FIVE

Huiguan as Space

Native-place lodges often consisted of several sites or compounds. The heart of every lodge was the main compound. Although these compounds were not necessarily the most spacious of huiguan holdings (charitable graveyards were often larger), they were, invariably, the centerpiece and social focus of huiguan properties. Some main compounds were much larger and more elaborate than others, but almost all had some form of public area, whether meeting hall or altar, in addition to the residential quarters. Many lodges also managed subsidiary compounds in addition to the main compound. These may have stood immediately adjacent to the main compound or have been located separately in another lane or in another area of the city altogether. The smallest lodge compounds were simple and spartan, consisting of only plain lodging rooms arranged around a single courtyard or two. Such compounds may have offered little beyond meager living quarters and a small altar. In contrast, more elaborate main compounds occupied large portions of city blocks, boasted courtyard after expansive courtyard, and provided a variety of facilities from meeting halls to opera stages (all described in more detail below).

The spaciousness of a compound area depended on a number of factors, including the relative wealth of the lodge to which it belonged. To a certain degree, the scope and architectural features of compounds reflected the administrative level of the region represented by the huiguan. Provincial-level huiguan were more likely to boast opera stages and gardens, whereas district-level huiguan tended to have only living quarters, meeting areas, and altars. There were innumerable exceptions to this pattern, and it cannot be taken as strict principle, but there was a clear general tendency for huiguan representing relatively larger administrative areas to have more ceremonial and social facilities.

Bryna Goodman has suggested that the architectural features of native-place lodges in Shanghai were modeled on or, perhaps more to the point, symbolically reflected the style of government office compounds (*yamen* 衙門).[1] Such a style of represented authority provides a telling contrast with Beijing scholar-official huiguan, which were conspicuously not constructed in the style of *yamen*. To begin with, any attempt to emulate *yamen* architecturally would have been thwarted by the inability of huiguan planners to guarantee the necessary south-to-north layout that marked *yamen* and other official buildings as seats of power.[2] The directional coordinates of lodge layouts could only conform to the characteristics of the irregular-shaped plots of land they occupied within the haphazard jumble of Outer City streets and oddly shaped property units. Some huiguan units faced north; others faced east or west, or any of the other possibilities.

Ordinational coordinates aside, the adoption by scholar-official huiguan of the residential walled courtyard (*siheyuan* 四合院) style of architecture characteristic of Beijing represented an even more telling difference between *yamen* and the lodges. The *siheyuan* style was primarily a residential style. Indeed, a great number of huiguan

1. Goodman, *Native Place*, 18–21.

2. It might seem that we could ignore the directional coordinates, but the highly developed directional awareness of Beijing residents is well known even within China. There must be nowhere in the world where the term "receiving directions" can more appropriately be employed. To this day, it is not unusual even within buildings to be given instructions such as "walk down this hall and turn north"!

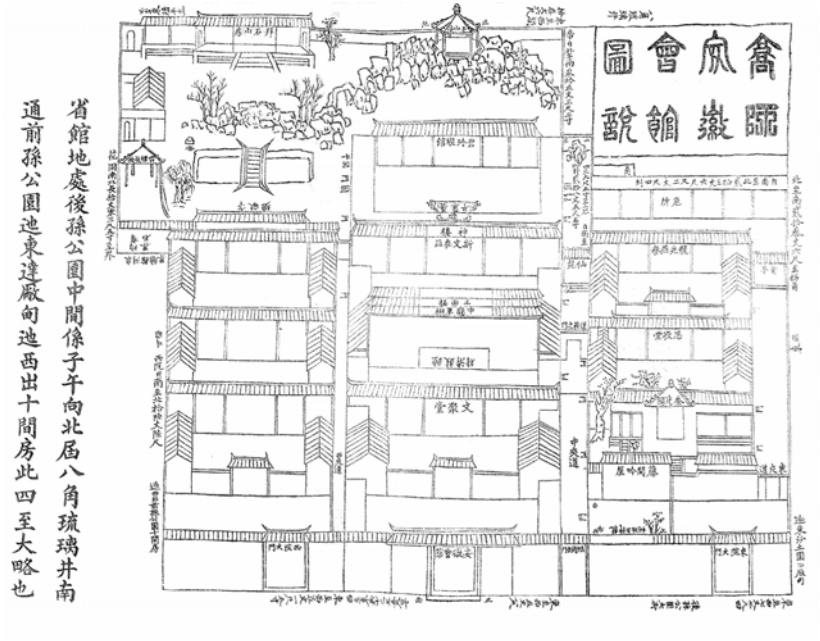

Fig. 5.1 The Anhui huiguan on Hou Sun gongyuan.

began as the residences of important officials and other prominent men before being reconstructed to serve as lodges. Some cases of particular interest include the (Guangdong) Guangzhou huiguan, which occupied the former site of the northern Mustard Seed Garden compound of famed Ming-period playwright and author Li Yu 李漁 (1611–80?), and the (Guangdong) Dongguan huiguan 東莞會館, which was situated within the former residence of the Ming loyalist general Zhang Jiayu 張家玉 (1615–47). The spacious residential compound of the late Ming–early Qing official and author Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1592–1676) was divided to form the compounds of the (Jiangsu) Xijin huiguan 錫金會館, the (Fujian) Quanjun huiguan 泉郡會館, the (Zhejiang) Taizhou huiguan 台州會館, and the Anhui huiguan 安徽會館 (see Fig. 5.1). Indeed, the lanes on which these lodges were located are still called Qian Sun gongyuan (前孫公園) and Hou Sun gongyuan (後孫公園), in reference to Sun's earlier residence.

