, constantly reforming itself as it accepts new practices and cultures. The informal homes that the people of Tainan have grown so familiar with tell of the struggles, changes, and rebirth across every step of their history, adapting to new circumstances. Like a bird reborn from ashes, the city always rises again after each of the challenges it faces.

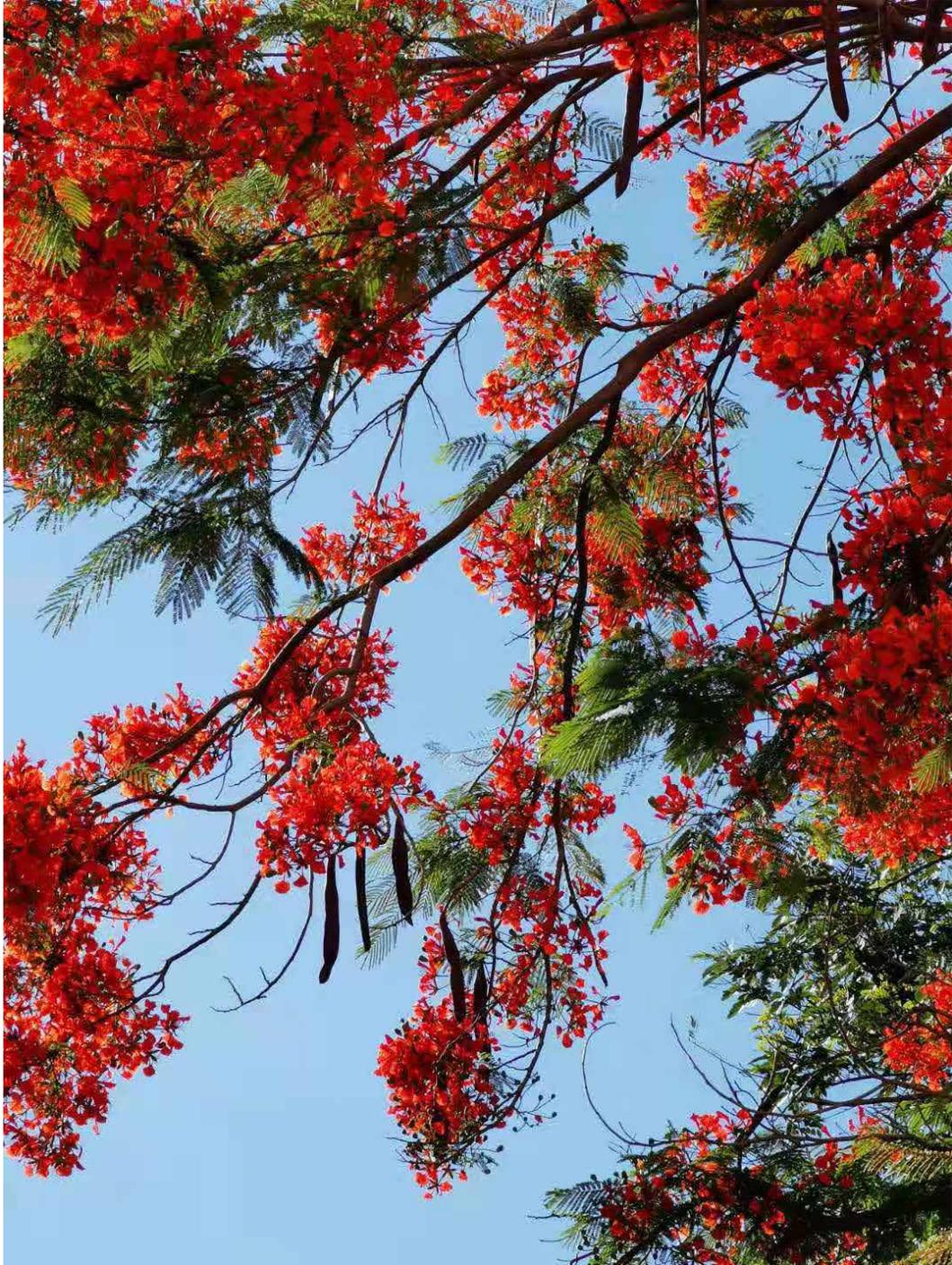


Fig. 2.23 A Royal Poinciana tree in bloom.

Tainan

The recorded history of human activity in Taiwan dates back tens of thousands of years, though large-scale settlements have only existed in more recent centuries¹⁷. Nonetheless, during the last few hundred years, Taiwan has experienced a complex history as a colony of multiple nations, absorbing different traditions and characteristics through each successive wave of colonization, transforming the island into the diverse fusion of cultures that we see today. Much of this multiplicity is shown through the architecture as the residents take inspiration from all of Tainan's past ruling governments as well as the western society¹⁷. The wide range of materialities and styles from each era embodied in the self-built residential dwellings serve to showcase the creative methods which the inhabitants have used to interpret and represent their identity.

The area known as modern-day Tainan was the first permanent settlement for both European and Chinese immigrants and served as the capital of the island for nearly two hundred years¹⁸. As the old capital of the nation, this part of the island has amalgamated the diversity and authenticity of Taiwan's historical transition more so than other cities. Apart from the Indigenous population, the first to settle on the southern portion of the island where Tainan is located were the Dutch from 1624 to 1668 and the Han Chinese, who were taking a last stand to uphold the Ming Dynasty during the Manchu conquest of China. The Dutch East India Company established its presence on Taiwan in order to trade with the Ming Empire.¹⁸ This colonial period was quickly put to an end as the Qing dynasty rose to power in the late 17th century and authority was handed over to the new Chinese rulers in exchange for the right to access their trade and shipping routes. Afterward, Tainan remained the capital of the Taiwan prefecture under the Qing until 1887, when the island was ceded over to the Japanese army during the First Sino-Japanese War and the capital was moved to present-day Taichung and then later Taipei¹⁸.

Today, the city of Tainan and Taiwan as a whole is under the rule of the Republic of China, which came into power along with the end of WWII and has remained in power until the present day. Although the capital city has since been moved elsewhere, Tainan is still considered the cultural capital of the country due to its rich folk culture and extensive preservation of historical sites from each of the transformations that it has endured. While the larger cities in Taiwan such as Taipei and Kaohsiung have been transformed by the economic growth and Western colonial modernism in the recent decades, the streets of Tainan have still managed to maintain the warmth and down-to-earth hospitality that it has cherished in its past. Without the urgency to race towards economic success like other metropolises around the world, this city instead chooses to retell various

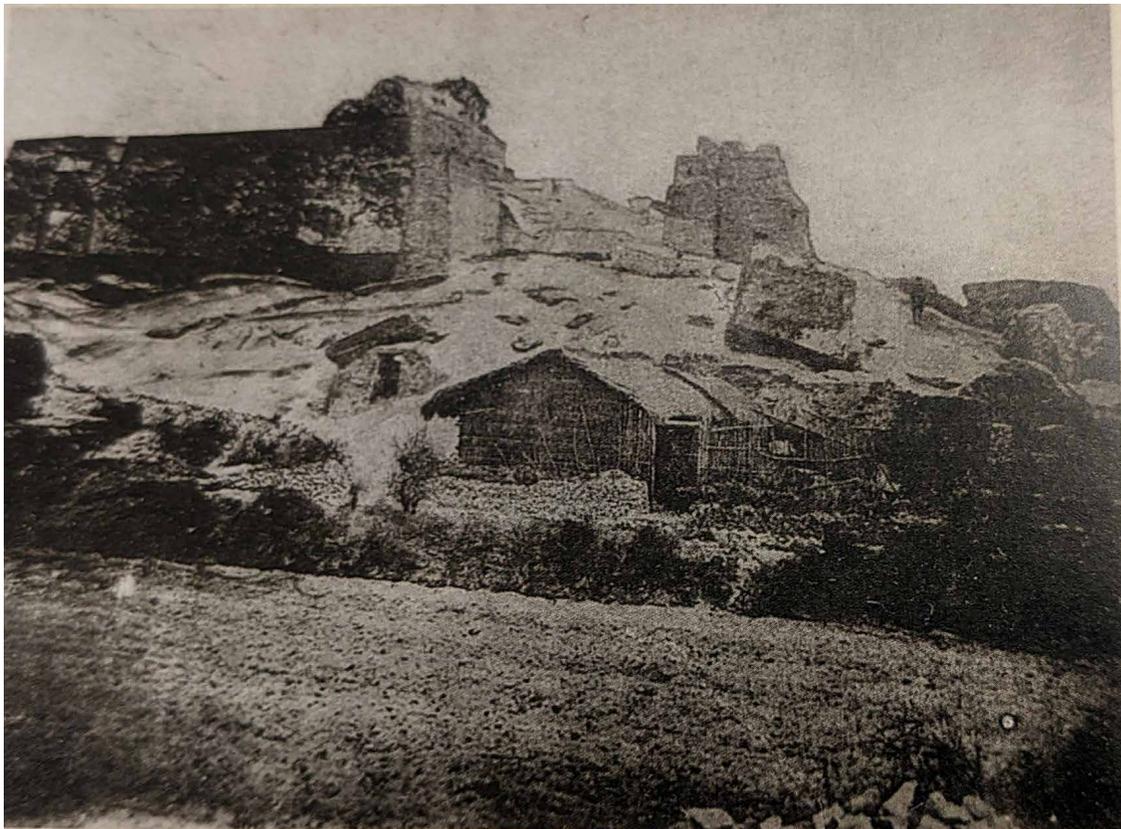


Fig.2.24 A historical photo of Fort Zeelandia (structure at the back of the photo) when the Japanese army first acquired it. In front of it is a hut built by Sirayan natives, outside of the fortresses's walls. The Dutch first built these large structures to protect settlers and resources from native attacks. After Japan invaded Taiwan, the colonizers reconstructed western structures on the fort as a celebration of what they considered to be the 300th year of Taiwan's history, destroying a majority of the fort's structure in the process.

chapters of the island's history through its people, culture, and architecture. Residents of Tainan know their neighbors by name, and different members of the community are not afraid to interact in and utilize shared communal spaces which they have created themselves. The city may not be as advanced as the northern parts of Taiwan, but the traditional alleyways are nevertheless still bustling with life and activities. Residents take pride in this trait of their hometown and have in turn passed down these traditional methods continuously to the next generation. The transition of ruling parties can be very clearly identified not only through the large-scale historical monuments of the city but also all throughout the streets and alleyways that are often hidden away from sight. Hints and traces that identify dwellings and link them to different eras and influences are scattered around the city like a colorful mosaic detailing each family's history.



Fig. 2.25 I quickly snapped a photograph of my mother chatting with some local residents of Tainan, who agreed to be interviewed about their homes and even pointed us to other members of the community whom they suggested we should speak to. The hospitality of Tainan's residents can be felt in every corner of these neighborhoods.

Early Aboriginal History

The first part of Tainan's story begins with its history. It has been speculated that the first population to settle on this island - the Aboriginal tribes - have resided in small nomadic villages scattered scarcely across Taiwan for approximately 6,500 years. The primary aboriginal tribe that lived in the Tainan region was the Siraya tribe, who slowly migrated towards the Eastern parts of Taiwan during the 19th century and relocated in the Taidong and Hualien regions¹⁹. Their dwellings mostly consisted of small huts constructed of bamboo, straw, and earth, with their bamboo weaving and building techniques coinciding with that of the Han Chinese who later became the dominant ethnical group of the island. Being a hunter-gatherer community, such tribes don't typically stay in specific settlements for long periods of time but instead develop a very strong connection with family and village members as they rely on each other for survival in the wild. They also greatly value the worship of ancestors and hold dedicated rituals for them called *Yeji*²⁰ that are still practiced by the remaining members of the tribe to this day. The traditions of the Siraya tribe almost serves as a precursor to the attitude towards tradition and family bonds that the residents of Tainan hold today. Unfortunately, the tribe's presence has all but disappeared in the Tainan region. Although there are still many Indigenous community presences living across Taiwan, the traditional dwellings of these tribes are almost nonexistent in the urban areas.

European Colonies

European settlements began to appear in Taiwan around the 17th century. Their settlements mostly took the form of fortresses which offered protection against the native people and other colonizer competitions. The main settlements located within the Tainan region were Fort Zeelandia (now known as Fort An Ping) and Fort Provintia (now known as Chih Kan Tower), and the population occupying this region were mostly Dutch settlers following the East India Trading Company. Their settlements consisted of roughly 5000~6000 people who lived in residences constructed with red brick. Figure 2.27 shows an early painting of Fort Zeelandia containing a main guarded fortress and smaller adjacent villages. Today, only the two main fortresses from these settlements are left partially intact in the city due to damages resulting from WWII and age^{18,19}.



Fig. 2.26 Model recreation of a Sirayan settlement. Each village hut is made of bamboo, straws, and earth and is shaped like a pentagon with a sloped roof and walls. The Dutch colonizers would describe such huts as being “boat-like” in appearance.



Fig. 2.27 Early painting of Fort Zeelandia during the Dutch rule



, showing a large, main fortress (right) and a general settlement.

Minnan Architecture

The Han Chinese arrived in Taiwan roughly around the same time as the Europeans. The majority of this population in Tainan originated from a group called the Hoklo people, who were the dominant demographic of the Fujian and Guangdong provinces. Due to the proximity of Taiwan to these regions, the Hoklo people began migrating to the island in the late 1600s and eventually became the primary population in the southern parts of Taiwan, including Tainan.¹⁹ These regions inherited the dialect, culture, and religions from the Hoklo as a result. In addition, much of the early architecture of the city is also constructed using the style of these cultures, commonly known as the Hokkien or Minnan architectural styles. Houses constructed in this style are typically made of materials such as wood or masonry, with stone or mud as the foundation of the building. The structure of the dwelling bears a resemblance to temples of local religious practices, as the home is considered an extended place of worship. Many Taiwanese homes, even contemporary ones, have special spaces such as ancestral rooms or altars that serve as such extensions. One way to identify a Minnan-style home is by looking at the roof of the house, which is built in a linear fashion using terracotta tiles and has a extrusion at the ridge of the roof. This style of roof construction is called the horseback-style. The main entrance of a Minnan house is typically very symmetrical, with the entrance located at the center of the facade.

Up until the latter part of the last century, these homes were still widely seen in the city, though today it is much more difficult to find a Minnan-style home that has not been modified to some extent in the urban center.



Fig 2.28 - 2.29 A well-preserved Minnan style home located on the outskirts of Tainan, which still retained a courtyard due to the abundance of space in rural regions. One can identify these houses by looking at the its roof, construction material, or the symmetrical layout of the main entrance.



Fig. 2.30 Postcard from 1901 shows a traditional Minnan-style neighborhood which has yellow pointed tips and a curved roof surface. Regular residential buildings have horseback roofs also highlighted with swallowtail roofs but are adorned with



not to be disrupted. Official buildings are highlighted with swallowtail roofs, which have long ridges which are identifiable by the rounded ridges. It should be noted that community temples are often decorated with many more ornaments, making them appear more complex.



Fig. 2.31 A Traditional Minnan-style ancestral hall within a courtyard typology home. These homes are built to resemble temples with symmetrical architecture and terracotta roofs. This particular roof style is called a swallowtail roof. Depending on the region and status of the residents, some homes will have ornamented roof ridges, as is the case with this particular one decorated with ceramic depictions of flowers and animals.



Fig. 2.32 The Confucius temple located in Tainan, which also doubled as the first established school in Taiwan. Note the temple's resemblance to the Minnan-style home with a swallowtail roof and symmetrical layout



Fig. 2.33 A modified Minnan style home in the city center. Although much of the remnants of a horseback roof, now covered in corrugated metal sheet metal, remains, the building. When examined closely, one can also see that the side profiles of



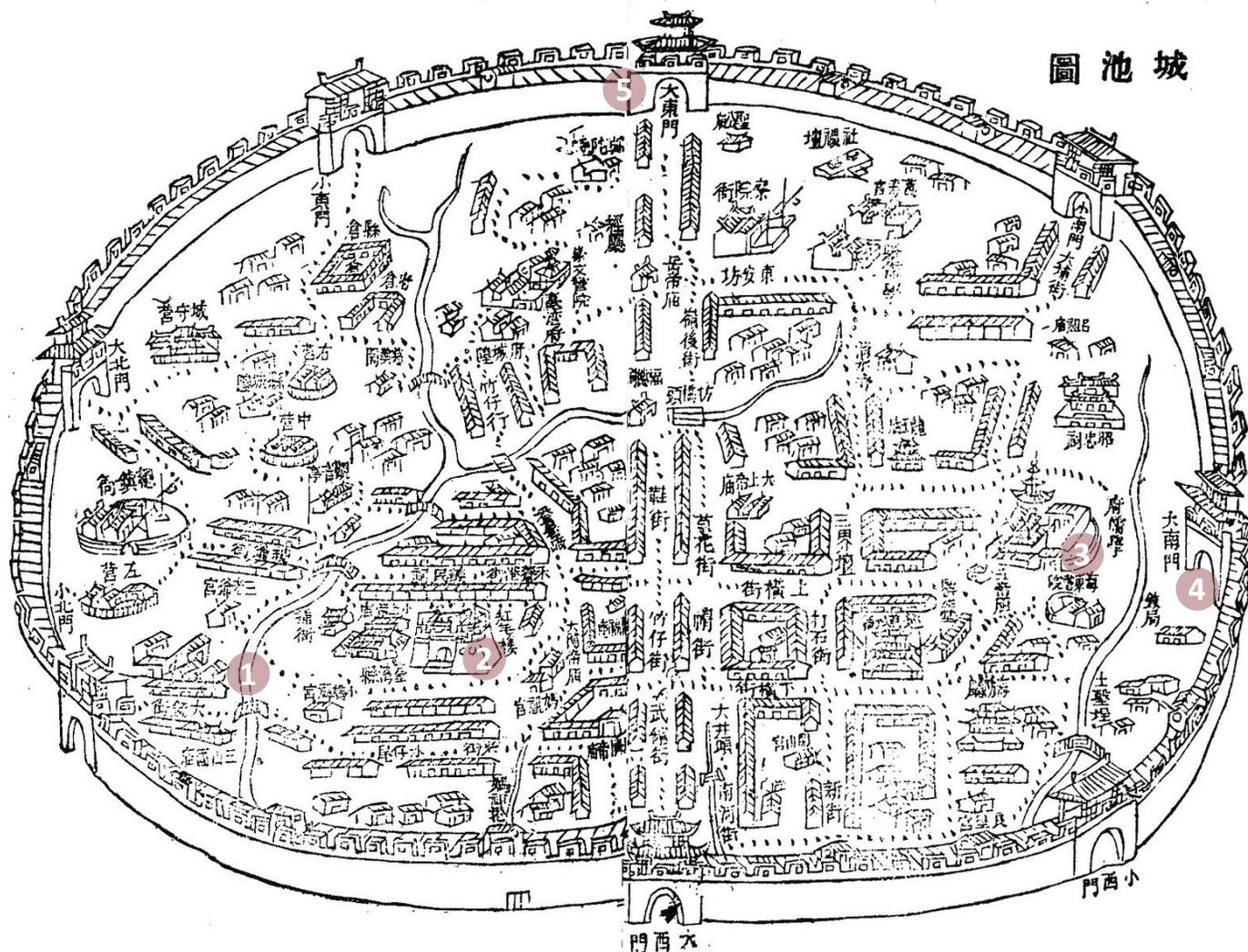
of the house has been changed, one can still see some Minnan features like rather than the original terracotta, and the symmetrical front profile of the of the house are made of red brick covered in a protective layer of concrete.

Japanese Architecture

Ever since Taiwan became a dependency of Japan in 1895, the colonizers have served as a major influence for Tainan's architecture, infrastructure, and popular culture. Japanese interventions in Taiwan's urban fabric also gave the island its first push towards modernization, introducing it to many external, mainly Western, influences. The combination of Japanese and European features on a building is often known as the Japanese Showa style, as it was popularized throughout East Asia during the Showa Era (1926~1989). Even after Japan lost its control of Taiwan, the import of electronics, entertainment, and popular culture continues to encourage the customization of Taiwan's homes²¹. Individuals during this time began to break away from traditions to embrace their newfound creativity and individuality which is in turn reflected in the appearance of their homes.

