The Confluence and Influence of Colonial Factors in Contemporary Heritage Making of Harbin

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For my father

DECLARATION

This thesis is based on original work and research. It contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text. While some aspects of this work have been expanded upon and published by the author elsewhere (Zhang, 2021a; 2021b; 2021c), the majority of the data analysis, discussions, and conclusions are presented here for the first time.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, the topic of *urban heritage* has attracted widespread interest from scholars in both urban studies and heritage studies. On the one hand, the term 'heritage' is frequently used not only in urban plans, policies, and projects to justify or legitimise official decisions on urban maintenance and development, but also by local people and communities to facilitate unofficial initiatives and social movements. On the other hand, scholars with various academic backgrounds are still debating over the very concept of heritage. This seemingly endless heritage debate features a dichotomy between 'heritage as a noun (i.e., an object)' and 'heritage as a verb (i.e., a process)', which makes the question of 'What is heritage?' look like a multiple choice out of two. Yet is it possible to jump out of this existing framework and develop a fresh, simple, clear, and tenable conception of heritage from a different viewpoint? Further, can we understand the role of heritage in cities more deeply in the light of an alternative heritage conception?

This research addresses the above questions through an investigation into the colonial heritage issue. In post-colonial cities which are now demographically and politically dominated by descendants of pre-colonial populations, attitudes and approaches to colonial pasts and remains are observed to be inconsistent and even opposing. The phenomenon that heritages derived from pasts of the same nature (i.e., *colonial* pasts) can be perceived and used very differently offers a unique entry point to understand the essence of heritage per se. Harbin, a post-colonial city in Northeast China, is an excellent research subject in this sense. Harbin was colonised successively by Russia and Japan in history. In the post-colonial era, the city has been making, remaking, and unmaking heritages that are associated with its Russian and Japanese

colonial pasts in various ways. Implementing the research strategy of case study and research methods of archival analysis, observation, semi-structured interviews, and user-generated content (UGC) analysis, this thesis qualitatively examines Harbin's colonial heritage making with three questions: How, and to what extent, does Harbin present and interpret its pasts associated with the Russian and the Japanese colonial periods through heritage making in contemporary urban maintenance and development? Why are certain images, narratives, and interpretations chosen at different times for these two differing colonial pasts? What debates, controversies, challenges, and predicaments are involved in this dynamic process? The process of finding answers to these questions is also a process of reflecting on the nature, essence, and current role of heritage per se.

The research concludes that heritage should be understood as an adjective or an abstract noun, which signifies a *status*. Therefore, a meaningful investigation into heritage can only be achieved when the concept is linked to concrete situations. This conception of heritage is not only theoretically developed but also repeatedly verified in the field. A city's post-colonial strategy for dealing with its colonial heritage(s) is influenced by the past processes of colonisation and decolonisation but is, to an even larger extent, affected by the present needs and desires. In the complex and dynamic urban context, heritage is only one of the many social factors. It interacts with other social factors and contributes to the ongoing layering of cities. This thesis questions the roles of heritage values and authenticity in heritage making and sustaining, and suggests that compatibility with present needs and demands is the key to acquiring and keeping a heritage status. Heritage is a part, rather than a counterpart, of development.

ABBREVIATIONS

CER	Chinese Eastern Railway
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
DCTHP	Department of Culture and Tourism of Heilongjiang Province
HIT	Harbin Institute of Technology
HQPDL	Harbin–Qiqihar Passenger Dedicated Line
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAR	special administrative region
UGC	user-generated content
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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INTRODUCTION

Colonialism, in its many forms (see for example: Fredrickson, 1988, pp. 218–221; Horvath, 1972; Osterhammel, 1997, pp. 4–10), has made a profound impact on most of the nations and peoples in the world. Regardless of whether the affected are the colonisers or the colonised, as Giblin (2015, p. 314) rightly pointed out, 'the scramble to divide up and own the continents had massive social consequences, and many colonial contexts still exist'. In countries where settler colonialism (see: Veracini, 2010; 2014) is dominant, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States (US), post-colonial responses to colonial history and heritage issues typically focus on Indigenous debates (see for example: Hart, 2012; Kearney, 2020; Onciul, 2015; Paquette, 2012; Pugliese, 2002). In post-colonial countries/regions that are now demographically and politically dominated by descendants of pre-colonial populations rather than those of colonial settlers or recent migrants, such as the post-colonial countries/regions in Asia and Africa, Indigenous issues, though existing in certain circumstances (see for example: Chen, 2017; Hodgson, 2011), are not at the centre of those countries'/regions' post-colonial heritage enquiries because the majority of their people commonly consider *themselves* as Indigenous. Rather, they generally turn to the 'reappropriation, recycling and renewal of identities and economies' (Giblin, 2015, p. 314) as a post-colonial focus of heritage studies. Such reappropriation, recycling, and renewal have been pursued mainly with three different strategies.

The Three Post-colonial Strategies for Dealing with Past and Heritage

The first strategy is to ignore or downplay the colonial pasts and promote pre-colonial culture and heritage instead, thus reinforcing a post-colonial national identity that is based on tradition and/or antiquity. A representative example is post-colonial Cambodia, for which Angkor, a site of classical antiquities, is a reminder of the Cambodians' 'former glory as a people and as a nation', and its ruined temples are a metaphor for 'a population struggling to recover from decades of national turmoil' (Winter, 2007, p. 143). This pre-colonial site is, therefore, thought to be 'imbued with an optimism about the country's future' (*ibid*.). In turn, it has been actively promoted by the Cambodian government as the country's primary national and world cultural heritage site, and has in effect 'monopolized the Cambodian national construction of heritage' (Esposito and Fauveaud, 2019, p. 674). Similar stories can also be found in, for example, the Malaysian historic city of Malacca, where the past of the fifteenth-century Malacca Sultanate is fundamental to the post-colonial national identity construction of Malaysia (Worden, 2003). In Malacca, the sultanate palace was reconstructed in the 1980s, while the colonial buildings such as the Dutch Stadthuys and the British clubhouse are reused to house museums that present Malaysian history and are thereby 'reclaimed by a Malay heritage' (*ibid.*, p. 33). In special cases, pre-colonial antiquities that do not reflect the traditions of a nation may also be leveraged to achieve post-colonial goals. For example, the coastal forts and castles in Ghana have been systematically restored to their pre-colonial conditions (Hove, 2018). After independence in 1957, post-colonial Ghana nominated the forts and castles to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1978, with the nomination focusing exclusively on the pre-colonial period and interpreting the sites as 'a monument not only to the evils of the slave trade, but also to nearly four centuries of pre-colonial Afro-European commerce on the basis of equality rather than on that of the colonial basis of inequality' (UNESCO WHC, 1979, n.p.). This action highlights the country's pre-colonial (and also envisioned post-colonial) identity as a European equal. In many cases

like these, colonial remains are erased, consciously or unconsciously, and the colonial heritage issue is absent from their post-colonial heritage discourses. By ignoring or downplaying the colonial pasts and remains, the corresponding countries consolidate their national identities that are constructed on the basis of pre-colonial pasts and heritages. Frequently, there are also economic considerations behind such promotion of pre-colonial heritage: the heritage often serves as a distinctive attraction in the (international) tourism industry and generates considerable revenue.

The second strategy is to interpret colonial pasts as collective suffering and colonial remains as testimony to such suffering, whereby a national identity that unifies the people of a post-colonial nation can be reconstructed and strengthened. For example, in South Korea's mainstream narratives, the Japanese colonial rule was harsh and brutal, which severely threatened the identity, distinctiveness, and independence of the nation-state (Oh, 2009). In this light, the Japanese colonial-era built environments in South Korea are seen as a negative legacy and as a tangible manifestation of the country's shameful colonial history (Lee, 2019), and are thus demolished as a theatrical gesture of decolonisation or used as 'historic resources and evidences [*sic*.] for educational purposes' (Kim, 2012, p. 41, as cited in Lee, 2019, p. 94). As regards the former, the gigantic neoclassical-style Japanese General Government Building, which was built during the Japanese colonial period within the enclosure of the Korean Gyeongbok Palace, was dismantled with a huge official ceremony 50 years after the end of Japanese rule (Youn, 2014, p. 94). This celebratory demolition is, as the then South-Korean President Kim Young-sam stated, to 'restore the appearance of Kyongbokkung Palace [i.e., Gyeongbok Palace], the most important symbol of legitimacy in our [i.e., Korean] national history' (as cited in Chung, 2003, p. 229). As regards the latter, the best-known example is Seodaemun Prison. The prison, being a colonial architectural legacy, was officially conserved and strategically converted into memorials to remind and inform Koreans of the past Japanese

colonial oppression and their own history of struggling for independence, binding colonial history to modern Korean nationalism (see: Lee, 2019; Podoler, 2009). Similar examples in other countries include the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement in South Africa, which started at the University of Cape Town in March 2015 (see: Knudsen and Andersen, 2019), and the Cellular Jail in India, which was submitted to the Indian World Cultural Heritage Tentative List in 2014 (see: Dobson, 2019). This strategy is mostly adopted to achieve political goals, while economic goals, if existing, are only secondary.

The third strategy is to understand colonial pasts from a relatively positive perspective, with typical emphases on colonial modernity and occidental exoticism. In such cases, colonial remains are used and even highlighted for city branding and/or tourism promotion. This strategy is illustrated, for example, in the Indonesian city of Semarang. The large concrete building of its old marketplace Pasar Johar was designed by the Dutch architect and town planner Thomas Karsten in the 1930s. After Pasar Johar caught fire in 2015, a tireless campaign for the conservation and restoration of the building was launched and finally achieved its goal. The Pasar Johar building was originally built under the coloniser's 'paternalistic vision of modernity' (Yapp, 2020, p. 181) during the Dutch colonial period, which reflects 'the colonial state's efforts to discipline its "unruly" subjects and "uplift" them through paternalistic tutelage' (*ibid.*, p. 191). Nevertheless, local Indonesians today speak highly of Karsten and his architectural works, regarding Pasar Johar as a 'most modern' masterpiece that 'perfectly adapted to the tropical climate of Semarang' (*ibid.*, p. 187). To them, an alternative of Semarang's future is illustrated in their city's past. Another example of this strategy can be found in Tunis. The historic Avenue Habib Bourguiba – 'the Champs-Élysées of Tunis' within the *Ville Nouvelle* of the French colonial era – was restored in the 2000s to enhance its 'Parisian' appearance. The Avenue was officially designated as a tourist zone during the restoration period and has since then been subject to a special set of regulations that intends to 'ensure maximised profitability

and popularity' by the management of the zone's 'historicist aesthetic conformity and quality' (Coslett, 2020, p. 732). Economic concerns are dominant in such examples, though in certain cases such as the Pasar Johar one (see: Yapp, 2020), the civic critiques of current urban politics may also contribute to the resultant positive understanding and deployment of colonial heritage.

While colonial past and remains are willingly overlooked or glossed over by the first strategy, they are emphasised and deployed by the other two, though in distinct ways. A post-colonial polity does not necessarily stick to one of these three strategies. Rather, a former colony may perceive and interact with its colonial past(s) in general and colonial built environment in particular in different ways at different post-colonial stages, and shift its focus of heritage research and practice along with the country/region/city's changing social, political, and economic contexts. Sometimes different post-colonial heritage strategies can also be adopted at the same time. This is evident in post-colonial Indonesia: after independence, the country's colonial past was initially ignored but was later recovered and then revalued, and the official attitude towards the colonial buildings and urban fabrics has shifted from indifference and, in a certain period, antipathy to appreciation. As a result, the colonial built environment in Indonesia is increasingly considered a cultural heritage and has achieved general support for its preservation, utilisation, and further, restoration and revitalisation (van Roosmalen, 2013; Yapp, 2020). Similar dynamics can even be seen in South Korea, where a top-down anti-Japanese-colonialism agenda is almost overwhelming. In recent years, for example, its post-colonial small city of Gunsan has been identifying the once-neglected Japanese colonial legacies, such as the industrial and official buildings in the inner harbour and vernacular Japanese houses and neighbourhoods, as official cultural heritage sites, promoting them for city rebranding, and commodifying them for tourism promotion and economic revitalisation (Lee and Huang, 2022).

Moreover, a former colony may show different attitudes to its colonial pasts and remains that are related to different colonial powers, as demonstrated by the Malaysian case of Malacca

in the city's different attitudes and approaches to its Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial pasts and colonial built environments (see: Worden, 2003). It is noteworthy that, as shown by the case of Indonesia (see: van Roosmalen, 2013), when a colonial past and its remains are seen by the former colony from a relatively positive perspective, the colonial remains can sometimes be mutually recognised by both the former colony and the former colonial power as 'shared heritage' (see: ICOMOS ISC SBH, n.d.). In such a case, the former colonial power can also contribute to the management and interpretation of the heritage. Although colonial heritage is essentially a type of *cultural* heritage, it is obvious from the extensive existing literature on relevant case studies that cultural factors are far from the primary considerations in decision-making about whether and how to make, interpret, and promote a certain colonial heritage. Rather, it is the political and economic factors that play decisive roles.

The above review is informative not only in that it clearly and systematically illustrates how post-colonial countries/regions that are demographically and politically dominated by descendants of pre-colonial populations, with those former colonies in Asia and Africa as representatives, generally perceive and approach their colonial pasts and remains. It also shows the potential of colonial heritage as a testing ground for notions of heritage. Firstly, for 'Indigenous'-people-dominated post-colonial countries/regions, in the present day there are only *three* major ways of dealing with colonial past and, where applicable, colonial heritage, despite the many forms of colonialism and the various processes of colonisation that took place in the past. Although all colonial heritage is connected to some colonial past, the relationship between post-colonial strategies regarding (colonial) heritage and the exact form(s) of colonialism that a former colony has experienced is loose at best. Certainly, historical factors can be important in shaping the present framework for dealing with a colonial past and its related remains/heritage. Nevertheless, an investigation into colonial heritage is by no means a historical study of colonial past. Secondly, the three post-colonial strategies for dealing with

past and heritage lead to inconsistent and even opposing attitudes and approaches to colonial pasts and remains. It is significant that heritages derived from pasts of the same nature (i.e., *colonial* pasts) can be perceived and used very differently. This situation offers a unique entry point to understand the nature, essence, and current role of heritage per se.

Colonial Past and Heritage in Post-colonial China: An overview of relevant literature

Most of the post-colonial cities in China were formerly colonised in the way of being occupied and then getting 'legal' identities with unequal treaties (Zhang, 2012). In those cases, although China had nominally preserved its juridical independence, the cities were dominated by the colonial powers. Thus, China during the colonial period is often referred to as a semi-colonial country (Ifversen and Pozzi, 2020). For post-colonial cities in mainland China after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the later returned former colonial cities of Hong Kong and Macau[1], dealing with the colonial pasts and remains has been a long-lasting and dynamic process that negotiates between decolonisation and (neo)colonisation in national, transnational, and global contexts. The process, being subjective and deeply contested, is to a large extent to achieve identity construction and economic development. In 2017, the inscription of the Kulangsu island – a 'historic international settlement' in Xiamen – as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site for its being an 'exceptional example of the cultural fusion' (UNESCO WHC, 2017, n.p.) provoked a new round of scholarly discussion on China's colonial heritage issue.

It can be seen from the extensive English-language literature that research on the memory and heritage of China's post-colonial cities focuses on cities that were formerly colonised predominantly by Western countries. Such research has long been concentrating on a few well-known cities such as the Hong Kong and Macau SARs (see for example: Chaplain,

[1] Hong Kong and Macau were transferred to the PRC and designated as a special administrative region (SAR) of China in 1997 and 1999 respectively.

2002; Chau *et al.*, 2021; Gallagher, 2021; Lu, 2009; Wong, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2022), and megacities in the Chinese mainland such as Shanghai (see for example: González Martínez, 2021; Ifversen and Pozzi, 2020; Pan, 2005; Pozzi, 2021) and Tianjin (see for example: Gravari-Barbas *et al.*, 2021; H. Zhang, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, Japan, despite being a major colonial power in China, is nevertheless under-represented. Only a handful of scholarly publications are dedicated to the post-colonial heritage issue of former Manchukuo (see for example: Bofulin, 2017; Huang and Lee, 2020, Chapter 4; Koga, 2016), an extensive Japanese colony located in Northeast China. In fact, when Japan-related memory and heritage in China are concerned, researchers frequently turn to better-known (non-colonial) cities such as Nanjing (see for example: Fogel, 2007; Zhu, 2022). Notwithstanding such an imbalance of research focus, the existing literature shows that China's post-colonial cities, like those in other countries and regions in Asia and Africa, also mainly adopt the three above-mentioned strategies to deal with their colonial pasts and remains. Nevertheless, it is the third strategy, which features the idea of 'East meets West' and places special emphasis on colonial modernity and occidental exoticism, that has been most frequently discussed in recent years. Moreover, the attitudes and approaches to the colonial pasts related to the West and Japan in the China of today have frequently been regarded as disparate things and studied separately in different case studies. China's different post-colonial phenomena have been individually investigated in the light of present needs and future goals, but the underlying historical reasons that sustain them were seldom discussed from a comparative perspective.

In addition, interpretations and uses of colonial pasts in China have often been seen as something controlled by the ruling/intellectual elite, with ordinary people's views under-presented. Relevant urban heritage projects being studied are typically those in large and prosperous cities. Regardless of which strategy they adopted and what controversies they have caused, the vast majority of those reported heritage projects have successfully produced a result,

whether desirable or undesirable to the researchers. However, in the real world, especially in those economically depressed post-colonial cities, things are more complex. There are indeed situations in which various official and popular needs and desires get entangled and, as a result, no decision on how exactly to deal with a certain colonial past and/or remains could be reached (see for example: Demgenski, 2015; 2019). It is in this context that Harbin – the capital city of Heilongjiang Province in Northeast China – is selected as the object of this study. This research sets out to investigate Harbin's post-colonial phenomena in a comprehensive and integrated manner, in order to examine the current issues of colonial past and heritage in post-colonial China and, further, inform the conception of heritage per se. I articulate the reason why I chose Harbin for this purpose after providing a brief history of the city.

Harbin: A heritage city?

Indicating the enduring difference between the past and the present, David Lowenthal adopted the opening sentence of L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* as the title of one of his books: *The Past is a Foreign Country*. It is, however, literally so for the city of Harbin (Figure 1.1). Harbin is a young metropolis close to the Chinese border with Russia. During the first half of its 120-year history, Harbin was ruled by Russia, Japan and China, sometimes successively and sometimes simultaneously. It has gone through the two world wars, both of which marked turning points in the city's history.

Figure 1.1 The location and current jurisdiction of Harbin

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang; base map: Google Maps.

Extraordinary History, Diverse Architecture

The site of the current Harbin was marked as a human settlement in the early eighteenth century after several centuries without historical records. Around 73 Chinese villages existed on the site in 1895 (*Haerbin* Ketizu, 2007, p.14). Those villages were small and surrounded by fields, burial grounds, and marshes; there were no roads connecting them (Bakich, 1986). Under the terms of the 1896 Li–Lobanov Treaty and the 1898 Pavlov Agreement between tsarist Russia and Qing China, Russia was allowed to build two railways in Northeast China: the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) which cuts across Manchuria from west to east and links the Trans-Baikal Railway to Vladivostok, and a southern extension of the CER which reaches the port city of Dalian (Dalny/Dairen). A 'CER Zone' was in turn designated. The CER Zone, a large territory expanded upon the land for the railway construction, was under extraterritorial jurisdiction and thus effectively acted as a Russian colony (Clausen and Thøgersen, 1995, p.

25; Moustafine, 2002; Rykachev,1910, as cited in Bakich, 2000; Wolff, 1999). An area around the junction of the two railways served as the central part of this Zone. It accommodated the Russian administration of the railways and constituted a significant portion of the later-formed Harbin City. In 1903, the Russians released the first plan of Harbin and its suburb (Haerbin Shi Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, 1998, p. 8). The remaining part of Harbin – its Chinese ghetto called 'Fujiadian' – was then ruled separately by Binjiang Guandao, a Qing Chinese local government which was formed only in 1906 (*ibid.*, p. 32; Zhan *et al.*, 1985, p. 68). Despite lengthy debates since the 1990s around the city's historical origins (Koga, 2008; Lahusen, 1998; Wolff, 1999, p. 27), it is generally agreed that Harbin as a *modern* city was founded by the Russians in 1898 (see for example: Gamsa, 2010; Xie *et al.*, 2016), with the construction of the CER marking the beginning of the city's formation.

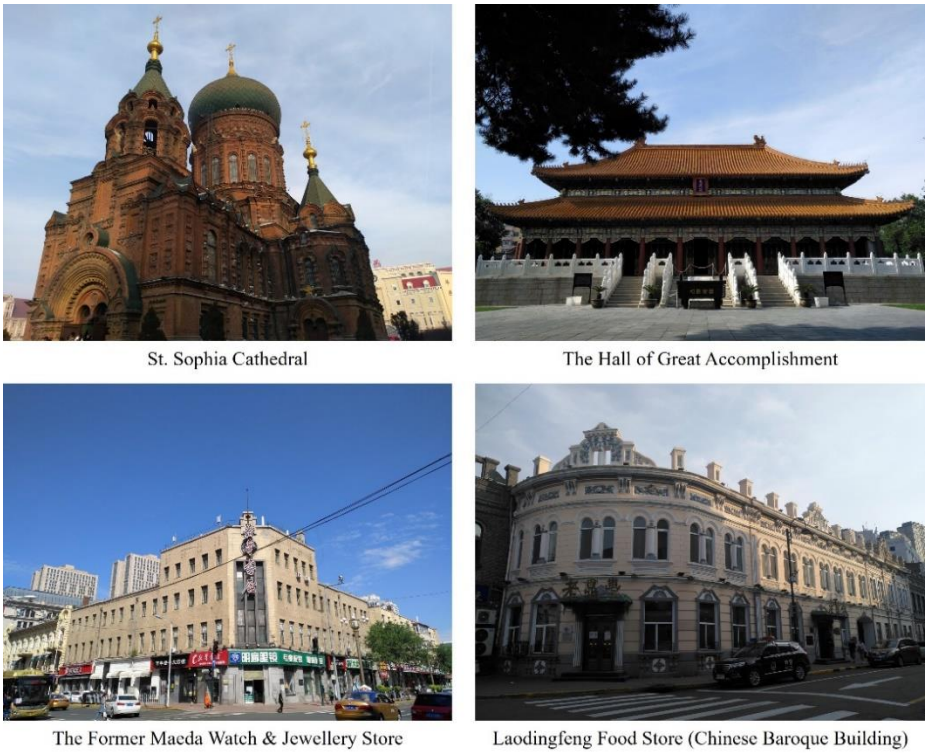
In 1907, following Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Harbin ceased to be a migration destination exclusively for the Russians but became a treaty port opened to all foreigners, despite the fact that the Russians still played the leading role in running the city. The construction of the CER and its accompanying industrialisation and commercialisation spurred the development of Harbin and helped the area to transform rapidly from small villages into a cosmopolitan metropolis. This city of mushroom growth soon became distinctly Russian 'as though it were located in the heart of Russia' (Miller, 1904, p. 113) with a great variety of classical and fashionable Western-style buildings as well as a prominent European ambience. By the late 1920s, Harbin had boomed to be the largest commercial and logistics hub in Northeast China.

For Harbin, the 1920s period is obscure in terms of political control. Russia's continuing defeats and losses in the First World War eventually triggered the 1917 Russian Revolution. After the February Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated on 15 March N.S., ending Romanov dynastic rule and the Russian Empire. A provisional government was formed to replace the

Tsar. The October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks later in the same year ended this Provisional Government, Russian Republic, and dual power, and created Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik takeover and the following Russian Civil War seriously undermined the Russian authority in Harbin. Despite the resultant official reversion of Harbin to China, the Chinese rule in the city was 'a changeable patchwork of regional authorities rather than a centralized state bureaucracy' (Carter, 2002, p. 79). This was due, in fact, to the ending of the Qing dynasty in 1912 with regional power, in turn, devolving to local warlords. Moreover, the White Russian community did not completely give up their power until the Self-Administrative Council [自治公议会] was finally dissolved in 1926 (*Haerbin* Ketizu, 2007, p. 39; Hu, 2009), and the Soviet Union emerged as a new player in Harbin. Nevertheless, the Chinese seized the chance and attempted to get their land back and create a Chinese Harbin during the 1920s. As an effort to claim the built environment of the city, several magnificent new buildings were constructed in Chinese traditional architectural style. Jile Temple [极乐寺], the first example of Chinese traditional architecture in Harbin, was completed in 1924. It was followed by the No. 3 High School (1925) and the Confucian Temple [文庙] (1929) (Carter, 2002, p. 130). The construction of Chinese traditional buildings during this period was, however, by no means massive and did not shake the dominant position of European-style buildings in Harbin.