Fig. 5.2 Courtyard of a Beijing native-place lodge (SOURCE: this sketch was drawn for the author by He Zhengqiang, who grew up in the (Guangdong) Zhaoqing huiguan on Li Tiegui xiejie).

Architecturally speaking, huiguan sites most resembled the elite residential compounds belonging to the Manchu aristocracy, officials, or other gentry. This style was expressed in, among other features, the low (one-story) style of most buildings, the unfolding procession of semi-discrete courtyards arranged within the compound, the expansiveness of contained open areas, and the numerous trees and internal gardens (see Fig. 5.2). The significance of this style should not be underestimated. If the *yamen* humbled the visitor and bespoke authority, the *siheyuan* style welcomed the sojourner with a more personable promise of some privacy from the outside world and ordered social harmony within. In an insightful analysis of the significance of this architectural style, Yingjin Zhang comments, "The [*siheyuan*] architectural style seems to predispose residents to close human connections." Zhang tellingly compares

the *siheyuan* style, not with *yamen*, but with the buildings of the village.[3] The architecture of huiguan expressed the prominent social status of the scholar-officials they served, but in a way that offered less the authority of power than the bonds of community.

Compound Features

From the street, no particular architectural grandeur identified huiguan, but each compound was marked by a large wooden placard inscribed with the name of the lodge. These placards were customarily carved in the calligraphy of noted compatriots and were occasionally accompanied by eulogistic poetic couplets hung on either side of the main gate. Some huiguan entrances were protected with iron gates (*zha lan* 柵欄), which sealed off the compound from the disorder of the streets when closed at night. Even during the day, little inside the compound would have been visible from the street, since large spirit screens built just within the front entrances kept out stray gazes and bad *fengshui*. Once beyond the spirit screen, and the watchful eyes and possible inquisition of the lodge caretaker (*kanguan* 看館 or *zhangban* 長班), a visitor would have found the compound divided into numerous courtyards. Although the compound would have been similar to a typical residential layout, a number of architectural features specifically characteristic of huiguan would also have been present.

Among the unique features were large meeting halls; banqueting facilities, courtyards lined with small cubicle-like rooms designed to put up one person or at most two, multitiered opera stages with two-story audience areas, and ceremonial space designed around altars. Many huiguan compounds also boasted gardens, kitchens, and even small libraries. Basic design features varied little over the centuries. Unlike Shanghai and Nanjing, where some native-place associations—a Republican-period incarnation of native-place lodges—were established in "modern" Western-style buildings, no similar trend was evident in Beijing (see Fig. 5.3).[4]

3. Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film*, 87–88.
4. For Shanghai, see Goodman, *Native Place*, 278–81; for Nanjing, see Fig. 5.3.

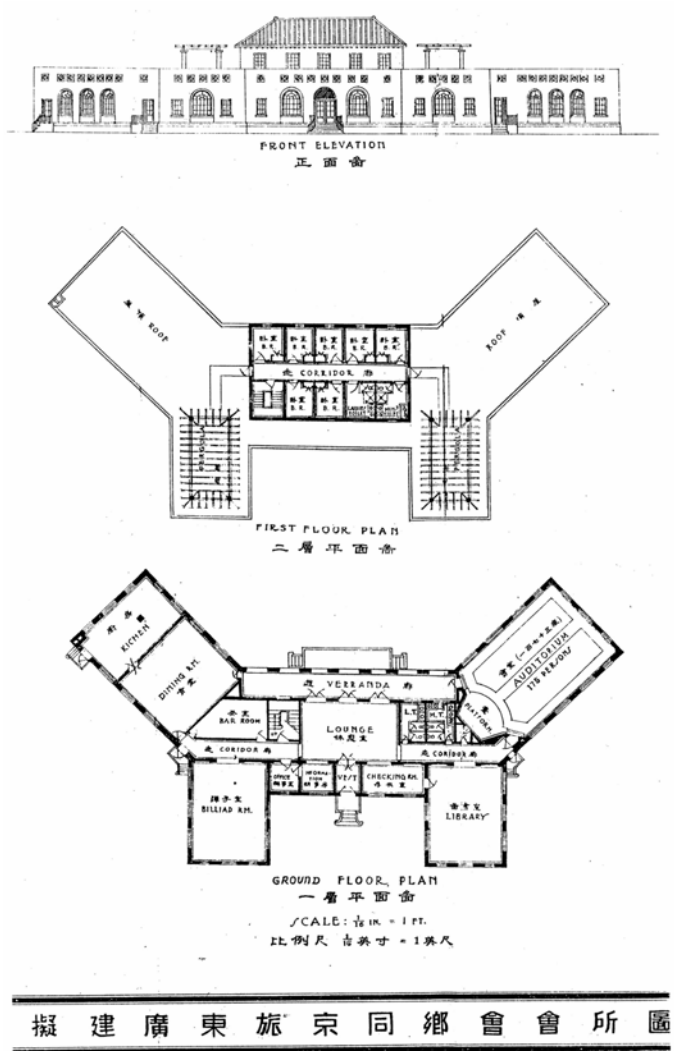

Fig. 5.3 Diagram of the Guangdong Native-Place Association proposed for Nanjing (late Republican period) (SOURCE: diagram from *Guangdong lüjing tongxiang hui gongzuo gaikuang*, 1930).