The Japanese colonial era also introduced major changes to the urban infrastructure of Tainan. In the early days following Tainan's city formation, most of the city consisted only of informal settlements. The indigenous Siraya tribe in Tainan lived very sparsely in the area and later migrated east with the arrival of the Han Chinese. Although the Han established settlements using city walls and formal roads, their infrastructure and urban planning were still very rudimentary. The edges of the city were surrounded by wooden walls which were later reconstructed using earthwork and masonry, but besides this, there was very little formal organization as the population did not yet demand more meticulous planning.

圖池城



- 1 Five Channels Canal: A Canal that leads to the rivers known as the "Five Channels" That served as ports for Tainan's early international commerce. Due to dramatic changes in geography over the years, the canal has dried up in modern days and no longer runs through the city.
- 2 Fort Provintia: Also known as the Chih Kan Tower today, was one of the original fortresses that the Dutch occupied when they first settled on the island.
- 3 Confucius Temple: A temple dedicated to Confucius which also doubled as the first school ever established in Taiwan.
- 4 Southern Gate: The city of Tainan was originally surrounded by walls built during the Qing rule. Today only the Southern and Eastern gates of this wall remain.
- 5 Eastern Gate: The city of Tainan was originally surrounded by walls built during the Qing rule. Today only the Southern and Eastern gates of this wall remain.

Fig. 3.34 Annotated map of Tainan in 1807 during the Qing Dynasty. Roads and houses are sparsely laid out except for the main central road connecting two of the main city gates. Major locations within the city during this time have been identified on the map.

A mass transition in Tainan's urban infrastructure happened in the beginning of the 1900s, when Japanese colonials began dividing up the city with a Western vision in mind. Using Haussmann's renovation of Paris during the Napoleon era as a precedent, the Japanese government proposed a plan to reconstruct the urban areas of Tainan using a grand series of grids and roundabout roads, which required much of the city to be remodeled²². Wider avenues and new, taller buildings replaced the congested low-rise settlements at the time so that the city center could be more inhabitable for Japanese officials. Because the Japanese modernization effort did not completely eradicate the existing buildings of the city, a majority of the densely-packed and maze-like alleyways still remain in the city today²³.

In the map shown in Figure 2.35, one can see that roundabouts and gridded roads (highlighted in red) were implemented into the urban layout, but most of the existing informal infrastructure structures are left untouched. This resulted in a hierarchy of roads (路), streets (街), and alleys (巷) to be established. The largest roads that the Japanese colonizers implemented became the major circulation for the city, and the buildings on either side of these roads were more uniform and typically were reserved for commercial uses. They are typically built with Showa-style architecture or other traditional Japanese styles. This distinction can be seen in Figure 2.36 and 2.37, in which the larger roads are occupied by Japanese architecture. As years go by, these roadside houses would always be the first to adapt to new architectural trends. On the other hand, the smaller streets and alleyways that were not a part of the infrastructure update mostly remained residential and informal²⁴.

Figures 2.41 through 2.43 show the difference in atmosphere and architecture between the roads that have been reconstructed by the Japanese urban update and the streets and alleyways that remained in their original locations. The reformed roads are generally more busy and can even be overwhelming with the amount of cars that passes through and the display of billboards from different shops. In contrast, the streets and alleyways are more quiet and give off a more serene and calm ambiance. As the city progressed in the next decades, the main roads would usually be the first to implement new architectural styles and trends, compared to the streets and alleyways which changed at a slower and more inconsistent rate, creating patches of residential and commercial areas that look incongruent to each other.

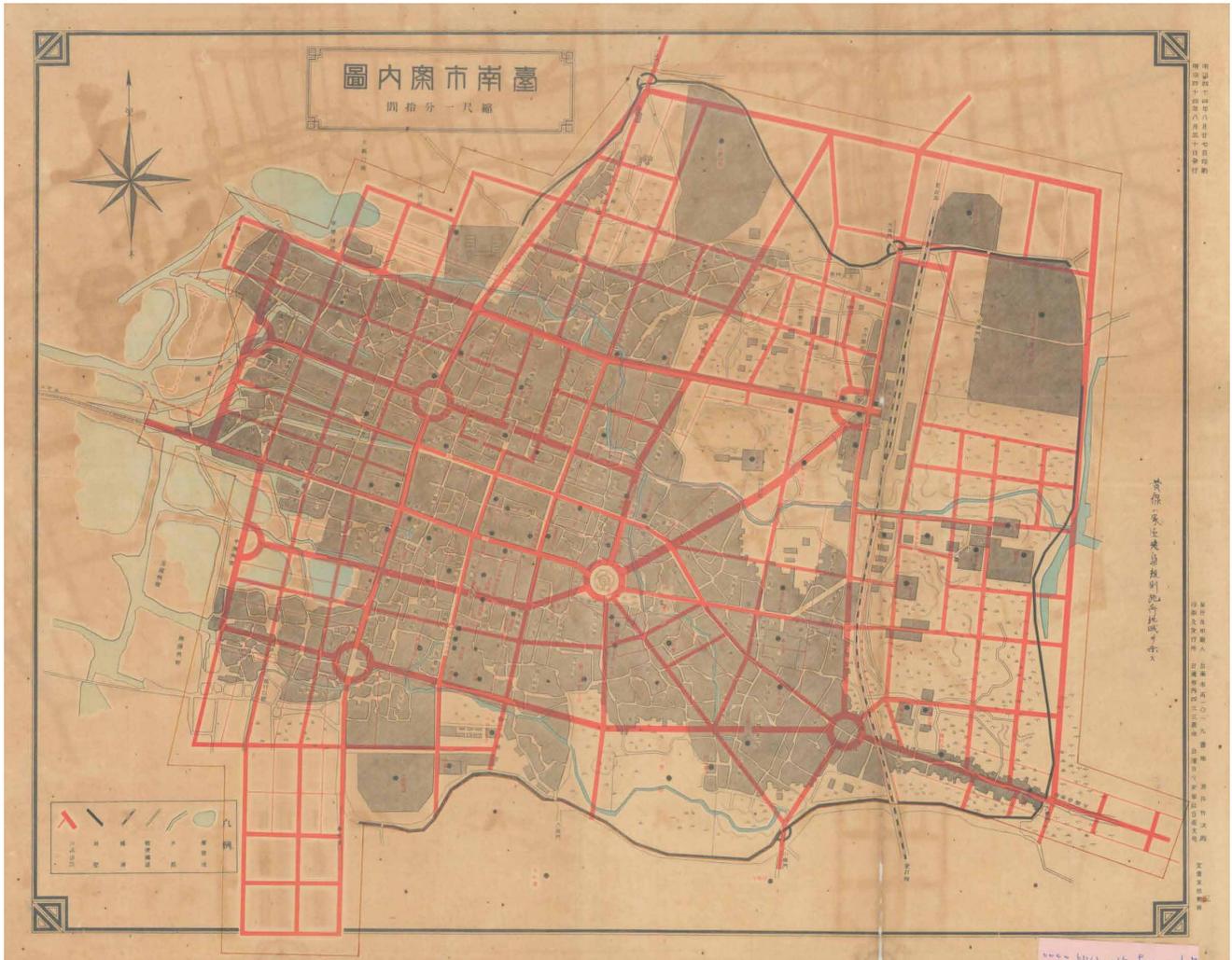


Fig. 2.35 A map of urban Tainan during its reconstruction. The roads highlighted in red are ones that will be reconstructed during the update of Tainan's infrastructure under the Japanese rule in 1911.

The next page shows two postcards showcasing Tainan's city center in the 1920s under the Japanese rule. Larger roads are introduced to the otherwise crowded Minnan-style neighborhoods as seen in Figure 2.36 and on the lower right corner of Figure 2.37. Various buildings with Japanese and even European influence can be seen within these images, identified by their wood or concrete structure and covered walkways on the first floor as opposed to the masonry and solid wall surfaces of Minnan-style housing. The introduction of the street house building typology and western architecture brought much diversity into neighborhoods that were otherwise filled with Minnan-style architecture. The city went through constant and rapid changes in the next five decades, with expansions of main streetways and the introduction of both traditional Japanese and Showa structures, until Taiwan was eventually ceded back to China after WWII.



Fig. 2.36



Fig. 2.37



Fig. 2.38 One of the main roads that was a part of the Japanese infrastructure untouched at the time of reconstruction, these roads are typically busier and more crowded than the onlooker. The architecture on these roads are typically taller and more densely packed.



update in 1911. Compared to the streets and alleyways that were left mostly more commercial oriented, covered with signage that may feel overwhelming to and more updated than the ones in the residential neighborhoods.



Fig. 2.39 An alleyway away from the business of the main roadways. The atmosphere here is more intimate, and residents can be seen utilizing the public circulation as a place for resting. The architecture here is more culturally diverse compared to the larger roads and contains buildings from a wider range of different eras. In this photo, a series of wooden Japanese streethouses can be seen amidst the more contemporary homes.



Fig. 2.40 A resident sitting in one of the residential alleyways. Behind him is a neighborhood temple. The lanterns and flags that are hung above the alleyway are an extension of the decorations from this temple welcoming the residents of the neighborhood inward.



Fig. 2.41 A Japanese colonial house in Tainan. This Showa style home, adorned with a family crest on the roof, was likely owned by a wealthy official working for the Japanese Army as they were typically given better treatments than the rest of the population.



Fig. 2.42 Some worn-down Japanese streethouses constructed of wood, with Minnan-style masonry walls acting as structural support. The first floors of these houses are still occupied by residents.



Fig. 2.43 (left), 2.44 (middle), 2.45 (right) Additional Showa-style homes that are still occupied. The ground floor has a wash terrazzo surface, decorated with wrought iron guards on the windows and balcony structure. All three structures have been modified by their residents to some extent.



...ied in the streets of Tainan. The houses in figure 2.43 and 2.44 are made with concrete with
 ..., whereas the house in figure 2.45 is equipped with traditional Japanese roof and wooden
 element, with the first floor of the house in Figure 2.44 even becoming a cafe space.

Taiwan's Economy and Contemporary Urban Development

Another factor that pushed Tainan to become more materially diverse in recent years was the economic boom that Taiwan experienced during the later decades of the 20th century, which not only invited foreign trades but also increased the buying power of the Taiwanese people, expanding their ability to invest in themselves and their homes. With 4 billion dollars in post-war financial aid coming from the United States, the island was able to supply the necessary funds needed to restart its economy after WWII. From 1945-1970, the island went through a period of rapid industrialization, often known as the "Taiwan Miracle"²⁵, an industrial revolution in which agricultural practices were gradually replaced with industrial production. This growth was mostly propelled by industries that produced various goods such as textiles, plastic, and machinery, as well as more complex electronic products and components in recent years. Taiwan's economic success during these years in turn boosted the country's urbanization efforts and pushed it toward an era of modernity. The widespread prosperity of its people in addition to more efficient productions of industrial materials and modular elements allowed the city to shift its focus from local development to developments toward the global order at all levels, expanding markets and its presence abroad while at the same time attracting foreign capital, goods, and popular media to the island.

According to data taken by the Maddison Project Economic database, Taiwan's economy took an extreme rise from 1950 through 2016. The gross national product grew by 360% between 1965 and 1986, and the global industrial output grew by 680% during this time. GDP per capita rose from \$1400 to over \$40,000 in 2016. The social gap between the rich and poor fell, a class of landowners was created and the quality of life improved drastically.²⁶ As a result, people gained the capability to invest in their homes more which led to the rapid urbanization and individualization of private homes.

GDP per capita, 1820 to 2016

GDP per capita adjusted for price changes over time (inflation) and price differences between countries – it is measured in international-\$ in 2011 prices.

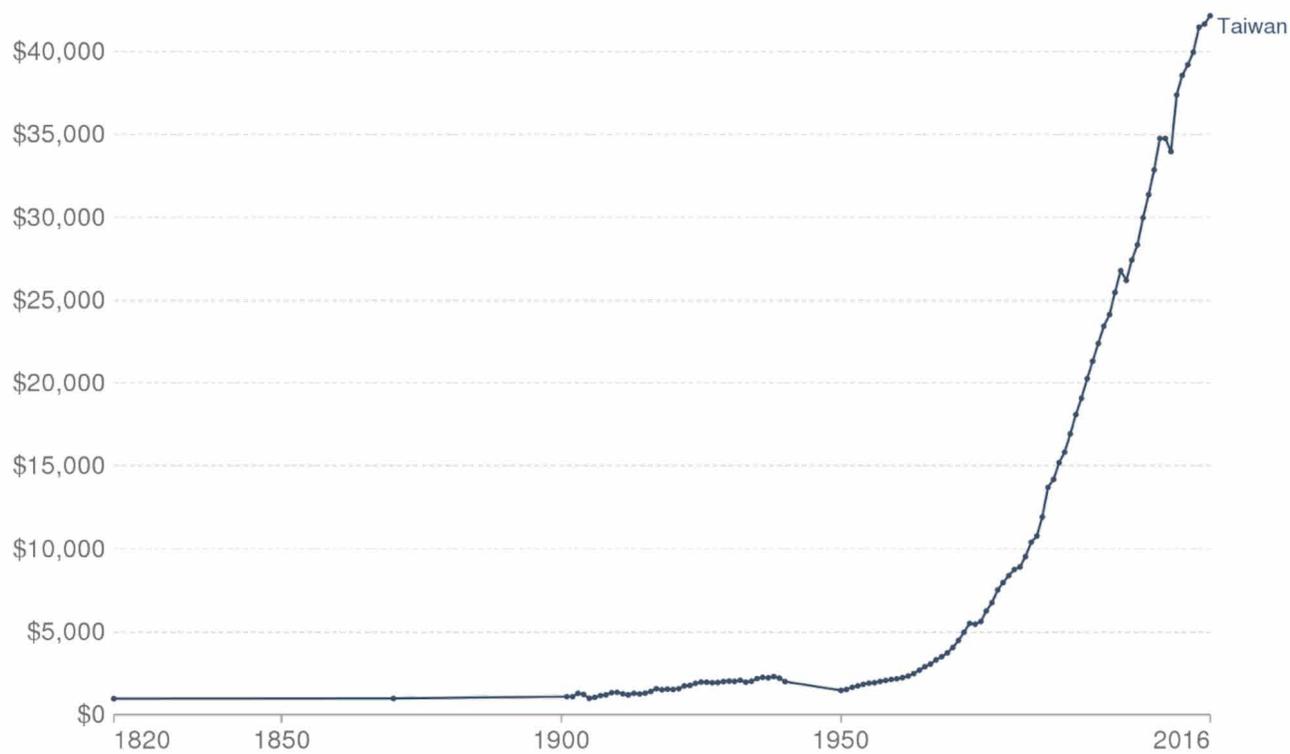


Fig. 2.46 A graph of the GDP per capita increase in Taiwan from 1820 to 2016. One can see a drastic increase after the events of WWII in 1945. This period of economic growth is known as the “Taiwan Miracle”.²⁶

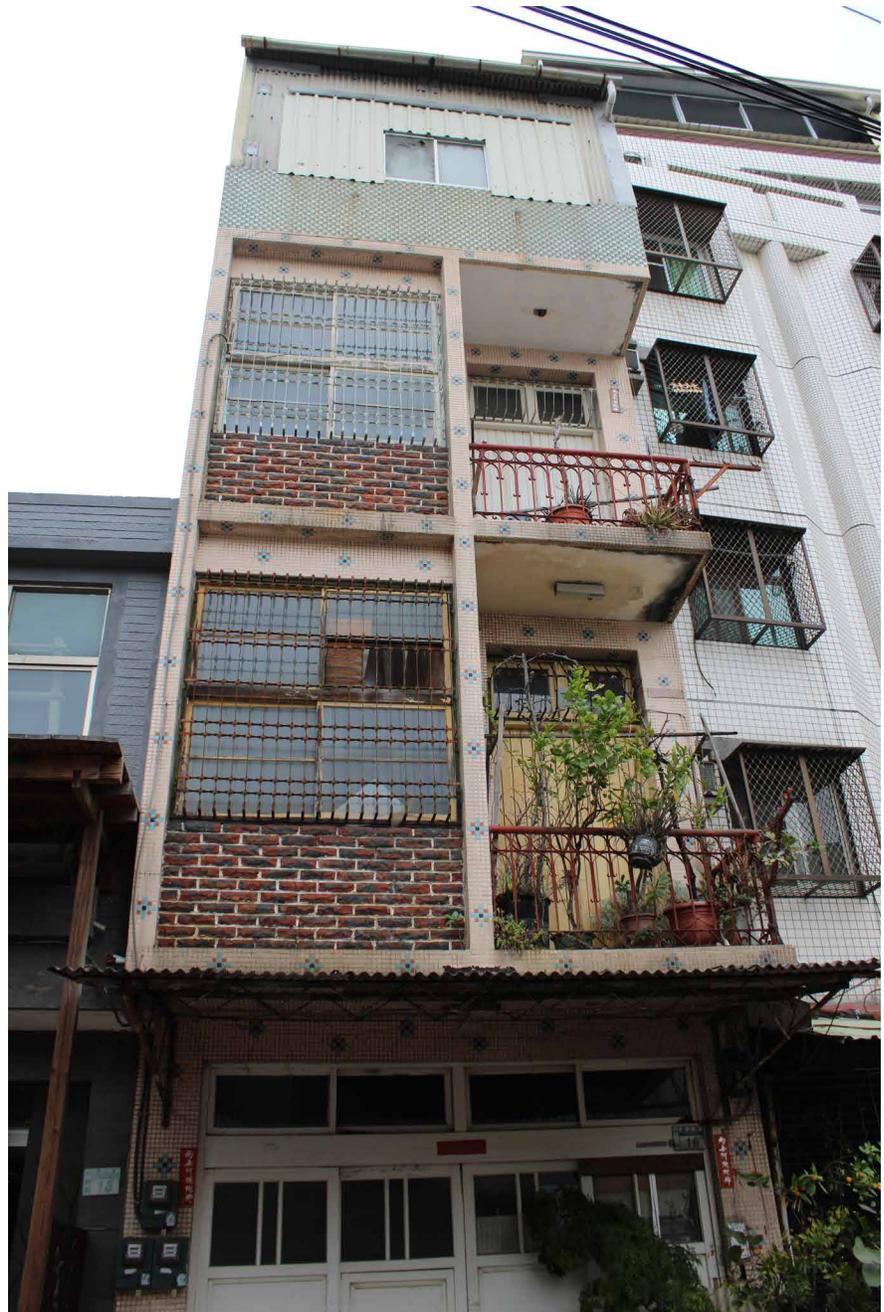


Fig. 2.48 (left) - 2.49 (right) Some examples of contemporary homes in Tainan. The manufacturing processes and abundant imports of various materials and ornaments allow used brick veneers, mosaic tiles, and decorative handrails to create a colorful facade on covered with green mosaic tiles and has incorporated a space on the first floor for shops houses, which can be used as an extra enclosed room (Fig. 2



form of the house became more simple due to western influences, but more efficient
 owed for more creative ways of building. In figure 2.48 one can see that the residents have
 their home. The house in figure 2.49 is situated on one of the larger roads of Tainan. It is
 s. Both of these homes have a corrugated steel decking addition added to the top of their
 .48) or an open space for laundry and gardening (Fig. 2.49).



Fig. 2.50 (left) - 2.51 (right) With access to better technology and more variety of materials, residents are now able to create more diverse and personalized designs for their family homes. As such homes were likely designed by residents, there are more creative and unique interior designs that are now commonly used in bathrooms or other interior designs are now seen here on the exterior. These designs often feature curved rectangular forms and can also include decorative elements.



materials, the people of Tainan became much more creative with the construction and had also little restrictions as to where these materials can be used. Tiles that would normally be used for the exterior facade of the home, and balconies no longer conform to their traditional shapes and curvatures.

Corrugated Steel Deck Additions

Some materials also define its own era of history for those who live in Tainan, such is the case with corrugated steel decking additions on Taiwanese dwellings. These structures have become a stable sight amongst the residential high-rises of Taiwan towards the end of the 20th century and residents have become heavily dependent on them. Today, almost every household in Tainan can be seen with some form of metal decking attached onto them. The development of this high strength steel material made modern buildings easier and more affordable to erect, thus making the colorful structures popular amongst the residential mid-rises of Taiwan. Though simplistic, such metal structures reflect a complex series of conflicts, tensions, and mindsets that appeared in Taiwanese history. This form of construction first appeared as a resort to combat the population explosion and rising housing demands after the retreat of Chiang Kai Shek's army to Taiwan in 1949. Utility took priority over aesthetics, thus giving rise to the culture of temporary housing, with metal decking becoming one of the most commonly used materials for these dwellings. Various natural disasters such as the 921 earthquake of 1999 also contributed to the demand for temporary housing. After the mass destruction of urban structures from natural events, people needed a quick way to accommodate those who had been displaced from their homes. These structures, which were meant to be temporary, eventually became a permanent scenery in the city^{27,28}.