Such a perplexing jurisdictional puzzle did not remain long as Japan occupied the city just a few years later. From 1932 to 1945, Harbin was colonised and ruled solely by Japan as a part of the puppet state Manchukuo under the 1932 Japan–Manchukuo Protocol. The Japanese kept the diverse buildings from previous decades and only added some modest buildings to the city. The surrender of Japan was announced on 15 August 1945, bringing the hostilities of the Second World War to a close. Five days later, Harbin was taken by the Soviet Army. The city was occupied by the Soviet Union for eight months. Then it was returned to China and became, in April 1946, the first large city governed by the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Despite the decades of chaos and hostilities, most of the early buildings survived along with their surroundings and witnessed the establishment of the PRC (Figure 1.2). These include typical Russian-style churches with onion domes such as the preeminent St. Sophia Cathedral, a landmark and must-see spot of Harbin today; Chinese traditional buildings such as the Hall of Great Accomplishment [大成殿] of Harbin Confucian Temple, a highest-rank traditional building with double-eave hip roofs [重檐庑殿顶] representing a significant architectural style that has rare examples in China; and Japanese modern buildings such as the former Maeda Watch & Jewellery Store, one of Harbin's earliest examples of modernist architecture. There are also hybrid-style buildings, among which the best-known are the Chinese Baroque buildings located in Daowai District (formerly Fujiadian). The Chinese Baroque style combines the Western Baroque façade with the Chinese traditional quadrangle. These surviving buildings in Harbin, diverse in style, were built in different periods and thus represent different pasts.



St. Sophia Cathedral

The Hall of Great Accomplishment

The Former Maeda Watch & Jewellery Store

Laodingfeng Food Store (Chinese Baroque Building)

Figure 1.2 Historic buildings representing different pasts

Sources: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2018, 2020, and 2021.

Difficult Pasts, Demolished Buildings

Not all pasts can be celebrated or even comfortably acknowledged as a city's valued history (Macdonald, 2009). As we can see from the previous sections, many post-colonial cities around the world have engaged in erasing and marginalising the built environment from their colonial pasts, in order to decolonise and reconstruct a national identity for its people (see also, for example: Leung, 2009; Western, 1985). Mainland China adopted a similar approach to decolonisation for a long time after the founding of the PRC in 1949. Colonial-era buildings, structures, and landscapes were seen as symbols of foreign domination and national humiliation and were, therefore, demolished to make way for 'new landmarks of China's new prosperity' (Goulard, 2013, n.p.).

Harbin's attitude towards its colonial pasts is even more complex. First of all, Harbin does not want to be identified as a post-colonial city or included in the discussion about the de/colonisation in China. Scholars in Harbin have written lengthy articles and blogs arguing that the city was never colonised by Russia, given that China still 'legally' maintained sovereignty over the CER Zone, even though it did not really exercise its jurisdiction (Li, 2015; Ma, 2018). While generally there is a consensus among the Chinese that Manchukuo as a puppet state was indeed a Japanese colony, people in Harbin remain wary of depicting the city as a former colony of Japan. When I started this research project, a local professor in architecture had spent over an hour debating with me about whether it is proper to describe Harbin as a post-colonial city and some of its historic buildings as colonial heritage. He suggested that the Japanese occupation of Harbin was primarily the result of an invasion, and describing such occupation as colonialism downplays the brutalities of war and whitewashes the Japanese militarism. This professor reminded me that the terms related to 'colonialism' should be carefully adopted in the Chinese context as colonial history is still politically sensitive in China:

> I think it is not proper for you to describe [some of] Harbin's heritage as 'colonial heritage'.

> If I am a peer reviewer for a journal and do not know you, I will certainly ask you to delete such expressions [in my comments on your paper]. In other words, I would not agree with you on this. […] You see, both in my books and articles and in my students' articles, we always talk about 'Harbin's modern architecture'. We do not touch *politics* but discuss [Harbin's] modern architecture in terms of *culture*. […] We talk about the Russian construction, the Japanese construction, and the Chinese construction; we talk about these separately but do not put them under a rubric such as that of 'colonialism'.

A friend who lives in Harbin and works locally as an urban planner seconded this concern when discussing with me about my research. He said the idea that China has some colonial pasts is not very well-accepted officially, though comforting me that this will not be a big problem if I do not interpret the history radically or extremely. Personally, he thought Harbin was not 'fully colonised', because 'the Chinese language had been continually used' during the foreign occupation periods and 'the Chinese civilisation was thus not interrupted'.

The political sensitivity of colonialism raised by these local people was later manifested in a scholarly event held in Harbin. In 2021, I was invited to give a talk at an academic forum organised by the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT). After I submitted the title of my talk, which was 'Heritage Making and Interpretation in China's Postcolonial Cities: The case of Harbin Railway Station' (this talk reported my findings in the case study of Harbin Railway Station, which is detailed in Chapter 2 of this thesis), I got a group message from the organiser reminding the speakers that 'the talks must not include improper opinions' the next day, and was soon requested in private to submit my slides beforehand for 'necessary process'. I did not receive further notice or request after the submission and delivered my talk in its original form on the day of the forum. After the talk, a department head approached me. He spoke highly of my research, but also kindly advise me to downplay the concept of 'colonialism' next time when I give a talk in China: 'it seems that Chinese people still cannot treat colonialism neutrally'. This professor suggested that I use 'imported culture' or 'foreign culture' instead,

though he was also aware that these expressions 'are not as accurate' as 'colonialism'. He then concluded that this expression problem is only a small issue which, after all, will not devalue the efficacy of the research project.

This research adopted the definition of 'colonialism' as 'a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another', in particular, 'the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin' (Kohn and Reddy, 2017, n.p.). Since both the Russian CER Zone and the Japanese Manchukuo meet this definition, this research regards both periods as essentially colonial but does not take a political stance on colonialism. Despite this nuance of expression, Harbin kept in line with other post-colonial cities in China and around the world, considering the city's demolition of colonial-era buildings in the second half of the twentieth century – most of its finest Russian- and Japanese-era buildings were demolished in the decolonisation process before the turn of the century.

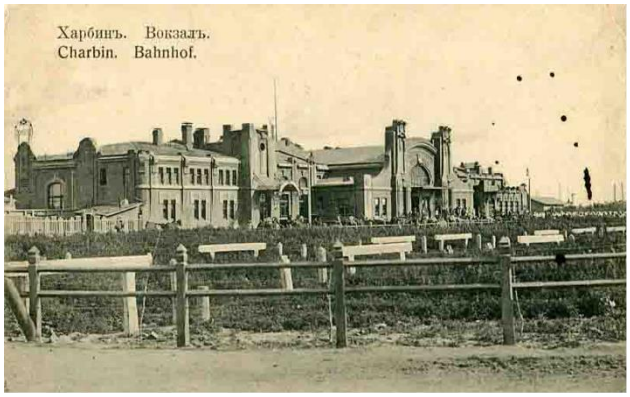
Among the Russian-built buildings that were demolished, the most famous are the old Harbin Railway Station and St. Nicholas Cathedral (Figure 1.3). The former was completed and opened to the public in 1904. That old station was a light pistachio-green building (von Nottbeck, 1906, p. 41, as cited in Wolff, 1999, p. 36) built in the then fashionable Art Nouveau style and was the first railway station building that China has ever had. It was a real struggle in 1960 to pull down that building because its structure was very strong: an elder man born in 1940 recalled that 'even the tank was useless against it', while a retired railwayman who was born in 1931 recounted that 'at last, they blasted that building with explosives'[2]. The Cathedral, a legendary building completed in 1900 and the most important landmark located at the centre of the Russian Harbin, was demolished in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution. The above-

[2] The research method of interviews is used in this study. See the 'Research Methods' section in the following text for an explanatory note on this.

mentioned elder man who was born in 1940 and a woman born in 1959 who was only a 7-year-old girl at that time recounted what they remembered about this event respectively:

> I passed by St. Nicholas Cathedral on 18 August 1966 when I went to the railway station. I was then on my way to Beijing for a Revolutionary Tour [串连]. I saw there was a group of people around the cathedral preparing for the demolition. They were placing ladders against the building and doing other things… The building was still there then. When I came back [from Beijing], it was gone!
>
> I witnessed the demolition of St. Nicholas Cathedral. I was only seven years old then. […] It was the Red Guards who pulled down that building. There were loads of people! The Red Guards used loudspeakers [to chant]: 'Completely smash the feudal, capitalist, and revisionist legal systems [砸碎封资修]!' Dear me! After the demolition, they put on site three red flags with the slogan 'Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman [大海航行靠舵手]'[3]. I was among the large crowd of onlookers then.

Many other magnificent churches, such as the Holy Annunciation Church and the Male Monastery of Our Lady of Kazan, were also demolished in the second half of the twentieth century.



Harbin Railway Station

St. Nicholas Cathedral

Figure 1.3 The demolished Russian-built buildings

Sources: left: https://www.balkanphila.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/products-B04130.jpg (Accessed: 1 October 2021); right: http://www.orthodox.cn/images/harbinnikolai1905side.jpg (Accessed: 1 October 2021).

[3] 'Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman' is the title of a popular Chinese revolutionary song in praise of Maoism and the Communist Party. It was widely sung by the public, especially by the Red Guards, during the Cultural Revolution.

As regards the Japanese-built buildings, the most important one is perhaps the religious Harbin Shrine (Figure 1.4) which was built from 1935 to 1942. This Japanese traditional building was located in the city centre and was very close to St. Nicholas Cathedral. The shrine was demolished immediately after the Japanese surrendered in 1945, only three years after the building's completion. Comparatively, the Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits [忠灵塔] (Figure 1.5), another significant site to the Japanese colonisers in Harbin, had gone through a rather roundabout decolonisation process. The monument tower was completed in 1936 to commemorate the Japanese soldiers who died during the Mukden Incident (Barclay, 2020; Yokoyama, 2014). After Manchukuo ceased, the monument had been adaptively reused as a parachute tower by the post-colonial Chinese government since 1957 (Liu, 1989), echoing what Macdonald (2009, p. 88) observed as the 'profanation' strategy for dealing with difficult heritage: 'doing ordinary things that did not "give recognition" to there being anything special about the site'. In this way, the difficult Japanese colonial past was covertly marginalised and downplayed. Nevertheless, the monument was eventually erased from the socialist China's land in 1993.

Figure 1.4 Harbin Shrine

Source: http://www.himoji.jp/database/db04/permalink_img.php?id=2536 (Accessed: 1 October 2021).

Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits (Original) Monument Reused as a Parachute Tower

Figure 1.5 Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits

Sources: left: http://www.himoji.jp/database/db04/permalink_img.php?id=2809 (Accessed: 1 October 2021); right: http://www.himoji.jp/database/db04/permalink_img.php?id=2151 (Accessed: 1 October 2021).

'Architecture and city places […] are mnemonic codes that awaken recall.' (Boyer, 1994, p. 322) Colonial memories were disappearing in Harbin along with the demolished colonial-era built environment, and the disruption to oral history made the situation even worse. For a long time after the founding of the PRC, and especially during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, talking about the colonial pasts was thought to be improper and risky as this may lead to an accusation of advocating 'the old society' and the following persecution, as the above-mentioned female informant said:

> Even if you ask those elder people who have experienced the Japanese colonial period, in most cases, you'll get nothing. […] When I was a child [there was the Cultural Revolution] … I have the feeling that there was no culture during the Cultural Revolution. All they talked about is 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'! […] We didn't learn anything about Harbin's culture at school. There was no oral history: people dared not tell those stories! If you tell, you'll be accused of advocating 'the old society'. That's it! You are wondering if there's

> anything left and if those elder people had told their descendants something about the colonial pasts… I tell you, that was the Cultural Revolution era, people only talked about the 'red' stuff. They dared not talk about the reality of the society. Some dared not say, some dared but were not able to say [due to their lacking education].

When Harbin finally rid itself in the mid-1990s of the heavily politicised tone which had characterised previous writing on its colonial pasts (Gamsa, 2010), a vacuum in urban memory had already been created and could not easily be filled.

Using Colonial Pasts: Understanding post-colonial China with the case study of Harbin

In the 1990s, Harbin started to re-evaluate its narratives and architectural remains that relate to the colonial pasts. Although the colonial pasts were still a taboo subject to some extent, their physical remains were no longer something needing to be suppressed. Rather, they were increasingly seen as a resource that should be explored for the city's future maintenance and development. The once purposefully neglected colonial-era structures and buildings, in turn, escaped demolition. Instead, they were valued and conserved as cultural heritage and were, in many cases, restored and renovated for city branding, tourism marketing, and patriotic education. Furthermore, some demolished colonial-era buildings were reconstructed or replicated for various reasons, and new memorial halls were built to commemorate events in the colonial periods.

As regards the contemporary use of colonial pasts, what is going on in the Harbin of today reflects manifold problems, expectations, and strategies of post-colonial China. Born international with a colonial background and pioneering in China's industrialisation and modernisation, Harbin is both typical and exceptional. On the one hand, Harbin is typical in that, firstly, it was colonised with unequal treaties signed between China and a Western

country/Japan[4]. Secondly, Harbin had gone through the typical decolonisation process in the twentieth century. Thirdly, the Harbin of today is, unlike the ambitious and extremely large and affluent global city of Shanghai but more like the majority of post-colonial cities in mainland China, an ordinary major city with a relatively undistinguished economic performance[5]. The city is, on the other hand, also exceptional in many aspects. Firstly, Harbin is Russia's first and most important colony and is thus a best city that can help us understand the Russian colonisation and its long-term effects. Formerly being a railway zone, Harbin is also the only representative of this unique form of colonisation in China. Secondly, Harbin was influenced by both Western (i.e., Russian) and Japanese colonial projects, while most post-colonial cities in China have only experienced one type of colonialism. Thirdly, the Harbin of today shows opposite attitudes and adopts seemingly conflicting approaches to its Russian and Japanese colonial pasts and their heritages, which are further articulated in the following chapters. Post-colonial Harbin provides a complex yet comprehensive context to understand contemporary China's post-colonial cities, and illustrates their major ways of dealing with colonial past and colonial heritage. In this sense, it is appropriate to understand the manifold and complex post-colonial phenomena in the broader China through an analysis of Harbin. Using colonial heritage as a testing ground for notions of heritage, the process of addressing the colonial heritage issues

[4] Chinese people use 'the West' to refer to Europe and North America, which is contrasted with *Eastern countries*. Although Westerners in the EU countries and North America, and even the Russians themselves, may not regard Russia as 'Western' (see for example: Blakkisrud and Rowe, 2018; Trofimov, 2018), in most Chinese people's eyes, Russia is indeed a European and Western country. Russia is considered to be a European country because Moscow – the capital of Russia – is in Europe, and most of Russia's population lives in the European part of the country. Moreover, from the perspective of Chinese people, the mainstream culture of Russia is much more similar to Western culture than to Eastern culture such as Chinese culture (for example, Russia is a mainly Christian nation). Thus, Chinese people generally see Russia as Western rather than Eastern.

[5] Ranking of Cities' Business Attractiveness in China, an annual publication of city rankings by YiCai [第一财经], ranks China's 337 cities that are at or above the prefecture level by economic performance and has been very influential in China. According to its 2022 update, Shanghai is one of the four first-tier cities; several post-colonial cities, such as Tianjin and Qingdao, are among the 15 emerging first-tier cities (i.e., better performed second-tier cities); while Harbin, along with some other post-colonial cities such as Xiamen and Dalian, is among the 30 (ordinary) second-tier cities. See: https://www.yicai.com/news/101430366.html?fromtid=101425010 (Accessed: 27 September 2022).

in Harbin and in China more broadly is also a process of reflecting on the nature, essence, and current role of heritage per se.

Research Strategy: Case study

Case study plays a prominent role both inside and outside of the research realm. General case studies have been around 'as long as recorded history' (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 302), and contemporary research case studies can be traced back to the work of the Chicago School of Sociology (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). Case study is generally defined as 'a strategy for doing social inquiry' (Schwandt, 2007, p. 28) featuring the 'case', while a case is typically regarded as 'a specific and bounded instance of a phenomenon selected for study' (*ibid.*, p. 27).

One of the most influential definitions of case study comes from Yin (2018, p. 15), who suggests a two-fold definition covering both its scope and features:

> A case study […] investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. […] [It] copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.

Case study is referred to in the literature as a strategy (Birch, 2012; Schwandt, 2007), a method (Yin, 2018), a methodology (Schwandt and Gates, 2018; Thomas and Bertolini, 2014), an approach (Campbell, 2003; Crowe *et al.*, 2011), an ideal type (Gerring, 2004), and a research design (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Yet these terms cannot all be used interchangeably. For example, 'methodology' and 'method' are defined very differently. According to their definitions, the two terms refer to totally different things. *Methodology* is the 'theory of how research proceeds' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 333). It refers to the principles of reasoning that

are used to make choices about research design, which 'involve consideration of appropriate models, *cases to study* [italics added], methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis, etc., in planning and executing a research study' (Silverman, 2017, p. 138). *Methods*, on the other hand, are specific qualitative or quantitative research techniques such as observation, interview, and statistical correlations (*ibid.*). As a methodology guides the decisions about whether to introduce a case study into the research and which cases should be chosen to study, while a case study may employ both qualitative and quantitative methods without intellectual boundaries (Schwandt and Gates, 2018), it is not appropriate to refer to case study as a methodology and/or a single method. Such reference, as Harrison *et al.* (2017) suggested, can be 'perplexing, misleading, and at times counterproductive' (para. 13). With the additional consideration that 'research approach' generally refers to the division of qualitative research (inductive approach) and quantitative research (deductive approach), in this thesis, case study is regarded as a strategy.

Cities are of interest to scholars because they house complex urban processes with a huge number of contextual variables, which include various cultural, social, political, and economic factors. Urbanists focus on real-world space and place. On the one hand, a certain space/place has its own tangible and intangible contexts, with which it does not have a clear boundary. On the other hand, a space/place is also a context itself, where diverse urban processes occur and interact with each other. It is also difficult to separate those urban processes from their spatial context. In this situation, it is not surprising that case study has become a widely adopted and very influential strategy in urban studies (Campbell, 2003; Harrison *et al.*, 2017). This research adopts case study as its research strategy for the same reason.

Materialising Colonial Pasts: From heritage listing to heritage making

As indicated previously, in the late twentieth century, the concept of 'heritage' was introduced to Harbin, which gradually changed the city's attitude towards its colonial pasts and relevant remains, and has generated real and obvious results in terms of built environment. People constantly raise the issue of heritage and frequently wield this concept to justify certain decisions on contemporary urban maintenance and development, yet many do not have a clear idea of what exactly 'heritage' means. Indeed, the concept of heritage itself is evolving through the decades, and there are still heated debates over the conception of heritage in academia today. Before moving to a systematic investigation into Harbin's colonial heritage issue, I propose to enquire into how the conception of heritage has evolved and, in turn, demarcate the concept of heritage in theoretical terms for this thesis. After all, *colonial heritage* is a type of *heritage*, thus a clear and tenable conception of heritage per se is a precondition for this study.

The Architectural Conception of Heritage

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the word 'heritage' had in the past several different meanings, of which two are relevant to heritage studies today: 'that which has been or may be inherited; any *property*, and esp. *land*, which devolves by right of inheritance' (with quotations since the thirteenth century) ('heritage, *n.*', 2021, subsense 1.a), and 'land and similar *property* which devolves by law upon the heir and not on executors or administrators; heritable *estate*, *realty* [italics added]' (with quotations since the sixteenth century) (*ibid.*, subsense 1.b). Both definitions regard heritage as tangible *objects* and especially refer to land and real estate. Since the eighteenth century, the goal of protecting material signs of the past has been defined in Europe as the cultural heritage of humanity (Jokilehto, 1999, p. 1), in which circumstance the conception of heritage has gone beyond personal inheritance. In the mid-nineteenth century, John Ruskin led the conservation movement which preached a conservation

approach to historic buildings with an absolute defence of their material truth. Although Ruskin did not write a theory of conservation, he nevertheless identified the values and significance of historic architecture (see for example: Ruskin, 1849) and thus provided a foundation for modern conservation philosophies. With the efforts of William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the conservation movement later spread from England to France, German countries, Italy, Greece, and even to countries on other continents such as India, and conservation was gradually accepted as 'the modern approach to the care of historic buildings and works of art, and thus also the principal reference for the policies of maintenance and conservative repair' (Jokilehto, 1999, p. 174).

In this context, the Athens Charter was adopted at the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1931. This was the first discussion about the international collaboration on cultural heritage protection and restoration. The charter focuses on historic monuments/sites and their surrounding areas, and thus reinforces the idea that heritage is tangible with built environment at its centre. In this document, the architects and technicians who participated in the congress regarded heritage – what they wanted to safeguard – as 'artistic and archaeological property' of 'artistic, historic or scientific interest', which seems to be 'threatened with destruction' (ICOMOS, 1931, n.p.). In this sense, heritage is a category of artefacts or works of art which are finite, and heritage buildings/sites should be scrupulously maintained and, when necessary, restored by specialists such as architects and archaeologists in the same way as they do with antiques or pieces of art. While the term 'historical value' is indeed mentioned in the document, this expression nevertheless means, as explained in the following text, that 'civilisation has been expressed to the highest degree' in these 'works of art' and that the monuments are 'concrete testimonies of all ages of civilisation' (*ibid.*). In essence, architectural heritage is seen as masterpieces of art. The importance of 'education' in heritage is also mentioned, but in the context that 'the best guarantee in the matter

of the preservation of monuments and works of art derives from the respect and attachment of the peoples themselves' (*ibid.*) and by educating children and young people about the importance of cultural heritage, the *objects* under preservation will have a better chance of being left intact. Here education is not about the historical interpretation or identity formation/confirmation of people or society, but simply about avoiding vandalism and better protecting the objects per se. At the end of the Athens Charter, the congress expressed the idea of 'a canon of heritage places' (Harrison, 2013, p. 44) by calling for 'an inventory of ancient monuments', which initiated the international heritage listing practice.

The Second World War interrupted the realisation of the recommendations raised in the Athens Charter, and the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments was not held until 1964. The Venice Charter adopted at this second congress inherited the main ideas of the Athens Charter but enlarged its scope to include both individual buildings/sites and urban/rural settings, and both 'great works of art' and 'more modest works of the past' (ICOMOS, 1964, art. 1). By stressing that 'the intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as *works of art* [italics added] than as historical evidence' (*ibid.*, art. 3), it is clear that architectural heritage is still seen as basically art, despite at the same time vaguely comprising associated societal values. This is also the context in which the notion of 'authenticity' was introduced into international agreements and, in turn, emphasised.

It is worth noting that the Venice Charter explicitly put forward the notions of 'common heritage', 'unity of human values', and 'common responsibility' to safeguard the common heritage, which were later echoed by the concepts of 'world heritage', 'outstanding universal value', and 'collective protection' in the 1972 World Heritage Convention (hereafter 'Convention') adopted by UNESCO. The Convention, following the Athens Charter and the Venice Charter, also defines 'cultural heritage' as *objects* and emphasises *built environment*. It

divides cultural heritage into three categories: ‘monuments’, ‘groups of buildings’, and ‘sites’, and establishes the ‘World Heritage List’, which echoes the recommendation of the Athens Charter on ‘an inventory of ancient monuments’. With 193 adhering countries (UNESCO, 2019), the Convention, which is still used internationally today, is the most influential international agreement on heritage practice. Taylor and Verdini (2022, pp. 110–113) called attention to the fact that it is the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (hereafter ‘Operational Guidelines’) that in effect guide World Heritage nominations and inscriptions, and this Guidelines has indeed been revised regularly to assimilate new concepts, knowledge, and experiences since its initial publication in 1977. In spite of this, the original text of the Convention nevertheless serves as the basis for many countries’ official heritage policies and regulations, leading them to adopt an architectural conception of heritage.

The Interdisciplinary Conception of Heritage

The heritage practice with listing and management as its essential components was initially framed mainly with consideration of architectural and planning history, rather than social history. Thus, it is not surprising that, at first, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and the heritage departments of most countries adopted a set of criteria which manifest architects’ and urban planners’ concerns in evaluating potential cultural heritages. For a long time, the potential cultural heritages under discussion were primarily and predominantly tangible *built environments*. The main task of these national and international heritage organisations was then to decide which buildings or sites should be *listed* as the official cultural heritage and then *manage* these heritage buildings/sites as artistic and/or archaeological masterpieces accordingly[6]. With the architecturally framed heritage practice promoted internationally by

[6] Although later treaties such as the 1994 Nara Document and the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention lessened the impact of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the concept of heritage as an *object* and its

UNESCO in the 1970s, the architects' initial wish to include specialists from a variety of relevant disciplines and engage the public in heritage practice[7] was realised, but not in the way that the architects had imagined.

- The Unaccepted Architectural Conception

In recent years, the idea that heritage is primarily material, has innate values, and can be of universal significance has been called into doubt, and the UNESCO World Heritage listing process is sometimes even seen as merely a political game (Zhang, 2017). There are frequent debates over 'whose and which value/value system decides what is heritage and what identity is represented by a certain heritage' in the light of postcolonialism, feminism, and multiculturalism (see for example: Hall, 1999; Smith, 2006; Taylor, 2019; Waterton and Smith, 2010), with heritage dualities at the centre: cultural heritage vs. natural heritage, material heritage vs. immaterial heritage, universal heritage value vs. local heritage value (including regional/national heritage value), innate heritage value vs. associated heritage value and so forth.