Note how greatly this design differs from the courtyard style adopted by the native-place lodges of Beijing. Rooms for temporary lodging are still provided on the second floor, although such features as the bar, billiard room, check room, and even the second floor itself were alien to Beijing huiguan. The western style of the building and even the style of the diagram (complete with English as well as Chinese labels) connote a "modern" sensibility, and may also reflect the style of Nanjing's government buildings.

A large meeting hall, typically the most prominent and majestic of the buildings, served as the architectural focus of most huiguan. The hall provided compatriots with a space for meetings to discuss matters of concern to the lodge or to the sojourning community in the capital and events back home. During examination times, the hall also doubled as study space for last-minute preparation by the candidates. From the pillars supporting the hall were hung couplets extolling the superior qualities of the region represented. Wooden placards inscribed with the names of the locality's graduates of the imperial examinations, permanent reminders of the accomplishments of the men from that region, were displayed along the hall's roof beams. The meeting hall was generally located near the main entrance to the compound. It presented to visitors both a practical gathering space and symbolic confirmation of the accomplishments of compatriots over time. The size and placement of the hall also served to separate the more public area of the compound from the residential area to its rear, which was filled with smaller courtyards and guest rooms.

The lion's share of space within lodge compounds was set aside for temporary lodgers with dormitory-style rooms typically set around any number of small courtyards. The rooms were utilitarian and designed along relatively egalitarian lines; there were no first- or second-class rooms, and none was extravagantly larger than the others. As far as residential form was concerned, within the huiguan all compatriots were brothers.

Over the next few pages, I briefly reconstruct living conditions inside huiguan. This is a worthwhile exercise for many reasons. Knowledge of the living arrangements of scholars and officials in the capital adds to our understanding of Beijing's social and cultural life. As I discuss below, the spatial arrangement of the lodges provides insight into the roles they played (and did not play) as transmitters and replicaters of cultural practices and habits. Perhaps even more important, the interior spaces of huiguan compounds, including the residential areas, became the sites of meetings and actions with political overtones in later years. In the following chapters, I show that the public/private nature of these spaces was an important factor shaping the relationship between the lodges and the state.

Lodgers were put up one or two to a room, depending on circumstance and demand. Huiguan regulations often strictly prescribed the number of lodgers to be boarded in each room. The Nanchang huiguan rules are typical: "As for huiguan rooms, those that are small [shall accommodate] one person per room, wide and spacious rooms [shall accommodate] two persons acquainted with each other."[5] Some huiguan stipulated that lodgers were expected to live one to a room except during examination periods, when all boarders were to double up. The (Fujian) Zhangzhou huiguan 漳州會館 insisted that two to a room was the norm, although the rules did allow a "departure from principle" (*tongrong* 通融) and individual occupation of rooms at times of low demand.

Huiguan beds consisted of thin padded-cotton mattresses atop wooden bedsteads. *Kang*, the traditional heated bed of Beijing and other north China residences, typically depended on coals from the kitchen for heat, and in huiguan the rooms for lodgers far outnumbered kitchens and stoves. Sharing a room presumably would, in some cases, have meant sharing a bed. But the regulations of the (Hunan) Shanhua huiguan 善化會館 make clear that sharing a bed was not always expected; they dictate that larger rooms be furnished with two cots (*ta* 榻), one per lodger.[6]

According to the rules of most huiguan, lodgers were not supposed to occupy more than one room.[7] Yet some evidence suggests that, in practice, lodges may have been somewhat flexible on this point. If demand was low, a well-connected guest, or one generous with his tips to the caretaker, might have been able to arrange to occupy several rooms. In some lodges, occupying several rooms might even have been standard practice, at least at times when the examinations were not being held or demand for huiguan space was low. The regulations of the (Anhui) Shexian huiguan provide clear

5. *Nanchang xian zhi* (1870), 2.9. The regulations of the Shanhua huiguan similarly mandated one lodger per small room and two per large room. They further stipulated that the person who arrived first was forbidden from arbitrarily occupying more than his share of the space and relegating the later-arriving tenant to the fringes of their shared room; see *Shanhua guan zhi* (1888), *juan* 1, "Huiguan guiyue," 7.

6. *Shanhua guan zhi* (1888), *juan* 1, "Huiguan guiyue," 3.