Although these structures have received a poor reputation due to their cheap, parasitic appearance, they have nevertheless been accepted into common practice on the island, and individuals have continued to construct them as an affordable and fast way to create extra space in the crowded urban environment. These rooftop additions have not only become a solution for some extra square footage added onto the home but also a space for individuals to express their creativity. As there is no definition for the usage of these metal additions, people often get creative with how they use the space. Utilities can range from the most bare-bones storage or laundry areas, to some individuals decorating these spaces as rooftop gardens or additional rooms.

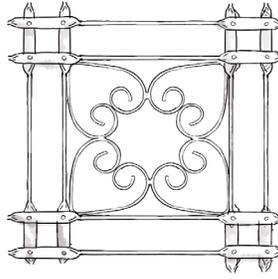


Fig. 2.52 Some colorful rooftop additions can be seen tacked onto existing building structures, creating additional open or enclosed spaces for residents to utilize.



Fig. 2.53 A rooftop space made of steel decking that is used as a garden space by the resident.

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Building Up: The Evolution and Reconstruction of Homes

The homes of Tainan today are not merely an envelope for shelter but also a parallel representation of both the growth of a family and the growth of the city's urban structure. The residents modify their form and spatial connections to suit not only the needs of their family but also to correspond with the changes that happen within the city. As the city centers of Taiwan became more and more dense throughout the years, the structure of the home also became increasingly compact, eventually beginning to favor vertical expansions with additional floors instead of horizontal expansions which cover more ground floor space.

The Chinese courtyard house—which is the traditional dwelling of the Han Chinese and one of the most common typologies spanning all across China, including the Fujian region populated by the Hoklo people—serves as one of the main influences for Taiwanese dwellings. The various spaces of the home would revolve around a central courtyard and grow outwards as additional rooms are built based on the number of people who live in the house. The program of such homes typically follows a very specific hierarchy based on Confucian philosophy which places an emphasis on respecting the elders, ancestors, and traditional practices. The central altar room in the house where ancestors and religious deities are worshiped would occupy the most prominent space at the head of the courtyard, followed by the kitchen and the rooms of the elders attached on the two sides of the altar room. Rooms for additional family members would then occupy the remaining spaces accordingly. Expansions to the existing home would occur when additional family members join the household, whether through the process of marriage, childbirth, incorporation of extended families, or other methods. The need to make room for new family members while at the same time retaining what belongs to the existing members became the impetus to continuously build upon and refurbish the same household, creating a timeline of all who have resided within the space. The house in this way becomes not only a representation of cultural growth but also a documentation of the family's history and a preservation of traditional views.

As the urban population rose and living situations changed over the last two centuries, the central courtyard space would grow smaller with each evolution of the typical home until it is almost completely omitted from modern dwellings. Figure 3.55 shows the evolution of typical Chinese homes from traditional to contemporary and how the size of the courtyard spaces grow increasingly smaller in favor of space efficiency.²⁹ The introduction of Japanese architecture, such as the Japanese Machiya street house (figure 3.56)²⁹, and more advanced construction methods after the 20th century also contributed to this form of compact and vertical building typology.

Curiously, however, although the modern urban housing typology in Tainan appears completely different from the traditional courtyard house, the hierarchy of the interior programs of the home has remained mostly the same. Figure 3.55 shows the typical layout of a courtyard house compared to a modern residential Toutianxi (directly translated to “house from ground to sky”) house and shows how the contemporary home takes on a very similar layout to its predecessor but in a vertical fashion. The altar, though no longer occupying an entire room, is still placed near the front entrance in the center of the home or at the top floor of the house in some instances, making it the most prominent and visible area in the house. The living room and kitchen would be located on the first floor, the rooms for the seniors are usually on the first and second floors of the house, and the rest of the family would reside on the upper floors.

Regardless of the style and age of Tainan’s homes, the residents have found ways to incorporate past knowledge and crafts into the construction of their houses. As the house is regarded as a part of their lineage, an evolutionary progression in the various styles of homes are very evident in these dwellings.

Traditional Sanheyuan Courtyard House

Urban M

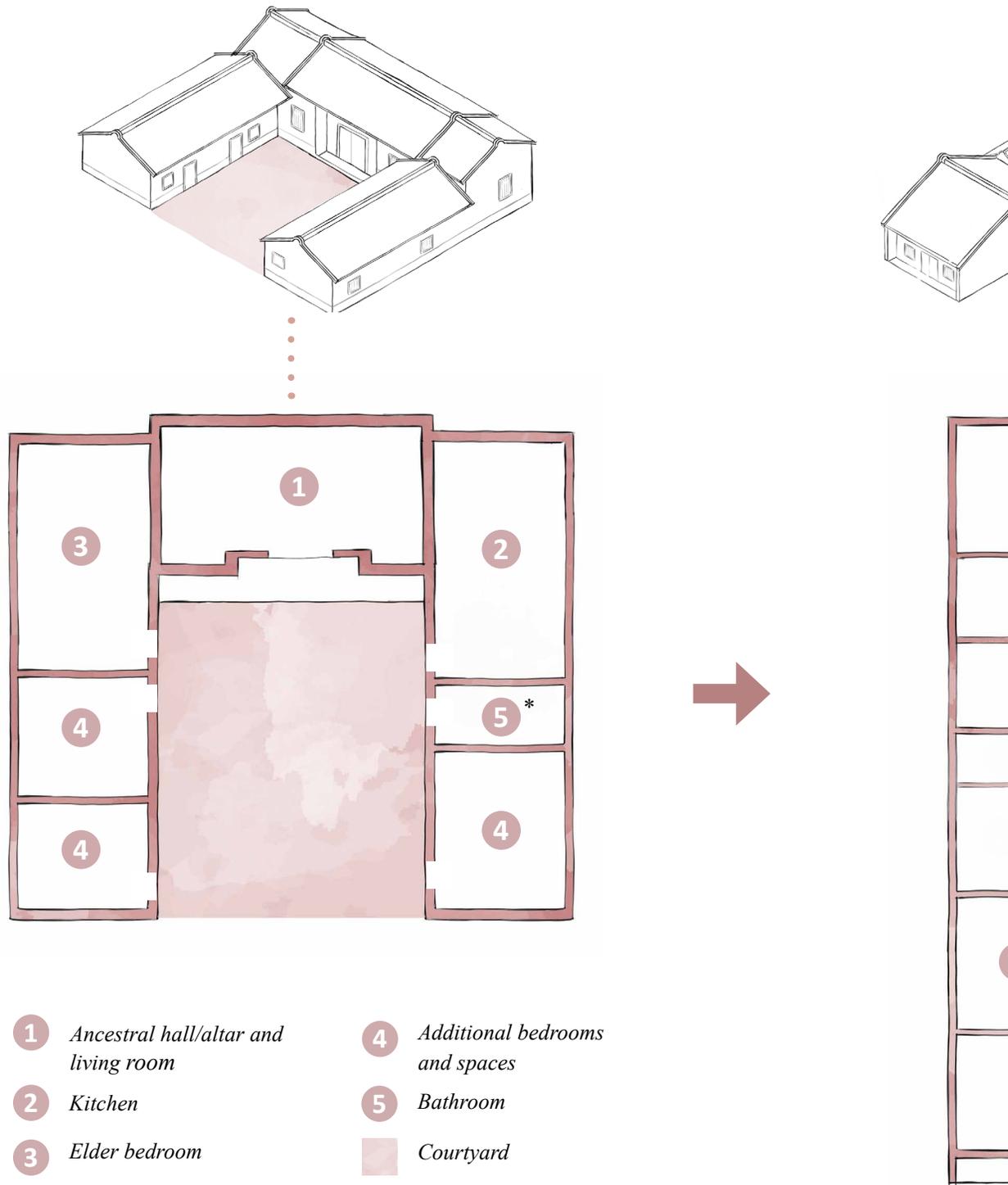
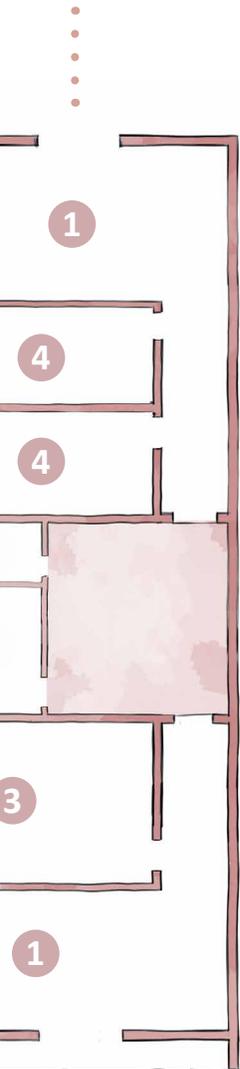
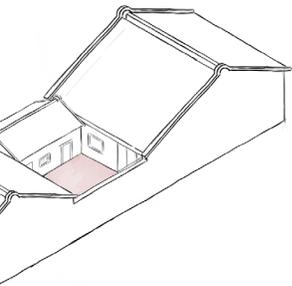
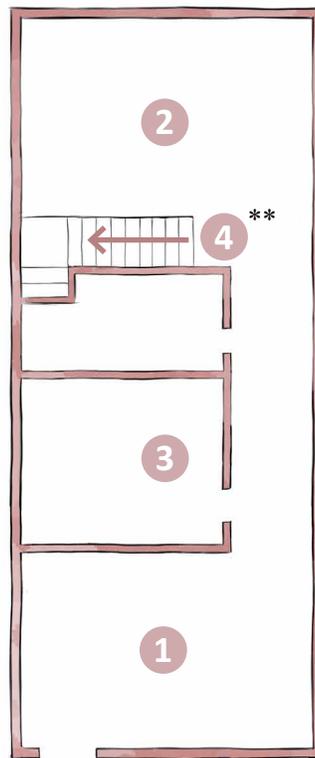
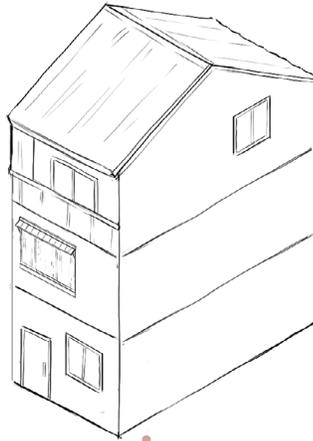


Fig.3.55 Diagram of the evolutionary process between Taiwanese residential homes as the urban fabric evolves from the courtyard house, the urban Minnan-style house, and the urban contemporary house which are all common in the urban fabric. The size of the courtyard evidently decreases with each rendition of the home, until it disappears in the urban contemporary house.

Minnan-Style House



Urban Contemporary House



...ric became more populated throughout the years, specifically looking at the Chinese Sanheyuan only found within Taiwan. Although the interior spaces remain fairly similar with each transition, ...til it is eventually eliminated altogether in the modern contemporary home.

* Many traditional households will opt to have the bathroom on the exterior of the house rather than including it as one of the interior spaces.

** Because contemporary homes have multiple floors, bedrooms are usually located on the upper floors of the house.



Fig. 3.56 A row of traditional Machiya streethouses from the Meiji Era of Japan. This type of building consists of solid rows of houses all facing the same direction. The Machiya House is traditionally made out of wood but houses built during and after the Japanese Showa era can also be made of materials such as masonry, concrete, and plaster.

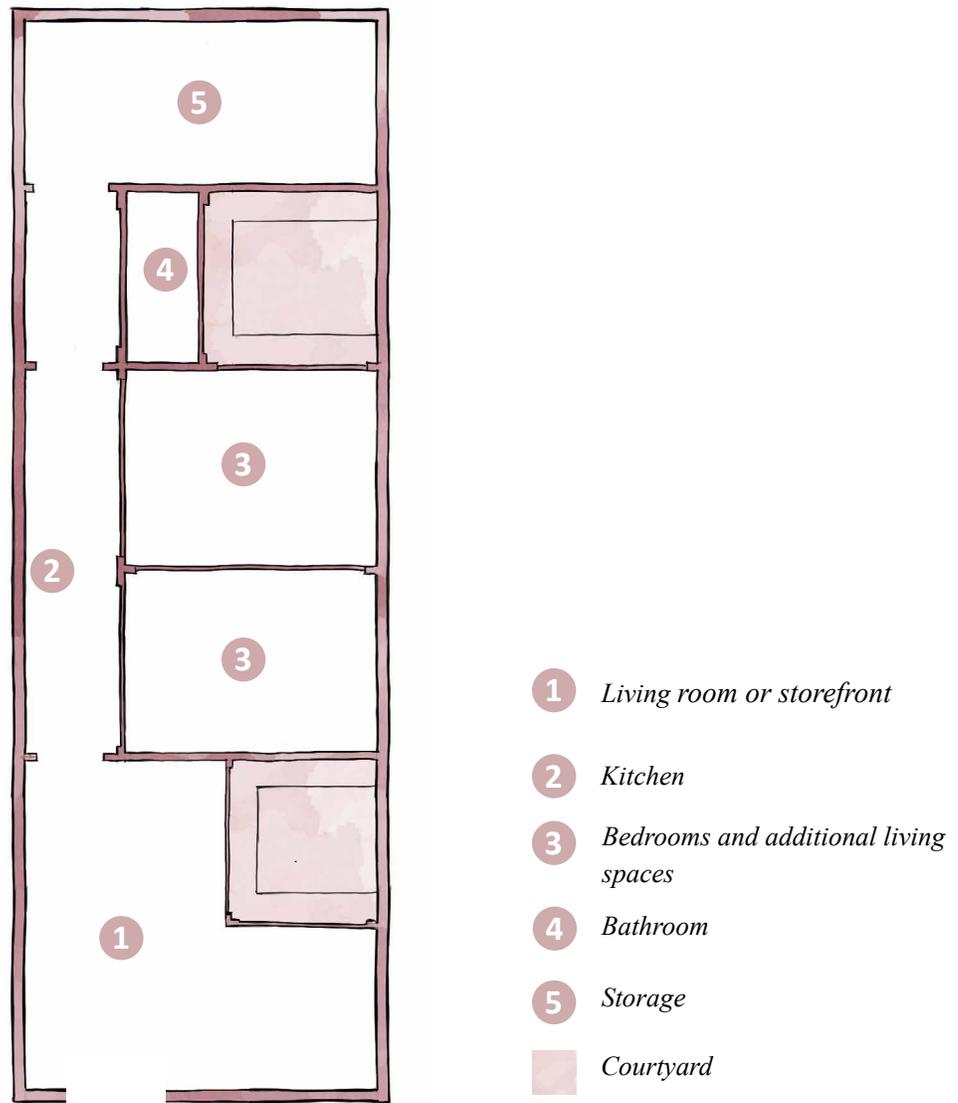


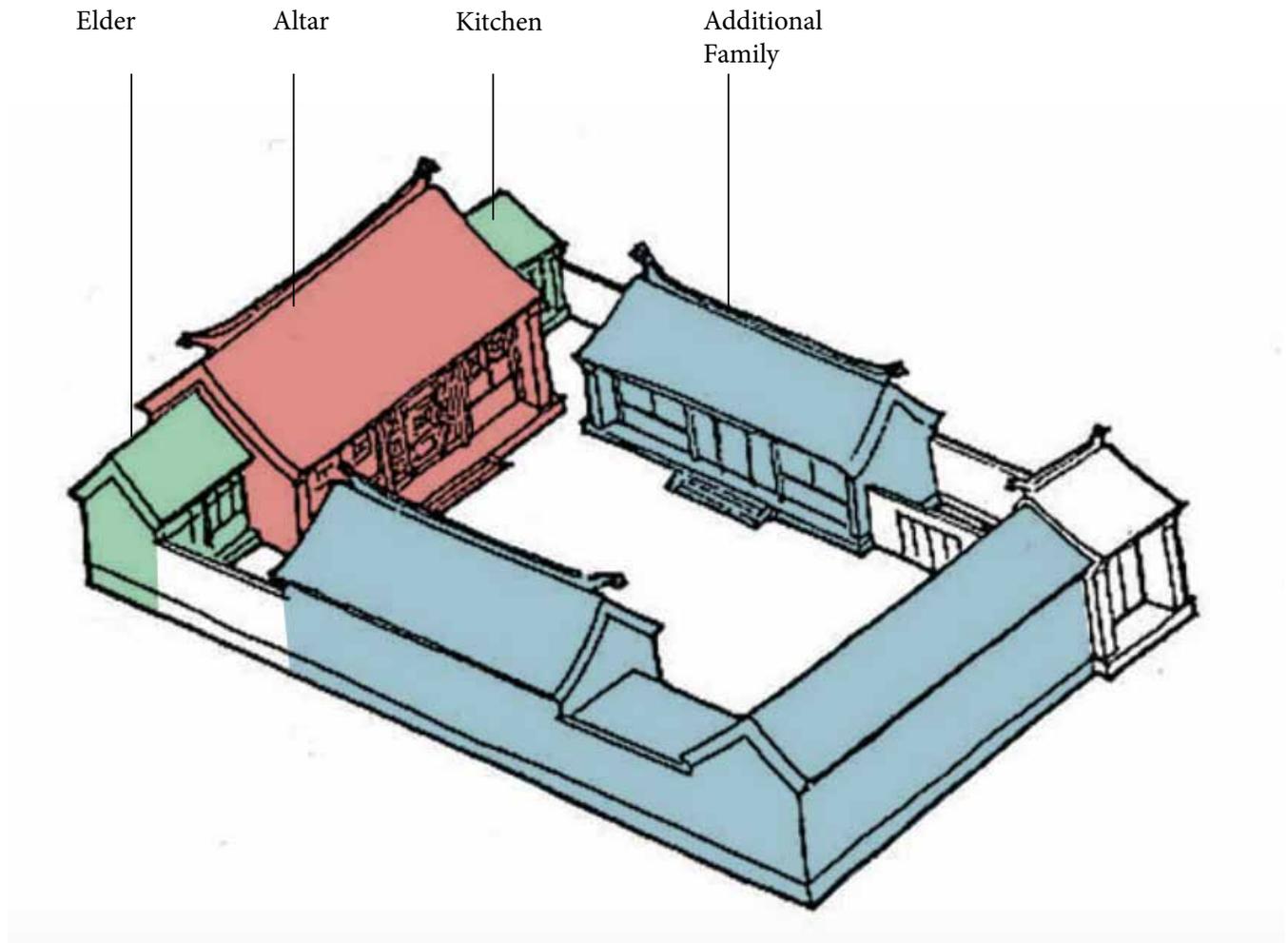
Fig. 3.57 Interior floorplan of a typical Machiya house. The interior of the house actually bears quite a bit of resemblance to the Chinese Minnan style house with similar placements of the courtyard, living room, and bedrooms.