The failure of the architectural notion of 'heritage' to be accepted by the wider academia is reasonable. Firstly, unlike paintings or artefacts, built environments have a strong social dimension besides their significance as works of art. Built environments are where we live our everyday lives; they are not something that we only encounter and appreciate when we choose to go, for example, to a gallery or museum. Built heritage is always there in the public space and is hard to be deliberately avoided. The public, especially the locals, get to understand a built heritage site through their daily viewing and interaction with it, the events taking place in and

accompanying heritage listing and management procedures still have a strong influence on the heritage practice today, internationally and locally alike.

[7] For example, in the Athens Charter by architects and technicians, there are statements such as 'the architects and curators of monuments should *collaborate with specialists in the physical, chemical, and natural sciences* [italics added] with a view to determining the methods to be adopted in specific cases', and 'the technical work undertaken in connection with the excavation and preservation of ancient monuments calls for *close collaboration between the archaeologist and the architect* [italics added]'. These can be seen as the initial calls for interdisciplinary heritage practice.

around it, and/or the stories, anecdotes, and history associated with it. While people normally learn about a masterpiece of painting or a piece of antiquity through interpretive signage or the interpretations of its creator or owner, the extent to which these interpretation methods influence visitors' understanding of built heritage sites is questionable. The social dimension of built heritage makes it particularly hard to inform the public of a preferred narrative about a certain built heritage site by specialists or heritage professionals.

Secondly, with increasingly more professionals and academics from other humanities and social science disciplines engaging in the heritage discourse, the narrow 'architectural' definition of cultural heritage as some 'historic built environment' is not satisfying. In fact, from the very beginning of international collaborative heritage practice, 'heritage' can have completely different meanings in other disciplines. For example, English classical scholar and Marxist philosopher George Thomson wrote in 1946: 'This, then, is the first need—to rescue our bourgeois *heritage* [italics added] from the bourgeoisie, to take it over, reinterpret it, adapt it to our needs, renew its vitality by making it thoroughly our own.' (Thomson, 1946, p. 65) Here, heritage is not some 'thing' that should be kept intact, but rather intangibles such as literature, which can be (re)interpreted and used to meet the current needs of a certain group. The great diversity in the understanding of heritage urged the concept of heritage to be more inclusive and suggested a larger scope of heritage studies.

Thirdly, the value-based approach to heritage practice prompted debates around the values of heritage. Scholars and professionals put emphasis on different aspects of heritage values, even when they are using the same term in debates. Architects, whose job is to build, naturally focus on tangible *things* (i.e., built environments including buildings, urban areas, etc.). They adopt 'the ability to build' and 'the ability to understand buildings' as their fundamental values, and thus nominate heritage sites with two underlying principles: 1. hard to

achieve[8], and 2. representing certain philosophical turn(s) in the professional understanding of architecture[9]. Such architectural values are seen to comprise artistic and technical merits and are understood to be inherent in built heritage sites. In contrast, other scholars such as historians and sociologists tend to focus on the intangible *past* and consider heritage values as societal values that are associated with a heritage site. Furthermore, scholars and professionals with different disciplinary backgrounds can use the same term to express very different meanings. By using 'historical value', as mentioned previously, architects mean, somewhat superficially, that historical built masterpieces manifest the great achievements of a time-honoured civilisation and are thus testimony to history. Historians, however, always know that there is no single history. To them, history is not neutral and is subject to (re)interpretation and manipulation. When historians face the term 'historical value', they take the idea a step further and ask 'Which history?' and 'Whose history?' This makes the debate over the historical value(s) of heritage much more complex and takes it far beyond the scope of architecture. It perhaps perplexes architects that historians such as Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison condemn heritage as simply 'bad' and 'false' history: those historians contend that heritage unifies, stifles, and denies the real history and represents conservative political interests (Hewison, 1987; Wright, 2009 [1985]). Even though historian Raphael Samuel did affirm the value of heritage in terms of history, his argument was nevertheless that heritage puts the emphasis on ordinary people's lives, thus serving to make the past more democratic (Samuel, 2012).

[8] For example, the Stonehenge in the United Kingdom (UK), the Pyramid in Egypt, the Palace of Versailles in France, and the Forbidden City in China.

[9] Philosophical turns in the understanding of architecture include, for instance, 'less is more' and 'form follows function'. An example that represents such philosophical turns is the Bauhaus buildings such as the UNESCO World Heritage 'Bauhaus and its Sites in Weimar, Dessau and Bernau'.

- A More Inclusive Conception of Heritage

Given all the previous facts, the concept of heritage evolved in the debates of subsequent years. The subject of heritage enquiry was enlarged to cover not only tangible objects but also intangible processes, and heritage values to include not only architectural values but also societal values. The Burra Charter, first published by Australia ICOMOS in 1979 and subsequently revised in 1981, 1988, 1999, and 2013, is widely recognised as a key document in introducing 'social value' to conservation policy and practice as an equal with the traditionally privileged heritage values (Jones, 2017). This shift is also demonstrated by the later international treaties: in 1994, the Nara Document on Authenticity challenged the former definition of 'authenticity' which was based on the assumption that built heritage sites are similar to and should be dealt with in the same manner as antiques and masterpieces of painting, and in turn redefined the concept of authenticity (ICOMOS, 1994); in 2003, 'intangible cultural heritage' was emphasised in international heritage practice by UNESCO with the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. With increasing attention to the non-expert public perceptions of heritage and their associated values, Leblanc (1993, p. 2), the then president of ICOMOS Canada, defined heritage as 'what ever [*sic*.] each one of us individually or collectively wish to preserve and pass on to the next generation'. As 'heritage' becomes an increasingly inclusive concept, the scope of heritage studies becomes increasingly vague. Lowenthal (1998, p. 94) thus commented that 'heritage today all but defies definition' and criticised the overuse of the term 'heritage' for reducing this term to cant.

- Heritage: A verb?

Despite the fact that the English word 'heritage' as a verb is considered obsolete and rare[10] ('heritage, *v.*', 2021) and that today 'heritage' is used as a noun only, geographer and

[10] There are two senses of heritage as a verb: 1. *transitive*. To inherit; 2. To give for an inheritance. Quotations concerning both senses are from the fourteenth century.

critical heritage scholar David Charles Harvey (2001) re-claimed that 'heritage' is a verb but, different from the original meanings of the verb of 'heritage', describes the *process* of producing the so-called 'heritage' (as a noun) and its accompanying production of identity and cultural power. He argued that heritage is a 'way of seeing and being' (*ibid.*, p. 327), a subjective and value-laden concept which is related to the past but is filtered with reference to the present. Schofield (2016 [2014], p. 2) equated 'heritage' with 'landscape' by simply claiming that 'landscape is heritage; heritage is landscape'. Radical such conception of heritage may be, it is noteworthy that Harvey understands 'heritage' in a very similar fashion to the way scholars of the period understood 'landscape' in the field of landscape studies: cultural geographers at that time suggested that 'landscape' is a way of representing and seeing (see for example: Cosgrove, 1985; Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988; Duncan, 1995). Further, Mitchell (1994, pp. 1–2) [11] thinks of landscape 'not as an object … but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed' and regards landscape as 'an instrument of cultural power', and, therefore, in the book *Landscape and Power* aimed to 'change "landscape" from a noun to a verb', which is precisely what Harvey proposes about 'heritage'.

Like those understandings of 'landscape', what underlies Harvey's conception of heritage is post-structuralism which has been influential in the humanities and took the study of literature in geography 'to a new level' (Duncan, 1995, p. 419). Based on what structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) defined as a 'sign', which is a union of 'signifier' (the sound of the word) and 'signified' (the concept represented by the word), the key concept of post-structuralism is 'the chain of signification'. Post-structuralist critics argue that the relationship between signifier and signified is not stable, and there is 'an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier' (Lacan, 2006, p. 503) that causes the ambiguity of language.

[11] It is noteworthy that W. J. T. Mitchell is editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Critical Inquiry*, a quarterly devoted to critical theory in the arts and human sciences.
See: https://arthistory.uchicago.edu/faculty/profiles/mitchell (Accessed: 4 November 2020).

In the sense of slippage in language, the word 'landscape', and in heritage studies, the word 'heritage' can be understood as a signifier that signifies beyond the concept of *material* 'landscape' or 'heritage'. Following these ideas, critical heritage studies have, in turn, focused on 'the larger issues that bear upon and extend outwards from heritage' (Winter, 2013a, p. 533).

Introducing the definition of landscape as 'a way of seeing' into geography, Daniels and Cosgrove (1988, p. 1) nevertheless stressed that 'this is not to say that landscapes are immaterial'. In contrast, some commentators in critical heritage studies have gone much further and radically claimed that 'all heritage is intangible' (Smith, 2006, p. 3; Smith, 2011) and that heritage is 'made' rather than 'found' (see for example: Avrami and Mason, 2019; Pietrostefani and Holman, 2021; Smith, 2017; Zhu and Maags, 2020). Heritage is re-described as a process of conscious and selective remembrance of the past to meet the cultural, social, political, or economic needs of the present (Marschall, 2008; Smith, 2011), which Macdonald put as 'past presencing [*sic*.]' (Macdonald, 2013). Graham *et al*. (2000, p. 2) even straightforwardly defined heritage as 'the contemporary use of the past'. Nevertheless, the newer and repetitive rhetorical statement that 'heritage' is a 'process' rather than a 'product' and is a verb rather than a noun (see for example: Emerick, 2014, p. 190; Fraser, 2020; Howard, 2003; Waterton and Smith, 2009) does not clearly demarcate the subject of heritage studies either. In fact, since heritage is increasingly investigated out of any specific context, the answers to the questions 'What is heritage?' and 'What is the scope of heritage studies?' are even vaguer. I will return to this point in the following sections.

Many scholars take the choice between 'heritage is a noun' and 'heritage is a verb' for granted and seem to be stuck in the endless debate about 'heritage as an object/thing' versus 'heritage as a process': Franquesa (2013, p. 348) argued that heritage exists both as a process and as an object, for heritage is, after all, 'a process that produces objects'. Skrede and Hølleland (2018) analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the current (critical) heritage studies through

the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Realism. They noted that the linguistic feature of 'nominalisation' is centred in the 'noun vs. verb' heritage debates, but simply took it for granted that the possible nominalisation in the concept of heritage is 'replacing verb processes with a noun construction' (*ibid.*, p. 77). They also disagree that heritage is only a verb and a process and, taking Critical Realism's non-reductionist stance, argued that heritage is both a verb and a noun. Nevertheless, the fundamental question is: do we have to choose from 'noun/object' or 'verb/process' to define 'heritage'? Or is it possible that the word 'heritage' can act as some other part of speech?

Heritage as a Status: Disciplinary understandings for interdisciplinary collaborations

The draft additions to the OED entry of 'heritage, *n.*' in 1993 shed light on the contemporary use of the word 'heritage': '*attributive*. Characterized by or pertaining to the preservation or exploitation of local and national features of historical, cultural, or scenic interest, esp. as tourist attractions' ('heritage, *n.*', 2021, subsense 6.a). Indeed, nowadays the word 'heritage' is used attributively like an adjective in many cases such as 'heritage building' and 'heritage site', and also in specific compounds such as the 'heritage coast' in the UK. In this sense, the 'nominalisation' in the concept of heritage may well be the process of forming a noun from an adjective. If our investigation into heritage starts from the premise that heritage is neither a 'thing' nor a 'process', but rather a particular *status* of *anything* in the world – that heritage is basically an adjective, or an abstract noun made from an adjective – many seemingly controversial arguments regarding heritage become rather meaningless and unnecessary.

Rhetoric is not uncommon in the public language today. When studying value in the Australian culture, Meyrick *et al.* (2018, p. 88) noticed that some abstract nouns such as 'innovation' and 'excellence' become enduring in so much policy discussion that they 'seem to cycle through on a mental Lazy Susan', while other abstract nouns including 'sustainability'

and ‘vibrancy’ have seasonal vogues. It is noteworthy that these abstract nouns are all products of nominalisation from some adjectives: ‘innovative’, ‘excellent’, ‘sustainable’, and ‘vibrant’. Despite the fact that these ‘nouns’ are repeatedly used in the public narratives and can be attached to nearly anything, they do not help to elucidate anything specific but merely claim a *status* which is represented by their corresponding adjectives. As Meyrick and his colleagues pointed out, ‘the words of largest scope have the least meaning’, and the belief that ‘a word meaningful in concrete situations […] can generate a general category that transcends concrete instances in a varied field’ is simply ‘misleading’ (*ibid.*). They, therefore, suggested avoiding abstract nouns and being specific in all descriptions, that is talking of, for example, ‘excellent paintings’ instead of ‘excellence’.

The same language abuse is evident in the public language concerning ‘heritage’ if the word is viewed as an abstract noun based on an adjective, just like ‘excellence’ and ‘sustainability’: the word ‘heritage’ was initially used by architects in a concrete situation (i.e., ‘heritage buildings’ and ‘heritage sites’) with clear definition and selection standards. After the concept of heritage was adopted by UNESCO to form its ‘World Heritage’ narrative, however, the word ‘heritage’ is increasingly regarded to be able to be attached to *anything* and, in turn, keeps losing meaning as a precise descriptor. The later-established critical heritage studies even radically detach the word from *everything* to declare the independence of ‘heritage’ and claim it to be essentially intangible. From that perspective, anything can be labelled as ‘heritage’ as long as it is involved in the heritage *process*. This prompted Berliner (2018, p. 301) to question whether anything and everything can become heritage with the query ‘Are there any inherent, *intrinsic* qualities to sites, objects or gestures that make them catchy enough to become *patrimoine*?’ In other words, what is the essence of heritage?

If heritage is an adjective or an abstract noun to describe a *status*, surely it *is* intangible, as is any other status, and different people/groups can have different ideas about what is the

status of 'heritage'. However, just like debating over what is 'excellence' or 'sustainability' regardless of concrete situations is meaningless, the enquiries into the 'inherently intangible' heritage without referring to any specific situation (e.g., architecture, literature, etc.) will not lead to anywhere. In this case, it is always necessary to define the 'heritage' that is under consideration by situating the concept into a specific context.

Research Subject: Built heritage in the urban context

In the light of the above discussion, the conception that heritage is an adjective or an abstract noun to signify a *status* is, compared with other conceptions such as 'heritage is a noun (i.e., an object)' and 'heritage is a verb (i.e., a process)', evidently more tenable in theoretical terms. This alternative conception of heritage is exactly what this thesis proposes and aims to verify in the field and further develop on the basis of case studies. Heritage as a status is conceptualised for, as cited previously, 'the contemporary use of the past' (Graham *et al.*, 2000, p. 2). David Charles Harvey (2008, p. 19) stated that the process by which people use the past is 'a discursive construction with material consequences'. In this thesis, such a process is understood as heritage making, which is sometimes also termed 'heritagisation' (Saintenoy *et al.*, 2019; see also, for example: Altaba Tena and García-Esparza, 2018; Park *et al.*, 2018). During the process of heritage making, the past is materialised as concrete *things* which are assigned values and thus justified or legitimised to acquire a 'heritage' status[12].

As argued previously, any heritage enquiry must situate the concept of heritage into a specific and concrete context in order to be meaningful. This research thus limits its heritage investigation to built heritage within the urban context. In this thesis, only *built things* in the city, including structures, buildings, and urban areas, are considered in terms of whether, how,

[12] It is noteworthy that practices also need concrete things (including people) as carriers. In this sense, the so-called 'intangible heritage' of rituals and cultural practices is indeed tangible and materially based. Here it is important to be aware that the word 'intangible' in the UNESCO concept of 'intangible heritage', and that in some claims from the critical heritage perspective such as 'all heritage is intangible', have different meanings and connotations.

and why they are officially or unofficially given a heritage status. Along the same line, the probe into heritage making in this thesis considers only the processes that materialise the past as built environments. In such cases, the corresponding built environments, whether pre-existing or newly constructed, serve as the 'material consequences' of 'the contemporary use of the past'. They bear certain officially and/or unofficially assigned values and have, therefore, acquired an official or unofficial heritage status and become a 'made heritage'. Obviously, the conventional heritage listing practice, which derives from the architectural conception of heritage, is a kind of official heritage-making process. However, this research goes beyond heritage listing and looks into a variety of heritage-making processes which represent diverse ways of heritagisation in the urban context.

Presenting Colonial Pasts: A probe into the Russian and the Japanese colonial effects on contemporary Harbin

This research features a comprehensive investigation into the colonial effects on post-colonial Harbin from the perspectives of heritage studies and urban studies. It addresses the following questions: How, and to what extent, does Harbin present and interpret its pasts associated with the Russian and the Japanese colonial periods through heritage making in contemporary urban maintenance and development? Why are certain images, narratives, and interpretations chosen at different times for these two differing colonial pasts? What debates, controversies, challenges, and predicaments are involved in this dynamic process? In this research, built heritages relating to Harbin's colonial pasts are examined against the background of the broader city and considered as one of the many variables in the urban processes. Based on the case studies of colonial heritage making, remaking, and unmaking in Harbin, the ultimate goal of this research is a deeper understanding of heritage per se.

It is worth clarifying that, with this thesis, I do not intend to study colonialism, postcolonialism, or the diverse colonial histories in China or around the world, nor do I propose a typological study of colonial heritage which generalise from Harbin's two colonial heritage examples (i.e., its Russian and Japanese colonial heritages) to all forms of colonial heritage. Rather, I see the post-colonial Harbin's various colonial heritage phenomena, which occur in the same urban context and relate to the city's different pasts of the same nature (i.e., *colonial* pasts), as an entry point to fundamentally understand the nature and essence of the very concept of heritage.

Research Methods

This qualitative research was conducted using archival analysis, observation, interviews, and user-generated content (UGC) analysis. I initially planned to do my six-month fieldwork in Harbin from March to August 2020. However, this plan was curtailed by COVID-19. My flight to China in late February 2020 was cancelled due to the epidemic in China, and Australia closed its borders later in March because this epidemic soon evolved into a pandemic. While both China's and Australia's COVID-19 conditions and border policies have been constantly changing during the period of my doctoral research, it has not been possible to visit Harbin. Fortunately, though, I was born in Harbin, had lived there for 18 years, and had gone back and visited the city occasionally throughout the years before coming to Australia. Therefore, I was able to collect data remotely – thanks to my connections in Harbin and the abundant online information resources.

The text-based data for archival analysis were collected mainly from the internet and university libraries in Australia. These include materials that are relevant to this research in terms of theory and case studies, such as research books and published research papers; laws of China; policy documents at the international, national, provincial, and municipal levels;

published heritage lists at the national, provincial, and municipal levels; published and unpublished urban planning and design texts, guidelines, and drawings; news articles; and blogs. Virtual tours of Harbin were done using the street view service 'Panorama [全景]' of Baidu Maps. Since I had lived in Harbin for a long time, some of these virtual tours were mainly to refresh my memory. Besides the virtual tours around the city in general terms, virtual tours to specific sites were also conducted by watching relevant online videos which were uploaded by tourists and visitors, and by making video calls with my connections in Harbin who were visiting the place to show me the site in real time. It is worth mentioning that the Exhibition Hall of Evidences of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army [侵华日军第七三一部队罪证陈列馆] offers visitors a comprehensive and informative virtual guided tour with 360-degree panoramas and pre-recorded audio interpretation online at its official website (www.731museum.org.cn), which makes remote visiting not only comfortable but also fruitful.

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 39 informants in 2020 and 2021 via video calls or phone calls. Among the interviewees, there are 32 local people, three officials (including two government officials and one official in the local tourism industry), and four professionals in urban planning and architecture (including three urban planners and one architect). Interviewees in the 'local people' group were selected according to gender, birth year, educational attainment, and district of residence in a balanced manner. Their birth year ranges from 1931 to 2001, with people born in each decade (i.e., 1930s, 1940s, …, 2000s) represented. The interviewees' educational attainment ranges from primary school graduate to doctoral degree and includes all the major possibilities lying in between in the Chinese context[13]. Their districts of residence cover all the four districts of Harbin's old town, namely, Nangang, Daoli, Daowai, and Xiangfang, and also include relatively remote districts such as Pingfang and new

[13] These possibilities include junior middle school graduate, technical school [技校] graduate, vocational middle school [中专] graduate, high school graduate, college [大专] diploma, bachelor's degree, and master's degree.

town districts such as Songbei. As for the officials being interviewed, the two government officials work in the housing and urban–rural development department and the cultural heritage department respectively. These are the two major government departments in charge of built heritage in China. The official in the local tourism industry works in upper management at one of Harbin's largest travel agencies. The architect and the urban planners being interviewed all work for major planning/design institutes and/or universities in Harbin. Interviewees were recruited based on my long-established personal and professional networks in Harbin. In addition to that, I recruited some interviewees by contacting them using their contact details that were disclosed online. Interviewees recruited in this way are mainly local people who had been actively participating in built-heritage-related discussions and debates in online communities such as I'm Harbin [大话哈尔滨] and Zhihu [知乎], and staff members of certain organisations who are responsible for relevant works. Snowball sampling was adopted as a complementary sampling technique to recruit local people of certain qualities, in order to achieve a more balanced sample set and avoid selection bias.

Interview questions for local people are divided into four parts. The first part entails the interviewees' personal and collective memories of Harbin's colonial pasts and decolonisation; the second part focuses on the interviewees' knowledge about the concepts of heritage, built heritage, and colonial (built) heritage, and when necessary, provides clarification on what is meant by these terms; the third part concerns the interviewees' overall views about and attitudes towards Harbin's built heritage with colonial backgrounds; the fourth part invites the interviewees to comment on the recent colonial heritage practice of the city and also several specific Japanese/Russian colonial heritage sites. Questions for heritage professionals and government officials were individually designed according to the researcher's prior knowledge of each interviewee's role and experience, which are typically divided into two parts: the first part focuses on their built-heritage-related works, and the second on their personal opinions

about Harbin's colonial pasts as well as its current uses of those. In terms of these interviewees' built-heritage-related works, the interviews with the government officials focused on Harbin's official colonial heritage making and relevant laws, policies, and strategies; the interview with the official in the local tourism industry focused on how the tourism sector perceives and interacts with the colonial heritage sites in Harbin; the interviews with the architect and the urban planners focused on the colonial-heritage-related planning and design projects in Harbin. Interviews typically took one hour, with the longest taking approximately four hours and the shortest taking approximately 20 minutes.

In this thesis, interviewees are not referred to by their names, in order to keep their identities confidential. Instead, each interviewee is given an ID code which is comprised of a letter and a number. The letter in the ID code identifies under which group the person was interviewed. Local people are identified by the letter 'L'; officials, including government officials and officials in the local industry, are identified by the letter 'O'; and professionals in urban planning and architecture are identified by the letter 'P'. For example, 'Interviewee L-1' refers to a person who was interviewed under the 'local people' group and given the identifier number '1'. All the quotes from the interviewees in this thesis are translated by me from the original Chinese language.

UGC analysis is used to understand tourists' perceptions of the Unit 731 heritage site in Pingfang District, Harbin. User-generated reviews of this heritage site that were posted on the travel websites 'Mafengwo [马蜂窝]' and 'Tripadvisor' before 1 March 2022 are scrutinised and qualitatively analysed. This method is also partially used in the case studies of Jihong Bridge and the Chinese Baroque area: user-generated ideas relevant to these two projects, which were posted on the microblogging and social networking website 'Sina Weibo [新浪微博]' (hereafter 'Weibo'), are extracted and qualitatively analysed.

Reflections on Fieldwork

Although my planned on-site fieldwork was at last conducted remotely by (re)visiting the city virtually using Baidu Maps and interviewing people via video calls or phone calls, I did not specially adjust the key elements of my fieldwork plan, such as my interview questions, to this change. This is primarily because I have obtained sufficient background knowledge about Harbin prior to this research project and, thanks to my identity as a Harbin-born researcher and my long-established connection to the city, in most cases I do not need to build rapport with my interviewees from scratch. The interviewees who were recruited based on my personal and professional connections in Harbin and those recruited using snowball sampling generally see me as an 'insider' and trust me.

Indeed, in China, colonial history is still politically sensitive to a certain extent. When I approached local people who work 'within the system' (for example, in a government department or a public institution), a few of them were cautious about speaking extensively about relevant matters. People who were contacted by me using their online contact information were comparatively more suspicious at the beginning, and this was especially so due to the recent difficult relationship between China and Australia: in an online chat conversation, a prospective interviewee asked me straightforwardly whether I hold Chinese nationality or Australian nationality. I have given up interviewing those people whose trust I believe I did not fully gain, so as to achieve higher overall data quality. In general, I am confident that my interviewees have spoken their minds and that the interview data are credible.

