



新聞稿
TO NEWS EDITOR
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Total: 3 pages
AUGUST 2, 1995

WORLD'S LEADING ACADEMICS CONVENE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON CHINESE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

The rich Chinese architectural heritage will come under scrutiny from modern perspectives by over 50 leading experts from around the world gathering at the first truly international conference of its kind at the Chinese University of Hong Kong next week.

Taking place from August 7 - 10, the conference will discuss topics ranging from Chinese culture and architecture, the architectural form of stupa and pagoda, the application of fung shui in traditional villages to the preservation of monuments.

"The Chinese are avid builders, and we can trace the Chinese architectural history back to 5000 B.C," said Dr. Ho Puay-peng, of the University's Department of Architecture. "The legacy of Chinese architecture is rich too, and can be felt in many spheres – from the Japanese Zen temples to Chinese gardens around the world."

"Recent developments in China have, however, often been pursued with such haste that many excellent buildings have been torn down without due evaluation of its merit or the possibilities of preservation," he added.

"It is therefore very timely for us to have an international meeting to take stocks of the past achievements of architectural research and exchange ideas about future directions," he said.

Sponsored by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust and the Government's Architectural Services Department, the conference will focus on traditional, religious, vernacular and folk architecture – including temples, ancestral shrines, study studios and humble dwellings. Panels on vernacular architecture and preservation will scrutinise the versatile and constantly-evolving nature of vernacular architecture.

Scholars will be looking at a wide spectrum of issues – form and decoration, the materials chosen and the manner in which buildings were arranged on the land and assembled into villages. These buildings will also be studied as expressions of social patterns, religious beliefs, as well as the aspirations of a people; for the Chinese seek not only a harmonious relationship with nature, but aspire to harness the forces of nature to advance their own prosperity, said Dr. Ho.

In general, the conference aims to consolidate current research findings and seek ways forward. "By analyzing how past masters of inspirational buildings have dealt with problems of function, meaning, structure and site, we hope to develop more culturally based and dynamic architecture for the modern world," he added.

Presentations on the first day of the conference will deal with cultural forces, sacred structures and Buddhist architecture, culminating with the opening of "The Living Building" exhibition at the Antiquities and Monuments Office on Nathan Road that evening. The exhibition, lasting for 3 months from Aug 8 to Nov 19, features interesting photographs and drawings of vernacular Chinese architecture taken by Chinese University's architecture students during field trips to southern China.

Under the generous financial support of Mr. Anthony Ng, these photographs and drawings have also been compiled by D. Ho Puay-peng into a book entitled "Living Building", which is now on sale at leading book stores. At \$100 each, the proceeds will go towards funding field trips by Chinese University's architecture students.

Subsequent sessions of the conference will highlight vernacular buildings, a visit to Kam Tin in the New Territories, forms and symbols of architecture, preservation, the modern practice of architecture, as well as the use of computers in architectural research and issues in the methodology of research.

Pre-registration is required for participation in the conference. For further information, please contact the Chinese University's Department of Architecture at 2609-6517.

In conjunction with the "Living Building" exhibition, the Antiquities and Monuments Office is organizing two public talks by experts attending the international conference.

The first starts from 4:30 p.m. on August 9. Mr. Wang Qijun, of the Architectural Press of China, will talk about the design of opera stages in the Chinese province of Jiangxi, while Professor Hsu Min-fu, head of architecture department of Taiwan's Cheng Kung University will speak on the preservation of monuments in Tainan.

On August 11 from 4:30 p.m., Professor Ronald Knapp, the head of geography department of the New York State University will talk about China's Folk Architecture. The talks will be held at the Antiquities and Monuments Office at 136 Nathan Road. Admission is free. For further information, please ring 2721-2326.

Note to Editors: Photos distributed via GIS press boxes

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