Fig. 3.58 A hybrid variation of the Minnan House, the Machiyō, during the Japanese Showa era. These houses usually have in layout and appearance are similar to the two previous housin and have a covered walkway in the front

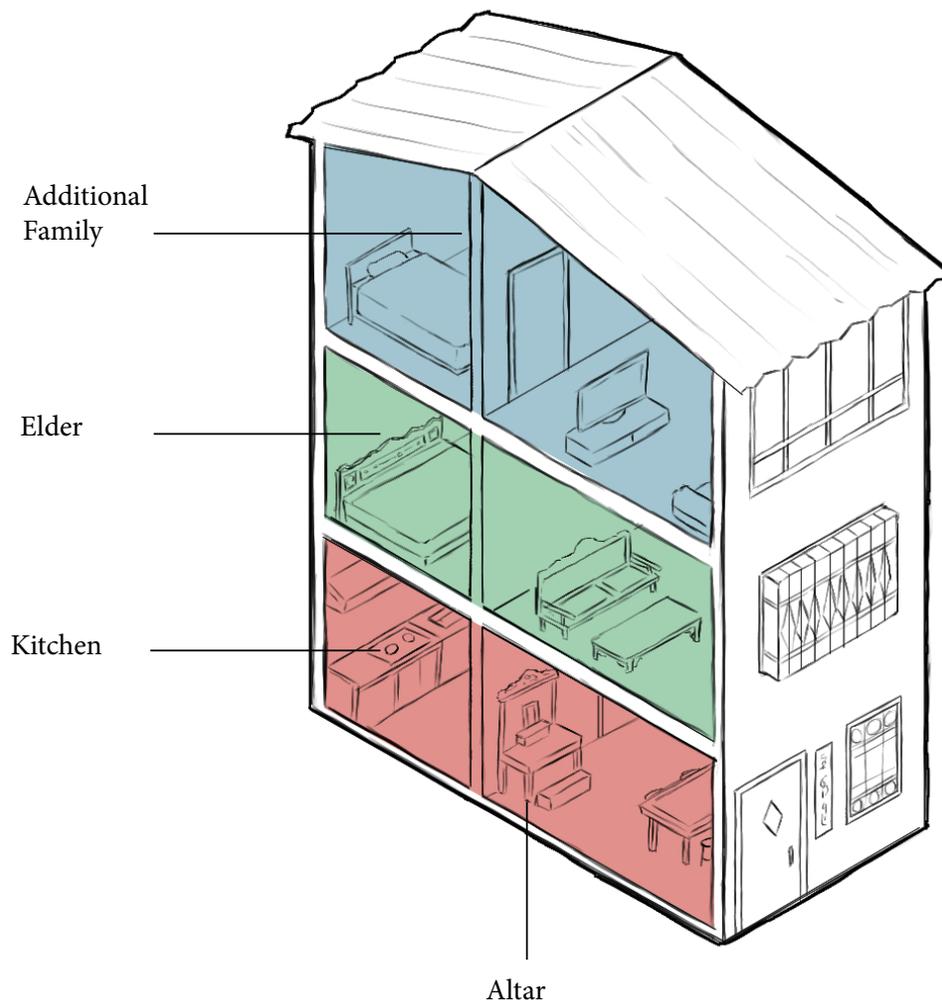


a house, and western influences called the streethouse emerged integrated commercial usage on top of being residential, their styles, but the facades are generally much more elaborate of the building for pedestrian circulation.



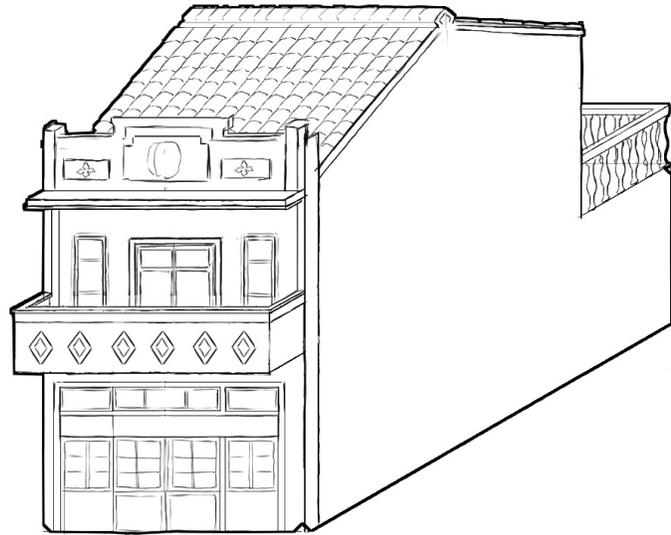
Traditional Chinese Courtyard House

Fig.3.59 shows the typical layout of a courtyard house compared to a contemporary residential Toutianxi house. The courtyard house has a central courtyard, which are used to worship deities and ancestors of the home. Next to this are the elder rooms, where the family's senior members will be reserved for the rest of the family members. The modern home takes on a very similar layout in a vertical form, making it the most prominent and visible area in the house. The living room and kitchen would be located on the first floor, and the bedrooms would reside on the second floor.

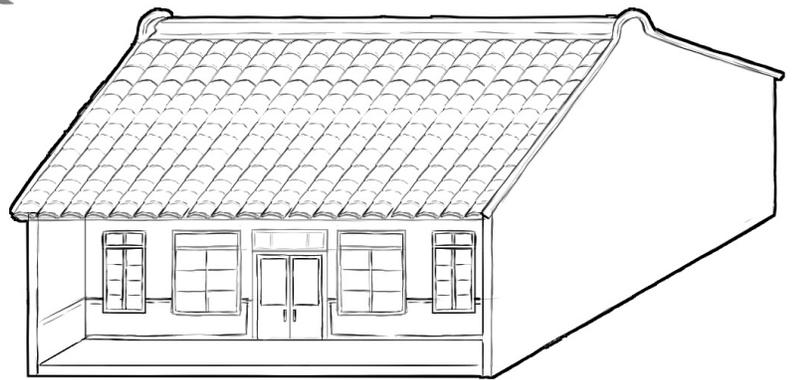


Typical Contemporary Home in Tainan

In the Courtyard house, the central and most prominent room is reserved for the ancestral hall and the altar; seniors live, and the kitchen. Finally, the remaining rooms as well as any other additions added later in the house fashion, with the altar typically placed near the front entrance, or at the top floor of the house in some instances, first floor; the rooms for the seniors are usually on the first and second floors of the house, and the rest of the family live on the upper floors.



*Japanese Showa
(1926~1989)*



*Ming/Qing Dynasty Minnan
(1661~1990s)*

Fig. 3.60 As homes evolve with the changing architecture of each era, some parts of the roof and the symmetrical facades would remain similar throughout each tradition. These architectural overlaps across different countries. For example, the Dutch colonies and the Chinese architecture share many similarities. The decorations used by the Chinese and Japanese bear resemblances to the Dutch architecture.



*Postmodern/Contemporary
(1945~2000s)*

the house would change drastically while other elements such as the shape and material transition. Various ornaments and building styles also remain similar due to cultural dynasties both commonly utilized red brick construction, and the roofing materials and their counterpart in their structure and usage of clay-firing techniques.

Diversity within Tainan's Homes

Though the informal building style found in Tainan can be compared to many other regions of the world, what sets it apart from other locations is the extent of hybridity that can be found within the city as a reflection of the multi-generational sharing of the dwelling, as well as its occupation of the gray area between informal and controlled, vernacular but not quite. Homes in Tainan often seem to be constructed based on certain cultural influences, but major changes to the home's appearance may be implemented depending on the needs and tastes of the residents. As a space is continuously repaired and modified, the boundaries between culture, age, and religion are blurred as all of such spaces become identified as the "home" by inhabitants regardless of their characteristics. Figure 5.61 shows a living room that appears to contain many cultural and religious elements. Some of the notable elements in this room are: the polished terrazzo flooring, Chinese wooden clerestory screens and octagonal windows, representing the eight trigrams of Tai Chi in Taoist beliefs, Western lace and printed ceramic tiles, etc. Sitting above the dining table and refrigerator is also an altar for a loved one. A white figurine of Guanyin, a Buddhist goddess of mercy and compassion, sits next to the photograph on the altar.

Informal dwellings in Tainan also differ from those located in other parts of the world in that the residents are actively choosing the route of repair over purchasing new homes or renting in a new city, even when they have the financial abilities to pursue the latter option. Compared to other regions where informal dwellings may often be a last resort, the residents of Tainan are actively choosing to remain in their homes. This is shown by the fact that most of the informal and self-made housing structures seen in the Taiwanese urban fabric today are constructed by middle-class families, with nearly 82% of Taiwanese residents owning their homes³⁰. Compared to the United States at 65.9%³¹, and Japan at 55.04%³², and Hong Kong at 49.8%³³ according to government data from the respective countries.



Fig. 5.61 There is much to unpack even in a single living room. Motifs from a wide range of origins can be seen in this particular living room. Some of the notable elements in this room are: the polished terrazzo flooring, Chinese octagonal windows and wood screens, Western lace and printed ceramic tiles, etc. Sitting above the dining table and refrigerator is also an altar for a loved one. A white figurine of Guanyin, a Buddhist goddess of mercy and compassion, sits next to the photograph on the altar.



Fig. 3.562 A home that has experienced quite a heavy amount of modifications by its residents. The house seemed to have originated from the Japanese colonial era, as the roof is constructed in a distinct Japanese style called the Irimoya style, and some of the original wooden structures can still be spotted on the house.



Fig. 3.63 Two homes that appeared to have undergone reconstruction at different periods of time, branched off from the same Minnan-style home according to other residents in the neighborhood. One can also identify this based on the general low-rise, linear, and symmetrical form of the house. The house on the right seemed to have been modified during the 1950s~1980s, when the floral star pattern etched on washed terrazzo and the wooden exterior were popular. The house on the left is currently under remodeling and will soon become a hair salon.

29. Jurgenhake, B. 2011. "The Qualities of the Machiya: An Architectural Research of a Traditional House in Japan." 23rd Conference of the European Network for Housing Research ENHR, 5-8 July 2011, Toulouse, France. <https://repository.tudelft.nl/islandora/object/uuid%3Aa9f98f2a-6be7-4693-92ad-26507e69666e>.

30. 2010. "The Story of Taiwan- Economy." Taiwan Government Information Office. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100202032138/http://www.taiwan.com.au/Polieco/History/ROC/report04.html>.

31. U.S. Census Bureau, Demographic Internet Staff. "Annual Statistics: 2013 (Including Historical Data by State and MSA)." United States Census Bureau, May 21, 2012. <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/ann14ind.html>.

32. "Homeownership." Homeownership Statistics Japan : Prefecture Comparisons. Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://stats-japan.com/t/kiji/23131>.

33. "LegCo Secretariat Releases Research Brief On." n.d. Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202103/01/P2021030100365.html>.



Temples and Folk Culture

Temple culture serves as an important aspect that inspires the creativity of the locals. Although these structures cannot be considered residential, they play a heavy role in influencing both the communal and home spaces of Tainan. The religious temples and shrines that serve a wide range of deities around the city are all created with extremely detailed craftsmanship, decorated with statues and murals of various folklore and religious cultures. Materials that adorn such spaces can range from glazed ceramic, stone, wood, or metal and are painted with bold colors that separate them clearly from other structures in their vicinity. Figure 4.65 and 4.66 showcase two temples of different scales and how these lavish temples stand out from the rest of the neighborhood. Such elaborate buildings can be seen in almost every community and are very closely tied to the daily lives and rituals of the Taiwanese people. In addition to the communal temples, residents would also worship deities within their own homes, forming further parallels with the temple through these religious practices

The number of temples in Tainan alone is the highest amongst any city in Taiwan at 1627³⁴ – meaning that almost every neighborhood has access to a temple and shows how significant these spaces are to the residents of the city. The main religions practiced in Taiwan are a local mix of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, though most Taiwanese who identify as religious do not worship a single god but rather thousands of different deities based on the local customs and folklore of specific regions. These deities can also take on many forms or characteristics depending on the area they protect, and the temples used to house and worship such deities serve as the backbone and anchor of Tainan's community. Most notably the temples are not only places for religious practices but also important social spaces that people utilize in addition to parks and schoolyards, which are not often the most accessible in the crowded and busy urban space.

Because these temples are generally embedded in the neighborhood fabric and come with courtyards and sitting spaces, they become important community gathering spots for the locals. Residents use these spaces to socialize with their friends, host community events, or even simply as spaces to take a break and relax. In some ways, the function of these temples as social areas is more effective than parks or specific communal locations established by architects or by the city, as they are typically more available to the residents in comparison and the deities worshiped are seen as symbols of comfort for the locals.



Fig. 4.64 The locals have integrated the temples into their private lives, almost seeing it as an extension of their home. Residents would bring their own chairs to sit around and chat with their friends, some even use the courtyard space to hang their laundry (bottom left).



Fig. 4.65 A Grand temple tucked away at the end of the alleyway, lavished with decorations in a wide array of colors. The exterior of the temple is clearly more complex than the rest of the neighborhood, with various depictions of deities and mythical animals (lion-dogs, dragons, etc) carved into it.



Fig. 4.66 A temple of a smaller scale in a neighborhood of contemporary homes decorated with colorful ceramic tiles and statues. The color orange is typically reserved for temples as well, making them stand out from the rest of the city.

Memory of the Billboard Temple

At the end of the street, where the main road connects with the alley there is a temple. The original wooden structures of the temple have eroded throughout the years, but the locals have added their own makeshift facade made of boards and corrugated metal sheets, protecting the interior of the original temple that still survives.

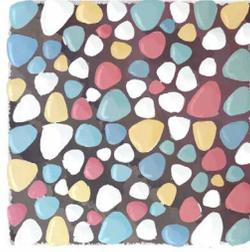
In my memory, this corner of our community has always been festive. It is the first place that my mother brings us to visit whenever we return home from abroad. Even before we put our luggage down, we would come and visit this space. For good luck, but also because we have grown to associate the temple's welcoming atmosphere with the idea of returning home. The red hue reflecting off of the paint of the columns and walls gives a warm, comforting glow to the space. Ceramic tiles on the walls ornamented with hand-made drawings decorate the walls of the temple, and assortment of flowers and offerings placed neatly in piles on the table form their own wonderful range of colors and vibrancy, all placed there by others who also share this attachment towards the temple. We would light seven sticks of incense, which would be placed on the altars which corresponds with each of the deities that protect our community. One in the altar facing the sky, three on the altar in the center of the space... even one underneath the main table, on a small altar that can only be accessed by crawling. As complex as it is, this ritual has been drilled into my memory ever since I was a child. The complexity of such a small space is welcomed by the devoted locals, who are devoted to the deities that they believe in but also the faith that they have placed in this temple as a safe space for the community.

Growing up, I have never thought of the temple and our beliefs as a religion. It was merely a part of Tainan's culture, a part of our routine, a part of our home. It felt almost natural to have such a space within the community, and the deities that we worship felt more like friends than otherworldly beings. The locals speak to the statues of deities as if they are human, they ask for permission and blessings as if talking to an elder within the community. This is as much of a religious space as it is a shared community center that brings individuals together, maintained and honored by everyone within the neighborhood.



Fig. 4.67 Although much of the temple has eroded from age, the local residents still tried to honor its memory by constructing a make-shift facade out of billboards and metal claddings. The original interior of the temple, however, is still well preserved.

34. Yao-Zu Hsu. 2019. “舊城區觀光仕紳化與社會資本轉變之連動關係—台南市神農街之個案研究.” [The Interlocking relationship between the Tourism Gentrification and social capital change in the old city area—A case study of Shen-Nong Street in Tainan] Thesis. <http://ir.lib.ncku.edu.tw/handle/987654321/183091>.



Phenomenology of the Home

Like the overarching history and architecture of Tainan, which establishes the cultural context in which communities develop, the interior of the home space and the culture of multi-generational living serves as another more intimate and private layer to the continual placemaking process of the city. Contributions made by each member of the family, who have lived through different eras and have seen their city and dwelling undergo various changes, allow the home to act as a medium to connect different knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, passing them down to younger family members as they grow up in the presence of their parents and elders.

Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, in his book *The Poetics of Space* (1958)³⁵ describes the home to be the first cosmos that humans experience, a space that shapes our first understanding of the world. In a study that he calls the study of topoanalysis, he concludes that the home can not simply be identified as an object, but rather something that is intertwined with our continuous, phenomenological experience of the present. The relationship between the home and the individual is mutual, as the individual adds to the home, the home also influences the individual. He then determines that the house has both unity and complexity; it is made of memories and experiences of all those who have dwelled within it. Different parts of the home arouse different sensations - each room, each space within the home provides a different setting for reflection and growth - yet together they bring up a unitary, intimate experience of living. The sharing of such a home space for individuals - or dreamers as Bachelard would call them as they imagine and daydream in the dwelling - provides a unique and diverse atmosphere within the home from which future members of the family can continue to reshape and build upon. This chapter will establish the place of the home as a link between the memory and experience of the city, the family, and the individual.



Fig. 5.69 A dated photograph of a family in their home in Tainan in which three generations live together. This particular home also doubles as a pharmacy so workers can be seen sitting in the background.

ArtDeCorner: A Revelation as an Architect

When I returned to the neighborhood after years abroad, many things had changed. As I arrived back at the steps of my childhood home, I quickly dropped my luggage in hopes of embracing the alleyways that had nurtured me when I was a child. However, I was shocked to find that many things were not as I remembered. My mother was correct, much of the neighborhood that I had held as treasured memories all these years had already begun to disappear.

The most notable of such change was a new cafe restaurant which has appeared at the corner of our streets. The space used to be occupied by an old couple who ran a noodle shop there. I remember the couple well, as they always sat at the couch outside of their home and greeted passerby with a smile as they passed. Everyone in the neighborhood was familiar with their hospitality, thus it was rather saddening to see that there was almost no trace of their presence within the building that they left behind. The new program that replaced the noodle shop was an adaptive-reuse project created by a local architect. I had the opportunity of interviewing the firm who designed the new building at a later date, and they told me of their visions for the cafe as a community event space. They even showed me the awards they've won and magazines they were featured in for this project. From what they have described and my own research afterwards, the cafe seemed to be a rather successful project which received much attention from the outside world.

However, when I inquired about the community restaurant with the other residents of the neighborhood, the answers I received seemed to be the complete opposite of my original findings. The residents saw this structure as an invasion into their home space - they disliked the new tourists who came to visit the shop, who held little respect towards the daily lives of the inhabitants, taking up space with illegal parking and gatherings in the already cramped alleyway. Many of the residents still remember the old couple and their noodle shop at, thus they were upset that the house was taken down. It was as though a portion of their memory was stolen from them. Something else I've noticed was that people who visited the shop rarely entered but merely took photographs of it from the exterior. I walk by the shop every day during my stay in the neighborhood, and the space seems to be rarely used from what I've observed,

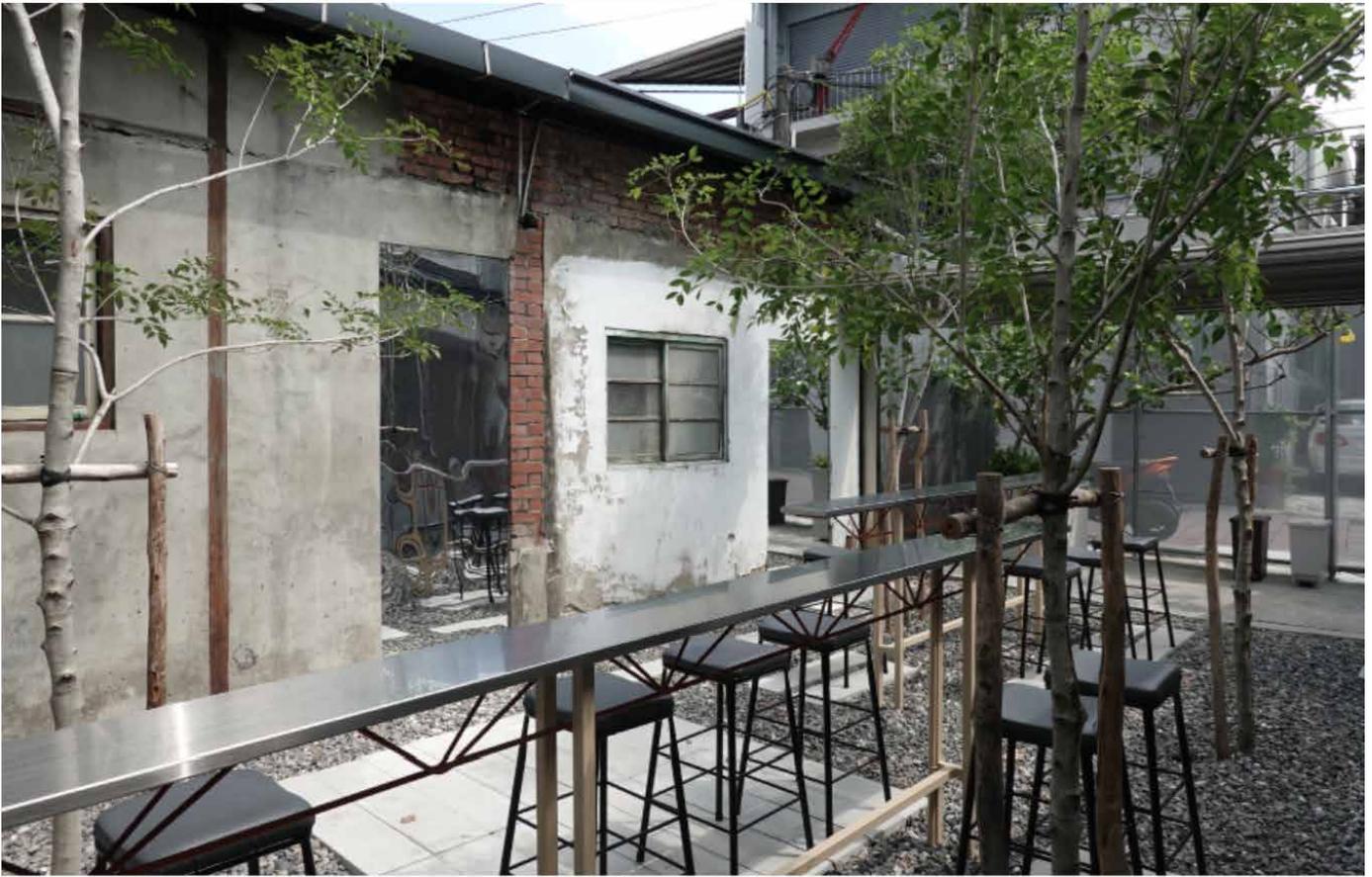


Fig. 5.70. Some interior photographs of the ArtDeCorner Community Cafe. Its name is a wordplay on the western Art Deco movement.