Overview of the Thesis

The contemporary heritage making of Harbin is analysed from a comparative perspective, with both the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts of the city being considered. This thesis approaches its research questions in both theoretical and practical terms, which features four

heritage-making cases that are affected by colonial factors. The case studies include Harbin Railway Station, the former site of the Unit 731 headquarters, Jihong Bridge, and the Chinese Baroque area. Both official and popular perceptions are taken into consideration. On the basis of a comprehensive investigation into Harbin's colonial heritage issue, the research further discusses the role of heritage in contemporary Chinese cities, questions the conventionally understood importance of heritage values and authenticity in heritage making and sustaining, and suggests a new understanding of the relationship between heritage and development.

Chapter 2 – 'Nostalgia for the Russian Past? Russian colonial heritage, collective memory, and city image' – examines the making of Russian colonial heritage in Harbin in recent years. The city's Russian colonial past has been increasingly in the spotlight with a seeming sense of colonial nostalgia since the 1990s, and the relating built heritage making has shifted from heritage listing and restoration to heritage creation and (re)construction. With the case study of Harbin Railway Station, this chapter scrutinises this 'colonial nostalgia' phenomenon and Harbin's most recent reinterpretations of its Russian colonial heritage as industrial heritage and revolutionary heritage. Chapter 3 – 'Humiliated by the Japanese Past: Japanese colonial heritage, negative heritage, and national identity' – turns to Harbin's making of its Japanese colonial heritage. The chapter starts with an analysis of the historical reasons that sustain Harbin's distinctively different attitudes to its Russian and Japanese colonial pasts from a comparative perspective, and then investigates the city's contemporary approaches to its Japanese colonial heritage in the light of the Chinese central government's 'national humiliation' discourse. The case of the Unit 731 headquarters is studied to examine the means and effects of highlighting negative colonial heritage in this post-colonial Chinese city.

Through case studies of relatively successful heritage projects, Chapters 2 and 3 provide a fundamental and multidimensional understanding of how and why Harbin has presented its Russian and Japanese colonial pasts and interpreted their corresponding colonial heritages in

certain ways. However, the on-site situation can be very complex when such heritage projects are launched in the real world, and colonial heritage is not always successfully made. Chapter 4 – 'Colonial Heritage in the Making: Stakeholders, conflicts, and predicaments' – investigates Harbin's two recent difficult and unsatisfactory heritage projects that are based on the city's colonial past(s): Jihong Bridge and the Chinese Baroque area. The chapter pays special attention to the challenges and predicaments faced by post-colonial Harbin during its heritage-making processes. The case studies aim to understand to what extent colonial factors can affect the contemporary heritage making of Harbin, and what impacts can other factors, such as the diverse opinions, needs, and desires of various stakeholders, have on colonial heritage making.

With comprehensive knowledge of Harbin's contemporary heritage making (and also heritage remaking and unmaking) that relates to its colonial pasts, Chapter 5 – 'Colonial Heritage in a Dynamic City: Authenticity or compatibility?' – reflects on the current relationship between colonial heritage and the post-colonial cities in China and, more broadly, the essence of heritage in contemporary cities and beyond. With an investigation into the concept of authenticity and an introduction to the notion of 'historic urban landscape' (especially its thoughts about urban layering), the chapter calls for understanding (colonial) heritage from a more dynamic and development-oriented perspective and highlights the significant role of compatibility in heritage making and sustaining.

Chapter 6 – 'Conclusion: Heritage as a part of development' – concludes the thesis and identifies directions for future research on the basis of this study. It is emphasised that the heritage should be understood as a part, rather than a counterpart, of development.

2

NOSTALGIA FOR THE RUSSIAN PAST?

Russian colonial heritage, collective memory, and city image

Despite the extensive demolition in the early years of the PRC, quite a few colonial-era buildings survived that decolonisation process. Consequently, Harbin today still accommodates diverse examples of European architectural styles including Russian traditional, neoclassical, Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Art Nouveau, and eclectic, as well as examples of the hybrid Chinese Baroque architecture (Figure 2.1). They dominate the landscape of Harbin's three historic urban centres (namely, Nangang, Daoli, and Daowai) and are simply too distinct and conspicuous to be overlooked.

A deep-rooted notion of Harbin's local people is that the city is known as the 'Oriental Little Paris [东方小巴黎]'. This term was freely used by many local inhabitants during their interviews:

> Harbin has been known as the 'Oriental Moscow [东方莫斯科]' and the 'Oriental Little Paris' for a long time because it has many buildings that are very similar to those in Europe. [Interviewee L-5, born in 1931, male]

> The influence [of the Western settlers] in the 1920s on Harbin lasts till today. Harbin is the Oriental Little Paris and has a foreign flavour. The city is permeated by foreign culture, lifestyle, and… everything. [Interviewee L-22, born in 1959, female]

> Many [Chinese] people may not have the chance of travelling abroad. Harbin is known as the 'Oriental Moscow' and the 'Oriental Little Paris'. When they come to Harbin and see these [Western-style] buildings, they may have the feeling of being abroad. [Interviewee L-6, born in 1991, female]

Although this long-standing appellation is widely known by Harbin locals, its origin is still an unsettled question.

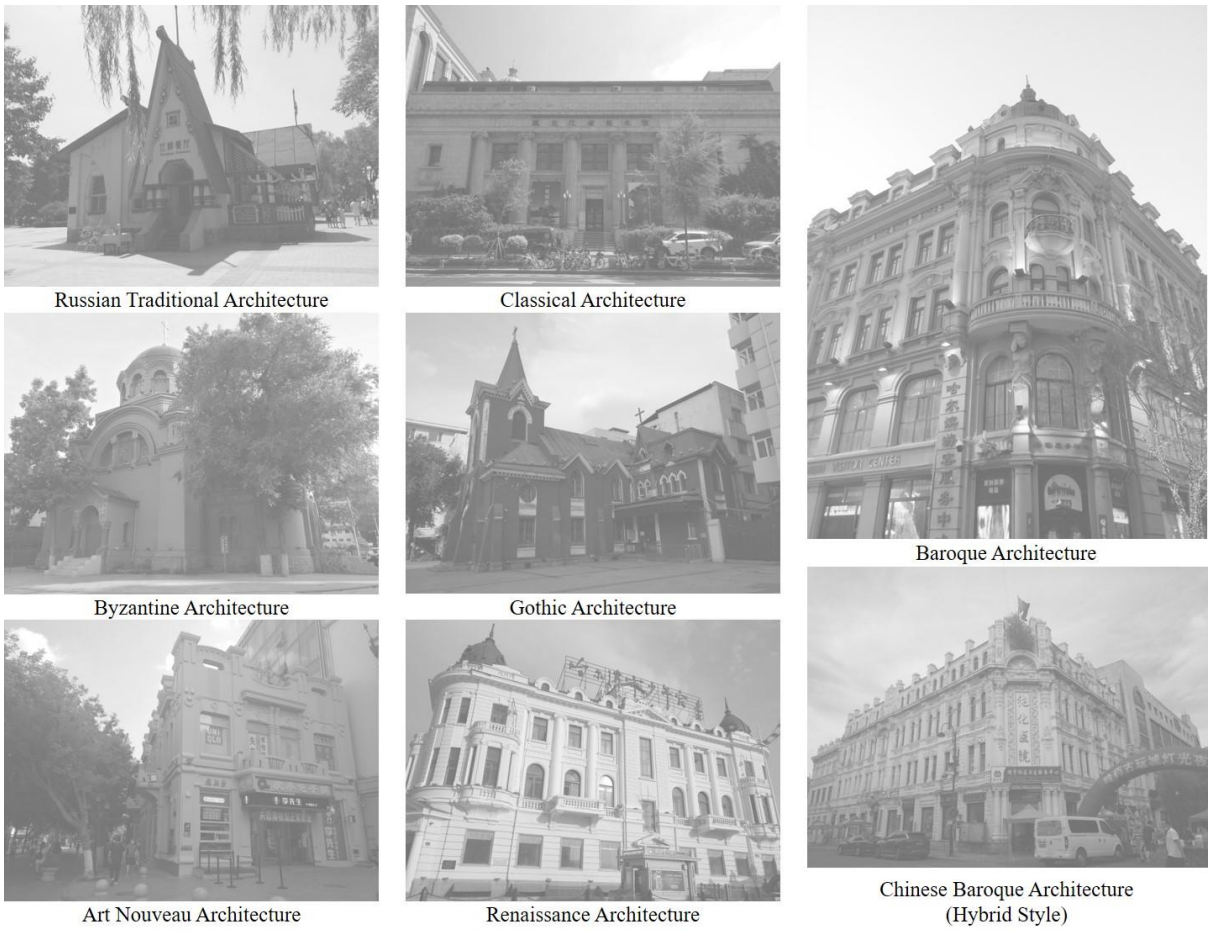


Figure 2.1 Examples of Harbin's historic buildings in European/hybrid styles

Sources: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2018 and 2020.

There are mainly three explanations as to why the city is known as the 'Oriental Little Paris'. The first and best-accepted explanation is that Harbin has diverse buildings in various Western architectural styles, which makes the city look like European cities such as Paris (see for example: Song *et al.*, 2008; Zhang and Xu, 2019). The second explanation is history related: as the White Russians fled from Russia after the October Revolution, many of them went to

Paris, while many others went to Harbin; for the latter, Harbin was the 'Oriental Paris'. The third is that people in Harbin yearn for the prosperity and romance of Paris and, therefore, coined the term as a means of city promotion.

In contrast to its uncertain origin, the appellation's significance since the late 1990s is certain: it has been highly publicized along with the initial promotion of Russian colonial heritage sites. 'Oriental Little Paris' is nowadays a most popular term among Harbin locals, despite the local writer A-Cheng (1995, p. 116) once observed that this historical appellation of Harbin is 'withering away'. Other terms that were frequently used by the local interviewees to describe the character of Harbin include 'Oriental Moscow', 'foreign flavour [洋气]', and 'European style'. In Harbin, the Russian-era architectural remains are, by common consent, beautiful and, in the Chinese context, unique.

Collective Memory and Nostalgia

The past can be approached through lenses of history, memory, and heritage, among which heritage serves as a body of selected history and memory. While history attaches itself to events, memory attaches itself to objects and places (Nora, 1989). Therefore, the city itself can be regarded as its people's collective memory (Rossi, 1982, p. 130), or more specifically, its 'urban memory'. Urban memory is generally seen as a kind of collective memory that is 'constituted by individuals' experiences within the place itself and through its history and social environment' (Ringas *et al.*, 2011, p. 340).

Halbwachs (1992 [1925]) stated that people's conceptions of the past are affected by the present problems which they need to solve, and the collective memory is in effect a reconstruction of the past from a present perspective. Thus, collective memories are often imaginary rather than depicting facts and actual events (Wang, 2012, p. 15). Nora (1989, p. 8) further argued that collective memory remains in permanent evolution, is 'vulnerable to

manipulation and appropriation', and can also be 'long dormant and periodically revived'. In the urban context, urban memory is dynamically and continuously reconstructed with the city's sequential building and rebuilding. It demonstrates the effect of present issues on the city's history as well as the interaction between the urban subject and object over time (F. Wang, 2016). Therefore, the research question informing this chapter is, to what extent is urban memory not only about remembrance but also about amnesia and nostalgia?

Cities change rapidly in the modern world, disconnecting people from the real environments of memory (*milieux de mémoire*) and prompting them to consciously cultivate sites of memory (*les lieux de mémoire*) (Nora, 1989), where the boundary between 'memory' and 'history' is no longer clear. These sites, being constructs, are invested with 'a symbolic aura' (*ibid.*, p. 19). Winter (2010, p. 315) pointed out that 'sites of memory are places where local politics happens'. Past can be renegotiated (Huyssen, 2003; Lowenthal, 2000), tradition can be invented (Hobsbawm, 1983; Winter, 2010), and heritage can be made (Avrami and Mason, 2019; Smith, 2017). Heritage making, along with heritage management, has been increasingly mobilised as integral to urban socio-economic development strategies around the world (Graham *et al.*, 2000; Silva, 2014), and the past, in turn, has become a 'world force' in the guise of heritage (Weiss, 2007). Whereas the understanding of *made* heritage downplays the age and material authenticity of heritage *things*, the material aspect of heritage consistently plays a key role in retaining and re-forming collective memory in one way or another. In cities, built heritage – historic buildings and landscape settings – is a natural carrier of urban memory that confirms the past but from a present standpoint.

Originally meaning homesickness regarded especially as a medical condition ('nostalgia, *n.*', 2019, sense 1), the term 'nostalgia' became associated with a 'sentimental longing for […] imagining or evocation of a period of the past' only later in the twentieth century (*ibid.*, subsense 2.a). Nostalgia is traditionally regarded as problematic and has thus been avoided as

a research subject (Campbell *et al.*, 2017), yet it allows us to feel attached to the time which we recall and, even more so, to the place at that time (Casey, 2000, p. 201). As regards the rapidly changing contemporary cities, nostalgia has been linked to the experience of loss which is endemic in modernity and postmodernity. Pickering and Keightley (2006, p. 921) understand nostalgia as 'the composite feeling of loss, lack and longing' which 'can be both melancholic and utopian'. Nostalgia, in this sense, offers a motivation to revisit, restore, and reconstruct the urban memories related to it. Taking this a step further, Berliner (2012, p. 770) abandoned the subjectivist usage of the term 'nostalgia' to describe a feeling per se but, instead, sees nostalgia as 'a specific posture *vis-à-vis* the past seen as irreversible, a set of publicly displayed discourses, practices, and emotions where the ancient is somehow glorified, without necessarily implying the experience of first-hand nostalgic memories'. From a similar perspective, Adams and Larkham (2016) argued that nostalgia is a progressive force in urban life, and a deeper understanding of the interaction between official and unofficial nostalgias can assist urban planners and policymakers in terms of sustainable urban transformation.

As a major type of urban memory carrier, urban heritage has long been associated with nostalgia. The two are synonymous with each other within the very influential 'heritage industry critique' (Smith and Campbell, 2017). Campbell *et al.* (2017) suggested treating nostalgia as an active affective practice to deal with the past and argued that nostalgia enhances people's feelings of authenticity towards heritage and the urban memory it bears.

Colonial Nostalgia? The Russian colonial heritage making in Harbin

Whereas scholars often probe into colonial heritage as a type of 'difficult heritage' (see Lee, 2019; Logan and Reeves, 2009), colonial nostalgia and its link to urban development have been noticed in many post-colonial cities around the world in general (see for example: Bandyopadhyay, 2012; Bissell, 2005; Peleggi, 2005) and in China in particular (Law and

Veldpaus, 2017; see also, for example: Pan, 2016). In such cities, a colonial past is frequently romanticised for tourism promotion, and colonial heritage is commodified as a type of tourist attraction (see also, for example: Jørgensen, 2019; H. Zhang, 2018). In the context of Harbin being deindustrialised and severely impoverished due to the privatisation of state-owned enterprises during the Chinese economic reform period, its initial transformation of colonial heritage in the late 1990s was also considered necessary for the city's economic survival, given that tourism can generate revenue and provide employment opportunities for the huge number of laid-off workers (Koga, 2008, p. 228).

Heritage Making by Listing, Heritage Promotion by Restoration

Harbin was listed as a 'National Distinctive Historical and Cultural City [国家历史文化名城]'[14] (see: Central People's Government (PRC), 2008) in 1994, and corresponding statutory conservation plans were made and amended by heritage professionals (mainly urban planners) in the following years. The most recent conservation plan is the revised version approved in 2012, which was valid until 2020. This revised version focuses on Harbin's districts of Nangang, Daoli, and Daowai. Its Thematic Conservation Plan especially highlights the city's Russian colonial heritage with themes of embassy buildings, cultural buildings, the CER buildings, Art Nouveau buildings, buildings related to the period of Jewish settlement, and churches (Tao *et al.*, 2012). Heritage sites of each theme are listed and mapped, and guidelines are prepared for their conservation. As with most official heritage management plans, this plan focuses on the material aspect of built heritage and often requires the historic sites to be frozen in time. It is also worth noting that the vast majority of the listed colonial heritage sites are aesthetically pleasing, and many of them had adopted the then cutting-edge architectural design and construction techniques.

[14] 'National Distinctive Historical and Cultural City' is an urban heritage project by the State Council of China. This project aims to conserve and manage cities of historical importance around the country.

In 1997, the Russian-founded Central Avenue [中央大街], a historic street that is the same age as Harbin, was renovated and transformed into China's first pedestrian street. Concurrently, the Russian-built Byzantine-style St. Sophia Cathedral was restored and granted landmark status. These two projects marked the local government's initial attempts at re-valuing and using Harbin's Russian colonial past and turning the city's Russian-era built settings into tourist attractions. Both projects turned out to be so highly successful that the local people of Harbin today still see Central Avenue and St. Sophia Cathedral as prominent places that represent their city. This is manifested by the fact that these two sites were most frequently mentioned by the local people who were interviewed. As Interviewee L-1 [born in 1992, female] explained, 'In terms of architecture, we've known that Central Avenue and St. Sophia Cathedral are unique to Harbin and are famous tourist attractions since we were children. This is a deep-rooted notion. We were not formally educated about this.'

In 2020, two decades after Central Avenue's initial transformation, a total of 1.7 billion yuan (approximately US$240 million then) was invested in the renovation and upgrade of this 120-year-old historic street, aiming to promote the 'European-style street in China' (Qiang, 2020). 43 Western-style historic buildings on Central Avenue and its side streets were repainted and repaired following extensive consultations between the local government and experts from a wide range of disciplines and fields including architecture, history, and tourism. The ambition was to 'recreate the historical appearance and atmosphere of the street' and make the precinct 'an international city's living room [国际化城市会客厅]' (*ibid.*). It is worth noting that the centrepiece of Central Avenue, an impressive Baroque building completed in 1918 which was originally the office building of Matsuura Foreign Firm [松浦洋行] and had been reused for a long time for other purposes such as Xinhua Bookstore and Harbin Tourist Service Centre, was renamed 'Matsuura Foreign Firm' and re-opened as a Western-style restaurant targeting tourists (Figure 2.2). On the façade of the refurbished building, the new slogans read 'Matsuura Western

Food 1918 [松浦西餐 1918]', 'tasting Matsuura, reminiscing about the past century [品松浦，忆百年]', which explicitly express a nostalgia, at least ostensibly, for the Russian colonial past.

Figure 2.2 Matsuura Foreign Firm

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Heritage Making by Creating, Heritage Promotion by (Re)Construction

As Law (2020, p. 233) observed in some other Chinese cities, 'the manufacture of historical branding has very real and/or tangible effects on the material urban environments and landscapes', which go beyond the conservation of pre-existing historic buildings and sites. Enjoying the big success in renovating and marketing the Russian-era heritage sites for the economic and cultural redevelopment of the city, Harbin is increasingly enthusiastic about advertising its Western character by showcasing its Russian colonial past.

In the past twenty years, a series of urban redevelopment and management projects focusing on 'Europeanisation' have been launched in Harbin: in 2003, Fendou Road [奋斗路, literally: Fight Road], a major road in Harbin CBD that was named after the 1950 inscription of 'Fendou' by Chairman Mao, was officially renamed with its original name 'Gogol Avenue [果戈里大街]'. At around the same time, Harbin began a prolonged project, which aimed at the building-façade renovation of the city's older residential areas. The main task of the project was to add European-style decorations to the humble Khrushchyovka buildings. The Russian River Park [俄罗斯河园], the Russian Style Town [俄罗斯风情小镇] on Sun Island, and the resort of Volga Manor, all featuring Russian culture and architecture, opened to visitors in 2003, 2004, and 2012 respectively. Even the city's transportation construction follows this trend. An example is the construction of the Harbin Metro, which started in 2008 and is still in progress – all the underground stations are decked out with European-style decorations. Interviewee L-28 [born in 1959, female] recognised such 'Europeanisation' as a fairly recent phenomenon and found it understandable:

> Nowadays anything built in Harbin has got an appearance imitating the European [architectural] styles because Harbin is known as the 'Oriental Little Paris'. The balustrades and bus stations in the city all seem to copy the European ones. For example, those green balustrades and pavilions.

She regarded producing European-style buildings and structures as a means of reinforcing the 'Oriental Little Paris' brand of Harbin and ensuring a unique urban character that distinguishes the city from other Chinese cities.

Notable also is that the demolished St. Nicholas Cathedral was rebuilt in the Volga Manor resort. The reconstruction was completed in 2009, and the reconstructed building has been serving as an art gallery since then. St. Nicholas Cathedral is not the only Russian Harbin's

landmark that was replicated. A more conspicuous case is the Russian-built Harbin Railway Station, which was completed in 1904 and demolished in 1960 (hereafter 'the old station').

A Case Study on Heritage Making and Interpretation: Contemporary urban memory of the Russian-built Harbin Railway Station

The old station was a light pistachio-green Art-Nouveau-style building. It was China's first railway station and was in good condition until its demolition. Although the old station no longer exists today, Harbin has been witnessing more and more replicas in the style of this building since 2000. In effect, the form of this previous landmark has become a motif in Harbin's contemporary architectural design. The earliest structure in the old station motif is probably the Sun Gate, the main entrance to the Sun Island Scenic Area, which was completed around 2005. Its design was inspired by the outline of the old station (Wang and Yu, 2011). Only a few years later, another gate designed with the same motif but in a more representational style was erected: the gate of the residential area 'Xishu Tingyuan' [溪树庭院, literally: Courtyard with Creek and Trees] (2009). This gate is also a component of the 1898 Art Square [1898 艺术广场], where an old steam locomotive is on display. Buildings in the old station motif appeared in the following years. The Harbin West Railway Station (2012) adopts the curve of the old station (Wang *et al.*, 2013), while the Chinese Eastern Railway Impressions Hall (2017) is more of a replica in terms of façade. Other designs with this motif include the entrance decoration of An Jung-geun Memorial Hall (2014) at the second-generation Harbin Railway Station[15] and the ice sculpture entrance of the 20th Harbin Ice and Snow World (Figure 2.3).

[15] The second-generation Harbin Railway Station was a modernist building designed by Chinese architects. Its construction started in 1960 and was completed in 1989.

Figure 2.3 The old Harbin Railway Station as a motif

Given all these replicas in the city, it is not surprising that after the second-generation Harbin Railway Station (Figure 2.4) was demolished in 2017, a new station building with a very similar design to the old station (Figure 2.5) was constructed as a replacement. This time, the replica was built exactly on the old station's original site. Being the third-generation Harbin Railway Station, the new building opened its door in late 2018 and immediately became a new cultural landmark in Harbin.

Figure 2.4 The second-generation Harbin Railway Station

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2016.

Figure 2.5 The third-generation Harbin Railway Station

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Heritage Making with Nostalgia

Interviewee O-1, the then deputy director-general of Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau, conceded that he and his colleagues have consciously promoted in Harbin the Art Nouveau architectural style during his tenure, for

> Harbin should have some specific cultural icon. […] Considering Harbin's architectural history, Art Nouveau [architecture] is a very important characteristic [of the city]. Leaving the colonial background aside, [Art Nouveau architecture] is widely accepted by specialists and citizens alike, and can be very impressive if carefully managed.

Nevertheless, when it came to the Harbin Railway Station project, the interviewee claimed that the decision to replicate the old station was not made solely by the government:

> We announced a design competition and accepted its winner's proposal. The final result of the competition was reached with consideration of both the specialists' opinions and the votes cast online by local people, and was released to invite the public to contribute their views.

Interviewee O-1 recalled that the winning proposal was 'highly rated' in each part of the design competition.

While the local government indeed established a standard decision-making process to minimise the influence of its senior officials' personal tastes and wills, it is undeniable that the actual practice is always much more intricate. The official demand and aspiration are unquestionably a major driving force behind this replication project. Interviewee P-3 [architect, doctoral degree] contended that the third-generation Harbin Railway Station was built to replicate the old station simply to follow 'the will of the governor and the mayor': 'It is certainly not the will of architects or citizens.' Interviewee P-2 [urban planner, master's degree], who was directly involved in the Harbin Railway Station project, expressed similar thoughts. He said that the final design of the station building was largely influenced by their client – the local government: the designer had proposed two directions, one is adding the previous railway station buildings' characteristic architectural elements to a contemporary architectural design, the other is simply replicating the old station, between which the government chose the latter 'mainly with consideration of the cost'. This final decision confirms Interviewee P-1's [urban planner, master's degree] opinion that the economic factor is the most decisive in Harbin's decision-making about heritage.

Nevertheless, there is no gainsaying the fact that both the local government and the practitioners working on this project were consciously making heritage with a sense of nostalgia, and building contemporary Harbin's cultural character is a main reason for such nostalgic heritage making. It is noteworthy, however, that such nostalgia is not for what actually happened in that period, but rather for a general 'European feel' of that past. Interviewee P-2 and his colleagues aimed to set a 'stage' for 'a scene of European railway station' through the architectural design of this old station replica, in order to 'move back to the time when Harbin Railway Station was the finest' and in turn 'evoke feelings of those old days'.

Heritage Interpretation beyond Nostalgia

It is apparent that considering the 'made' heritage of Harbin Railway Station, local people's interpretation shows a generational difference and shifts over time.