7. See, e.g., *Minzhong huiguan zhi*, "Zhangzhou huiguan."

evidence that "suites" of two or three rooms were rented out as a set to some lodgers. The huiguan rules of 1805 indicate that there were two sets of housing principles. The first article dictated the rooming policy for examination periods and stated that no individual was to occupy more than one room. However, another article declares that during those years in which no examinations were held, expectant officials, those coming for an imperial audience, and metropolitan officials were permitted to stay in the lodge, and the rent for these lodgers was to be calculated according to the number of *jian* 間 per *fang* 房.[8]

What is meant by this distinction between *jian* and *fang* (which are used synonymously in the modern vernacular to indicate a room)? The map of the (Guangdong) Nanhai huiguan makes the answer readily apparent (see Fig. 5.4). Rooms were divided into sets (*fang*) of two or three rooms (*jian*). A *fang* typically represented one side of an interior courtyard. In practice, some lodgers were allowed to occupy a whole *fang* instead of a single *jian*. The layout of the Shexian huiguan similarly depicts sets of rooms (here labeled *wu*) arranged around courtyards (see Fig. 5.5). Indeed, the number of *jian* per *wu* is noted but not drawn on the diagram; this may reflect a tendency to think of these sets of rooms as single units.

We can point to several examples of lodgers allowed to occupy more than one room. Tan Sitong, the philosopher, reformer, and martyr of the Hundred Days Reforms, occupied three rooms in the (Hunan) Liuyang huiguan 瀏陽會館 in the 1890s. Tan's father had been a leader in the effort to establish the huiguan in 1872, and at one point in 1874–75 Tan's entire family had resided on the premises. Tan dubbed his quarters the Verdant Studio (Mang cang cang zhai 莽蒼蒼齋), and that name was later bestowed on his poetry collection.[9] Interestingly, perhaps the most important reformer of that time, Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1855–1927), also dubbed his quarters

8. *Shexian huiguan lu*, "Xinji," 12–13.

9. Tong Xun, "Liuyang huiguan Mang cang cang zhai." This informative article includes a diagram of the Liuyang huiguan indicating the rooms occupied by Tan. Tan's collection of poetry, published the year before his execution, was entitled *Mangcangcang zhai shi*.

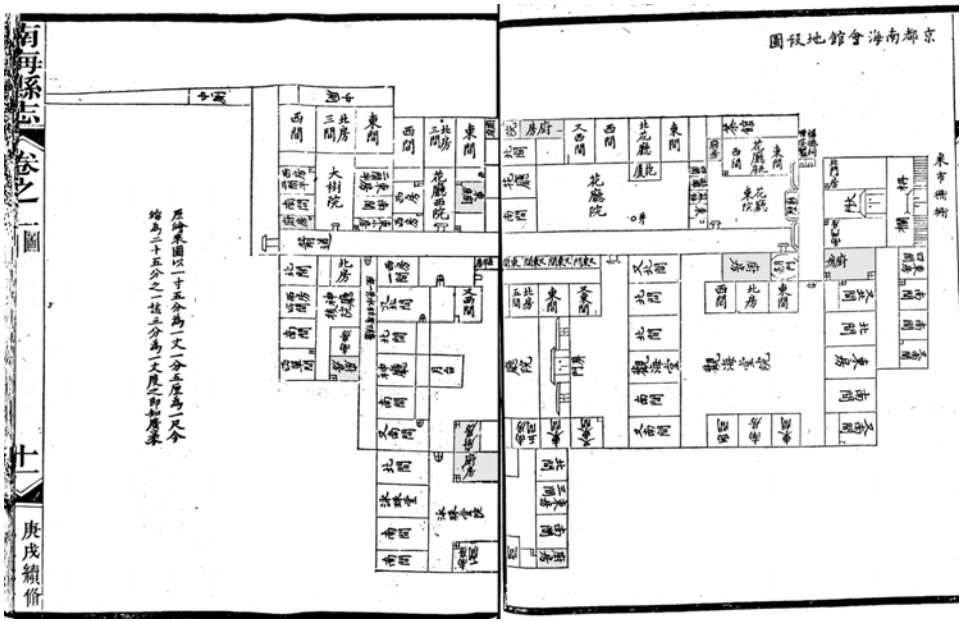

Fig. 5.4 Diagram of the (Guangdong) Nanhai huiguan on Mishi hutong (SOURCE: diagram from the *Nanhai xian zhi*, 1910).

Note the main entrance is on the upper right side. The diagram indicates that there used to be an iron gate in front of the entrance (which no longer exists). The site stands on the west side of the street and entrance is from the east. Upon entry into the compound, the first courtyard on one's right contained a small altar and a ceremonial burner for the burning of paper on which there was writing. Kitchens have been highlighted for emphasis.

in the (Guangdong) Nanhai huiguan 南海會館 with a literary name and later published a collection of his poetry under that name. Kang, too, appears to have occupied a set of rooms on one side of an interior courtyard in that compound, but I have not been able to verify this.[10]

During the Republican period, at least one lodger in the (Zhejiang) Shaoxing xianguan 紹興縣館 (known earlier as the Shan-Gui yiguan) certainly occupied multiple rooms. When Lu Xun first moved into the lodge, he was allotted only a single room, but years

10. Kang styled his quarters the Ship on the Wide Seas Studio (Han man fang 汗漫舫). His collected works of poetry were published as the *Han man fang shiji*. See *Beijing Lingnan wenwu zhi*, 51–54; and the informative article by Wei Jingzhao, "Nanhai huiguan chunqiu."