Some of our understandings of the home as architects may have become misguided through the representations of popular culture and media today. The titles of architectural books invariably use the notion of 'house'- 'The Modern House,' 'GA-Houses,' 'California Houses', etc. - Whereas books and magazines that deal with interior decoration and celebrities prefer the notion of 'home' - 'Celebrity Homes,' 'Artist Homes,' etc.³⁶ The ArtdeCorner project brings attention to our role as an architect as we try to find the balance between our visions for design and the more subtle, emotional aspects of the home. Although this adaptive reuse project is no doubt impressive and holds its own beauty, the space feels more like a shell than the welcoming space it previously was. The now converted community space recycled much of the materials from the existing home of the couple, so then why does the same space evoke a completely different emotion?

When I think of a home, I do not think of it as pristine or lavish, nor do I think about the form and structure when occupying my own home. Rather, the words that come to me are family, comfort, warmth, safety, love. The memories that I shared with my community and my family are what make the home truly feel welcoming. Many theoretical writings on the topic of the home also affirm this idea of the home on multiple levels. Juhani Pallasmaa, writer and dean of the school of architecture at the Helsinki University of Technology, proposed that the home is a psychological concept much more than it is architecture; It has psyche and soul in addition to its formal and quantifiable qualities such as structure and order.³⁶ The spaces that one considers home, on top of being a physical shelter, possess many layered quantities outside of the architectural realm. It can be defined by the personalization of individuals over time, making them a mirror for one's identity. Iris Marion Young in *House and Home* identifies the home as a place of remembrance. She describes the process of homemaking as a complex process to "reconstruct the connection of the past to the present in light of new events, relationships, and political understandings"³⁷, preserving memories of the past while at the same time preparing for the turmoils of the future. Bell Hooks in her essay *Homeplace* argues that the home holds a universal value for all as a safe space, a place of dignity, and a site of resistance against oppression³⁸. The accumulation of these values, defined by the residents and then absorbed into each space, each corner of the home, is what makes the multi-generational homes of Tainan valuable to their residents. When a home is deprived of its inhabitants, who maintain such values through the process of homemaking, and the means to remember said inhabitants, that space will then loses the qualities and atmosphere which it originally possesses and returns to simply being an envelope rather than a home. Perhaps this is what the city of Tainan was trying to tell me as it guided me again through its streets.

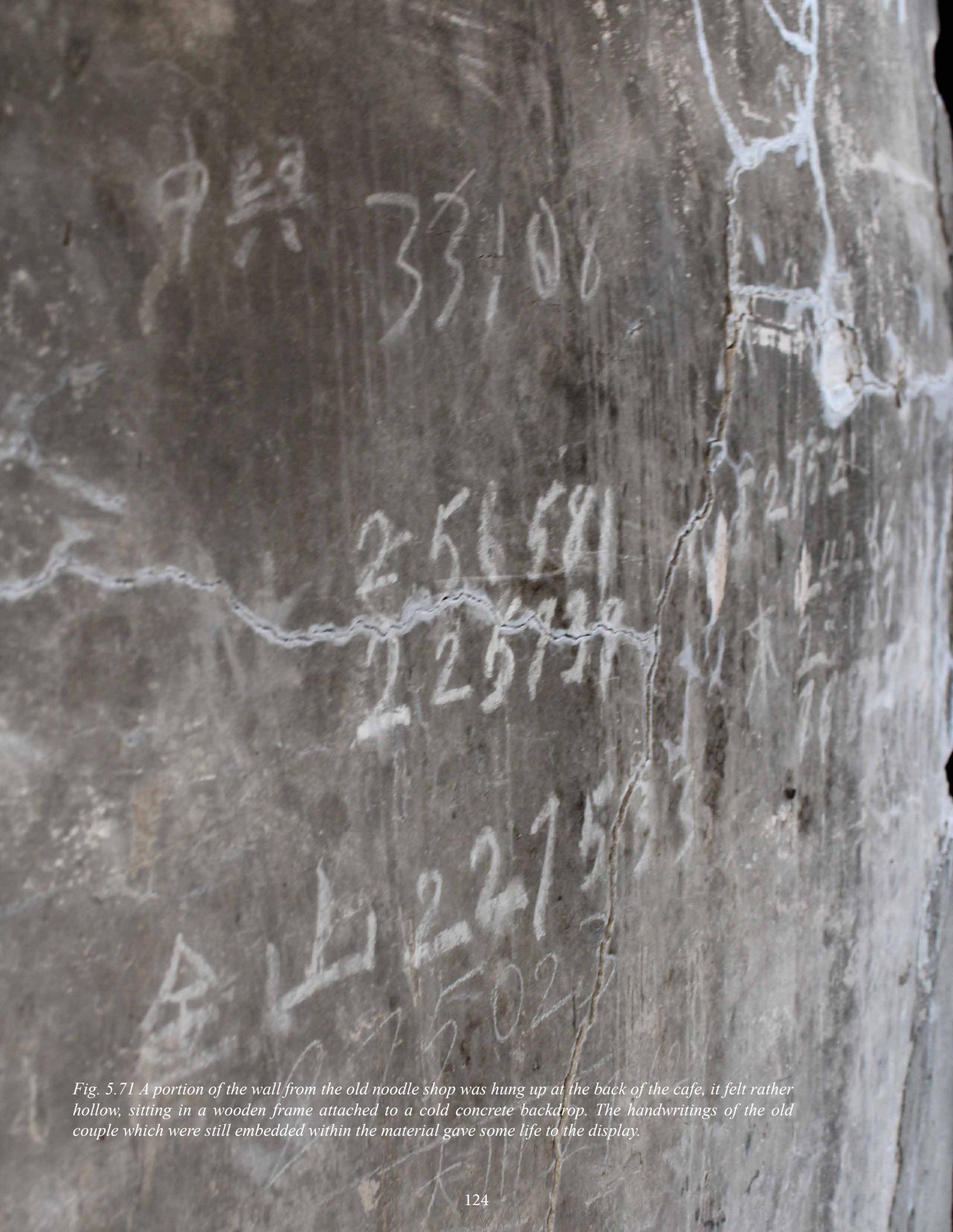


Fig. 5.71 A portion of the wall from the old noodle shop was hung up at the back of the cafe, it felt rather hollow, sitting in a wooden frame attached to a cold concrete backdrop. The handwritings of the old couple which were still embedded within the material gave some life to the display.

The Home Space of Tainan

As Bachelard has pointed out in *The Poetics of Space*³⁵, the realm of the home is complex and full of layers. Each room and corner of the house carries a certain atmosphere and function with them that engages with the dweller in different ways. Although the homes of Tainan do not necessarily possess the qualities that he discusses in his book, such as having an attic or a cellar, which were more common in the European countryside homes that Bachelard had in mind, he nevertheless brings up the crucial point of how the memories of the home are presented to us in dispersed fragments, scattered throughout the different spaces - in the cellar, the attic, and even in furniture such as drawers, chest, and cabinets, that make up a dwelling. Yet, when combined, these spaces bring us an intimate experience that transcends the physical space and speaks directly to our hearts, soul, and memory - creating a wholeness that contributes to our sense of comfort and belonging within the home⁴. Juhani Pallasmaa also speaks of this fragmenting of the home, but as an accumulation of a family's combined effort to build a safe space for their loved ones throughout the years. "The home cannot be produced all at once; it has its time dimension and continuum and is a gradual product of the family's and individual's adaptation to the world."³⁶ The homes of Tainan can be analyzed based on these two frameworks with the inclusion of the level of cultural and generational representation embedded within each space. The evolution and hybridity of various cultural characteristics seen on the exterior of the multi-generational homes are also exhibited in the interior spaces. This form of overlap and understanding of culture created by each generation inherently seeps into the domestic space due to decades of placemaking process and the nature of generational living. The home space is defined and redefined repeatedly by each member of the household, and the transition from each era to the next can be visually noted in each space. Past generations that are no longer residing with the family are also represented through daily religious practices or through the passing down of mementos and parts of the home. Altars such as the ones seen in figure 5.72 are typically used to pay respect towards the ancestors and other deities that protect each home, similar to how one would worship them at the neighborhood temples discussed in the previous chapter. The task of taking proper care of the altar becomes part of the daily routine for residents, making such altars a direct and accessible way for residents to connect with their lineage and culture. The purpose, symbolism, and atmosphere of the various rooms within a Taiwanese multi-generational home will be addressed in the next few pages.



Fig. 5.72 A typical altar located in the living room of a home, dedicated to both the deity and ancestors that each family worship. Offerings such as flowers, plants, and food are usually maintained on a daily basis

The Living Room

The living room is the first space that one encounters when entering a dwelling, serving as the gateway between exterior and interior, public and private, house and non-house³⁵. It has both the quality of intimacy and privacy that the rest of the home holds, but at the same time, it also represents what an individual chooses to display to others and to the public³⁹. This room is meant to be a sign of welcome and is used to entertain friends and guests, and the Chinese culture has developed many rituals and signage that are specifically tied to the living room to fulfill this purpose, one of such rituals being the act of tea drinking. Sharing tea in the living room shows a sign of respect, whether it is between elders and younger generations, a superior and a subordinate, or simply amongst friends and family, but it also is an act of inviting someone into the home. The gesture of respect also transcends the mortal realm, as the contemporary homes of Tainan typically place altars within the living room space as a sign of inviting the spirits of loved ones or respected deities into their home.



Fig.5.73 A living room in one of the generational homes of Tainan. The cracked terrazzo floor tell of its age, the red couplet on the door serves as a sign of welcome for visitors.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is a space that holds similar symbolic meanings in both Western and Asian cultures, often being associated with fire, warmth, motherhood, and has also been a point of controversy over the years as a sphere mainly dominated by women ³⁷. In Asian architecture, the kitchen is typically situated at the back corner of the house and is closely related to the dining area, usually near if not connected to each other in the home space. These two spaces hold a similar role as the hearth in Western literature as a space for gathering, sharing, and communication.

The kitchen and dining rooms in Tainan hold a special function within the home as they not only link different generations together through their physical architecture but also offer a space for members of the family to form psychological connections with each other through shared conversation. The kitchen and dining room create an environment for the different generations in a family to share their ideas and stories, their understanding of their world with one another over a warm meal, in doing so also facilitating a sense of belonging. In this sense, they become spaces for reflection for all members of the family, which differs from spaces such as the bedroom which may be more catered towards private thoughts.



Fig. 5.74 A traditional wood kitchen cabinet from the last century placed next to more lively and modern kitchen decorations and children's toys, showing that residents from different eras have coexisted within this space



Fig. 5.75 Various decorative elements on the kitchen walls and sink show the youthful self expression of a generation past.

The Bathroom

The bathrooms of Tainan's multi-generational homes exhibit an almost child-like quality, often lined with colorful tiles, bathtubs, and accessories, emitting a calming atmosphere. Like the kitchen, the bathroom is a room shared by all members of the family - children and elders alike. It is also where family members share their most vulnerable and intimate selves with one another - a place where parents bathe their children, and the sons and daughters bathe their elderly parents, who may have perhaps reverted to the state of children. I believe that the space of the bathroom is constructed to reflect the dreamer that Bachelard describes. For adults, this is a space for meditation and thought away from the responsibilities of the world; for children, it is a space for play and exploration. Figure 5.76 shows a playful Taiwanese bathroom ornamented with a wide range of colorful tiles. The built-in bathtub embedded with mosaics in the shape of cobblestones is a popular addition to homes built in the 1970s and 80s and serves as a particularly fond childhood memory for current Taiwanese residents. Many remember sharing their bath times in such a bathtub with their parents and grandparents as children. Various buckets are scattered around this bathroom, which is used for water conservation but also for washing clothes and infants. Temporary guardrails have been installed to accommodate the elderly members of the family.



Fig. 5.76 A Taiwanese bathroom ornamented with a wide range of colorful tiles. The built-in bathtub embedded with mosaics in the shape of cobblestones is a popular addition to homes built in the 1970s and 80s and serves as a particularly fond childhood memory for current Taiwanese residents. Various buckets are scattered around this bathroom, which is used for water conservation but also for washing clothes and infants. Temporary guardrails have been installed to accommodate the elderly members of the family.

The Bedroom

The bedroom is the space that one retreats to when the night falls and the business of the streets quiets down. It is a space for dreams, reflections, and slumber at the end of the day. In contemporary Taiwanese homes which are built with more verticality, the bedroom is often located on the upper floors of a house, distancing it from the public realms within a neighborhood such as the streets below. However, this does not mean that individuals become estranged from others in their bedrooms. Due to the constraints of space in Tainan, each bedroom is often shared between multiple members of the family. Therefore, rather than being a private space, the bedroom instead becomes a place of gathering for family members, a nest or cocoon where children are protected by their parents and grandparents, and couples dream in the comfort of their significant other.

Figure 5.77 shows a bedroom within a contemporary home. According to the resident, the two mattresses in the room are laid out on the floor rather than on a bed frame so more people can fit on the bed, and so that in the case where someone needs to sleep on the floor, they do not feel as though they are excluded.



Fig. 5.77 A bedroom within a contemporary home. According to the resident, the two mattresses in the room are laid out on the floor rather than on a bed frame so more family members can fit on the bed, and so that in the case where someone needs to sleep on the floor, they do not feel as though they are excluded.

4. Seamon, David. 2018.

35. Bachelard, Gaston, and M. Jolas. 1994. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press.

36. "JUHANI PALLASMAA: IDENTITY, INTIMACY AND DOMICILE - Notes on the Phenomenology of Home- University of Westminster." n.d. Accessed August 15, 2023. <https://library-collections-search.westminster.ac.uk>.

37. Young, Iris Marion. 2005. "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme." In *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal through Politics, Home, and the Body*, edited by Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer, 115–47. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-12103-5_8.

38. Hooks, Bell. 1997. "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance." In *Undoing Place?* Routledge.

39. Cooper, Clare. 2014. "The House as Symbol of the Self (1974)." In *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. Routledge.

Chapter 6: Ornaments



The Place of Ornaments

As the final and smallest component in this story of Tainan, ornaments hold a special place between collective memory and individuality. Such ornament can either be the more permanent architectural ornamentations embedded in the physical structure of a building, or they can be transient mementos, decorations, and furnitures that the dwellers bring into their home. These ornaments are usually implemented by the individual on the interior or exterior of their homes, but can both showcase a person's uniqueness and contribute to the collective memory. I would like to dedicate a chapter of this thesis to the fleeting decorations of the home. As my recollections of the various ornaments and materialities of my childhood home were what initially prompted me to pursue this journey towards rediscovering this city. Although they may seem small, and insignificant, ornaments actually contribute much more to our memory and identity than one may think. The ornaments that are present in the built environment influence our understanding of our culture and community as early as our childhoods, they serve as a representation of the city and can come to define significant elements of an individual's identity. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of ornaments, identifying the importance of their role and how they contribute to the place and memory of Tainan.



Fig. 6.79 A home decorated with various lanterns, couplets and other Chinese motifs.

Modernist Rejection of Ornaments

In 1910, Adolf Loos gave his famous lecture at the Akademischer Verband für Literatur und Musik in Vienna. In this lecture Loos stated bluntly that the modern era is an era with no definite ornamental style, and that the ultimate end result of an evolution of culture is the lack of ornament. Those who enjoy ornamental items are primitive and therefore holding society back.⁴⁰

In *Ornament and Crime*, he declared that he has “made the following discovery and [will] pass it onto the world: The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects”⁴⁰. Le Corbusier likewise in his multiple works, notably *Towards a New Architecture* and *The Decorative Art of Today*, rejected the traditional ornamental styles in architecture and believes that ornaments have no place in the era of machines^{41,42}, saying that “The religion of beautiful materials is in its final death agony... The almost hysterical onrush in recent years toward this quasi-orgy of decor is only the last spasm of a death already predictable”⁴². These statements which condemn ornamentation would proceed to heavily influence the Modernist movement, and many architects would also follow in Loos’s and Le Corbusier’s footsteps as they pushed society toward the future they envisioned.

Going by definition, it may be true that ornaments are merely decorative elements that can be separated from the practical function of an object. As they are non-functional and transient by nature, ornaments have frequently been overlooked or considered unnecessary in architectural design. However, if this is entirely the case, then why do we still see ornaments in almost all aspects of our lives a century after Loos’s essay was published? The ethos of the Modernist movement was rooted in the removal of ornaments in favor of the emphasis of function and form. Yet, regardless of how pristine a house is when it is built, once it is occupied by humans it will inevitably become filled with ornaments added on by their inhabitants, unplanned by the architect. This is because of the fact that ornaments do indeed have function and are still an essential part of our built environment.



Fig. 6.80 “Are they not beautiful?” The owner of the pharmacy pointed to the mosaic floor tiles in the foyer; “My grandfather installed them when he opened his first shop. When I look at these tiles, I think of the struggles that my grandfather had endured in order to make this house our home.”

Each family had a piece of their house which they were most fond of, their memories were embedded within the particular materials and ornaments in their homes.

According to Farshid Moussavi, a professor at Harvard's School of Architecture, "Ornaments are the means by which architects today produce sensations and effects, in contrast to such prior architectural modalities as Modernist transparency and postmodernist signification." They allow architecture to "constantly engage the city in new ways" and to "remain convergent with culture"⁴³. Ornaments are effective at bringing out human emotions and sometimes even convey particular messages, such as ones embedded on a temple signifying the grandness and authority that the space possesses. (Figure 6.82) The ornaments of Taiwan are especially significant in that they are also indicators of each of the historical eras that each home family has gone through. The patterns on a building and the collected mementos within its interiors allow locals to tell at a glance when the building is constructed, and what the resident's values are, while also serving as colorful landmarks for the neighborhood. Each family had a piece of their house which they were most fond of, their memories were embedded within the particular materials and ornaments in their homes. Some ornaments belong to the collective memory of the neighborhood, while others were unique to the family. Ornaments also told of a person's status, lifestyle, and the amount of time they have used the space as a home. The permanence of different types of ornaments can also vary depending on how long the residents have been here or which member of the household uses these spaces the most (Figure 6.81).

While not essential for the object's utility, they still contribute to the creative, symbolic, or cultural significance of their associated object. Ornament is one of the smallest and most common contributions that one can make to their home, yet they often become the "focal point" within a space and serve to captivate or initiate conversations⁴⁴. Even though they may lose their physical worth over time due to neglect, weathering, or the passage of time, their emotional value remains intact for their owners and as they are passed down through generations. Consider a wedding bed, an altar, or even a simple lamp gifted by grandparents. Despite their seemingly small and insignificant nature, ornament and decoration are part of the cultural and symbolic dimensions that weave human lives, meaning, and even the dimension of time, into the architecture

An example within the western household that demonstrates the purpose of ornaments is the mantelpiece, which is a piece of furniture that has become somewhat outdated in contemporary Western society but nevertheless continues to exist as an ornamental item in numerous suburban homes. In her study, Rachel Hurdley, a Fellow of cultural Sociology at Cardiff University, in her book *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging, Keeping Culture*⁴⁵, characterizes the mantelpiece as a significant embodiment of emotions, a "structure of feeling," which functions as both the "fabric and fabricator in the collective labor of memory". While the materials, designs, and adornments of these mantelpieces



Fig. 6.81 The rusted wrought iron handrails give away the age of the home, whereas the woven bamboo furniture serve as an ode to traditional crafts.

may vary from household to household, they universally evoke a sense of comfort and nostalgia for their owners. Each of the cherished objects within one's home carry with them the precious memories of the generations that have lived with them. No matter how individuals engage with these ornamental elements, even the most simple act such as placing a memento on the table, admiring the reflections through a tinted window, or sharing a meal around a table, are all important rituals that reinforce the bond connecting them to their family and heritage and ties the individual to their culture and city.