- Locals Born before 1960

The older generations who retain memories about the old station always easily recognise the newly built one as a replica and regard this design as a reminder of that past and a symbol of colonial nostalgia. Sometimes they themselves are also filled with such nostalgia, especially when they recall the high quality of the Russian-built buildings: 'everything built by the Soviets [means "Russians"][16] is magnificent and strong' [Interviewee L-5, born in 1931, male, vocational middle school graduate], and the buildings at that time were 'unlike the many tofu-dreg projects [means "poorly constructed buildings"] nowadays' [Interviewee L-4, born in 1940, male, bachelor's degree].

Interviewee L-5 noticed that the third-generation railway station is much larger than the original one. But since 'the form and mode are the same', he regarded the replication as an intention 'to go back to the Manchuria': 'Harbin's people yearn for the past, so they restore [Harbin Railway Station] to its original appearance.' Interviewee L-4, who only saw the northern façade of the new station building, mistakenly thought that the old station and its newly built replica 'are roughly the same in size', though he recognised that the inside of the new station is modernised and is thus very different from that of the original one. Nevertheless, he went along with the replication:

> As the old one was demolished, it is OK to build a new one that inherits [the appearance of] the old one. […] The first railway station is the same as this one so that people will not forget … to let the citizens know.

[16] Some Chinese people use 'Russians' and 'Soviets' interchangeably, regardless of historical periods.

While both interviewees regarded the replication of the old station as a sign of yearning for that past, apparently, by 'that past', they do not mean the colonial rule by foreign countries. Taking Interviewee L-5, who was 14 years old when Manchukuo state disintegrated, as an example: he kept mentioning the Japanese during the interview as 'Japanese devils [日本鬼子]', which is a term that is hardly used by younger generations in Harbin.

Most locals born after 1960 cannot recognise the similarity between the first- and third-generation stations because they never saw the former in their lives and hardly heard stories or narratives about that past from their older family members. As a result, these later-generation locals only have a vague impression of the term 'CER zone' and have not acquired the collective memory of the Russian-built Harbin Railway Station. Only those who are particularly interested in the city's past got to know it by reading and watching relevant materials. People born after 1960, therefore, are not able to get a real sense of nostalgia for any particular past from this replica of the old station.

- Locals Born between 1960 and 1990

People born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s were still educated to separate 'us' (Chinese) from 'them' (Russians/Europeans/Western people). Thus, they are well aware of the foreign nature of colonial heritage and tend to scrutinise those examples of Western architecture in Harbin but from a distance. Interviewee L-3 [born in 1962, male, bachelor's degree] considered the façade of the third-generation railway station to be 'pleasing to the eye and a little bit exotic'. He thought that the new railway station was designed to have its current appearance in order to 'emphasise the European style… the style of Harbin':

> Harbin is known as the 'Oriental Little Paris'. When you come to our Harbin, once you see this railway station, your will get the first impression that this [city] looks a little bit like

> [those in] Europe, [you will feel like you] have entered Russia. […] People will find this building very different from Chinese [traditional] buildings as it takes in Russian and European architectural styles.

This idea of linking the Art-Nouveau-style building to Harbin's 'foreign flavour' and especially to the city's historical appellation of 'Oriental Little Paris' was echoed by Interviewee L-14 [born in 1978, female, bachelor's degree] and Interviewee L-11 [born in 1981, male, bachelor's degree]. Regarding the replication, Interviewee L-3 stated, 'The original Harbin Railway Station built by the tsarist Russians is historically significant. […] We must stick to our Chinese identity because we are Chinese. Nevertheless, we can still borrow from Russia.' Interviewee L-27 [born in 1973, female, bachelor's degree] considered such replication as an indicator of inclusiveness: 'We Chinese are happy to accept aesthetically pleasing things. We are not narrow-minded people who reject a thing simply because it is not ours.' Despite speaking in support of the replication, Interviewee L-11 thought Harbin 'should have something that is our own' by building 'some more buildings with Chinese features'. Comparatively, Interviewee L-8 [born in 1983, male, doctoral degree] was more indifferent to the non-Chinese Other:

> For me as a Chinese, the history of the Russians – their lives and experiences in Harbin at that time – is not important. […] Because their [colonial] history is only a small piece [compared with China's very long history]. This is, after all, a Chinese city.

He disapproved of the replication because 'this replica cannot represent China's traditional or future culture, nor does it illustrate the trend. It is only an ordinary building that looks relatively good'. The interviewee attributed such replication to 'a lack of self-confidence' of the Chinese, in that they 'think Europe and America are good and developed places and hope to be associated with the word "development"'. For these locals who were born between 1960 and 1990, the old station is a symbol of sophistication, prosperity, development, and most obviously, the West.

They hardly feel nostalgic because they never have a relevant memory. They see the replication in a more utilitarian way and link it to the contemporary needs of Harbin.

- Locals Born after 1990

Locals born after 1990 have strikingly different ideas about the replication of the railway station in two aspects. Firstly, whereas the locals who were born earlier reached a consensus that the newly built third-generation railway station looks better than the recently demolished second-generation station, people born in the 1990s and later have various ideas concerning the architectural aesthetics. For example, Interviewee L-1 [born in 1992, female, master's degree] preferred the second-generation railway station and thought it is better-looking compared with the new one: '[the new railway station] looks not so good, not as good as the previous one. […] people all have a sense of nostalgia… I think the previous one is better', while Interviewee L-7 [born in 2001, male, undergraduate student] and Interviewee L-13 [born in 1992, female, master's degree] did not see much difference between the second-generation and third-generation station buildings: 'I think they are almost the same, in terms of both appearance and structure' [Interviewee L-7]; 'I have the feeling that they are quite similar in style' [Interviewee L-13]. Interviewee L-7 even thought that the third-generation station is the renovated second-generation station. Such different perceptions of 'what kind of architecture looks better' may be a result of Harbin's rapid urbanisation and mass construction since the 1990s, in which circumstance the locals born afterwards were brought up in a very different physical environment compared with the people born before and, therefore, have a different sense of what is old and familiar. Interviewee L-2 [born in 1995, male, PhD student] thought the second-generation railway station is a more cultured station with a 'seemingly historical big clock':

> Despite the fact that the form [of the new station building] is very similar to the previous one [i.e., the old station], I don't see any other aspect of the building that is historical. It is totally a modern station.

Secondly, unlike locals born before 1990, who tend to regard colonial heritage as the colonisers' heritage that represents an Otherness, those born afterwards are more likely to accept the Russian-built buildings as their own heritage and value them as an essential part of the city. The heavily politicised writings about Harbin's Russia-related past, which reaffirms the Communist doctrine, gradually ceased in the mid-1990s. Therefore, the younger generations were educated in a different way, which abandoned the stringently ideological prism. These younger generations do not place the Russians and the Chinese in opposition to each other. Rather, they put the two peoples into the historical context and see Harbin's colonial past from an integrated perspective. Interviewee L-6 [born in 1991, female, doctoral degree] likes the new railway station because its design keeps Harbin's character with the 'Russian style'[17] and offers people a feel of Harbin's culture and tradition being handed down:

> I don't regard [the Russian-style built environments in Harbin] as something belonging to Russia that should be segregated. I think it has already become a part of Harbin's history and, therefore, belongs to Harbin. It is not a concept that is simply planted in Harbin from an external source. As it reflects the history of Harbin, it is an essential component of Harbin. I think it belongs to Harbin. Simply put, I don't think it belongs to Russia.

These younger generations seem to develop another nostalgia, which is not for any certain colonial period but for a period when Harbin had a unique character that is different from any other Chinese city and was thus a very special city in the country.

The urban memory of Harbin is not consistent among generations. The replica of the Russian-built railway station has different meanings to locals who were born in different times: colonial nostalgia may exist in the eyes of people who are in their 80s and 90s, but for younger

[17] The first-generation Harbin Railway Station was in Art Nouveau style, so is the third-generation one. The interviewee could not tell between different architectural styles and thus regarded it as 'Russian style'.

generations such as the generations Y and Z, those European-style buildings and landscapes are increasingly seen as Harbin's instead of Russia's. Relevant reconstruction is therefore interpreted as managing the character of Harbin rather than longing for any colonial past.

The Russian Colonial Heritage for the Future: Harbin in a dilemma

Most of the quotes above come from interviewees who have received tertiary education. Indeed, while locals with a wide range of educational backgrounds were interviewed and invited to give opinions on the same issue, interviewees of lower educational attainment tend to reply with very brief answers which may not even include their own opinions at all. Several interviewees replied that they are happy with the replication simply because the new station looks good, but that they did not know the new station is a replica of the old station before the interview, and did not have an opinion on such replication after they were told about this fact. Some of them tried to make a guess at the reason for this replication: Interviewee L-16 [born in 1957, female, technical school graduate] believed there 'must be a reason' and asked if the old station was replicated 'to recall something'; Interviewee L-23 [born in 1966, female, senior middle school graduate] and Interviewee L-24 [born in 1967, female, senior middle school graduate] guessed that the replication should be an attempt to learn from some strengths of the Russian-built old station building, despite acknowledging that they 'really don't know' and 'really can't explain clearly' respectively. Interviewee L-15 [born in 1950, male, junior middle school graduate] spoke frankly about his indifference to colonial heritage: 'How do we ordinary people have opinions? They conserve as they wish. They demolish as they wish. What power do I have [to interfere]?' He thought colonial heritage is not his business but the responsibility of the relevant government departments, in which case his personal opinion about the issue is simply not important, not to mention that he really does not have any opinion. Surely Frankfurt (2005, p. 63) is right that a citizen should not be expected to have opinions about *everything* or be 'impelled … to speak extensively about matters of which they are to some degree ignorant', yet

these interviewees' responses reveal that the knowledge about Harbin's history and heritage does not reach its local people widely.

Interviewee L-9 [born in 1987, female, senior middle school graduate] thought that she lacks knowledge of Harbin's cultural heritage because 'no one is publicising' information about those heritage sites: 'On TV, there are promotional videos about the urban landscapes [of Harbin] such as Central Avenue, which do introduce some [historic] buildings [to the audience]. But no publicity material connects those buildings to the actual past and history.' Interviewee L-12 [born in 1991, male, master's degree] expressed similar ideas, thinking that people in Harbin do not know much about their local heritage due to the lack of publicity for and popular education about Harbin's history, culture, and heritage, which is 'a problem of political orientation'. Interviewee L-21 [born in 1967, male, college diploma] explicitly attributed this problem to the dilemma of the local government: on the one hand, they want to show off the attractive Russian colonial heritage buildings and precincts; on the other hand, they prefer not to make public reference to the Russian colonial past represented by the heritage, to avoid the negative associations with invasion and occupation. As a compromise, the Russian colonial heritage sites are simply used for tourism without much interpretation:

> I have the feeling that [the local government] once wanted to demolish all those [colonial] buildings, to erase them from the city. But [Harbin] doesn't have its own [Chinese] things that can represent its long history.

It is certainly very common that cities set socio-economic development goals concerning city branding and tourism marketing through heritage making (Silva, 2014; Wang, 2017). Among the cities with colonial backgrounds in China, many have constructed colonial pasts as romantic and exotic tourist attractions by identifying historically remaining environments or reconstructing the once-existing environments (Law and Veldpaus, 2017; H. Zhang, 2018). While the new railway station is seen by many locals as Harbin's new 'name

card' which offers tourists and visitors a first impression of this European-style post-colonial city, Interviewee O-2, the manager and controlling shareholder of China International Travel Service (CITS) Heilongjiang Co., Ltd, a major travel agency located in Harbin, expressed concern:

> The new railway station […] gives the impression that Harbin is trying to revive its old-time character. […] It seems that Harbin is disorientated. […] It is meaningless to replicate a building that once existed. The replica is unlike historical remains. It is ironic to make a new building look like something a century before, because this action indicates that Harbin is desperate and doesn't know what to do [for the future]. Why do we make such a replica? We sought for the character of the city but failed, so we have to go back to its historical origin.

This is a view echoed by the architect and the urban planners that were interviewed. Interviewee P-2 felt that Harbin has no choice but to promote European things because the local government failed to find 'a [Chinese] historical and cultural origin for the city' and in turn has difficulty in designating 'an ultimate carrier of the city's culture'. Interviewee P-3 thought that urban renewal in the past decades has resulted in Harbin demolishing large numbers of historic buildings and precincts and thus 'lacking culture', so the current government officials decided to reverse the trend by 'getting something back' through 'giving new buildings the appearance of historic buildings'. Nevertheless, such a perspective can and does raise problematic questions. Interviewee P-4 [urban planner, bachelor's degree], for example, recognised the dynamic nature of urban culture and brought up a further problem that the action of 'getting back' is at the same time 'disavowing the city's most recent past' by erasing its cultural evidence:

> The second-generation railway station was also a product of a certain historical period. […] Now, to make room for the newly built replica of the first-generation railway station, the second-generation one was also destroyed. […] Actually, every historical stage is meaningful and should have its heritage [handed down].

Harbin is now in a predicament: it is desperate for a stable cultural character that can guide its future development, but is reluctant to acknowledge its Russian colonial origin. The city is embracing but at the same time rejecting its Russian colonial heritage. With the passage of time, the Russian colonial past is drifting away, and the younger generations have less collective memory of the Russian colonial era. They accept the Russian colonial heritage more as their own heritage, without considering much about the history and political issues associated with it. This makes contemporary Harbin feel much more comfortable to use and even *make* its Russian colonial heritage to meet its present and future needs, though detailed heritage interpretation is still avoided. Russian colonial heritage thus becomes merely a symbol that represents the cultural character of the city, rather than a carrier of the narratives of the Russian colonial past. Here it should be stressed that although such symbols do not necessarily serve to remind people of a certain past, they are nevertheless historically significant in another sense as they do 'require time and a past to become symbols' (Lowenthal, 1975, p. 12).

Considering that the Harbin Railway Station project was initiated by the local government in a top-down fashion, the replication is in effect an authorised renegotiation of Harbin's past and identity. It is a heritage-making process that recreates things to bear the promoted meanings and values of the present. The ostensible nostalgia that is shown in this process is essentially an official tool for tourism promotion and city-image enhancement, and its material result is interpreted diversely by locals. By replicating the Art-Nouveau-style old station, the local government apparently regards the *form* of the demolished building as what is representative of Harbin's culture and worth handing down. Nevertheless, a controversy over 'what heritage the old station offers' was aroused among its locals.

Interviewee L-19 [born in 1970, female, bachelor's degree], Interviewee L-9, and Interviewee L-13 uniformly made a distinction between 'spiritual heritage' and 'material heritage', the former of which refers to the human spirit (i.e., courage/determination/virtue)

passed on to the later generations. For Interviewee L-9, it is the *spirit* underlying the *form* of the historical thing that should be inherited. Interviewee L-8, along the same line, regarded the replication as tangential and inappropriate:

> Today we see the buildings […] built in the 1920s and 1930s as classical, but those Art-Nouveau-style buildings were fashionable and indicated the trend in architectural design at that time. I have read some materials saying that the quality standard and architectural style of the buildings built in the then Harbin were in sync with those of the buildings in the world. […] Nowadays there is only 'Europeanisation' which transforms all the recently built buildings into buildings in the so-called 'European styles': Art Nouveau style, Baroque style, you name it. But no matter which, that is something belonging to the past and out of date. If we build a Baroque building at the present time, we are actually replicating their outdated thing. Even those foreign countries won't build Baroque buildings today!

He suggested that what Harbin should inherit from the old station is not its Art-Nouveau form, but the spirit to lead international fashion. For him, it is not Art-Nouveau-style replicas but buildings with cutting-edge architectural designs that should be the *thing* which Harbin gains from the *process* of heritage making. The interviewee further took the Harbin Grand Theatre (Figure 2.6), a prestigious contemporary building in Harbin which represents again the international fashions and trends that are acknowledged by architects worldwide, as an example to explain this.

By interpreting the significance of the demolished old station in their own ways, the interviewees are making their own heritage at a community or individual level that goes beyond the official heritage making, reaffirming their own identities as Harbin locals, and suggesting alternative scenarios for the city's future.

Figure 2.6 Harbin Grand Theatre

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2018.

Europeanisation in the Name of the Past: New challenges

Bosker (2013, p. 2) observed a 'mammoth trend of "duplitecture"' throughout China since the turn of the twenty-first century: on a massive scale, Western structures and themed communities have been constructed, and identifiable Western prototypes replicated. This is, to a large extent, to display the modernity and sophistication of contemporary China and to exhibit its present technical prowess and accumulated wealth. Under this circumstance, post-colonial cities are at an 'advantage' as they have already got a constellation of Western-style buildings and structures. Colonial heritage is thus not only the generator of a cosmopolitan atmosphere which is believed to have been long existing as a cultural characteristic of those cities, but also a key driver of their contemporary urban development. In the past two decades in China, many post-colonial cities have stripped the narratives of colonial pasts off their Western-style built heritage. In turn, urban memories of those pasts re-form to recall the Western *feel* rather than to remember the actual historical events. Colonial heritage making via reconstruction is, therefore, about both nostalgia and amnesia. To a certain degree, such heritage making acts as a more legitimised type of 'duplitecture' which offers replicas that have their 'roots' in the city. Here the comments

of Geddes (1915, pp. 374–375) on the reconstruction of Crosby Hall in London are pertinent, for such reconstruction in China's post-colonial cities

> is no mere act of archaeological piety, still less of mere "restoration," but one of renewal; it is a purposeful symbol, a renewed initiative, Utopian and local […] in one. It is, first of all, a renewed link with the past and its associations; it is also of daily uses […]; and these above all as preparing the future, not simply dignifying the present and commemorating the past.

With the rapid development of the country, in recent years, China is increasingly expected by its people not only to equal the West but also to surpass the West. As a result, Western built environment is no longer capable of representing the present and future achievements of China, and colonial heritage with occidental flavour starts to return to its essence as primarily a mnemonic of a past. Heritage-driven urban development, in turn, becomes less likely to be directly achieved through colonial heritage making, thus the most recent replications of the demolished Western colonial buildings spark more controversy among the local society than those did in the earlier years. Winter (2013b, p. 86) investigated the cultural displays of a range of Western and non-Western countries at Expo 2010 in Shanghai from a comparative perspective and stated,

> Those nations that primarily rely on their pasts both position themselves in relation to, and are positioned by, the other of industrialized modernity. In other words, a cultural nationalism principally oriented around the notion of heritage places a country in the less 'modern' category in the hierarchy of nations today.

The statement, though aiming at national identity construction, can also be extended to the construction of identity at the municipal level. As being Western is, to more and more Chinese people, no longer the metonym for being modern, building the collective identity of a post-colonial Chinese city on the basis of its Western colonial past and the corresponding Western-style architectural heritage is increasingly regarded as not future-oriented enough, thus problematic. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of 'searching for and locating of urban modernity

in the [colonial] past, in [colonial] heritage buildings and not in contemporary constructions' (Yapp, 2020, p. 188) did not cease completely. Some of the local people in these post-colonial cities start to reinterpret their colonial-era built heritage innovatively so as to make their conception of colonial heritage more in line with their ongoing desire for urban development and modernity. They have brought forward new ideas about what colonial heritage should offer (for example, the *spirit* to lead the international fashion), which clearly demonstrate the most current needs and expectations of the post-colonial cities.

Despite the fact that Harbin had become 'the second biggest city in Asia after Shanghai' by the 1920s (Yu, 2017, p. 76) and was 'far ahead' of China's historical capitals of Beijing and Nanjing (Lattimore, 1935, p. 260, as cited in Gamsa, 2010, p. 143), the city lost its geopolitical importance with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and suffered from radical deindustrialisation and impoverishment when reformed China started to enjoy an overall economic boom. Although both Shanghai and Harbin were once colonised and have many similar post-colonial problems and demands nowadays, unlike the prosperous and ambitious global city of Shanghai, today's Harbin is still searching for a way to the future. For Harbin, Russian colonial heritage making frequently acts as legitimised Europeanisation, which is a means of both identity renegotiation and urban revitalisation. How effective such a heritage-making project is to achieve the latter goal largely affects the appraisal of the project by the local society of this relatively economically depressed city. As colonial-heritage-driven urban development is increasingly difficult to achieve in a simple and direct manner due to the current paradigm shift, Harbin is now facing even bigger challenges in dealing with its Russian colonial heritage. In this case, the city needs to reconsider how to reinterpret and present its colonial heritage to meet the changed cultural and social needs and facilitate a new round of economic growth.

The CER Heritage Discourse for Reinterpreting the Russian-Era Heritage: Colonial heritage, industrial heritage, or revolutionary heritage?

It is clear that, in Harbin, colonialism is still to some extent a taboo for scholars and officials alike, thus people hesitate to talk explicitly and publicly about the Russian colonial heritage. However, 'for every "past", no matter how distant, there is no single story or interpretation, but rather new and alternative explanations' (Bofulin, 2017, p. 47). There are indeed people attempting to construct a new discourse – the 'CER heritage' discourse – for the discussion of the same issue.

The CER Heritage as Industrial Heritage

With an internet-based enquiry, which looked for publications using Engineering Index (EI), eLIBRARY.RU [Научная Электронная Библиотека], and CNKI [中国知网], Zhang *et al.* (2018) presented a systematic review of the literature on the CER from the perspective of urban heritage. According to their article, China and Russia are the two main countries that are publishing research findings on the CER. The literature review considered articles and theses published between 1997 and 2016, and covered 213 Chinese publications and 18 Russian publications. Zhang and his colleagues reported that there were barely any publications on the CER before 2000; the number of Chinese publications on this topic showed an upward trend since the turn of the century and increased rapidly after 2005. Approximately 70 per cent of the publications included in this literature review were published in 2010 and after. Comparatively, there are not many Russian publications on the CER, which started to emerge only in 2006. The keyword cloud created based on these publications shows that the words that most frequently appeared include 'Chinese Eastern Railway', 'Harbin', 'early modern architecture [近代建筑]', and 'industrial heritage'. In contrast, 'colonial heritage' and other terms that are related to colonialism, such as '(semi-)colony' and 'postcolonial landscape', were much less frequently

mentioned (Figure 2.7). It shows that in the Chinese scholarly writings about the CER heritage, the CER heritage is much more closely linked to industrial heritage rather than colonial heritage.

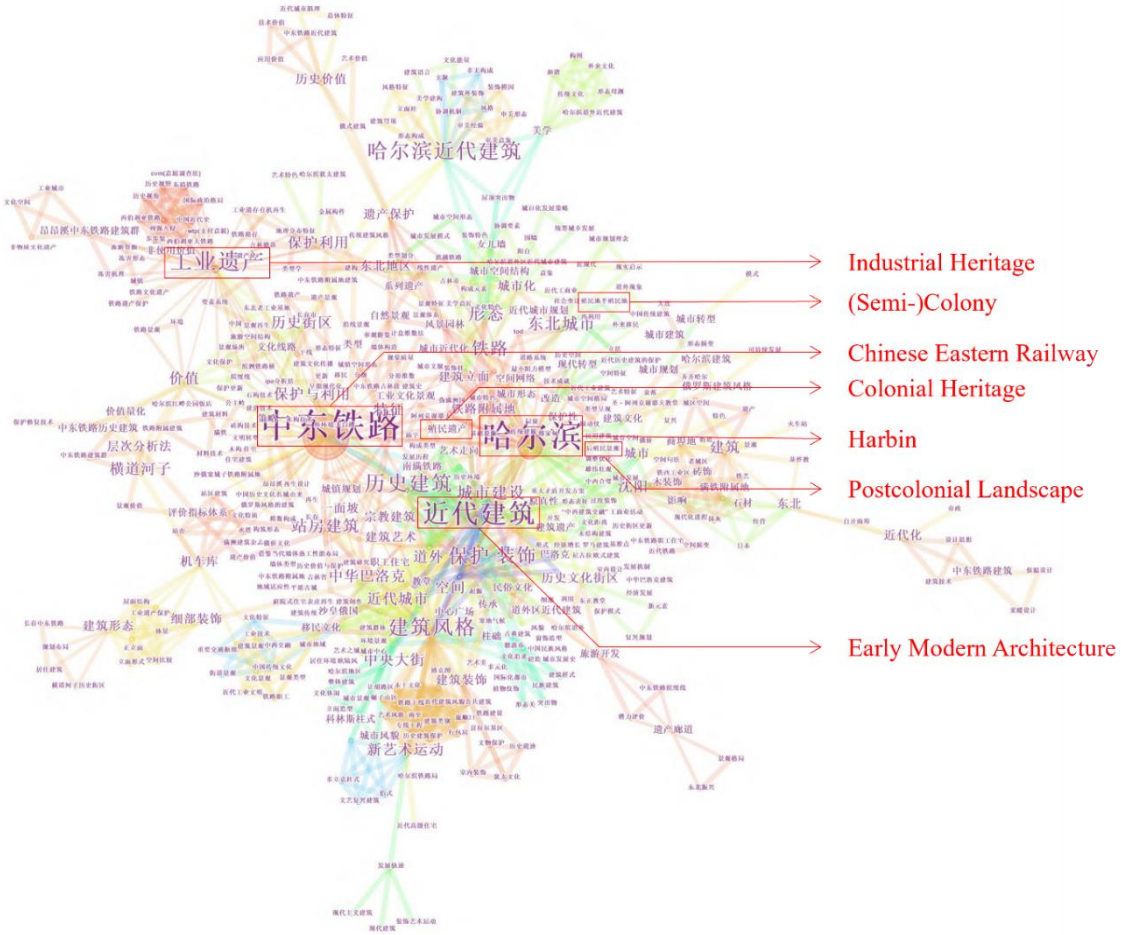


Figure 2.7 Keyword cloud of the publications on the CER (1997–2016)

Source: Zhang *et al.*, 2018, p. 106. Translated by Wenzhuo Zhang.