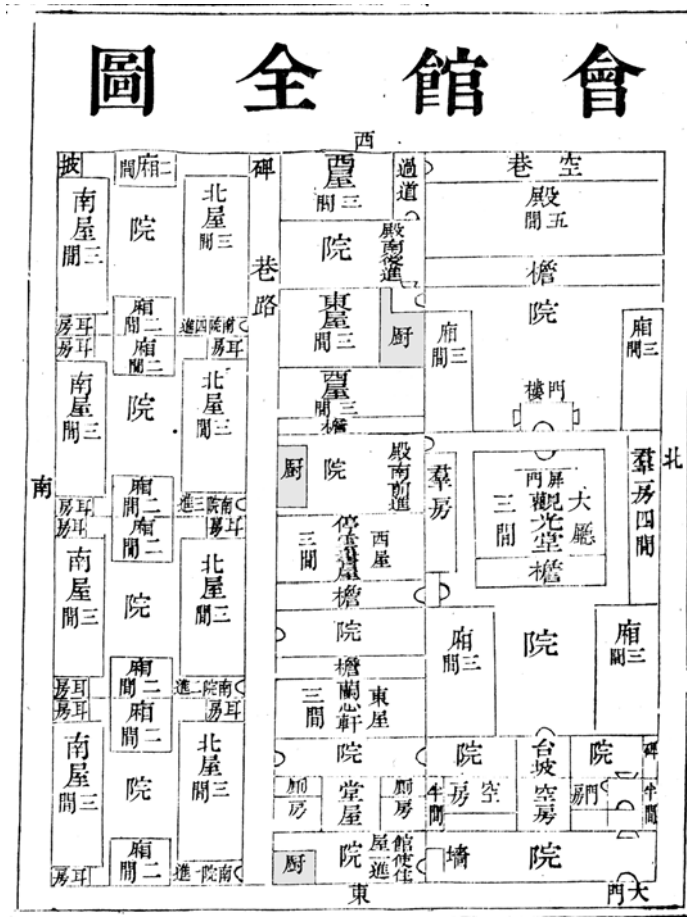

Fig. 5.5 The (Anhui) Shexian lodge on Xuanwumen dajie (SOURCE: diagram from the [*Chongxu*] *Shexian huiguan lu*, 1834).

Note the main gate is at the bottom right-hand corner. The lodge stood on the west side of the street; thus entrance was from the east. The meeting hall is in the right central part of the diagram. The lodge altar is in the top right-hand corner. Kitchens have been highlighted for emphasis.

later he moved to a set of rooms in a different part of the compound. In fact, as is discussed in the last chapter, Lu moved to new quarters twice. During the last several years of his stay, Lu occupied a set of rooms that formed one side of a private courtyard. Lu's brother, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), moved into one of the rooms for a period following his return from Japan, and he later described Lu's

accommodations in great detail. Indeed, so vividly did Zhou recreate the physical presence of Lu's quarters, and so rare is such a detailed description of the spatial arrangement of huiguan living quarters, that it is worth quoting Zhou's comments at length.

The Replaced Tree Studio consisted of a row of four rooms facing east. The front door was located in the center of the second room. The room to the south, and the two rooms to the north were attached. In the courtyard against the north wall was a small room with a cooking stove inside. It was intended to house a servant. On the east side of the courtyard, abutting the back wall of the lodge shrine and down a narrow alley was a northern-style lavatory, with a "squatting latrine." Because this small toilet stuck out in front, the window of the north room was blocked off from the sunlight and was therefore very dark. When Lu Xun lived there, he did not ordinarily use [the north room]; so he sealed off that door and used only the three southern rooms.

In the middle room was the door. Across from it against the wall stood a drawing table, in front of which stood a round eight-person table at which meals were taken. The table was an extremely old and beat-up thing that probably belonged to the lodge. The room to the south was where Lu Xun lived originally, but when I came to Beijing, he gave it to me and moved into the opposite room. All the rooms were very old-fashioned. The windows were Japanese style and were entirely papered over. There was no glass. In the summer, one could put in a strip of green coarse cloth [used in North China to screen in windows] to make a roll-up window. I found a small pane of glass and inserted it into the window frame myself, so I could see guests coming through the round moon gate [to our courtyard], but Lu Xun never even put green coarse cloth into the window in his room.

In the southwest corner of the southernmost room of the Replaced Tree Studio was a bed; in the southeast corner below the window stood a square desk with drawers; beside that to the north were placed two leather trunks covered with burlap. Against the northern wall stood a bookcase, although it did not hold books. On the top shelf were tea, matches, and various miscellaneous items including some copper cash, and on the bottom shelf were piled old and new newspapers. In front of the bookcase was a rattan lounge, and in front of the desk stood a rattan chair. In front of the bed against the wall were two square stools between which was squeezed a narrow tea table. All this was used for guests. When, between hosts and guests, there were more than four people, the bed was used. At the height of the summer when the

weather was hot, occasionally the chairs were moved outside beneath the eaves.[11]

In this passage Zhou referred to two other types of compound space that greatly marked the character of the lodges. These are kitchens and altars, both of which deserve brief consideration.