Fig. 6.82 Highly ornamented columns and exterior of this temple add to its grandness and authority, leaving visitors in a state of awe as they enter the space. The dragons carved into the censers represent the imperial heavenly deities, whereas the lion dogs on either side of the entrance serve to protect the temple from the harm of demons. Various scenes from general Chinese mythology and local folklore are carved into the walls and highlighted in the roof structure of the temple entrance. In addition, it appears that someone has left a metal container (Bottom of photo) used for burning paper money meant for the deceased in front of the temple, likely as a part of a personal prayer.

The Child and the Details of the Home

Ornaments also contribute greatly to our sense of nostalgia of the home and are heavily tied to our childhood memories. Something about the way that children experience the world that is so profoundly deep and imaginative, and this keenness towards our environment seems to become lost as we move onto adulthood. The memories that we create during this stage of our growth play a great role in influencing our unconscious perception of the home space as we grow up. Things that made us feel happy, safe, comfortable often have direct affects on our preferences as adults. At the scale of children, they are able to examine their environment at a much more intimate level than adults. They experience the details in their environment not as mere background objects but rather stimulators. They tend to hold a much deeper and direct connection to them compared to adults. The curious mind of children means that even the most unnotable object in the home can become stimulants for a child's imagination and growth, and experience in which the child is actively involved, with his body, his senses, and his awareness, is likely to be etched in memory for a long time. Thus objects such as ornaments, which can be examined and interacted with at a much closer level for children, tend to become a core component of their memory and influences their stylistic preferences as adults as they actively associate such objects with the home.

The way that I saw my neighborhood when I was a child was full of excitement and curiosity. I remember feeling a much stronger connection and less of a restraint to touch, feel, (and even lick) everything that was within my grasp. As children, we do not yet fully understand the orders that adults have established for our world. Since we do not yet have this structure established by society to restrain us, each object in our environment, everything we see and experience therefore held much deeper meaning and curated our imagination in more fantastical ways. As a child, the stairs were not merely a tool for climbing. They were a tower that hides dangerous secrets and monsters that my brother and I must defeat in our make-belief adventures. The intricate metal stair rails were not simply for decoration but trees in a rain forest that we can dangle from, or it may also be the watchtower of a ship as we became pirates to spy on my mother in the kitchen. The bathtub was not a container for water but a vast ocean, and the colorful stone tilings embedded on its surface were treasures and jewels at the ocean floor that we must dive to retrieve.

The way that we interact with the various ornaments have become an indispensable part of my memory of the home, and the profound recollection of such memories was what eventually drew me back to the city, as it has done so for many other residents who have been estranged from Tainan.



Fig. 6.83 Drawing of children playing on the staircase



Fig. 6.84 Drawing of a child playing with a crumbling brick wall

Traditional Craft

Ornaments within the residencies of Tainan also display notable differences when compared to western-style dwellings and homes. Taiwanese homes, even contemporary ones, display visibly more elaborate and decorative exteriors. The closeness to traditional crafts in Taiwan may be the reason which contributes to the highly ornamental expressions within these self-built dwellings.

The connection between Taiwanese culture and crafts can be traced as far back as the Aboriginal era of the island and Taiwan's close proximity to East Asian countries which also valued such traditions, but more crucially it was a result of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance movement beginning in 1966 that recognized and promoted the significance of traditional arts. The movement began as a response to the Chinese Cultural Revolution which pushed to eradicate capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society as an effort to promote the communist agenda. Dissatisfied with the intense cultural suppression and mass destruction of traditional artifacts during this period, the people of Taiwan sought to revive what they believed to be the "true" Chinese spirit in opposition to the Nationalist party, encouraging the publication of traditional literature and arts and allowing people to engage with such works freely.

Today, the beauty of craft in Tainan is still very much honored and integrated into people's daily lives, and the residential homes are an architectural reflection of such spirit. Many ornaments found in these dwellings also carry symbolic meanings. In Figure 6.87, the clouds and peony flower carved into the side of the wooden table are symbols of the heavens and wealth respectively, meaning that this was likely a piece of furniture owned by a wealthy family, who displayed this table in their home as a sign of status. Other symbols such as mythical creatures, fruits, and animals can also be commonly spotted in Taiwanese homes. More examples of such ornaments will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

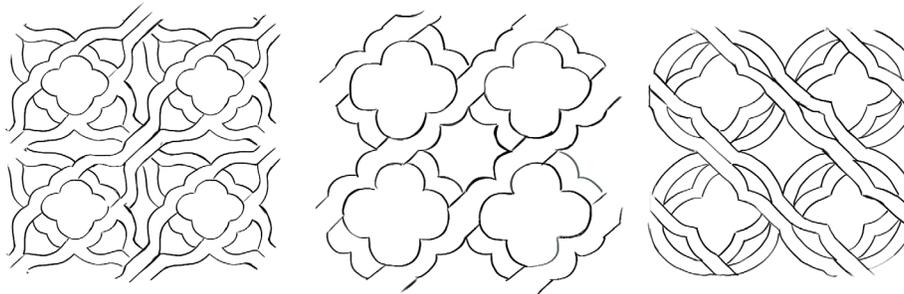


Fig. 6.85 (top) - 6.86 (bottom) Traditional Chinese rattan weaving techniques are used to make bamboo furniture such as this chair. The craft involves a variety of weaves that can be assembled into a wide range of patterns and forms.



Fig 6.87 Delicate wood carvings can be commonly found on Chinese wooden furniture, some of which also hold symbolic meanings.

The Roof

The roof is a particularly important element that has accumulated the external cultures that Taiwan has been affected by. It is a heavily symbolic part of the home in East Asian Architecture, as Buddhist practices believe that the form of traditional Chinese and Japanese slanted roofs can ward off Evil. The significance of the roof can be traced back to the evolution with the radical 宀 (mián), which is present in many Chinese characters associated with the home such as 家 (Home), 宅 (house), and 安 (sense of security). The form of the slanted roof surface in the early pictographs of the radical speaks to the importance of this particular roof shape as a functional element in the humid and rainy Asian climate as well, where domes and flat roofs would prove to be problematic as water can quickly build up and erode the building material.

Taking the above points into consideration, it also makes sense that the ornaments associated with the roof can add special meanings to the presentation of the home. Symbolism can be found within the colors, materials, and rooftop decorations of each roof. Temples place special emphasis on the ornamentation of their roofs, depicting various religious figures from Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian beliefs. Oftentimes, characters from local folklore can also be found. The highly decorated roofs make temples especially easy to spot when walking through a neighborhood. While typical homes do not have an ornamental system that is as elaborate as temples and palaces, they still contain many similar elements at a smaller scale. Below is an index of some roof ornaments that can be commonly found in the homes of Taiwan. These ornaments are not only for aesthetic purposes but also speak much about the beliefs and practices of Taiwanese culture at different times in history.

The form of the roof has evolved as technological advancements allowed more advanced or lighter material to be used. Although like many other aspects of the self built multi-generational housing, some families can choose to preserve older roofs and renovate the rest of the house, while other older buildings may use more modern roofs to shelter the rest of their more traditional home. The variety that these roofs bring to each home can add a point of interest to communities and showcases the thought process of each family as they construct and repair the form of their home.



Fig. 6.88 A Traditional Chinese terracotta roof. Terracotta tiles have been used as early as 771 BC in Chinese culture and has been a common material in Tainan ever since the integration of the Han Chinese and Dutch colonies in the 17th century. The seemingly black coating and texture on the tiles is due to years of moss growth and flaking⁴⁸.

Roof Ornaments

1. *The ridge of a Minnan-style roof can be made into different shapes representative of the different elements in Chinese Wuxing beliefs. The most common one found in urban Tainan is the “Horseback” style which symbolizes the element of Gold and wealth. Other elements include wood, fire, water, and earth.*
2. *A thick, glazed ceramic tile with a green hue commonly found on the side of Minnan-style homes. It is used for ventilation or simply as a decorative element to the house.*
3. *Antefix end tiles and fillets were invented by Lu Ban, a Chinese master architect who lived during the Warring States Period (481/403 BCE - 221 BCE) and are used for drainage purposes on the roof. Various patterns and icons can be carved onto these two elements, with the most popular ones being patterns such as clouds or dragon, or ones with auspicious characters from the Han Dynasty which were believed to bring good fortune. Other mythical animals such as the tiger, the phoenix, and the Xuanwu also appeared after the end of the Han Dynasty. In Taiwan, the most common pattern is the lotus flower, which symbolizes purity and longevity.*
4. *Although the Japanese Showa era changed much of the way that architecture is presented in Taiwan, most buildings still opt to use Chinese terracotta roofs that mimic the horseback style despite the front-facing facade of the building having a Western appearance.*
5. *Decorative reliefs on the front facades of Japanese Showa-style homes can serve many purposes. Typically made out of concrete or terrazzo, they can be used to represent family crests, shop signs, or various ornamental symbols.*
6. *Corrugated steel decking became an extremely popular building material in the later 20th century due to their convenience and affordability. These colorful metal additions can be found on almost all homes in Tainan today.*
7. *Due to the lack of space in the urban regions of Tainan, many steel decking spaces will often be used as an additional balcony or outdoor space and can be used according to the creativity of the residents.*

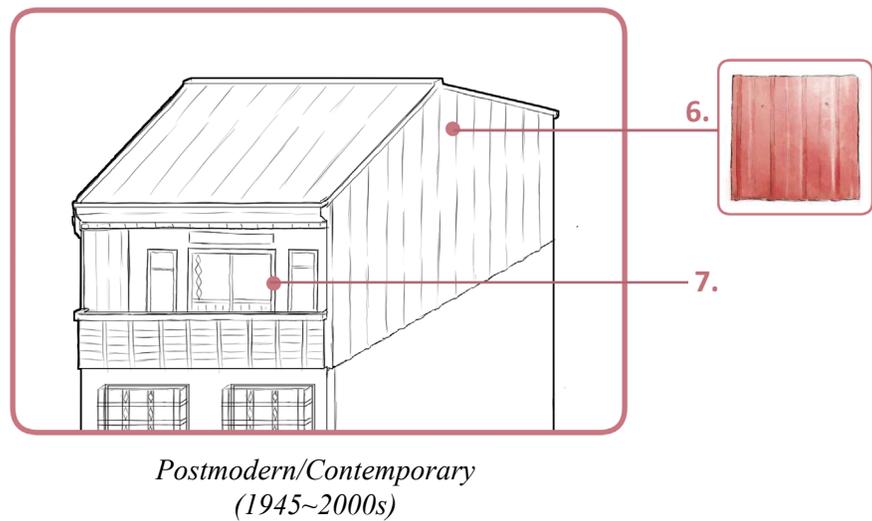
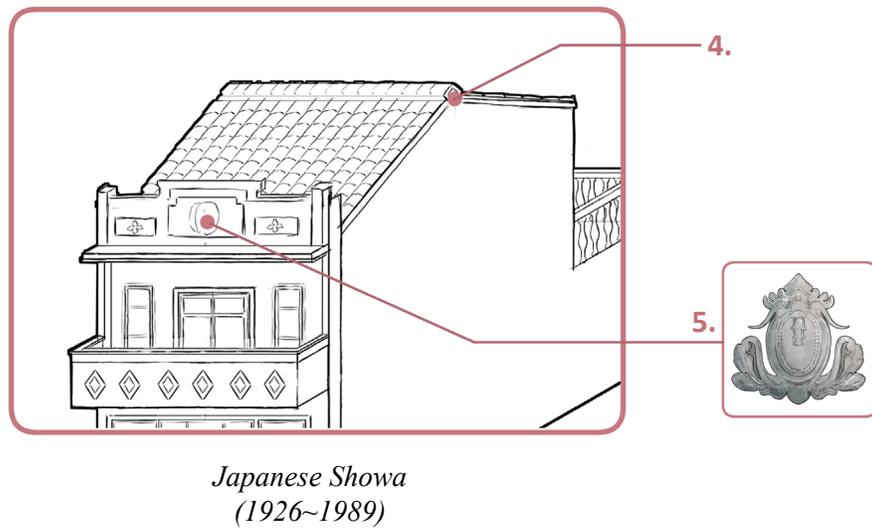
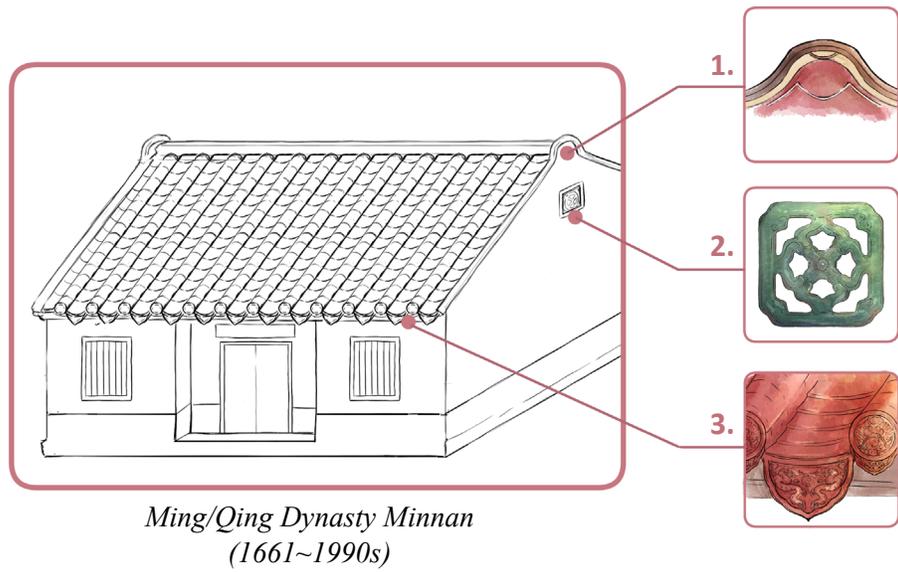


Fig. 6.89 Diagram of the different roof elements that can be found in Tainan.

A Tile with a Global History

Of all of the materials that I discuss within this thesis, the Majolica tile may be the one with the most complex history. The techniques for making Majolica tiles were first developed in the Islamic world and influenced the development of ceramic techniques in Italy, France, the Netherlands, and other nations. The craft would later reach England around the middle of the 16th century, and with the industrial advancements and technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution, Majolica production would lead to the development of popular British Victorian tiles.

Japan was introduced to the Majolica in the late Edo period (1603–1867) and early Meiji period (1868–1912), when Japanese craftsmen began studying and developing tiles according to Victorian tile samples. By the early 20th century, Japan would develop a high quality and consistent method of producing these tiles which it then began to export to other countries such as China, Southeast Asia, India, the Americas, and eventually Taiwan.

An interview with Kenji Horigome, Professor at National Taiwan University's Graduate Institute of Art History dives into the complex history of these small yet intricate tiles. "As Taiwan was a Japanese colony, more than 90% of the majolica tiles on Taiwan's residences were manufactured in Japan,"⁴⁹ Horigome states. The Japanese companies would base the designs on local popular culture, implementing designs of various fruits, flowers, and patterns that hold symbolic meanings locally. Figure 6.90 shows a Majolica tile with a depiction of a fruit basket. On top of symbolizing bountifulness, each fruit also holds an extended meaning - The peaches represent longevity, pomegranate and grapes represent fertility, etc.⁵⁰.

The tiles quickly became extremely popular, even more so than they have become in Japan, and much of the island's home facades, rooftops and interiors can often be seen adorned with these delicate tiles. These seemingly commonplace tiles tell a tale of economic geography and globalization and helped shaped many cityscapes around the world, connecting Taiwan to countries and cultures that are outside of its own scope.



Fig. 6.90 A piece of Majolica tile embedded in the frame of a bamboo chair. The tile itself holds a depiction of a fruit basket. On top of symbolizing bountifulness, each fruit also holds an extended meaning - The peaches represent longevity, pomegranate and grapes represent fertility, etc.



Fig. 6.91 Some floral patterns with European origins



Fig. 6.92 More Majolica tiles based on local symbols of Taiwan. Peony flowers represent wealth, and bats are a wordplay on the Chinese character “fu” meaning good fortune.



Fig. 6.93 Large Majolica tile spanning across four tiles depicting the image of two cranes, a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture.



Fig. 6.94 The molds for each Majolica tile pattern is hand carved by the artisan before they are used for printing.

Additional Ceramic Tiles

Following the Majolica tiles, other forms of ceramic tiles also came into popularity and are used generously throughout both the interior and exterior of buildings. Mosaic tiles are another favorite of Taiwanese residents, and can come in both complex and simple geometries (figure 6.97). Some more oddly shaped tiles such as the colorful cobblestone mosaic (figure 6.96) are also used widely in Taiwanese homes. In more recent years, people have also begun to opt for tiles with patterns printed on them rather than etched into the ceramic itself. Figure 6.95 shows an interior kitchen adorned with a multitude of mosaic and printed tiles



Fig. 6.95A kitchen adorned with a variety of ceramic tiles of various styles.

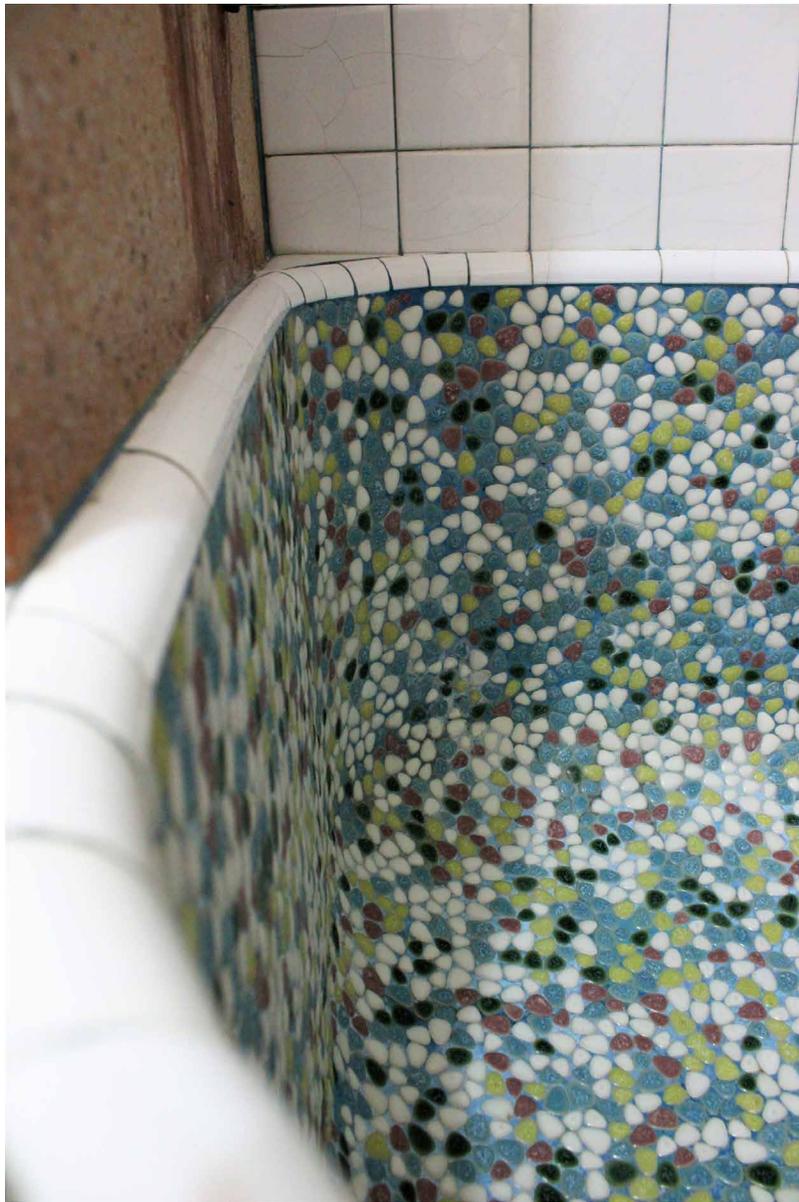


Fig. 6.96 Colorful cobblestone shaped Mosaic tiles found in a common Taiwanese bathtub.