The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), through documents such as the Nizhny Tagil Charter and the Dublin Principles, has traced the development of industrial heritage research and practice and given it an international perspective. It defines industrial heritage as that which

> consists of the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value. These remains consist of buildings and machinery, workshops, mills and factories, mines and sites for processing and refining, warehouses and stores, places where energy is generated, transmitted and used, transport and all its

> infrastructure, as well as places used for social activities related to industry such as housing, religious worship or education. (TICCIH, 2003, art. 1)

Although Chinese scholars often categorise the CER heritage as industrial heritage, the actual subjects discussed in this CER heritage discourse today are hardly confined to the above definition of industrial heritage. For example, Liu *et al.* (2020) published a book on the CER architectural heritage, where they include not only the commonly accepted industrial heritage items such as railway stations, motive power depots, water towers, work areas, warehouses, bridges and tunnels, and places for industry-related social activities including residences, churches, and schools, but also police stations, prisons, and military facilities such as fortifications and barracks, which are obviously not a common part of industry but rather a part of regime. Apparently, in such cases (see also, for example: Cui *et al.*, 2016; Tong, 2013), all the heritage buildings and sites within the CER Zone are regarded as the CER heritage, and the term 'CER heritage' actually acts as an alternative to 'Russian colonial heritage'. In this way, the scholars beat about the bush to avoid unwanted disputes over Harbin's origin and history, and also to avoid confrontation with the 'correct' attitude towards the city's Russian colonial past in the present.

The CER heritage discourse is increasingly accepted and promoted by the official sector. In 2006, a series of sites in Hailin[18] was listed in China's national cultural heritage register of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level [全国重点文物保护单位][19] as the 'Chinese Eastern Railway buildings [中东铁路建筑群]' (hereafter 'CER buildings') (State Council (PRC), 2006). This sub-list of the CER buildings was extended to include more sites in Heilongjiang Province, Jilin Province, Liaoning Province, and Inner Mongolia

[18] Hailin is a county-level city administrated by the prefecture-level city of Mudanjiang in Heilongjiang Province. Harbin is a sub-provincial city and the capital of Heilongjiang.
[19] The Register of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level is the highest-level cultural heritage register in China, which lists sites of national significance in historical, artistic, or scientific terms. It is maintained by the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

Autonomous Region in 2013 and 2019 (National Cultural Heritage Administration (PRC), 2013; State Council (PRC), 2019). Some of those later-included sites are in Harbin, for example, the Binzhou Railway Bridge over Songhua River [滨洲线松花江铁路大桥]. It is noteworthy that the nationally protected heritage site 'Manchuria Russian-style buildings' in Manzhouli[20] was, as a whole, incorporated into the sub-list of the CER buildings. Since 2012, the Heilongjiang provincial government, along with relevant professional bodies, has been working on the conservation planning of several historic urban areas under the rubric of the CER buildings, including those of Hengdaohezi Town [横道河子镇], Ang'angxi District [昂昂溪区], and Yimianpo Town [一面坡镇][21]. In 2015, the China–Russia Innovative Research Centre for Chinese Eastern Railway Cultural Heritage Conservation [中俄中东铁路文化遗产保护创新研究中心] was founded by Harbin Institute of Technology Urban Planning and Design Institute Co., Ltd. (HITUPDI) under the support of the Heilongjiang provincial government and the then Department of Culture of Heilongjiang Province [黑龙江省文化厅][22]. From 2015 to 2017, the HITUPDI prepared the Master Plan of the Chinese Eastern Railway Buildings (Heilongjiang Section) [中东铁路建筑群（黑龙江段）总体保护规划], which put 1220 heritage sites (with 1504 heritage buildings included) within Heilongjiang Province into the framework of the CER heritage (HITUPDI, 2020; Wu, 2019). With the continuous extension of the heritage list of the CER buildings, the so-called 'CER buildings' became an inclusive heritage category that accepts almost anything within the former CER Zone, that is, anything from the Russian colonial era.

[20] Manzhouli is a sub-prefectural city administrated by the prefecture-level city of Hulunbuir in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.
[21] All these three historic urban areas are in Heilongjiang Province. Hengdaohezi Town is within the jurisdiction of Hailin City; Ang'angxi District is a county-level district of Qiqihar City; Yimianpo Town is within the jurisdiction of Shangzhi City, which is a county-level city administrated by Harbin City.
[22] The Department of Culture of Heilongjiang Province has been renamed and is currently the Department of Culture and Tourism of Heilongjiang Province.

In 2018, the National Academy of Innovation Strategy (NAIS) and Urban Planning Society of China (UPSC) released the list of the first batch of 'Protected Industrial Heritage Sites in China'. This list has included the CER-related sites located in Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, and Inner Mongolia as one of its items (UPSC, 2018). The First Academic Forum on Chinese Eastern Railway Heritage Conservation and Utilisation was held in Harbin in July 2021, and the Department of Culture and Tourism of Heilongjiang Province (DCTHP) [黑龙江省文化和旅游厅] was one of its three organisers. The conference announcement describes the 'CER architectural heritage' as a type of 'twentieth-century industrial and architectural heritage' that is 'of a cultural-route nature', and claims that the conservation and utilisation of the CER heritage will facilitate 'the conservation of early modern and modern buildings and the inheritance of early modern and modern urban culture in Northeast China' (HITUPDI, 2021, n.p.). By linking the CER to industrialisation and modernisation and fitting the CER heritage into the industrial heritage discourse, the local government, along with scholars and professionals, is trying to get rid of the Russian colonial background of the CER and, in turn, to use the Russian past and its symbolic and physical remains more conveniently and freely in the present.

In 2014, the Harbin municipal government decided to construct the Chinese Eastern Railway Park [中东铁路公园] (hereafter 'CER Park') based on the cultural heritage site Binzhou Railway Bridge, a bridge that was completed in 1901 and listed in 2013 as an additional part of the above-mentioned nationally protected 'CER buildings'. The bridge is nowadays often called 'the old river bridge [老江桥]' or 'the CER Bridge [中东铁路桥]'. The construction of the CER Park started in 2015; Phase I of the park was completed and opened to the public in 2016, and Phase II opened in 2018 (HURPDRI, 2017; Liu and Li, 2018). In this project, Binzhou Railway Bridge was refurbished along with the construction of the park: trains ceased running on this former railway bridge in April 2014, and the bridge was afterwards

transformed into a pedestrian-friendly sight-seeing bridge with a new glass and plastic walk. According to Harbin Urban and Rural Planning and Design Research Institute (HURPDRI) (2020, n.p.), the institute which completed the planning and design of the CER Park, this park was designed to highlight the 'CER culture' with special consideration of the relationship between the CER and the urban development of Harbin. It aims to pass on the 'historical memory' and help to construct 'a sense of cultural identity' for the Harbin citizens, as 'the CER has birthed the city of Harbin' and 'witnessed the century-old Harbin's urban history', thus 'bearing our collective memory of this city' (*ibid.*). It is worth noting that, in recent years, when speaking of Harbin's origin, it is much more frequently said that Harbin is a city 'developed because of the railway [因铁路而兴]', or more figuratively, that Harbin is 'a city carried here by train [火车拉来的城市]'. By highlighting the industrial dimension of Harbin's origin and avoiding explicitly mentioning the past Russian colonisation, such tactfully worded statements successfully circumvent the political sensitiveness of this post-colonial city's history.

The CER Heritage as Revolutionary Heritage

The Chinese Eastern Railway Impressions Hall (hereafter 'Impressions Hall'), which is located inside the CER Park and has a façade replicating that of the old station (see: Figure 2.3), opened its door to the public on 1 September 2017. Unlike the traditional museums which house abundant antiques and employ factual and objective interpretation approaches, the Impressions Hall has adopted various new techniques and technologies such as stage setting, multimedia display, and 3D visualisation in its exhibition, in order to provide overall 'impressions' of the historic Harbin city to its visitors. Rather than focusing on the CER itself, the exhibition includes rich information about the architecture and culture of the old Harbin, which is, in many cases, beyond industry or industrialisation but in effect related to the Russian colonisation. It is obvious that when the exhibition was initially arranged, the curators did not mind acknowledging that Harbin, along with the CER, is a result of Russian colonisation. Further,

they intended to depict the city as an affluent international metropolis that was and is still influenced by Western culture. What visitors see first after entering the Impressions Hall is a screen decorated with two steel rails and glass sleepers[23], which imitate a railway track. The rails were historic items made in 1910, and the glass sleepers bear a quote from Hu Shih[24] in Chinese, English, and Russian: 'Once arriving in Harbin I made a great discovery: I discovered the junction of Eastern and Western civilization [*sic.*].'[25] On the back of the screen is the preface of the exhibition, which is also displayed in the three languages. In the English version of this preface, it is said that

> The Chinese Eastern Railway was built during the colonization by imperial powers in the late Qing Dynasty, […] Harbin became an international metropolis, emerging as a Eurasian transport and trading hub due to its status as the main port of the Chinese Eastern Railway, featuring Chinese and foreign customs coexisting and blending, […] From the early period of the new China to its reform and opening-up to the outside, the Chinese Eastern Railway promoted the friendship among neighbors and the economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and Russia.

The preface particularly emphasises the economic benefits of the CER, especially when commenting on the influence of this historic transportation infrastructure upon Harbin's present and future development. For example, it highlights that the CER is now involved in the China–Mongolia–Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC) envisioned by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and will thus contribute to the realisation of the 'Chinese Dream'. It is claimed at the end of this preface that the aim of founding the Impressions Hall is to 'recall the past in the light of the present, foresee the future by reviewing the past, inherit history and realize new

[23] The 'sleepers' are actually made of Poly (methyl methacrylate) (PMMA). PMMA, being a transparent thermoplastic, is also known as acrylic glass. Like many other thermoplastics, PMMA is often technically classified as a type of glass.
[24] Hu Shih [胡适] (17 December 1891–24 February 1962) was a Chinese diplomat, literary scholar, essayist, and philosopher.
[25] The original quote in Chinese is '到了哈尔滨，在此地我得了一个绝大的发现：我发现了东西文明的交界点。' The English translation of this quote comes from the screen at the entrance of the Impressions Hall.

missions', which clearly demonstrates that the recent making of the CER heritage is for the present and the future rather than commemorating the past per se.

It is notable that the making and interpretation of the CER heritage have been evolving in the past few years, during which process various alternatives have emerged to explain Harbin's Russia-era heritage without touching on the colonialism issue. In some scenarios, the CER heritage is even more clearly separated from its Russian context. The CPC celebrated its centenary in 2021, when anniversary festivities spread in all the Chinese government departments. As for cultural heritage, the National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) [国家文物局] launched the 'National Revolutionary Cultural Relics Protection and Utilisation Awareness Month [全国革命文物保护利用宣传活动月]'. On its official website, there is a vlog series entitled 'Chasing Light on the Road [追光之路]', which is produced by China Traffic Radio (CTR) [中国交通广播] and supported by the NCHA and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (CTR, 2021). The series focuses on transport-related revolutionary cultural relics, and one of the episodes is about the Impressions Hall. In that episode, the journalist reported the CER heritage as a revolutionary heritage. He described the CER as 'an international revolutionary route' that 'had made a great contribution in the early years of the CPC':

> [Karl] Marx published the political manifesto calling for unity among workers of the world. The CER helped with the initial formation of a transnational workers' union among Chinese and Russian workers. This should be seen as the CER's greatest achievement in history. The CER also facilitated the CPC's revolutionary collaboration with the Soviet Union and the Communist International. (Qin, 2021)

CTR is not alone in interpreting the CER heritage from the revolutionary perspective. The idea is also echoed by the provincial broadcaster Heilongjiang Television (HLJTV). In one of its special features on the celebration of the CPC's centenary, the CER was described as a 'revolutionary route that made the initial importation of Marxism to China possible': 'It is

because of this revolutionary route that Marxism and the spirit of the October Revolution could be transmitted from the remote Europe to China, which enlightened the Chinese Marxists and became kindling wood to the revolution led by the CPC.' (Long-Shi Xinwen Lianbo, 2021, n.p.)

Indeed, along with the construction of the CER and the Russian colonisation, Russian Bolsheviks entered Harbin as early as 1905. They disseminated revolutionary information among Chinese workers as well as Russian workers and soldiers, and established a Bolshevik branch in Harbin. In 1907, over ten thousand Chinese and Russian workers attended a rally on Harbin's Sun Island to celebrate International Workers' Day, being the first time that Chinese workers celebrated May Day (*Haerbin* Ketizu, 2007, p. 40). This is a milestone in China's labour movement history. However, interpreting the CER heritage as a revolutionary heritage does carry a problematic connotation that the late-nineteenth-century Russian colonial project is valuable to and cherished by contemporary China because it offered China the first opportunity to import Marxism in a direct and massive fashion and, in turn, facilitated the twentieth-century Chinese Communist Revolution and helped with the establishment of the CPC-led PRC. Certainly, no one would make such a connection and articulate that connotation in the context of heritage making and interpretation, as it is simply politically incorrect. Having said that, both the 'industrial heritage' interpretation and this 'revolutionary heritage' interpretation can be seen as official attempts to make and interpret the Russian colonial heritage in an alternative way. The aim thereby is to use the Russian colonial past to meet Harbin's present and future needs but avoid sensitivities and disputes.

Why is the Russian-Era Heritage Reinterpreted as Such?

To understand the reason why Harbin has been attempting to reinterpret its Russian-era heritage, under the name of the CER heritage, as industrial heritage since the 2010s, it is necessary to go through Harbin's past of industrialisation and deindustrialisation.

Occupying a strategic place in China's industrialisation history, the industrialised Harbin is a result of two waves of technology transfer from foreign countries. The first came with the colonial powers, as the colonisers constructed railways and infrastructures and set up factories in the city. The second wave came in the 1950s with the international industrial assistance programme '156 Key Projects'. Through this programme, the Soviet Union transferred its core technologies to the PRC and thus equipped China with a complete industrial system. Harbin received 13 Key Projects, the highest proportion of this international industrial assistance programme among China's large cities. Since colonisation and industrialisation are interlinked processes in Harbin, many colonial remains in the city can also be interpreted as industrial heritage. Indeed, the concepts of colonial heritage and industrial heritage are not mutually exclusive. Colonial heritage is a concept that highlights the ownership and the political relationship between the colonisers and the colonised, while the concept of industrial heritage underlines the original function of the site or property. The CER heritage in Harbin is exactly an example that can be both colonial and industrial.

From a social perspective, colonisation and industrialisation are the two major driving forces behind Harbin's formation and early development. Both have heavily influenced the identity of Harbin and its citizens, and the impacts of the city's decolonisation and deindustrialisation have been profound and long-lasting. In Harbin, the initial making and promotion of Russian colonial heritage is to a large extent an economic strategy for dealing with the high unemployment caused by the city's radical deindustrialisation. For a long time, Harbin tried hard to extricate itself from financial difficulties and rejected its (post-)industrial identity. The economic recovery and the urban revitalisation in recent years, however, make Harbin's deindustrialisation 'past, dead and safe' (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 140) and, therefore, less painful and less controversial. The shifted situation enables Harbin to look at this past through rose-coloured glasses.

Furthermore, what is going on in any particular city is never isolated. On the contrary, 'the local is negotiated into being in relation […] to "elsewhere"' (Macdonald, 2009, p. 5). Harbin's recent embrace and promotion of its industrial past is a combined result of local redevelopment and national and international influences. Under the influence of a global trend of industrial heritage making and selling – transforming former industrial sites into modern cultural complexes, which include museums, parks, galleries, creative clusters, and even shopping malls – major post-industrial cities in China such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenyang have also launched industrial heritage projects with consideration of their actual conditions since the turn of the century. Given that wordings such as 'Russian-era heritage' or 'Russian-style heritage' easily remind people of Harbin's Russian colonial past and thus make the relevant buildings and sites closely connected with the dynamic international relationship between China and Russia in the present day, the promotion of industrial heritage, without much controversy in political terms, is comparatively safe. In this context, Harbin, with its economy gradually recovering, is willing to join China's 'post-industrial club' and reconstruct its identity from a post-industrial perspective. By reinterpreting its Russian-era heritage as industrial heritage, Harbin tries to avoid referring to the city's foreign origin and to prevent awkward questions such as that asked by Carter (2002, p. 92): Was Harbin 'a Chinese city where many Russians lived, or was it a Russian city on Chinese territory'?

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed China as well as the rest of the world, not only in economic and social terms but also in cultural terms. After living in the shadow of the pandemic for three years, most Chinese people, or rather people in most parts of China, think that China's strict control of the coronavirus is successful and believe that China is better than Western countries in dealing with the pandemic. This, in turn, prompts them to reflect on their previous attitudes towards the Western as well as their own political systems and cultures, which has led to unprecedented self-confidence in the PRC over the past three years. This is

not merely government propaganda through its official media (see for example: Liu, 2021; Pu, 2021; Shen and Wang, 2021), but can be readily observed if we take a glance at the Chinese social media platforms such as Weibo and online forums such as Zhihu, where users who contribute content are largely ordinary Chinese people. What Dong et al. (2020, p. 2) wrote in their macroeconomic review report represents the common scepticism and thoughts of the Chinese:

> For a long time, especially after the economic reform, a very large proportion of Chinese people regard Western countries as 'civilised', 'advanced', and 'mighty' and think that China should learn from the West in every aspect. However, it is surprising that the 'great' Western countries not only failed to be role models in battling the virus but also acted in ways that are, to many Chinese people, simply inexplicable. […] Obviously, the 'Western developed countries', which is a long-existing notion in our society, are in effect not as perfect as we imagined, and may not even be good.

The change in Chinese people's common attitude towards the West is so drastic that this trend was also recognised by Western countries (see for example: Buckley, 2021) and other parts of the world (see for example: D. Yang, 2021). Here I do not intend to make a judgement on whether China is really better than the West in dealing with COVID-19, as this is a scientific and also value- and ideology-laden question. My point is that, in Harbin and in China more broadly, there is a general *belief* that China is better at the pandemic control, which has significantly changed Chinese people's perceptions of the West and raised the people's confidence in their own country. It is exactly in this context that the CPC celebrated its centenary, and the celebration further boosted China's confidence. The change in China's public perception is so strong that it has influenced the Chinese society in many aspects, including, as regards Harbin, how the Russian-era heritage was reinterpreted most recently.

As Harbin's Russian-era heritage is well-known in the city and beyond primarily for its 'Western style', the city's attitude towards those relevant sites has been changing along with its

attitudes towards China and the West. By reinterpreting the Russian-era heritage as revolutionary heritage, the ambitious Russian colonial project is reduced to a shortcut to the communist revolution, of which the Chinese communists had taken advantage. While reinterpreting the Russian-era heritage as industrial heritage still makes an underlying connection between the West and modernisation/development, this new interpretation, which focuses on Marxism, communism, and revolution, expresses more admiration for contemporary China rather than for anything Western. In this sense, the most recent making and reinterpretation of the Russian colonial heritage in Harbin truly reflect the most up-to-date thoughts and needs of this Chinese city.

The CER Heritage from the Perspectives of Local People and the Tourism Industry

From my fieldwork interviews, it can be seen that the local people in Harbin generally do not know much about the CER or the CER Zone. For example, some interviewees told me that they had never heard about the term 'CER Zone' at all, while many others only have a vague impression of the term. There are indeed a few interviewees who mistakenly assumed that the CER was constructed by the Japanese or during the Japanese colonial period of Manchukuo. In this context, the opening of the CER Park, with the refurbished Binzhou Railway Bridge and the Impressions Hall inside it, did familiarise local people with the CER, at least in terms of the word itself. When I asked the question of whether the interviewee had heard about the term 'CER Zone', several local people, including Interviewee L-11, Interviewee L-17 [born in 1960, male], Interviewee L-20 [born in 1947, female], Interviewee L-24, Interviewee L-25 [born in 1984, female], and Interviewee L-28, raised the example of the 'CER Park/Bridge/Memorial Hall' as an answer to my question. They simply omitted the word 'zone' and showed me that they had at least heard about the first word 'CER' and know something linked to it. In two extreme cases, when interviewees were asked 'What is the first thing that pops into your head when you hear the term "Harbin's colonial era"?', they identically referred to two and only two

heritage sites: 'the CER Bridge' and Central Avenue [Interviewee L-9; Interviewee L-14]. As regards the local tourism industry, the travel agency manager Interviewee O-2 indicated that the CER Bridge has become one of the four major tourist destinations of their guided tours in terms of cultural heritage, together with Sun Island, Central Avenue, and St. Sophia Cathedral. It should be noted that Interviewee O-2 identified these four sites as 'Russian things'. The same idea was, in effect, also explicitly expressed by local people such as Interviewee L-3: 'the CER is the heritage of tsarist Russia'.

On the one hand, the interviewees' replies indicate that this recently listed, refurbished, and promoted CER heritage site has been so highly publicised and well accepted that its standing with the public has gradually improved to a similar level to that of Harbin's legendary landmarks such as Central Avenue. On the other hand, these replies also show that the broader society of Harbin still tends to link the CER and its related heritage to the Russian past and colonisation, rather than to industrialisation or revolution. The small number of interviewees who do have some knowledge about Harbin's history stated that Russia plotted to occupy the area in the name of the CER construction [Interviewee L-6], or condemned Russia for using the CER as a means of plundering Northeast China of its natural resources [Interviewee L-3; Interviewee L-19]. Nevertheless, some of them also acknowledged the intercultural communication and economic growth facilitated by the CER [Interviewee L-3; Interviewee L-7; Interviewee O-2]. However, not a single interviewee expressed their understanding of the CER from the perspective that it stimulated Harbin's industrialisation or the Chinese Communist Revolution. In fact, even some local urban planners, if they have not participated in the relevant projects, may frankly express the opinion that Harbin's CER heritage is primarily connected to the city's colonial history. For instance, the first example that Interviewee P-1 gave when asked about 'the urban planning projects relevant to colonial history and especially colonial heritage' is the planning and design of the CER Park.

Obviously, the CER heritage discourse, which is constructed by scholars and adopted by the local government, has not had much effect on the ordinary people and the local tourism industry until now. The reinterpretations of Harbin's Russian-era heritage as industrial heritage and, most recently, as revolutionary heritage are still restricted to the heritage understandings of the intellectual/ruling elite.

Discussion

As a modern city initially developed under Russian colonial rule, Harbin today still houses a great variety of Western-style buildings and offers a cosmopolitan atmosphere, which reminds people of its reputation as the 'Oriental Little Paris' and the 'Oriental Moscow'. However, such aesthetically pleasing historic built environments also contain a politically sensitive undertone which links this contemporary Chinese city with its Russian colonial past. Harbin's colonial past(s) was and is still a taboo subject for the city. In the early years, the Chinese in Harbin attempted radical and thorough decolonisation to reclaim the city from Russia: they built buildings that feature Chinese traditional design elements when Russia, during and after the Russian Revolution, gradually lost control of Harbin, and demolished many Russian-built masterpieces after the founding of the PRC. Nevertheless, distinct changes took place in the 1990s. For a long period since then, Harbin was in a difficult situation due to the unprecedented large-scale deindustrialisation and high unemployment. In order to survive economically, if not also socially, the city had to reconsider its attitude and readjust its approach to the Russian colonial remains. It is in this context that Harbin started to advocate the consumption of 'European-style heritage sites' and launched initial heritage restoration and renovation projects such as those of Central Avenue and St. Sophia Cathedral.

The first attempts to make Russian colonial heritage by conventional means of heritage listing and the following tourism promotion turned out to be a huge success. Firstly, it did

provide employment opportunities for the displaced workers and thus contributed to the early revitalisation of this deindustrialised and impoverished city. Secondly, whether intentionally or not, Harbin became China's pioneer of Europeanisation in the globalised age, in which circumstance the Russian colonial past is not only a catalyst but also an excuse. Enjoying the new city brand image as an international metropolis with a 'foreign flavour', in the following decades, Harbin gradually moved its Russian colonial heritage making from the simple architecturally framed heritage listing to a more complex and nuanced heritage creation with social considerations. To a certain extent, this new type of Russian colonial heritage making acts as a 'legitimised' Europeanisation in the name of the past, which offers Europeanised built environments that have their 'roots' in Harbin. In this sense, Harbin's Russian colonial heritage making is, from the very beginning, not really about the past but rather for the present and the future. This is more evident in recent years, as the city's needs and expectations are shifting remarkably due to the significant changes in domestic society and international relationships.