Space as Cultural Bulwark: Kitchens

In a fascinating article on the cuisines of China during the Yuan and Ming periods, F. W. Mote argued that huiguan played a significant role in the production and replication of regionally specific cultures during the Ming period and thereafter. Mote's article essentially presented huiguan as outposts of regional cuisine in "alien" territory and thus as institutions engaged in a process of regional cultural reproduction in urban centers throughout the empire:

> Characteristically, the huiguan in Beijing had a staff of employees from the home locality, including cooks. The Suzhou merchant or statesman residing temporarily at the Suzhou huiguan in Beijing, at any of the important centers along the Grand Canal or the Yangtze, or at other important locations, could expect to hear his Suzhou speech and to eat his fine Suzhou soup noodles and pastries for breakfast. Although this is mere conjecture, one might assume that the great expansion of the huiguan institution from mid-Ming times onward contributed much to establishing provincial cuisines in all the major cities.[12]

This is a vision to which I was favorably disposed when I began this study. However, I have found little evidence that huiguan kitchens were organized replicaters of regional culture—a point worth examining in further detail.

As Mote suggested, many of the most prominent huiguan did have large central kitchens, but did lodge kitchens employ compatriot chefs to produce regional food? Weng Tonghe recorded in his diary the dishes presented at several elaborate banquets held in various provincial huiguan, but although he briefly described some

11. Zhou Xiashou, *Lu Xun de gu jia*: first paragraph, 406–7; second paragraph, 412; third paragraph, 420.

12. Mote, "Yüan and Ming," 244.

of the more elaborate dishes, he did not mention, and it is not possible to infer with any certainty, whether these dishes were examples of regional cuisine.[13] In fact, repeated entries in his diary make clear that major banquets held in huiguan were prepared under the direction of chefs brought in and employed by the host. Huiguan facilities were booked because they were spacious and because guests could also be entertained with opera performances, but they were not noted as showcases for regional cuisines because the actual direction of the cooking was not left to the employees of the lodge. One example is a New Year's get-together thrown for government officials in 1888, which cost over 700 taels (the Board of Revenue contributed 300 taels, the Imperial Household Department 100 taels, the Head Office of the Customs and Octroi at the Chongwen Gate [Chongwen men shuiwu yamen 崇文門稅務衙門] 100 taels; each guest kicked in 2 taels) and which Weng characterized as lavish. It was held in the Anhui huiguan, but in his diary Weng noted that the head chef was the family chef of one Mr. Lao.[14] At other banquets, Weng often recorded the name of the chef employed to cook the meal, especially when he himself was the host. For example, for a banquet at the Anhui huiguan in 1893, Weng hired his own chef.[15] It seems clear that the major banquets thrown on huiguan premises did not serve the cuisine associated with the region the lodge represented. Instead, the chef hired by the host determined the style of food. But what about the daily fare served within huiguan for the lodgers in residence there? Might that have been prepared in regional cuisine style?

Part of Mote's contention is that all the cooks employed within a huiguan would have hailed from the region represented. One can easily imagine the advantages of hiring only compatriots for such jobs, but there is little evidence to support the notion that huiguan

13. Weng, for instance, describes a fish served at a dinner held at the (Guangdong) Guangzhou merchant huiguan, the Xiancheng huiguan, as "delicious beyond what one tastes in ordinary life," but whether it was cooked in Guangdong style is unknown.

14. Weng Tonghe, *Weng Tonghe riji* (GX 14.1.22), 1526. Mr. Lao was presumably Lao Kaichen, an official in the Board of Punishments, who managed other banquets hosted by Weng as well; see, e.g., ibid. (GX 14.10.08), 1563.

15. Ibid. (GX 19.9.26), 1843.

employees were fellow natives. Can we identify the places of origin of huiguan staff? Although huiguan regulations are quite specific about who qualified to be selected as an administrator, they say nothing about the qualifications required of huiguan employees. The absence of regulations about this may, indeed, reflect an open policy regarding the geographical origins of lodge workers. The only direct evidence on this point that I have come across is found in documents relating to a late nineteenth-century court case involving a cook employed by the (Guangdong) Xiangshan huiguan.[16] The case itself is briefly discussed in Chapter 3, but what is of interest to us here is that the depositions and other documents reveal that the cook was officially registered as a native of nearby Wuqing county (a rural county to the southeast of Beijing), not Xiangshan or any other county in Guangdong province.

This evidence, of course, is merely anecdotal. It is quite possible that the major huiguan kitchens did, in general, employ regional natives and did, in general, prepare regional fare, although, if true, the fact received remarkably little comment from contemporaries. The idea of huiguan as institutionalized bulwarks of regional cuisine is fundamentally challenged by another fact, however. This brings us back to Lu Xun's courtyard and his brother's description of a "small room there with a cooking stove inside." The majority of huiguan appear not to have operated central kitchens. Most scholar-gentry huiguan instead provided smaller kitchens, located at various spots around the residential area, for communal use by lodgers. They did not, however, offer any kind of prepared meal service. If the Suzhou traveler depicted by Mote wanted to enjoy his "fine Suzhou soup noodles and pastries" for breakfast, in most cases he or a servant would have had to prepare them. The 1770 regulations of the (Hebei) Hejian huiguan 河間會館 give specific instructions for the use of such kitchens, noting that each of the six kitchens within the compound was reserved for the use of lodgers in a specific set of rooms. Guests were forbidden to use the kitchens assigned to other areas; they were further forbidden to set up cooking stoves in their own rooms for fear of fire.[17] Although other huiguan regulations tend to

16. Number One Historical Archives of China, Xingbu, no. 01134.
17. [*Chongxiu*] *Hejian huiguan ji*, 38.

say less about the use of kitchens, it is evident from the maps of huiguan that many shared this feature of multiple kitchens provided for the individual use of lodgers (consider the eleven kitchens depicted in Fig. 5.4 and the three kitchens depicted in Fig. 5.5).