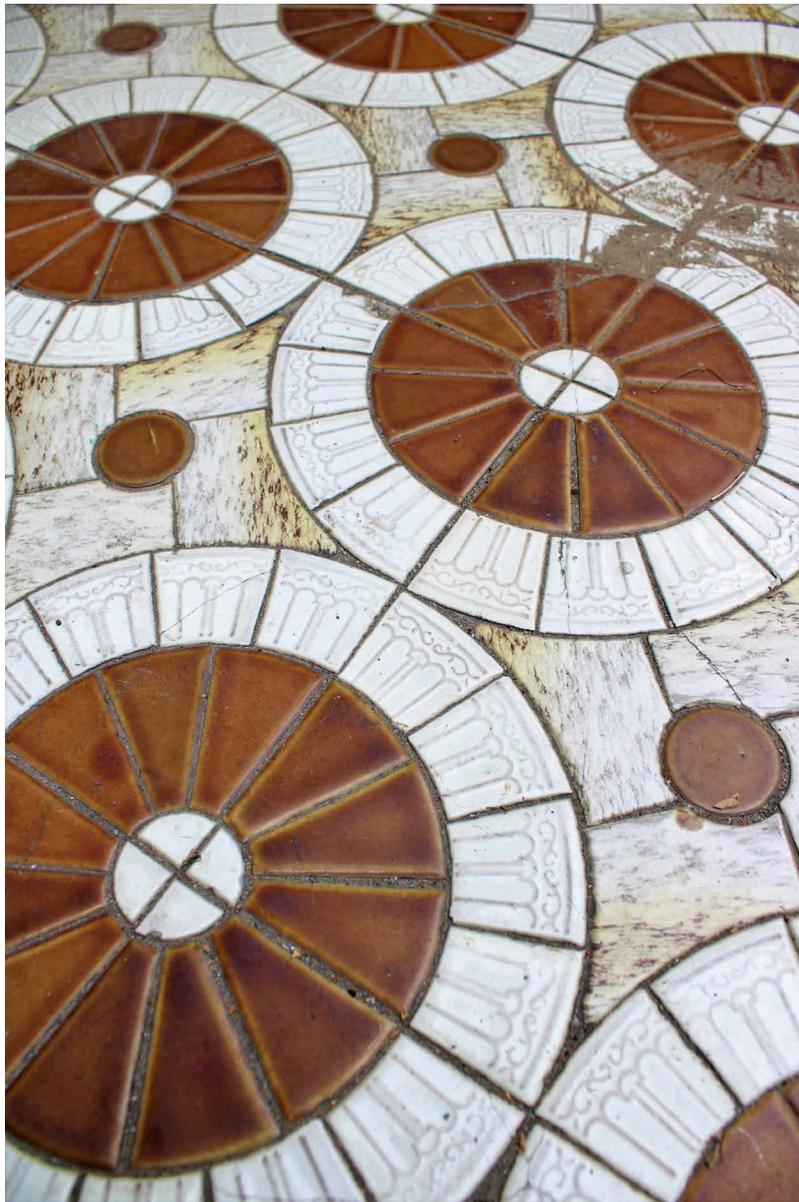


Fig. 6.97 Circular mosaic tile patterns embedded in the floor.

Decorative Metal Grills

Originally imported from European origins in the 1930s, the metal window guards and handrails were brought into Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era and became extremely popular amongst the local population during the 1970s through 1990s. The metal grills are made of wrought iron recycled from ships and machineries left over from WWII. Such material is highly malleable, allowing them to be heated, reheated, and worked into various shapes. As the manufacturing and production process became more stable many varieties of mass produced and custom grill options became available to the consumers of Taiwan in a variety of color options. Despite having faded out of fashion in recent years, they can still be commonly spotted throughout the island.

Another reason these decorative metal pieces became so popular was because the added volume of the grill extensions on one's home allowed for a bit of extra space in the in densely populated cities. These window guards are often the smartest and most efficient way for residents to demonstrate their creativity in a cramped and crowded urban landscape. Some families will even install custom window guards to represent a part of their business or even personality.



Fig. 6.98 A wide range of metal grill patterns can be seen throughout the city.

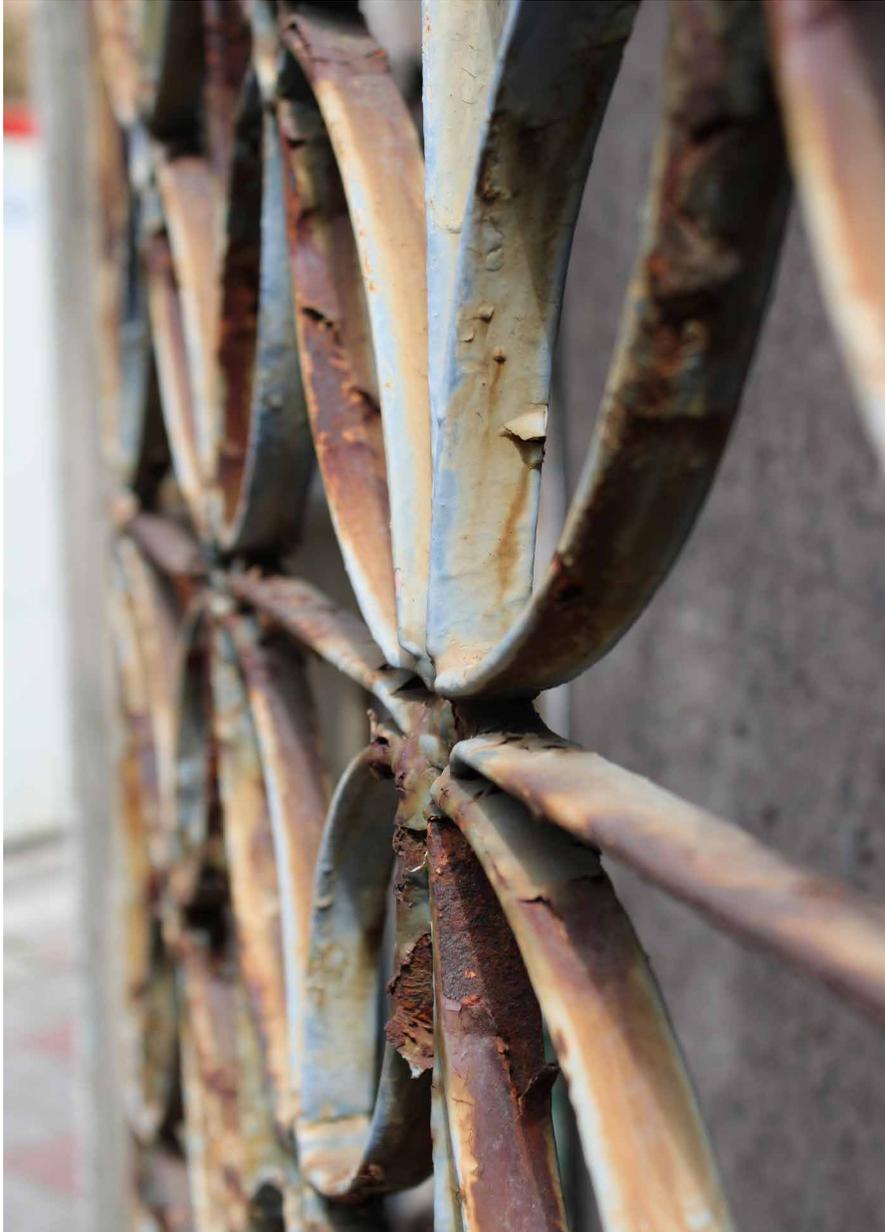


Fig. 6.99 The wrought iron window guards are often painted over with a layer of paint, giving them a vibrantly colorful and glossy finish. As the paint begins to wear off, the age of the building becomes evident

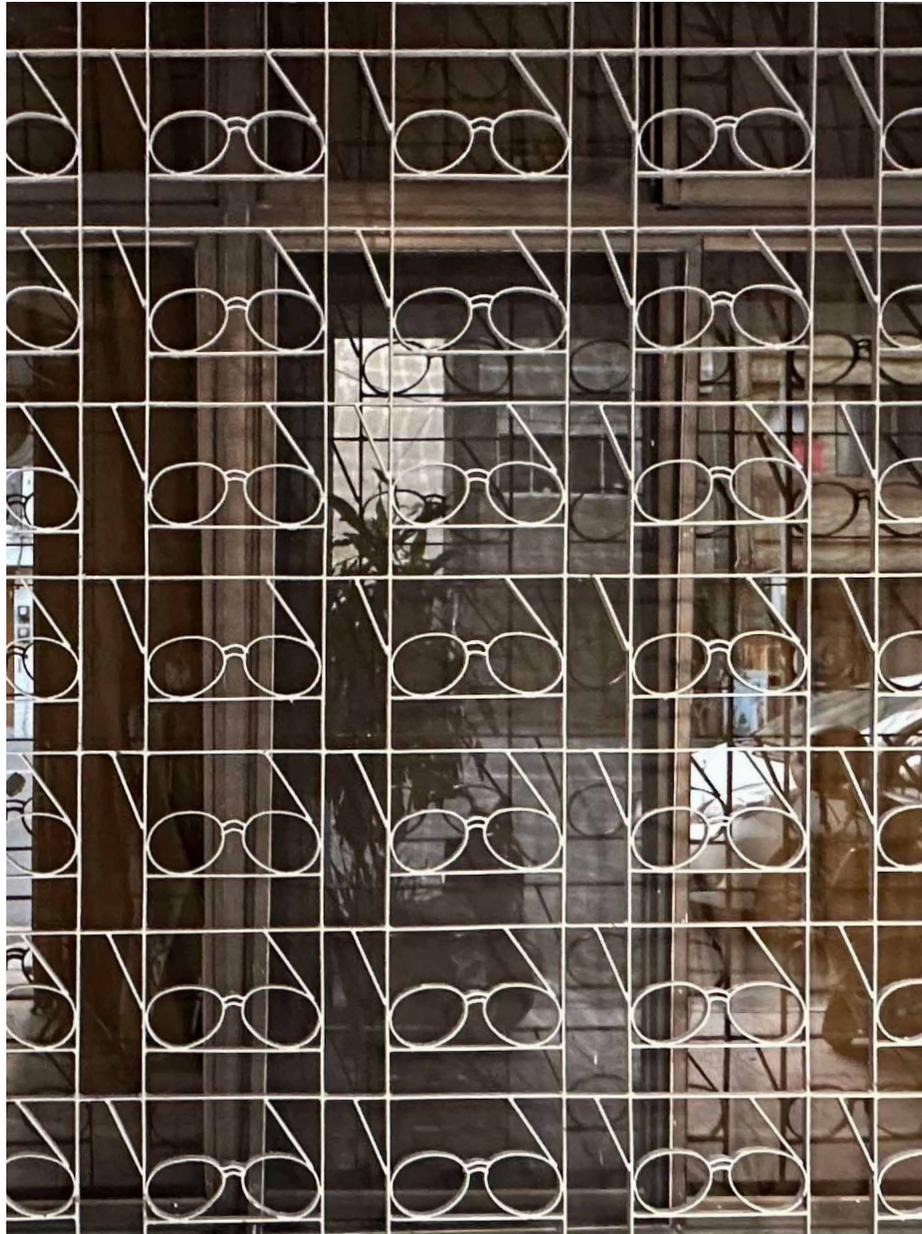


Fig. 6.100 Custom made window guards in the shape of sunglasses. The owner of the house used to be a glasses manufacturer and therefore used this to promote his business.

Press Pattern Glass

Starting from the 1950s, pressed pattern glass became widely used in Taiwan as a translucent material that could help combat privacy issues while still keeping indoor spaces well-lit.

Melted glass would be pressed with different molds or rollers before it return to its hardened state, and some of the most common patterns included the begonia flower, cross, diamond, and more. The begonia flower especially has become an iconic sight in Taiwan due to its unique and complex appearance as connotation to wealth, with the name of the flower “海棠”(Haitang) being a wordplay on the Chinese word “堂”(Tang) meaning palace. As modern society began to demand more technologically advanced window glass for their homes, such patterned glass has slowly become obsolete and is eventually discontinued on the island. It is thanks to decades of home preservation efforts made by Tainan’s residents that they can still be commonly found on buildings today.



Fig. 6.101 (top) - 6.102 (bottom) Two of the most common patterned glass - the cross and the begonia flower.

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Fig. 6.103 Drawing of a child playing with some decorative window guards.



Interviews and Site Visits

The story of a home is written by its residents. These tales tell not only of the physical space but also of the history of the entire family, their connections to the community, and how they became a part of the city. For this research, I have interviewed 12 residents who have lived in Taiwan with their families for decades, with each person bringing a different perspective and a different story to tell. In this chapter, I will let their voices speak. I will be highlighting the memories and stories of some families that I have visited. Their stories present their version of the collective individual memories that they hold of Tainan and how they contribute to the theme of placemaking that this thesis centers around, with each story that I record addressing a different part of the thesis thus far.

During the interviews, participants were asked standard questions relating to their home, such as how long they and their family have lived there, whether there have been any modifications or additions to the homes during their residence, their satisfaction with living in their current home compared to living elsewhere, etc. But most of the interview process was carried out in a conversational format, in which the participants were free to talk about anything which they felt was notable about their home. Overall, it was discovered that the residents of Tainan generally have a very positive view of living in the city. Surprisingly, all residents gave very similar answers to my questions during the interviews, and most people are very proud to be called a resident of Tainan. When asked if the residents would be willing to move to a different city or country if given the funds and opportunity to do so, all 12 interviewees responded that they would still like to stay in Tainan, and preferably remain in their family homes.



Fig. 7.105 A long-time resident of Tainan, sitting next to his tea set in his home.

Story of Two Siblings

This particular story questions again the effect that architects and mass media really leave on the urban fabric of Tainan. It raises the debate of whether it would be more beneficial for architects to design communities or whether we should leave the natural process of homemaking in the hands of the residents themselves.

“I have lived here for 70 years,” Said Mr. Hsu when asked about his home. The house that he and his wife now live in was originally constructed at the beginning of the 20th century “You see those bricks over there? You cannot find these anymore, they were left over from the Japanese era and have been set in the walls of this house for over 100 years.” As soon as I started the Interview, Mr. Hsu pointed out the walls of his one-storey house to me. Many parts of his home have become worn down with age, and all that remained of the original masonry home were a few exterior walls. The rest of the home has been replaced with metal decking and other materials as a solution to the crumbling facade. “This is my house.” Even though his house has definitely seen better days, Mr. Hsu nevertheless emphasized his possession of the house throughout our interview, his eyes glistening with pride as he spoke of the home in which he has lived his entire life.

Mr. Hsu is a lifelong resident of Tainan and has acquired the structure from his parents. As the other members of his family gradually moved out or passed, he and his wife are not the only inhabitants of this house. He explains that his sister actually lives in the house across the street, which was designed by an architect whose name he no longer remembers. In contrast to Mr. Hsu’s home, The two-storey house was rather well-kept and built with more modern materials that mimicked traditional Japanese architecture. The roof of the home especially resembled a traditional Japanese gabled roof, yet is also adorned with a European chimney. The sister’s house has since become a cultural heritage site, and many students from the local architecture school would often visit at the suggestion of their professors. This has caused Mr. Hsu and his sister quite a bit of trouble and his sister eventually decided to stop allowing interviews and visits to their house. He says that although the house has been given a prestigious title, the government has now placed much more restrictions on what they can or cannot renovate in the house. As an example, he points out the water tower that was installed on the side of the house. The government initially prohibited them from installing the water tower, even though it is a necessary utility, as it would hinder the aesthetics of the house, which once again has caused much trouble for their family. Although his sister lives in the more modern and designed house across the street, Mr. Hsu and his wife much preferred the family house passed down from their parents which is over a century old. On the other side of the road, Mr. Shu has started a community garden in the area where part of his family home has been demolished. He carefully tends to this garden daily and told me that it has been a rather popular gathering spot for the locals.



Fig. 7.106 A community garden created and maintained by Mr. Hsu in the demolished portion of his house. On the left side of the photo, the remnants of his century-old family home and its masonry structure can still be seen.



Fig. 7.107 Home of Mr. Hsu's sister, designed by an architect. Features include a tile roof, washed terrazzo walls, and a narrow alleyway.



Architect using Japanese and Western elements such as a clay roof, circular windows, and metal window guards.

Story of Generations

The story that this resident shared with me showed how valuable and sustainable the process of generational living is to their residents, as dwellers share and reuse the same home space throughout the years, the home also transforms and becomes a parts of their identity. Even after the residents move out of these homes, the fond memories that they hold of their house and community will still remain with them.

“My father began building this house when I was 3 years old. I am 73 this year, meaning that this house has more than 70 years of history now.” Mr. Zhu begin retelling his own story as he invited us into his home for tea. “My daughter and her children currently live in this house, and I used to live here with my parents and my 8 siblings. This house holds so much memory for us, my wife and I were also married in that house 40 years ago, my eldest son was born in this house... The house is small, but it had everything we need. We also knew everyone in the neighborhood as well since I grew up in this house. Nowadays most of our family has moved away but the house still remains under our care”

Mr. Zhu also told me about his connection to the local temple. As a child, he used to play in the temples with his friends, and in those days he never really saw the temple as a religious space but instead remembers it as something more familiar. “Tainan is a good city to live in, and the residents here are all very hard-working.”

Mr. Zhu’s daughter has chosen to renovate the interior of the house, so the original wood structures and some of the brick exterior have been removed, but the washed terrazzo facade that made the house stand out in the neighborhood still remains. The house also kept its original concrete decorative tiles and the cloud-shaped window guards that Mr. Zhu installed, which are now adorned with the colorful school projects of his grandson. One can truly see the efforts made by each generation of Mr.Zhu’s family to make this a comfortable space for each member of the family.



Fig. 7.108(top), 7.109(bottom left), and 7.110(bottom right). A generational home built and dwelled in by Mr. Zhu's family for 70 years. The exterior facade is decorated with various ornaments from the Showa era, such as the ornamental concrete blocks on the roof, the cloud-shaped window guards, and the washed terrazzo walls. As family members move in and out of the home, they also contribute to the appearance of the generational home with their personal items. In fig.7.108 various children's toys and potted plants can be seen next to the front door.

Story of Growth

The story of Ms. Tsai's family hints at how strongly connected the history and culture of Tainan are linked to the lives of its residents. As the city prospers and evolves, the homes built by residents also transform and adapt with it, creating a timeline that reflects both the city and dwellers.

I met Ms. Tsai while exploring one of the historical districts of Tainan. Attracted by the peculiar appearance of the house, which seemed as though it was ripped out of the row of houses beside it. The lot besides the home lies empty but traces of wall debris and indents from the previous house that used to sit there are still visible. I decided to inquire more about its history with the residents. As it turns out, the house that I entered is a pharmacy that has been in operation for more than 70 years.

“My grandfather built this house 72 years ago when he was first studying as an apprentice pharmacist.” Ms. Tsai would explain to me, “He originally only constructed the front-most part of the house and then gradually built higher and wider as the pharmacy became more successful. The pharmacy operated on the first floor of the house whereas the medicinal workshop and living spaces are on the upper floors. There were 3 or 4 expansions to the house, with one such expansion being my parent’s wedding room. Me, my parents and my brothers family currently live in this four-story house ”

The pharmacy is located in one of the original commercial centers of Tainan - commonly known as the Five Channels District. Because this region is situated on the old canals of Tainan, many foreign trade and exports will need to go through this region before entering or leaving the city. It was thanks to this that her grandfather’s business was able to become so successful.

When I asked Ms. Tsai about the parts of her home that she was most proud of, she immediately pointed to the tiles on the floor of the lobby, which were incorporated with mosaics placed in a green floral pattern. The tiles were also the first things I noticed when entering the space. Ms. Tsai explained to me that the tiles were the pride and joy of her grandfather and that it was one of the first things that my grandfather installed when he began constructing the house and has earned many compliments throughout the years for it.

After we concluded the initial interview, Ms. Tsai offered to give me a tour of the remainder house, which consisted of the storage area for medicine on the ground floor, and the processing area for Chinese medicine on the second floor, which is mixed with the living quarters that Ms. Tsai and her family grew up in on the remainder floors. The balcony on the third floor was where they dried the herbs used for the medicine that they sell, and the fourth floor, which was the newest addition to their home, is now occupied by her brother’s family.



Fig. 7.111 The pharmacy owned by Ms. Tsai and her family, which also serves as their family home. The building to the right of their house has been demolished, but some parts of its walls are still attached to the pharmacy. The metal guards embedded in the balconies makes the building appear very prominent on their street. Ms. Tsai told me that the house has gone through many modifications; the door and windows on the first floor have been completely replaced at one point, and the metal decking addition on the fourth floor was also added later.