For a long time in the past, the Chinese saw the West as a symbol of prosperity, development, and mightiness, and hoped to learn from and catch up with the West. Since the economic reform, China has been developing rapidly and thus become increasingly confident and ambitious. As a result, the China of today views Western countries on an equal footing and seeks to surpass the West. In the past three years, this confidence has been further boosted as China chose to strictly control COVID-19 and has done the work, to most Chinese people, successfully, when Western countries mostly decided that it was not feasible to stop the pandemic. Changing perceptions and attitudes lead to changing needs and expectations, and Harbin's most recent needs and expectations are clearly reflected in its heritage making and interpretation that relate to the city's Russian colonial past.

On the one hand, the latest heritage-driven Europeanisation projects provoked more controversy among local people. While Harbin's recent official heritage making related to the

city's Russian colonial past apparently shows signs of path dependence, many local people have changed their attitudes much more quickly and are thus no longer satisfied with the material results of such heritage-making processes. Some expressed different ideas on what Harbin should inherit from its Russian colonial past and, in turn, reinterpreted the essence of Harbin's Russian-era heritage. It suggests alternative scenarios for the city's future, where urban characteristics including 'modern' and 'creative' are stressed. However, such modernity and creativity should, in their views, no longer be represented by Europeanised or Western forms. On the other hand, local intellectual and ruling elites are also seeking alternative interpretations of Harbin's Russian colonial heritage in the light of the recent social and political changes. Indeed, Harbin used to make Russian colonial heritage mainly for city image enhancement and tourism promotion, in the process of which official interpretations of those sites were deliberately avoided to prevent unwanted political disputes and criticisms. In recent years, some elite people have been trying to construct a new discourse – the 'CER heritage' discourse – to (re)interpret the Russian-related heritage without touching upon the colonial issues. By classifying the Russian-era heritage as 'CER heritage' and reinterpreting it from the perspectives of industrial heritage and, most recently, revolutionary heritage, Harbin is endeavouring to make new heritage from the old past. However, these new initiatives have not, as yet, reached the broader society of Harbin.

Uzzell's (2009, p. 326) comments are pertinent to the conclusion of this chapter:

> The meaning of the heritage will vary over time and for different groups of people. It serves social, cultural and political functions. But the heritage during this process does not remain static and unchanged. It also becomes a piece of clay ready to be moulded into something we want it to be. We use the heritage in the creation of our own individual, group and national identities. We construct meanings from the heritage and we construct ourselves from it as well.

Harbin's heritage making concerning its Russian colonial past caters for the city's cultural and economic imaginations and expectations about itself. Its aim is not to accurately depict or comprehensively interpret that past, but to meet the needs of the present and the future. Although protecting, restoring, renovating, and reconstructing the Russian-era structures and buildings seems nostalgic, such nostalgia is only ostensible. The ever-evolving collective memory of Harbin is not and will not be consistent among generations, which indicates that there has not been and will never be a real collective sense of nostalgia for a concrete past like that of the Russian colonisation. In this case, therefore, Harbin's seemingly nostalgic Russian colonial heritage making serves the purpose of acting mainly as a support system for the city's urban redevelopment and revitalisation in cultural and economic terms.

* * * * *

While both Russia and Japan have colonised Harbin in history, the city's attitude towards the Japanese colonial past and Japan in general is much more negative. In turn, the making, presentation, and interpretation of the Japanese colonial heritage in Harbin are very different from those of the Russian one. Why are the colonial pasts related to Russia and Japan treated differently in Harbin? How is the Japanese colonial heritage made, presented, and interpreted, and why? The following chapter focuses on the Japanese colonial heritage in Harbin and aims to answer these questions.

3

HUMILIATED BY THE JAPANESE PAST

Japanese colonial heritage, negative heritage, and national identity

While local people generally spoke about the Russian-era heritage buildings with great familiarity, most of them could not recall heritage sites that were built by the Japanese, except the relics of the Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731:

> Historic buildings built by the Japanese… I can't tell, I really don't know. [Interviewee L-4]
>
> I don't really know which building is from the Manchukuo period. […] I suppose there are not many Japanese buildings [in Harbin]. [Interviewee L-3]
>
> Are there any Japanese buildings left in Harbin? (laugh) I can't recall any building that was built by the Japanese. I have the impression that all the [foreign-style] buildings were built by the Russians, and that Japan only brought hurt, suffering, and harm. I suppose the Japanese didn't build much. [Interviewee L-2]

Such views are even shared by high-ranking government officials such as Interviewee O-1, who expressed the personal feeling that 'Japan left almost nothing [to Harbin]. There are only a few things [left] which we can easily do a quick count. Not many… It [means "Japan"] mainly plundered [from China] and didn't leave many things indeed.' Nevertheless, Interviewee L-2 raised doubts about his own view after pondering on the relevant history: 'As far as I can

remember, it seems that the Japanese at that time regarded Northeast China as a part of Japan, in which case they might indeed have built some buildings…'

Under the Russian rule, Harbin was once described in a news article as:

> The roads are awful, and the sidewalks torture. Masses of filth and deep pools of liquid mud cover alike carriageway [*sic.*] and sidewalks. No attempt is made to improve in this direction, drains and roads having been forgotten in the haste of composition. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1904, p. 11)

In contrast, there are various references to the urban environment of Harbin improving greatly under the Japanese administration, with the city benefitting from the long-term effects of the Japanese construction achievements in terms of architecture, urban planning, and infrastructure (Denison and Ren, 2016, pp. 82+85; Hillier and Fu, 2021). Eckstein *et al.* (1974, pp. 259–260) studied the economic development of the whole of Manchuria and concluded that the Japanese left behind them 'a most important economic legacy when they surrendered Manchuria in 1945' and 'a much more developed region than they acquired and one that would make a major contribution to the industrialization and economic development of a revitalized China'. However, those former achievements are seldom mentioned today. Interviewee L-21 reflected on this issue, saying,

> I have the feeling that both the civil society and the government are, subconsciously, unwilling to mention the Japanese era. But it seems that people are willing to talk about the Russian era… perhaps because it's a relatively remote past. Or maybe Russia is a milder bully [compared with Japan]? But I don't know why [there is a difference in perceiving the two colonial pasts].

Although amnesia permeates Harbin when it comes to the Japanese-built buildings, local people frequently expressed their feelings of being humiliated by the Japanese colonisation and regarded the Japanese-built heritage – if it does exist – as 'evidence of the

Japanese invasion of China' [Interviewee L-7]. Interviewee L-3 regarded the built heritage from the Manchukuo period as 'an objective existence' which 'demonstrates that the Japanese invaded China at that time': 'How do we know they invaded? We see their buildings in Harbin.' Such opinions echoed the official colonial heritage strategy. Interviewee O-3, the deputy director of the DCTHP Cultural Heritage Conservation and Archaeology Division, explained that in the official heritage management practice, 'Heritage buildings are not categorised into Russian colonial heritage or Japanese colonial heritage. However, most of the buildings related to the Japanese Army are the heritage of the "evidence of crime" type.'

Unlike the largely positive public perception of the Russian colonial heritage, local people's attitudes towards the Japanese colonial past are generally negative. Many expressed their resentment against the Japanese, or at least the Japanese during the Manchukuo colonial period, by using certain terms to mention them. Like the previously mentioned Interviewee L-5, Interviewee L-22 also called the Japanese 'Japanese devils' during the interview; Interviewee L-16, Interviewee L-20, and Interviewee L-18 [born in 1948, male] deployed the derogatory term 'small Japan [小日本]' to refer to the country.

The Colonial Pasts Related to Russia and Japan: Same nature, different attitudes

Considering both Russian and Japanese colonial periods are in essence about colonisation, it is significant that Harbin, a city colonised by these two colonial powers in history, remembers, interprets, and uses its colonial pasts related to Russia and Japan very differently. Harbin today utilises its Russian colonial remains in cultural and economic terms: the Russian colonial heritage is mobilised as a means of city branding and marketing, in order to attract tourists and investments. The Japanese colonial heritage, on the other hand, is dealt with in a politically oriented way and is mainly used as material for patriotic education and advocacy of pacifism.

The different perceptions of the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts can be seen as a result of the differences in the start, course, and aftermath of colonisation.

Differences in the Start of Colonisation

The Russian colonisation of Harbin started with a series of unequal treaties. Though Dmitriĭ Khorvat, a Russian lieutenant general, was appointed as the manager of the CER and had effective control of the CER Zone, and Imperial Russia did use military force and violence during its colonisation, most notably in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion (Zatsepine, 2013), officially it is the CER company that represented Russia and ruled Harbin. The most obvious difference between the CER Zone and any Chinese settlement is illustrated by the Western culture permeating the Zone, such as Western architecture, religion, art, and cuisine. Thus, the Chinese people in Harbin regard the Russian colonisation as mostly a cultural and economic issue and consider its impact from cultural and economic perspectives. Some local professionals even think, in this context, that the CER Zone should not be categorised as a colony given its relatively weak political dimension. Interviewee P-3 contended that Harbin is not a typical colony in political terms, and its built heritage should not be described with the Western term 'colonial heritage':

> In architectural history, we do not underline the colonial factors because the architectural development of Harbin does not really relate to any colonial factor. We can only say that the railways were built, and the various cultures, ballet, symphony, and foreign people including architects and businessmen came along with the railways. The land was opened for business and performances, accepted diverse cultures, and became an international metropolis. This is not about colonisation [in terms of politics].

Such a position effectively legitimises and justifies the city's present cultural and economic uses of its Western-style architecture. However, it is not necessarily tenable. Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk (2019, p. 701) pointed out that 'one of the fundamental premises of colonization

is that the imperialist tries to instill in the territory of the colonized culture a conviction of the superiority of its own culture and ideology (world view)', and Harbin obviously fits this description.

This also sheds light on why the Japanese colonisation is rarely scrutinised by the Chinese from a cultural perspective: a wide range of elements of Japanese culture, such as its language, architecture, garden design, and cuisine, originated in China. Even though most of those ideas and products from China were later 'Japanised', Chinese people consider Japanese culture as based on Chinese culture and thus have a sense of cultural superiority themselves. Other than Western culture, Chinese people are very likely to overlook things that represent Japanese culture because they are simply too similar to the Chinese ones. In that case, it is almost impossible for the Japanese colonisers to colonise a Chinese city in most cultural dimensions. Admittedly, Japan has its original religion of Shinto, which was typologised by Pye (1989) as an 'adjusted primal religion' and is often alleged to be Japan's indigenous religion (Breen and Teeuwen, 2010; see for example: Ono, 1962)[26]. Shinto is a polytheistic religion based on the belief in and worship of *Kami*[27]. It is highly inclusive and has absorbed elements of many other religions and cultures throughout its course (Hardacre, 2017). Despite the fact that religion is a most important contributor to cultural transmission, the Shinto religion did not help with Japan's culturally colonising Harbin. Unlike the situation in the then Japanese colonies of Taiwan and Korea, coercive policies of cultural assimilation such as the policy of *kōminka* (i.e., Japanisation) were not enacted in Manchukuo. Therefore, Shinto shrines in Manchukuo did not serve the Japanisation purpose of 'religious reform' (*ibid.*, p. 432). Although the Japanese did construct the Harbin Shrine during that period (see: Figure 1.4), they

[26] Whether Shinto is an indigenous religion of Japan is disputable (see for example: Hardacre, 2017; Kuroda, 1981).
[27] Kami can be best translated into English as 'spirits'. However, this translation may be over-simplified as Kami is a complex concept that includes not only different ideas but also different interpretations of the same idea. For more information about the concept(s) of Kami, see:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/beliefs/kami_1.shtml (Accessed: 4 February 2022).

did not expect the city's non-Japanese people to convert to Shinto at all. In contrast to the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church, the Japanese Shinto has neither a doctrine nor the convention of sending people like missionaries to teach others about this religion. It is not surprising, therefore, that Japan was not able to culturally influence Harbin in terms of religion as Russia did.

Given that the Japanese army occupied Harbin with explicit military force and then directly ruled the city, the Japanese colonisation is understandably classified by the Chinese as a political issue and interpreted as a humiliation to Harbin and, more broadly, China.

Differences in the Course of Colonisation

As regards the colonisers' roles during the colonial periods, it is undeniable that the Russians had made a great contribution to Harbin's founding and early development. The Japanese, in contrast, occupied Harbin when the city was already established and prosperous. Nowadays, it is widely thought that Russia *built* and *left* the city to China, while Japan *took* and *returned* the city to China. The opinion of Interviewee O-2, who has collected much information about Harbin's cultural heritage due to his focus on heritage tourism, is representative. He attributed Harbin's initial 'rapid economic growth and cultural development' to the CER: 'After several decades' building, [Harbin] became a well-known city in Asia and even in the world. I suppose Harbin could not achieve this without the CER.' When it comes to the Japanese colonisation, he contended that 'the influence of the Manchukuo period is much smaller' in comparison with that of the CER Zone period. Such an impression is indeed not a surprise, especially considering the obvious Russian/Western appearance and atmosphere of the present Harbin. Historically, this status quo can be attributed, to a certain extent, to the fact that Japan itself had been industrialised and Westernised by the 1930s.

Admittedly, the Imperial Crown style, a Japanese Western eclectic architectural style which aimed to represent distinctively Japanese architecture, emerged in the late 1920s and 1930s. It had been popular in Japan and some of its former colonies, such as Manchuria, until the end of the Second World War. This style, being a reaction against modernism in the context of Japan's 'increased anxiety about the impact of the West on Japanese culture' (Reynolds, 2012, p. 408), is identified by Japanese traditional tiled roofing on modern reinforced concrete buildings and can feature a centrally elevated structure with a pyramidal dome. Imperial Crown buildings did become pervasive in some Manchurian cities such as the then Manchukuo's capital city Hsinking (now Changchun), but not in its 'brilliant city' (Mohri, 2016, p. 17) Harbin. Some Japanese scholars noted that, after the 1920s and especially during the Manchukuo period, the Russian-planned and -built Harbin was seen by the Japanese as an international entertainment city that provides exotic and erotic experiences. At that time, Harbin, with its European urban character and atmosphere, was a tourist destination for the Japanese, where they could enjoy the unusual nightlife in red-light districts that featured beautiful Russian women (Komeie, 2018; Mohri, 2016). Such distorted 'Western' experience gave the Japanese tourists/visitors mixed feelings about Europe: they admired Europe but at the same time had a sense of superiority over Europe (Komeie, 2018). In that context, it is not surprising that the Japanese retained Harbin's European cityscape and did not change it radically to a distinctively Japanese one during their occupation. Or rather, it is very likely that the Japanese consciously kept the Western atmosphere of the city and avoided explicit cultural intervention in Harbin. This, again, leads naturally to the contemporary non-cultural interpretation of Harbin's Japanese colonial past.

Moreover, in history, some of Imperial Japan's most notorious war crimes were carried out in Harbin: the biological and chemical warfare researches and lethal human experiments conducted by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army were so terrifying and shocking that

these events are now understood as traumatic experience not only for Harbin but also for all China[28]. This undoubtedly has a significant adverse effect on Harbin's overall social attitude to the Japanese occupation.

Differences in the Aftermath of Colonisation

The two former colonial powers' relationships with Harbin and with China more broadly in the aftermath of colonisation also affected the Chinese perceptions of the colonial pasts. The then Soviet Union had a strong influence on the CPC and the Party's establishment of the PRC. What is more, its '156 Key Projects' programme in the 1950s made the industrial development of post-colonial China, including Harbin, closely connected to a helpful Russia. Despite acknowledging the 'disputes between Russia and China from time to time', Interviewee O-2 highlighted the two countries' long friendship in history and thought that Harbin's becoming 'a nationally important city of heavy industry' 'owes much to the Russians': 'Especially in the early years of the PRC, the then Soviet Union helped China a lot. This is evident in Harbin as the city received a dozen [Soviet Union's] aid projects [i.e., 13 of the 156 Key Projects].' In the 1990s, Harbin's local government started to promote the deindustrialised city's exotic and aesthetic Russian colonial remains to attract tourists, which enabled its impoverished citizens to profit from the emerging tourism industry. At that time, tourism based on the Western-style cultural heritage was something the creaking economy badly needed. Locals thus generated even more positive feelings about the Russian colonisation.

In contrast, the relationship between China and Japan has generally been fraught with political tensions throughout the decades. The official narrative of China being victimised by Japan in history, which is further discussed in the next section, certainly has a strong influence on ordinary Chinese people's views, yet 'without a broad social consensus, exertion of political

[28] See the following sections for a detailed analysis of the relics, the memorial, and the perceptions of Unit 731.

influence would be impossible' (Xu, 2016, p. 56). In Harbin, the more recent collective memory is also a contributing factor. For example, the recurrent epidemic outbreaks in the early years of the PRC, which were repercussions of Unit 731's biological warfare research, are still in living memory. Interviewee L-27 claimed that her family is 'a victim of the Japanese biological warfare' and recounted her grandparents' death: 'My grandparents died when my father was only a child. Japan is to blame for their death. […] They [i.e., the Japanese] spread diseases such as typhoid, bubonic plague, and malaria. Both of my grandparents were infected and then died.' Victimisation is, in this sense, not only a statement made by the authorities but also a *reality* remembered and shared among the populace.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Harbin of today sees an autocatalytic evolution of its colonial memories involving a gradual polarisation of collective memories of both the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts, where official and popular attitudes generally coincide and reinforce each other. The politics of collective memory 'circumscribes the acceptable' and 'defines such key ingredients as pride, shame, fear, revenge, and comfort' for a large number of people in the related groups (Markovits and Reich, 1997, p. 9), thus having a real impact on which approach they adopt to deal with a certain past and its heritage. This is manifested in Harbin's very different approach to the making and interpretation of its Japanese colonial heritage from that of its Russian colonial heritage, which is elaborated on in the following sections of this chapter.

Negative Heritage and China's National Humiliation Discourse

For many, heritage is 'inherently good' and a 'cause for celebration' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006, p. 190). Such an understanding of heritage is, in particular, officially promoted as a means of building consensus and achieving harmony, as manifested in the prestigious UNESCO

protocols (Logan, 2022). However, as Dolff-Bonekämper (2008, p. 135) questioned, 'How can anyone claim that the cultural heritage only embodies positive historical, artistic and ethical values (truth, beauty and goodness), when heritage often comes down to us from periods of deep social and political conflict?' Indeed, collective identity can be affirmed not only through positive heritage about triumph and achievement, but also through negative heritage associated with suffering and sacrifice (Macdonald, 2009, p. 2). As Lowenthal (2015, p. 131) rightly pointed out, 'stressing past misery has its benefits'. Firstly, the past suffering can, in many cases, act in the present day as a 'vehicle for the display of virtue and faith' (Schwartz and Kim, 2002, p. 223) of a people in history, thereby building up a collective sense of dignity and pride and raising the current people's morale. Secondly, suffering and grief impose duties, require a common effort, and in turn, unite people more than joy and triumphs do (Renan, 2018 [1882], p. 261).

Volkan (1997, p. 48) coined the term 'chosen trauma' to describe 'the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ancestors'. Comparing with *chosen glories* which serve to bolster a group's self-esteem, he contended that *chosen traumas* have a more complex and profound psychological effect on people and exert a stronger influence on group behaviour (*ibid.*, pp. 81–82). Chosen traumas can provoke reactive tasks such as mourning and reversing feelings of loss or humiliation, which tightly knit a nation together. Similarly, Fogel (2007, p. 272) suggested that a people's collective identity can be constructed on the basis of a negative instance because the negative event 'links all members of an ethnic group in victimhood and bonds them in a way that cannot be questioned'. Spatially, past negative events effectively endow places with memorable identities, and these sites can in turn be made into a 'heritage of victimization' which 'strengthens solidarity within the group and defines it in relation to the external perpetrator' (Ashworth, 2008, p. 232), thus 'providing internal cohesion and external demarcation' (*ibid.*, p. 239). Compared with the Russia-era heritage, which is

perceived to be positive at least to a certain degree, the Japanese-era heritage is decidedly negative heritage for contemporary Harbin.

Meskell (2002, p. 558) coined the term 'negative heritage' to describe those conflictual sites which have become 'the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary'. On this basis, Rico (2008, p. 344) offered a more specific definition of negative heritage: 'sites that may be interpreted by a group as commemorating conflict, trauma and disaster'. Some scholars also researched this type of heritage under alternative rubrics such as 'difficult heritage' (Huang and Lee, 2019; Knudsen, 2011), 'heritage that hurts' (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011), and 'dark heritage' (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2017; Thomas *et al.*, 2016), the last one being a term based on the notion of 'dark tourism' introduced by Foley and Lennon (1996) in tourism studies (see also: Lennon and Foley, 2000; Light, 2017). Here it is necessary to reiterate that heritage is a *status*. As Carr (2014, p. 12) rightly pointed out, 'to turn something into heritage is an active choice, a decision about what is of value and what a community is happy to embrace as a part of its identity', and what remains as a *legacy* needs not only a choice/decision but also intervention to become a *heritage*. Thus, historically remaining negative sites are not automatically negative heritage. Instead, the negative sites generally have two fates: in some cases such as Auschwitz and Hiroshima, they can be deployed as resources for didactic purposes and are thus labelled as heritage for their uncontested significance; in other cases, those negative sites that 'resist incorporation into the national imaginary' – for example, the Nazi and the Soviet statues and buildings – may never be given the heritage status but are simply eliminated from the landscape (Meskell, 2002, p. 558). The latter is understandable since the erasure of memories and reminders of unpleasant pasts would seem to make current people feel more relieved and comfortable. Therefore, in many situations, erasure can be more in the current interests of a society (Ashworth, 2008). Indeed, collective amnesia is as much a part of collective identity construction as collective remembrance.

That being the case, the contrary choice to remember a negative past and make heritage from it is always deliberate and needs explicit justification at a collective level. In some circumstances, this justification is 'never forget national humiliation' (see for example: Kim, 2014; Strate, 2015; Zhu, 2022). As regards China, it is widely observed that the PRC has constructed the 'century of national humiliation' and victimisation discourses, which serve not only to consolidate national identity and reinforce patriotism but also to legitimate the leadership of the CPC (Callahan, 2004; 2010; Gries, 2004; Qian, 2009; Wang, 2012). At the centre of these discourses are 'China's traumatic and humiliating experience in the face of Western and Japanese incursions' (Wang, 2012, p. 102) and how the CPC-led revolution rescued China from the century-long victimisation and suffering and helped it regain national independence.

It is in this context that the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee (PDCPCCC) issued the 'Notice about Conducting Education in Patriotism and Revolutionary Tradition by Taking Full Advantage of Cultural Heritage' in 1991, which clearly explained China's rationale for making and using its (negative) cultural heritage:

> We must persistently educate students and the masses on China's modern history and national conditions in a step-by-step fashion. This is a fundamental work to foster the national spirit of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance, to guarantee a smooth process of our country's socialist modernisation, to resist peaceful evolution plotted by hostile forces at home and abroad, and to nurture aspiring, virtuous, knowledgeable, and disciplined new socialists. […] Using our abundant cultural heritages is a more straightforward, vivid, authentic, and credible method of educating the masses to love our motherland, the Party, and socialism. It makes people accept and understand [the relevant facts and ideas] more easily, thus being more effective than conventional oral interpretations and propagandist texts. (PDCPCCC, 1991, n.p.)

The 1994 Outline for the Implementation of Education in Patriotism further required governments of all levels to establish 'patriotic education bases [爱国主义教育基地]' as a most important element of the educational campaign (CPC Central Committee, 1994, pp. 857–858). In response, the Ministry of Civil Affairs selected 100 sites as National Demonstrative Patriotic Education Bases [全国爱国主义教育示范基地] in 1995, which aimed to set up typical examples that represent the central government's interests and values at that time. Those 100 selected sites were publicised by the PDCPCCC two years later.

As summarised by Wang (2012, p. 105), 40 of the 100 demonstrative bases are 'memory sites of China's past conflicts or wars with foreign countries', among which half (i.e., 20 sites) concern the Sino-Japanese Wars[29]. The other half focus diversely on the Opium Wars (7 sites), the Korean War (4 sites), the Russian invasion (1 site), the Sino-Indian War (1 site), the war with the Dutch over Taiwan (1 site), and the invasion of the Eight-Nation Alliance (1 site), or stress anti-imperialism in general terms (5 sites) (*ibid.*). This clearly demonstrates that, although both the West and Japan are involved in China's national humiliation discourse, Japan and the Japanese atrocities are always a prime target in practice. It is noteworthy that several memorial halls that focus on specific Japanese atrocities, including the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders [侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆] (hereafter 'Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall'), Lüshun Wanzhongmu Memorial Hall [旅顺万忠墓纪念馆][30], and the Exhibition Hall of Evidences of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese

[29] Wang (2012, p. 105) put it as 'Anti-Japanese War, 1931–1945', that is the Second Sino-Japanese War. However, if we compare Wang's summary with the official list of National Demonstrative Patriotic Education Bases (first batch), obviously sites related to the First Sino-Japanese War were also included in this count.

[30] Wanzhongmu commemorates the victims of the Port Arthur Massacre by the Japanese army. The massacre took place in November 1894 during the First Sino-Japanese War and targeted both Chinese soldiers and civilians. Around 20,000 Chinese people were killed in this massacre (Zang, 2001).