Huiguan also invariably established altars dedicated to the worship of regional deities of particular significance to scholars and officials. In many huiguan the altar was the second largest building in the compound. Generally speaking, altars were located toward the rear of the main compound. Like meeting halls, and unlike lodging rooms, which were constructed in traditional single-story (*pingfang* 平房) style with brick walls and angled tile roofs, huiguan altars were often built with columns supporting a multi-bracketed roof. At times of great demand for lodging space, there was considerable pressure to open meeting halls and altars to accommodate temporary boarders. Presumably, this did happen from time to time, even though many regulations explicitly forbid even short-term occupation of these public spaces by lodgers.[18] Indeed, the very existence of the regulations implies the occurrence of the proscribed behavior, yet clearly the space represented by altars was valued beyond its potential residential utility. Because the role played by altars in the replication of regional culture and construction of scholar-official identity was tied to the rituals conducted in them, they are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Huiguan Stages

The final category of space within the huiguan compound that deserves to be discussed was the area set aside for opera stages. One feature of provincial scholar-official huiguan that was not typical of lodges representing subprovincial regions is that scholar-official lodges representing whole provinces generally set aside a space for an opera stage. Not all provincial-level huiguan boasted stages, but among those with notable stages were the Anhui huiguan, the Hunan xinguan 湖南新館, the Jiangsu huiguan 江蘇會館, the (Guangdong) Yuedong huiguan, the (Yunnan) Zhao gong ci 趙公祠,

18. See, e.g., *Minzhong huiguan zhi*, "Fuzhou huiguan."

and the (Hunan and Hubei) Huguang huiguan 湖廣會館. Indeed, the Huguang huiguan has recently been refurbished and opened to the public as a Chinese opera museum, and has become one of the more popular venues for Beijing opera in the city.

Somewhat in contrast to the scholar-official lodge pattern, numerous merchant huiguan, including many representing subprovincial level regions, boasted stages. Among the merchant huiguan in Beijing with stages were the (Zhejiang, Shaoxing) Zhengyi ci 正乙祠, also known as the Yinhao huiguan 銀號會館, representing Zhejiang native bankers; the (Shanxi, Pingyao, and Jiexiu) Ping-Jie huiguan 平介會館, representing bankers and those involved in the pawn, dyestuffs, and silk trades; the (Shanxi) Taiping huiguan 太平會館, representing all trades and, as of the eighteenth century, scholars and officials as well; the (Fujian, Yanping, and Shaowu) Yan-Shao huiguan 延邵會館, representing paper merchants; the (Shanxi provincial) Hedong huiguan 河東會館, representing all tobacco and other merchants; and the (Shanxi, Pingyang prefecture) Pingyang huiguan 平陽會館, representing all merchants from there. Many of these stages still exist. There is evidence that the stage at the Pingyang huiguan may date to the seventeenth century, which would make it one of the oldest wooden theatrical stages in the world.[19]

The association of opera stages with provincial huiguan reflects the role of these lodges as banqueting facilities and social centers for the highest-ranking officials of the capital. The lodging of examination candidates was a less central function of these facilities, and some even forbade examination candidates and officials below a specified rank from using the premises (a point discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). In some sense, these sites might be thought of as a subcategory of the Beijing scholar-official lodge. Architecturally they tended to contain more public spaces, and the public spaces tended to be more elaborate, including larger gardens and meeting halls. The huiguan mentioned above served as frequent sites for large annual banquets hosted by the boards during the New Year's

19. See Li Chang, "Tantan Yangping huiguan juchang." As the title of this article suggests, there has been some confusion about whether this site was the Pingyang or Yangping huiguan. It was, in fact, the Pingyang huiguan.

season on behalf of the officials who worked in them. They also served as sites for elaborate personal parties featuring opera and banquets. Throughout his diary, Weng Tonghe mentioned many examples of both kinds of affairs held at various lodges.

Huiguan in Space and Huiguan as Space

The spatial characteristics of Beijing native-place lodges reveal much about the social history of the capital and the character of this important institution. Consideration of "huiguan in space" facilitates our understanding of Beijing in several ways. During the Ming, huiguan were widely distributed across both the Inner and Outer Cities, and the principal spatial division between lodges existed between those serving a wealthier clientele in the Inner City and those serving poorer examination candidates and official runners located in the Outer City. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, scholar-officials increasingly converged on the Xuannan area of the Outer City. There the learned and the powerful lived, either in huiguan or in their own private residences, in close proximity to one another. With the new concentration of these men came the rise of services such as teahouses, restaurants, and bookstores catering to the scholar-official class. The presence of these services, then, further intensified the attraction of this area to more of this class.