It was a pleasant surprise to find that the residents of Tainan are very willing to speak about their own homes, many would even offer me more information about their family or city's history in addition to talking about their house, or point me to other residents of their neighborhood upon finding out my purpose of research. They were welcoming and open about their pasts and spoke with great enthusiasm about the city that they live in. Not only do they feel proud of being a part of the city, they want their stories to be heard loud and clear.



Fig. 7.112 The floral mosaic patterns that Ms. Tsai and her family are still very proud of to this day. They were installed when their grandfather first constructed their family home.

Story of Survival

The story of this home was woven together from a rather unexpected perspective yet still nevertheless told of the linkage that residents share with their community and city. It shows how the home can become a medium for creating personal memories but also strengthen the bonds shared between members of the community, helping them prosper as they each find ways to build and shape their careers.

I was introduced to Ms. Chen by one of the other interviewees in my research. She and her family owned a Minnan Style house on one of the original streets of Tainan, which is attached to a few other residential houses from the same era, although the facade and interior of each of these houses have been modified based on the history and needs of each family,

“To be able to own this house was a matter of survival,” Mr. Chen told me. “It is something completely different from what you would experience in today’s society. To survive and build a family back in my time was a test of your knowledge, abilities, and most importantly, your connections with everyone within this city.”

To Mr. Chen, the house is a testament to his life as a young businessman, and it captured the challenges that he and his family had overcome. Though they were not the original owners of the house, their family has nevertheless called the house their home for more than 50 years and started a paint shop and machine shop in their home. “Conducting a business was not only about how much money you can make, thanks to my house and my business, I have gotten to know my neighbors so well and we help each other. Like many people within this neighborhood... the woman who sells rice at the end of the alleyway, for example, or the man who makes glasses across the streets, I made friends with them and we help each other when we encounter trouble... it is precisely because we share this bond with each other in the community that we can pull each other up and help everyone succeed in their own conducts.” Today, Mr Hsu is a successful businessman within the area, but has not forgotten how this neighborhood has helped his growth.

As a child, Ms. Hsu also remembers her father’s struggles too, as their family lived together alongside workers and watched both their house and her father’s business grow. As an enthusiast of the history of Tainan herself, Ms. Chen also shared her knowledge of the city with me, including the formation of their own neighborhood and street since the Qing dynasty. She as we parted, she pointed me to many other historians and resources around the city. Her enthusiasm as she pointed out where her ancestors used to live and which houses have become heritage sites showed that she truly cares about Tainan. Like her father, she was eager to carry on the story of Tainan and share it with those who are willing to listen.

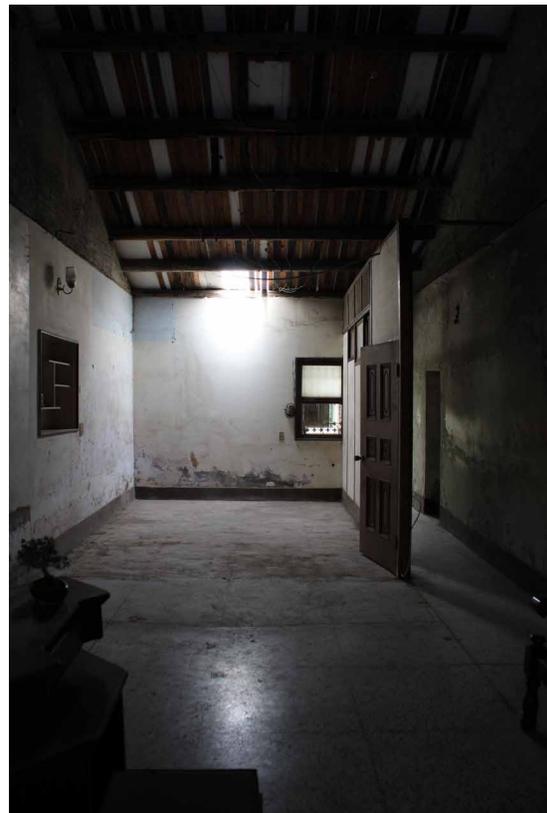
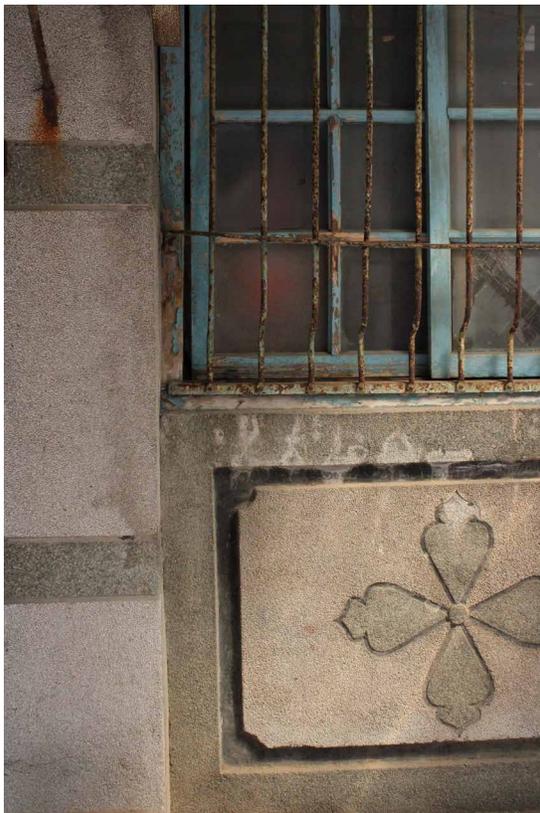


Fig. 7.113(top), 7.114 (bottom left), and 7.115 (bottom right) are the interior and exterior shots of Ms. Chen's family home. The original Minnan dwelling has been split into three households which took on separate modifications in different eras. In figure 7.114, the original roof structure of the Minnan home can still be seen even though the exterior structure of the home has been replaced with red corrugated metal decking.

The Bonsai Tree

One of the neighbors joined us during my tour with Ms. Chen of her family home. The neighbor presented Ms. Chen with a bonsai tree as a gift as it had come up in a previous conversation.

This friendly gesture between the two drew my attention. Not only does it show how comfortable the residents are in their interactions with each other, but the symbolism behind the potted plant also piqued my interest. The bonsai tree is organic by nature, but through years of pruning and care by its owner the form of the small plant can be sculpted into an object of beauty. In Zen philosophy, caring for bonsai is seen as a spiritual exercise, a living symbol of the soul of the person who has taken care of it. As the owner of the tree becomes involved with its growth, they are channeling more and more of their own energy—and even a portion of their soul—into the bonsai. I could not help but think that such an act is rather similar to the generational homes that I have been visiting thus far. As a building is cared for by each of its owners, it slowly begins to develop a spirit similar to theirs. By living within these homes and modifying them, families are channeling their own physical and spiritual energy into their dwelling.



Fig. 7.116 A shaky snapshot of the bonsai tree, gifted to Ms. Chen by her neighbor. I was able to snatch this photograph before the tree was taken by Ms. Chen.

Sentiments of the Ruins

During my travel, I had the opportunity to visit some abandoned ruins of residential homes. Though the structure for some of these homes have long since given way, some of the objects left behind by their previous owners still remained. It was fascinating to see how the human presence embedded within these objects and spaces were so powerful that they continued to tell the stories of their families even after the residents have long disappeared. Figures 6.118 and 6.119 are a set of Minnan style ruins surrounded by high-rises and more modern buildings on all four sides, it was as though these homes were forgotten by the city. Thankfully, one of the residents who lives in the surrounding area has informed me that a preservation project has been initiated in order to maintain this group of historical structures. Some of the construction can already be seen at the bottom left corner of Figure 6.118.



Fig. 7.117 Ruins of a contemporary home.



Fig. 7.118 a set of Minnan style ruins surrounded by high-rises and more modern buildings on all four side. Thankfully, one of the residents who lives in the surrounding area has informed me that a preservation project has been initiated.



Fig. 7.119 zoomed-in photo of the previous ruins. One can see the terracotta material and wooden structure of the roof in this photo



Fig. 7.120 On one of the Minnan-style roofs, there was a metal crest, symbolizing the Qing dynasty when this house was likely constructed. It was difficult to tell much about its surroundings.



izing that this family was wealthy as metalwork was very expensive during the
ore about the context of this home as generic apartments have now taken over
undings.

I discovered another abandoned home hidden in a quiet alleyway far from the crowded main streets. Looking at its exterior, the house appeared similar to its neighbors, but once inside the living spaces revealed that it has so much more character than what meets the eye. The house included many ornamental elements which are common from the last century—ceramic tiles, terrazzo flooring, etc.—but it also contained many custom touches that the owner implemented themselves. For example, the walls of the rooms are hand-painted in different colors using the technique of paint-splashing, and each room has a lamp that is unique from the rest of the house.

On top of the various ornaments and decorations that the owners have selected for their home, they also left behind many mementos that would have been treasured. Although the residents are no longer present to tell their tales, the house still serves as documentation of their presence within the space. Items left over by the previous owner include some award certificates for an abacus competition, a box of handmade paper stars, and most notably a wedding photo (presumably of the resident) tucked inside a closet. While there are many contributors to the disappearance of these homes, such as economic factors, safety, or erosion, and while society will ultimately continue to progress forward in the search for more profitable and efficient ways of living, these memories of the home that have survived through multiple generations should be acknowledged and remembered as part of Tainan's identity. I believe that my job as an observer is to document and preserve the knowledge, experience, and emotions of these homes so that even if their architecture may disappear in the future, we will still be able to retain the memories that these spaces once held.



Fig. 7.121 A box of toys and handmade paper stars hidden in the rubbles of this abandoned house.



Fig. 7.122 A wedding photo tucked away in one of the closets of the abandoned home.

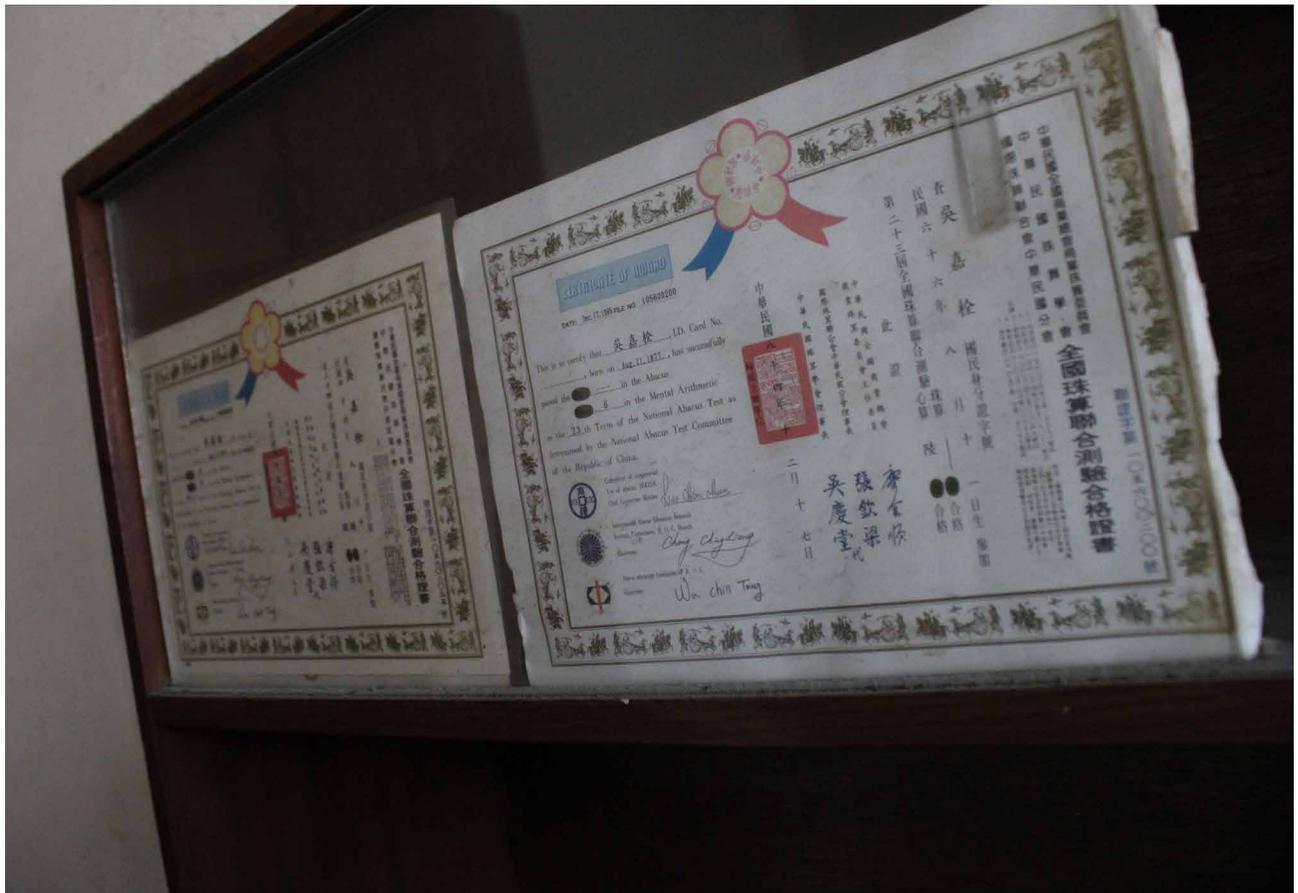


Fig.7.123 Certificates from an abacus competition left behind by the previous residents.



Fig. 7.124 (left) - 7.125 (right) A roadside home that was abandoned with one of its walls missing, allowing one to see the history of the house clearly. One can see a clear distinction of the original structure (the bathroom space judging from the cupboards and tiles), and the concrete structure added later.



*s exterior walls missing. Much of the house is actually left intact, allowing passerby
inal masonry structure on the left side of the home (which was likely a kitchen the
ete walls on the right side of the home which was likely added on later.*

“There is a strange melancholy in an abandoned home or a demolished apartment house that reveals traces and scars of intimate lives to the public gaze on its crumbling walls.”

- Juhani Pallasmaa: Identity, Intimacy And Domicile

Diaspora

There is a piece of the story that I have neglected to tell until this point. After speaking with the residents of Tainan and seeing the passion that they held for this city, I began to contemplate my own perception of Tainan up to this point. Although I reminisce about Tainan now, the truth is, I used to hold a much different view of my hometown growing up.

My family emigrated to the United States when I was in grade school, where the culture taught us much more about forgetting than staying true to your origins. Looking back, the discrimination that I faced as a child living in the US also contributed to my rejection of my birthplace. For a period of time, I identified as an American more than I did as Taiwanese. Sunshine, Hollywood, the American Dream, these all seemed much more exciting to others than a small unremarkable city located on a distant island.

I came to see my hometown as an insignificant speck of dust in the vast world that we live in. During my education, I tried to visit and live in as many countries as possible in order to broaden my horizons, but also to escape from my past. My travels have taken me across parts of Asia, North America, and Europe, as I tried to find my sense of belonging in one of these places. Yet, out of all of the places that I considered living, Tainan was not one of them. "Where are you from?" I'm from California, USA. "Can you tell us a story about your past?" I'd bring up stories of Munich or Shanghai rather than the stories of my hometown. At the time, it seemed shameful to bring up my past, was there a need to bring up a city that was so insignificant? I had forgotten, or rather was taught to forget, the colorful streets and the lively people that once brought me so much excitement. I had forgotten the quirky alleyways, the warm smile of the people who have raised me, and the city that has made me who I am. Although I have traveled so much and seen so many people, and learned from so many cultures, at some point I seemed to have forgotten who I was to begin with. I felt lost for a long time, I cannot remember who I wanted to be or where I belonged, nor was I able to fit into the new places where I tried to call home. I rejected my birthplace for so long that when I finally decided to face it was too late. People changed, and my home has changed so drastically within the few years that I had been gone. The charismatic alleyways and houses that used to hold so many memories have now been replaced by unfamiliar buildings and strangers.

It was only then that I realized how empty the city felt without the dwellings that I had considered insignificant for so long. I often reminisced about my childhood memories of Tainan, but I never really understood what it means to be a part of the city. The more I learned about my hometown through my own journey, the more I realized how distant I became from the community that I grew up in. I was glad that I had the opportunity to come to this realization. After speaking with the residents of this city and rediscovering it for myself, I was able to

appreciate the city for what it currently is as a place of belonging. Although much has already been lost, there is still time to preserve the memory of these shared homes.

The sense of longing for a place and one's feeling of belonging has been discussed in many literary and philosophical works to this point. Bell Hooks in her book *Belonging: A Culture of Place*⁵¹ talks about her journey back to Kentucky after years of traveling, and Janet Heyneman in her *Nostalgia for the Present*⁶² shared her thoughts about living in San Francisco but reminiscing about her life back in Kyoto. It was not until that flashback of the alleyway that I again remember the place where I grew up. It was as if the city was calling to me, to come back, to find myself again.

Now is the time that I am recalling a distant past of mine and reliving it after so many years, only this search for my identity is not only about myself, it is also the identity of Tainan's residents who love it for what it is. This thesis is dedicated to all the individuals, all the homes, and all the memories that may have been deemed insignificant. So much of culture is passed on through retellings of the story over and over again. This act of oral passage ensures that the material is retained within a person's memory and eventually etched into their identity. The stories become a part of the individual, so that they don't forget who they are for decades to come.

I tell my story so that I don't forget, and I tell the story of Tainan so that the world doesn't forget.

Epilogue

The story of Tainan is continuously evolving, shaped by the progression of time, memories, and the people who call it home.

Through my interactions with the residents, it became evident that the love and respect the locals hold for Tainan is what has encouraged them to remain here for decades, continuously preserving and reshaping their living environment so that future generations can feel a sense of belonging in the city. With the inhabitants' efforts, the city also becomes a vessel for collective and individual memory as it documents every action that residents take through its architecture. As I traveled across Tainan, I was also able to re-experience my childhood memories at a much deeper level. The more time I spent exploring the eccentric neighborhoods and streets, the more I felt as though a thread was pulling me back toward my origin in this city. With each step I took, each corner I turned, the fragmented recollections of my hometown were woven closer together, until the tapestry that made up the city finally revealed to me through each community, each home, each ornament, and each person.

Now that we approach the end of this story, a final question remains: As the threat of mass urban development looms over Tainan, as high-rises and apartment complexes continue to overtake urban spaces where traditional neighborhoods once stood, how can the generational homes of Tainan compete with more advanced architecture as urban population and living standards continue to rise?

There is no doubt that the city will continue to transform in the future as the criteria for living change. However, I strongly believe that Tainan will be able to adapt to such challenges and maintain its cultural identity in the process. The multi-generational homes of the city that have survived for decades, even centuries, serve as a testament to how neighborhoods can transform and reevaluate their identity under new circumstances. Tainan makes for a unique metropolitan environment not only because of its complex past but also because the residents hold active control over the creation of their homes.

The city serves as an example of how the placemaking process conducted by communities can make for a more engaging model of living, in which urban fabric and the individual resonate with each other on all layers, creating a symbiotic system that caters to both the collective and individual. Residents of Tainan have demonstrated their resiliency towards change and willingness to adapt to new challenges as they work to create, modify, and rebuild their homes in each era. In addition, the culture of generational living and the passing down of homes to younger generations make for a sustainable and affordable model of living without taking away the essence of a community, demonstrating how the natural growth of a community can compete with artificial interventions and gentrification. The people of Tainan hold a strong sense of pride in their

hometown and share a joint understanding of what it means to preserve their heritage. This is why I have chosen not to create any interventions through external design, instead opting to document the changes that the city has experienced, leaving Tainan's fate to its residents as it engages in the next phase of its metamorphosis.

My thesis writing concludes with these pages, but my story with Tainan does not end here. As I approach the end of this research, the words from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, from Marco Polo's journey across the world still linger in my mind.

"Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."

Like Marco Polo in this novel, even though he has long since left his home to travel the world, a piece of Venice will always stay with him and with each story he tells - Every time I describe a city, I am saying something about Tainan. Though my physical presence is no longer in my hometown, it will always remain a part of me, a part of my identity. The same holds for every resident who has ever called the city their home; even if residents move away from Tainan at some point in their lifetime, their memories of the city will still stay with them as a critical part of their identity. I tell the story of Tainan so that the value of the city may be known to the World, and as I travel through different continents, and different cities, a piece of Tainan will always follow me as I continue to move forward with my own story.

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