As significant as the overall consolidation of scholar-officials in this ward is the fact that the Xuannan area remained largely undivided by spatial subgroupings of rich or poor or of those with particular regional backgrounds. The social homogeneity represented by this undivided distribution of scholars and officials reflected and facilitated the creation of an elite cosmopolitan community among China's imperial political class. Huiguan were instrumental in creating a space within the city, accessible both to the most powerful and to those aspiring to power, that facilitated and promoted a high level of social interaction among members of this elite. Significantly, native-place ties served as building blocks in the establishment of this cosmopolitan community without generating overt kinds of regional tensions.

Consideration of "huiguan as space" reveals several fundamental aspects of the nature of the native-place lodge as an institution. Some

of the implications of the insights gained through this cursory summary of the microspatial aspects of arrangement of lodge space are discussed in the following chapters. For example, the courtyard-style living arrangements of huiguan lodgers had particular consequences in terms of the private/public nature of huiguan life. Activities within huiguan were walled off from, and to a significant extent protected from, the outside world (and the government). At the same time, the close proximity of quarters within the compound prevented complete privacy and ensured that some of what occurred within a huiguan would be known to others, at least to others in the compound. This particular balance of public and private character greatly shaped the social-control function of huiguan and profoundly affected their relationship to the state. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 8.

Perhaps the most important aspect of huiguan as space is the meaning of such space to those who established and used it. Native-place lodges occupied a unique position between the region and the political center of China. On one hand, huiguan essentially recreated native-place space within the capital. For *tongxiang* 同鄉 scholars and officials in Beijing, huiguan served as "virtual *xiang*" or as recreated pockets of regional territory. In some respects, lodges served as "ritual embassies" within which the rituals most closely tied to native place could be effectively performed. Ritually, huiguan space was equivalent to regional space. It is tempting to think of the lodges as "native-place theme parks" where the enjoyment of dialect, culture, and cuisine of one's native place satisfied nostalgic desires for a taste of home, but the ritual efficacy of such space, seen most clearly in respect to the altars and cemeteries, indicates they served as much more than that. At the lodge altar alone could one worship the particular deities of one's region, and where, outside one's native place, but in the soil of the huiguan cemetery could one's bones be buried with the assurance that the proper annual sacrifices to the dead would be effectively performed by compatriots and that one's ghost would never go hungry.

But huiguan space had many meanings, and the role of the lodges as regional space in the capital represents only one side of them. For as much as they served as links from Beijing to the region, they also

served as links from the region to the capital. Without undermining the significance of the first function, I believe the second function was considered at least as important, if not more important, than the first by those who established huiguan and made use of them. This explains the close connection between the people of a region and their huiguan in Beijing (reflected in their coverage in the local gazetteer and in the degree of direct financial support from the sponsoring locality). The role of Beijing huiguan as a conduit to the capital region was at least as important as their role as a link back to the region.

Finally, the role of huiguan as cultural space needs to be addressed. This topic may be best approached in conjunction with the closely related question of scholar-official identity. I have already shown that the notion of Beijing huiguan as cultural bastions is flawed, at least insofar as the matter of lodge *cuisine* is concerned. The findings related to matters of cuisine are further confirmed in regard to the performance of operas. On each of the stages listed above, what was performed was Beijing opera, not the particular regional opera of the huiguan where the performance was put on.

Beijing opera, indeed, serves as a fine example of the elite cosmopolitan culture that native-place lodges did so much to promote. A product of multiple regional influences, the Beijing opera style came to be considered the highest expression of the form and was held in high regard by the learned elite from all parts of the empire. If there was a "national" or "elite cosmopolitan" style of opera, it was Beijing opera. As a cultural form, it owed much to its many Manchu patrons, but it serves as well as a superb symbol of the Xuannan community of scholars and officials. As mentioned in the Introduction, there has been a long-standing debate about the relationship between native-place lodges and local identity. Unlike cities such as Chongqing, Hankou, or Shanghai, however, the question of a Beijing identity was an irrelevant one for the men served by Beijing huiguan. The scholars and officials had no interest in becoming Beijing men.[20]

20. The question of Beijing identity remains somewhat problematic to this day. In response to my informal querying of Beijing residents over the years as to who qualifies as an authentic Beijinger (*didao de Beijing ren* 地道的北京人), I am in-

The culture of the Xuannan district was not one of handed-down folkways but one of collective self-invention. It was in some respects a consciously created culture that expressed refinement, learning, proximity to power, and connections with China's learned and powerful. For ambitious and aspiring scholars across China, the native-place lodge that represented them in the capital meant much more than affordable lodging during examination periods; it meant access to the world of China's cosmopolitan political elite, and it meant for the lodger some degree of identification with other scholar-officials gathered in the capital and through them the imperium.

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variably told that that designation belongs to the old Manchu banner families alone. I believe there is a true connection between a culturally defined "Beijing-ness" and a Manchu background. This, as much as anything, explains why the writing of a Manchu author such as Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966) can seem at once so definitively Beijing and at the same time so divorced from the culture of the Xuannan district. On the Manchu domination of and impact on Beijing culture, see Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, 90.