Imperial Army [侵华日军第七三一部队罪证陈列馆] (hereafter 'Unit 731 Exhibition Hall')[31], are covered by this initial list of national patriotic education bases.

The Ignored versus the Focused: The Japanese colonial heritage making in Harbin

Harbin became a part of the puppet state Manchukuo soon after the Japanese troops entered the city, as Japan established Manchukuo on 1 March 1932 and entitled the former Qing emperor Puyi to act as the state's nominal leader. Harbin had, since then, been under Japanese colonial rule for thirteen years. Nevertheless, unlike Changchun, Harbin did not receive a distinct Japanese landscape because of the Japanese occupation. As indicated previously, it was probably a conscious decision that the Japanese did not change Harbin's landscape from Russian to Japanese but kept those Western-style buildings and structures in the city – to some extent, this reflected the Japanese admiration for the West at that time.

This is certainly not to say that the Japanese did not build anything in Harbin at all. Except for modest Japanese traditional buildings such as the religious Harbin Shrine and memorials such as the Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits (see also: Chapter 1), the most common Japanese-built things in Harbin were probably eclectic buildings and modernist buildings which showcased the modernised/Westernised architectural thoughts and building techniques of Japan. Such buildings did fit well into this young Western-style city. In this context, it is notable that there were Russian-designed buildings still being constructed and completed during the Japanese colonial period. For example, the Harbin International Hotel (originally the New Harbin Hotel) built in the late 1930s (Figure 3.1) was designed by the Russian architect Petr Sergeevich Sviridov.

[31] Both 'the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders' and 'the Exhibition Hall of Evidences of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army' are official English names. See their official websites for more information: http://www.19371213.com.cn/; http://www.731museum.org.cn/ (Accessed: 29 January 2022).

Figure 3.1 Harbin International Hotel

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

'Hidden' Japanese-Era Buildings, 'Invisible' Listed Heritage

As shown at the beginning of this chapter, many local people cannot tell which buildings in Harbin are from the Japanese colonial period. There are nevertheless a number of Japanese-era buildings listed by relevant government departments as the official heritage of Historic Building [历史建筑], Immovable Cultural Relics [不可移动文物], or Protected Historical and Cultural Site [文物保护单位] at different levels. These officially listed heritage buildings can be roughly divided into two categories: the first is Western eclectic buildings, which look like Russian-era buildings at first sight (Figure 3.2); the second is modernist buildings, which look modest and easily blend into the more recent cityscape that formed in the later decades after the founding of the PRC (Figure 3.3).

113 Tiandi Street, Daoli | 62 Zhaolin Street, Daoli

53 Zhongyi Street, Daoli | 29 Manzhouli Street, Nangang

Figure 3.2 Examples of listed Japanese-era Western eclectic buildings

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

2 Diduan Street, Daoli | 128 Gongchang Street, Daoli

420 Gogol Avenue, Nangang | 53 Shangzhi Avenue, Daoli

Figure 3.3 Examples of listed Japanese-era modernist buildings

Sources: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021 and 2022.

Today, these listed Japanese-era heritage buildings are generally in use for commercial or public purposes which are mostly mundane. As shown by the buildings in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, the current possible uses of Harbin's Japanese-era heritage sites include, for example, bank, hospital, theatre, newspaper office, and telecommunications service store. Being frequently seen and visited by the local people as a part of their day-to-day lives, the Japanese-era buildings are inconspicuously integrated into the contemporary Harbin city. This can be seen as yet another example of the application of the 'profanation' strategy on the Japanese colonial heritage besides the reusing of the Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits as a parachute tower in the 1950s (see: Chapter 1). Given that those Japanese-era buildings are not overtly Japanese in terms of architectural style, it is unsurprising that many local people are not able to tell from their daily experience which buildings in their surroundings are from the Japanese colonial period.

Considering the lack of publicity for such Japanese colonial heritage sites in Harbin, the heritage plaques attached to the walls of those listed buildings are perhaps the only channel for ordinary people to notice the buildings' heritage status. These plaques, most of which are black, typically offer the name and basic architectural information of their corresponding building. The basic architectural information includes, for example, year of construction, original use, structure, and style. Occasionally, there is also a short account of the building's history. However, the data collected from my fieldwork interviews indicate that such heritage plaques have constantly escaped local people's notice. Some interviewees tried to justify their failure to notice the plaques. For example, Interviewee L-1 thought 'it is understandable' that she did not notice those heritage plaques because when she walks, she does not expect to see them and does not have the habit of looking around; Interviewee L-23 further pointed out that those plaques are 'not very noticeable' in themselves and can thus only be seen when people really pay attention. Interviewee L-2 explained, from a different perspective, that if people 'do not

concern' themselves with the conservation of heritage buildings, they can hardly get an impression of those plaques even if they did see them.

There are indeed interviewees who have noticed the heritage plaques on the walls of the listed buildings in Harbin, but such notice does not make much difference to their knowledge about the heritage sites: they tend to pass by without really reading the inscriptions on the plaques because they are busy doing other things or are not willing to read simply because they are not interested [Interviewee L-7 and Interviewee L-28]. Interviewees who had read some of those inscriptions did not give very positive feedback either. Interviewee L-10 [born in 1997, male] complained that there is not much useful information on the heritage plaques, which he thought is a problem not only in Harbin but also in many other cities around China; Interviewee L-11 and Interviewee L-25 considered the information given to be insufficient for people to really know about the heritage sites. Another problem is that the information on the heritage plaques is too technical to be understood or remembered by ordinary people. Both Interviewee L-9 and Interviewee L-12 specifically mentioned the architectural term 'eclectic style' because they encountered this term when reading the inscriptions – as Interviewee L-12 said, 'on [the heritage plaques of] many buildings' – but did not know what it means. As a result, most of the interviewees who had read the inscriptions on the heritage plaques, which are full of numbers, names, and technical terms but without enough narrative, told me that they are simply not able to remember what they read. Even the government official Interviewee O-1 found this problematic, suggesting that information given on such heritage signage should be stories like 'who lived here before', rather than academic descriptions such as the building's architectural style. In this sense, the heritage plaques are more of a tool for the local government to maintain the heritage sites, rather than a means of transmitting heritage information and knowledge to local people and tourists alike. In other words, those heritage plaques only offer very limited

help to ordinary people in recognising and understanding Harbin's Japanese colonial heritage sites.

As a combined result of the current banal uses, a lack of publicity, and the inconspicuous signage, most of the Japanese-era buildings in Harbin – even if they are officially given a heritage status and included in the heritage lists – seem to be forgotten by the local community. Burke (1997, pp. 56–57) suggested that

> To understand the workings of the social memory it may be worth investigating the social organization of forgetting, the rules of exclusion, suppression or repression, and the question of who wants whom to forget what, and why. In a phrase, social amnesia. Amnesia is related to 'amnesty', to what used to be called 'acts of oblivion', the official erasure of memories of conflict in the interests of social cohesion.

In the case of Harbin's 'forgetting' the majority of its Japanese-era buildings (typically those Western eclectic and modernist buildings in the city), it is certainly not the 'memories of conflict' that were officially erased. Rather, depicting itself as a victim of the China–Japan conflict, Harbin kept its memories of conflict but erased the benign part of the Japanese colonial past. In this way, Harbin's social amnesia serves to reinforce the national humiliation discourse of China. However, as Burke suggested, it might be better for people if they got to know about the past which they 'for one reason or another do not wish to', because 'it might, for example, free them from the dangerous illusion that the past may be seen as a simple struggle between heroes and villains, good and evil, right and wrong' (*ibid.*, p. 59). A more comprehensive understanding of the Japanese colonial past and its relevant heritage (and also the Russian ones) may help to mitigate Harbin's contemporary polarisation of collective memories of the Russian colonisation and the Japanese colonisation, and thus lead to a fairer and more objective evaluation of both the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts.

Highlighted Historical Conflicts, Conspicuous New Memorials

Unlike the Japanese-era historic buildings which are often invisible to the local people in Harbin, sites that mark historical confrontations between China and Japan are much more likely to be highlighted by the city. In Harbin, there are four streets named after heroes and martyrs who resisted the Japanese rule over the then Manchukuo: Jingyu Street [靖宇街], Yiman Street [一曼街], Zhaolin Street [兆麟街], and Shangzhi Avenue [尚志大街], in memory of Yang Jingyu [杨靖宇], Zhao Yiman [赵一曼], Li Zhaolin [李兆麟], and Zhao Shangzhi [赵尚志] respectively. Their names and heroic deeds are widely known among Harbin locals since all primary and secondary schools in Harbin regularly educate their students on the sacrifices made by those pioneers. As Interviewee L-2 commented, Chinese people can hardly have any good feelings about the Japanese colonial period if they live in a city like Harbin, where even streets are named after heroes who strived to safeguard China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and, because of this, died in the hands of the Japanese: in such cases, 'you will find it very hard to believe that the Japanese constructed many fine buildings for you [means "in Harbin"], or that Japan has left anything good to you'.

In recent years, Japanese-related heritage has been made particularly in the form of newly built memorials. As a result, memorials commemorating collective suffering and/or individual sacrifice have become an effective tool to promote the Chinese identity of Harbin. A recent and pertinent example is the memorial to An Jung-geun. An was a Korean independence activist, nationalist, and pan-Asianist. He assassinated the Japanese politician Itō Hirobumi[32] on a platform at the Harbin Railway Station on 26 October 1909, and was thus seen as a terrorist and murderer in Japan but as a righteous person and hero in Korea and China: the South Korean government posthumously awarded An Jung-geun the Order of Merit for National Foundation

[32] Itō was a four-time prime minister of Japan, former resident-general of Korea, and then president of the Privy Council of Japan.

for his efforts to achieve Korean independence. In 2014, a memorial to An and his heroic assassination of Itō was set up at Harbin Railway Station. It consists of two marks on the ground of a platform, showing the exact spots where An and Itō stood when the shooting took place. This memorial was accompanied by the newly built An Jung-geun Memorial Hall [安重根义士纪念馆], which opened to the public on 19 January. A joint South Korean–Chinese effort, the memorial hall has received generous praise from these two countries but, unsurprisingly, has been strongly criticized by the Japanese (Rauhala, 2014).

Although the memorial to An Jung-geun and its accompanying exhibition hall commemorate an event prior to the Manchukuo period, this example nevertheless clearly demonstrates the thinking behind the Japanese-related heritage making in contemporary Harbin. Rather than appreciating the architectural or aesthetic values of the buildings or the landscapes per se, sites related to Japan are consciously made and promoted as heritage mainly because of specific events and/or people, along with their associated political and/or societal values. These made heritage sites not only mark and remind people of the past conflicts between China and Japan, but can sometimes also provoke new international disputes between the two countries. Indeed, heritage making is not only about the past but also for the present and the future. Harbin's current making of heritage which highlights past international conflicts undoubtedly represents the most recent political and social attitudes of the city, and of China more broadly, towards any country that is involved in those conflicts.

As regards the Japanese colonial heritage sites that are related to the Manchukuo period, nowadays, the former site of the Unit 731 camp is undoubtedly the best-known in Harbin. This is not surprising given that the site was, as previously mentioned, listed among the first batch of the National Demonstrative Patriotic Education Bases and has thus become a most visited place for schools and working units in Harbin, not to mention that there has always been a great deal of publicity surrounding the atrocities and relics of Unit 731, especially on relevant

memorial days such as the anniversaries of China's victory in the Second Sino-Japanese War, or on special occasions when political tensions between China and Japan are mounting.

Never Forget the War Crimes of Unit 731: Relics, memorials, and perceptions

Unit 731, or Ishii Unit, was formally known as the 'Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department of the Kwantung Army'. It was a covert biological and chemical warfare research and development unit of the Imperial Japanese Army that undertook lethal human experimentation during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Ishii Unit was founded by the Japanese microbiologist and army medical officer Shirō Ishii in 1933, with its headquarters in the inner city of Harbin and an experimental camp located in Wuchang County [五常县], 70 kilometres from Harbin. After several incidents, the experimental camp was deserted, and experiments were moved to the unit's headquarters. However, it was certainly not convenient for the Japanese army medical staff to conduct unethical experiments secretly in the inner city, where they could be readily revealed.

In 1936, the construction of Ishii Unit's new headquarters started in Harbin's suburban district of Pingfang. Ishii Unit moved to this new camp in 1938, though the construction was not completed until 1940. From 1941, the official designation of Ishii Unit was 'Manchuria Unit 731'. In 1945, days before the surrender of Japan, the Unit 731 personnel started to retreat and blasted their camp, as instructed by their superiors, into ruins (Figure 3.4). After the war, the US made a deal with Japan. Shirō Ishii and his fellow Unit 731 members handed over to the US their data on biological and chemical warfare, a large portion of which was collected through human experimentation, as well as relevant scientific reports. In exchange, these Japanese were protected by the US and thus not prosecuted for their war crimes (Harris, 1994; Williams and Wallace, 1989). Being classified for over half a century, the US documents relating to the war crimes committed by the Japanese Unit 731 were only identified, declassified,

and made available to the public after the year 2000 (NWCRIWG, 2000; see for example: Drea *et al.*, 2006; The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2007).

Figure 3.4 Part of the Unit 731 relics

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

The Official Heritage Making: From the listing of relics to the building of memorials

In March 1950, only a few months after the announcement of the PRC's founding, the Health Department of the PRC Northeast Region People's Government promulgated a notice to conserve three Japanese military sites in Northeast China. These sites, all relating to the Japanese biological and chemical warfare research, include the former site of the Unit 731 camp in Pingfang District. At that time, only parts of its central buildings remained in clear view, and the site was protected by the then newly founded State-Owned No. 122 Factory. This early protection was, however, interrupted by the social movements of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) and the Cultural Revolution. During the social movement period, the historic site experienced vandalism, and the ruins were further dismantled.

The conservation and management of the site were officially resumed in 1982. A year later, the former site of the Unit 731 camp was listed by the Heilongjiang provincial government

as a 'Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the Provincial Level'. By that time, the site had been reused for various purposes. In a booklet that was completed in 1984 and published in 1985, the then Unit 731 site is described as the following:

> The former site of the Square Building [四方楼, i.e., the former building which accommodated bacteriological laboratories and the Special Prison], which was the core of the then bacterial factory, is nowadays a part of the campus of Harbin No. 25 Middle School; the former site of Tanaka Squad [田中班, i.e., the building that formerly accommodated animal breeding rooms], where the Japanese invaders did animal researches, is now used as a warehouse; […] Dongxiang Village, which was formerly the residential area for the Unit 731 members' families, has been transformed to a new residential quarter for workers in Pingfang District. (Zhan *et al.*, 1985, p. 196)

These reuses had apparently exploited the heritage site to an even larger extent and negatively impacted the site.

An exhibition of Unit 731's war crimes at the site of the old camp opened to the public on 15 August 1985. That day was the 40th anniversary of the Chinese victory against Japanese aggression. On the same date ten years later, a newly built exhibition hall to the east of the heritage site opened its door to visitors in commemoration of the 50th anniversary. The process of relevant heritage making and management has been accelerating since the turn of the century. The 'Former Sites of Unit 731' was added to the list of 'Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level' in 2006. This officially listed national heritage property consists of six complementary sites. These include not only the former site of the Unit 731 camp in Pingfang District but also five other sites related to Unit 731 around the city: the relics of the germ bomb shell factory, the former liaison office on Jilin Street, the former off-camp dormitory on Jiaohua Street, the former Japanese consulate, and the former site of Chengzigou [城子沟] test field.

The six sites of the Unit 731 national heritage property have a total of 27 heritage spots, among which 22 are in the Pingfang site. As regards the other five sites, the relics of the germ bomb shell factory consist of two kilns, four chimneys, and a five-storey building. The building, along with the inner-city heritage buildings of the former liaison office, the former off-camp dormitory, and the former Japanese consulate, was adapted for other uses after Manchukuo disintegrated and thus significantly changed. The former site of Chengzigou test field has also altered considerably due to agricultural activities and grave diggings of the nearby villagers. Comparatively, the Pingfang site, which demonstrates the major activities of Unit 731, is the largest and most important constituent of the nationally listed Unit 731 heritage property. Therefore, this research focuses on the Pingfang site (i.e., the former site of the Unit 731 camp) and its related monuments and interpretation facilities only.

The Conservation Regulation of the Former Sites of the Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731 in Harbin [哈尔滨市侵华日军第七三一部队旧址保护条例] was promulgated in 2011. This marked the extra special protection added to the Unit 731 national heritage property: its constituent sites' management must comply with this dedicated regulation in addition to the common national and local heritage-related laws and regulations. In 2012, the Unit 731 heritage property was included in the Chinese World Cultural Heritage Tentative List and was designated as a National Defence Education Base [国防教育基地]. In 2013, the statutory Conservation Plan of the Former Sites of the Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731 was completed. The objective of the Conservation Plan is to effectively conserve and appropriately use the relics, so as to present their historical values and magnify their social effects. The sites were planned to disclose the crimes against humanity of the Japanese militaristic germ warfare during the Second World War, to commemorate the victims of the lethal biological experimentation, to help with patriotic education, to constitute the Red Tourism system of Harbin, and to promote peace internationally (SPCEIMS, 2013, p. 15).

In 2015, a second-generation exhibition hall was completed and opened, again, on the anniversary day of 15 August. Interviewee O-1 expounded that this new exhibition hall was a 'national project' invested in by the central government:

> It is a very important project in commemoration of the '70th Anniversary of the Victory of the World Anti-Fascist War'. I remember the Japanese disavowed the Nanjing Massacre that year. It was a chaotic year. […] At that time, there were some Japanophiles in China… I have the impression that the central government attached great importance to this project.

Being a top-down initiative supported by the central government, the exhibition hall offers an authorised presentation of the Japanese war crimes to both domestic and international audiences, which acts as a part of China's 'official memory' of the Japanese colonial past.

Nowadays, the heritage complex that has been made based on the former site of Unit 731 includes not only the officially listed relics, but also various later-established interpretation facilities such as a memorial, an exhibition hall, and an archive.

- Management of the Relics

The relics of Unit 731 have been protected and managed in a relatively conventional fashion. As regards the relics of its camp in Pingfang District, the only part that seems to be under elaborate protection is the former site of the bacteriological laboratories and their associated Special Prison, which is an archaeological site that was excavated only in the past decade (Figure 3.5). Most of the remaining buildings and structures, regardless of how intact or damaged they were when the official protection of the area was resumed in the early 1980s, were kept with minimal interference such as necessary preservation and maintenance. With trees and grass around, they stand there silently and solemnly, offering visitors an unexpected sense of peace and solitude.

On the Pingfang site, perhaps the only obvious sign that the remains are officially managed on a regular basis is the heritage plaques, each with the name of its corresponding heritage spot and a short introduction. They are similar to those on the 'hidden' Japanese-era buildings around the Harbin city (see the previous section) but are much more conspicuous: there are three sets of heritage plaques on and/or beside each heritage spot within the Unit 731 protected area. Two sets of them are heritage signage dedicated to the 'Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the National Level' status of those spots. Both were set up by the Heilongjiang provincial government, but in 2008 and 2014 respectively. The other set of plaques contains information in both Chinese and English, which seems to be developed mainly as a tour guide (Figure 3.6). Although the repeatedly organised plaques do illustrate how much importance the local authorities have attached to the relics of Unit 731, the overlaps and contradictions between the information on those different sets of plaques nevertheless make the heritage presentation untidy and sometimes even confusing. In terms of contents, those plaques have the same problem as the plaques on the scattered eclectic and modernist Japanese-era buildings within the city, in that they simply communicate basic factual information, which consists of too many technical terms, but do not offer enough narration or interpretation as suggested by Tilden (2007 [1957], pp. 34–35).

Figure 3.5 The former site of the bacteriological laboratories and the Special Prison

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Figure 3.6 The three sets of heritage plaques for the Unit 731 yellow rat breeding room

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

- Design and Arrangement of the Exhibition Hall

The current Unit 731 Exhibition Hall (Figure 3.7), which is the second-generation exhibition hall for the presentation and interpretation of Unit 731's war crimes, is built on a plot that was formerly occupied by Unit 731, beside the relics of the unit's camp. This building was designed by a group of architects, with the chief architect, He Jingtang, being nationally renowned. The main body of the building is very large yet very low. On top of it stand three soaring chimney-like vertical skylight shafts, which are dominant and can be seen from a distance. As intended by the designers He *et al.* (2016), this black-coloured building was conceived of as a black box which recorded the atrocities of Unit 731. Its main body was segmented 'as if being dissected by a scalpel' and tilted, serving as a metaphor for the unethical human experiments conducted by the Japanese and their devastating effect on the Chinese (*ibid.*, p. 100). The three skylight shafts symbolise the three war crimes committed by Unit 731: biological warfare, chemical warfare, and experimentation on live human beings. These shafts are designed to simulate the chimneys of the once-existing incinerators, where the bodies of experimentation victims were burnt like refuse during the Japanese colonial period. The architects explained that they wanted to design a 'readable' building by translating historical information into abstract design elements, thereby transmitting their messages to the visitors that we should 'never forget [this] history' and that we must 'respect humanity, avoid wars, and cherish peace' (*ibid.*, pp. 102–103), as well as provoking resonance among the visitors, who obviously have not experienced that incredibly heinous medical research project.

Figure 3.7 The Unit 731 Exhibition Hall

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

Compared with the building, the exhibition inside offers a more concrete base for the visitors' emotions to be evoked and gathered. The entrance of the exhibition is a dark space – the only light falls over a wall, which bears large characters showing the exhibition theme 'inhuman atrocities' in six different languages (Figure 3.8). Below the characters, there is a short preface in Chinese and English, which underlines the aim of the exhibition hall:

> The Unit 731 Exhibition Hall carries a unique historical mission of revealing the nature of the Japanese biological warfare, which was against humanity, civilization and moral ethics. It is hoped that with the abundant artifacts, archival materials and oral history collected, the exhibits would help provoke a deep reflection on war and human nature.

The exhibition was arranged not to show the history of Unit 731, but rather to present the evidence of the Japanese war crimes with jurisprudential considerations. The six parts of the exhibition – 'Japan's Biological Warfare against China', 'Unit 731: Japanese biological warfare headquarters', 'Human Experiments', 'Development of Bacteriological Weapons', 'Implementation of Biological Warfare', and 'Destroying Evidence and Trials' – offer a visiting experience similar to viewing a dossier on the war crimes committed by Japan and its Unit 731 (*Beijing Evening News*, 2019).

Figure 3.8 Large characters showing the exhibition theme at the entrance

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

With the purposely created dim exhibition rooms, aesthetic installations, and specially designed interior decoration (Figure 3.9) – in addition to the terrifying and/or sad stories on the display panels, which include not only quotes from books such as *The Devil's Gluttony* written by the Japanese author Seiichi Morimura, but also oral history that consists of narrations of both the then Japanese perpetrators and the relatives of the Chinese victims – the exhibition is a sombre dedication to a 'hot interpretation' (Uzzell, 1989) of the Japanese colonial past. Harbin's local government as well as the Chinese central government have chosen to expose the public to the horrors and miseries of biological and chemical warfare and human experimentation 'by a sense of collective outrage, anger, [and] despair', and 'hope that lessons can be learnt' (*ibid.*, p. 38). The effect of this hot interpretation is clearly reflected by the visitors' reviews of the 'Unit 731 Museum' on the travel website Tripadvisor[33]. The reviewers, who come from different parts of the world and have visited the Unit 731 heritage site in Pingfang

[33] See: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g297433-d495090-Reviews-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 1 March 2022). There are few reviews (only four by 1 March 2022) written after 2020 because international tourists have not been able to enter China since the outbreak of COVID-19. The reviews of the 'Unit 731 Museum' generally consider both the exhibition hall and the open-air relics outside of it.

District, frequently described the relics and their accompanied exhibition/exhibits with words such as ‘sobering’, ‘creepy’, ‘moving’, and ‘poignant’. Words such as ‘devastating’, ‘shocking’, ‘distressing’, ‘depressing’, and ‘terrifying’ also appear in their descriptions. A large number of them used words from ‘sad’ and ‘sombre’ to ‘horrified’ and ‘furious’ in their reviews to highlight their own feelings and emotions during and after their visit to the exhibition hall, and many warned that the site is not very suitable for young children or ‘faint-hearted’/ ‘very sensitive’/ ‘impressionable’ people.

Figure 3.9 Inside the exhibition rooms

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

Despite the hot interpretation of the Unit 731 heritage, it is noteworthy that those many photographs and documentary films showing the horrific human experiments, which were taken by the Photography Squad of Unit 731 as the experiments occurred and can still be found online today, are not included in the exhibits of the Unit 731 Exhibition Hall. Instead, only photographs of relevant buildings, structures, and Japanese perpetrators are displayed, while the scenes of human experiment conduction and biological warfare implementation are depicted with

paintings, dioramas, and mock-ups. Hillier and Fu (2021, pp. 216–217) also noticed this and wondered whether it is due to 'Chinese attitudes to death […] with a cultural reluctance to present dead bodies or skeletons, especially when these are of unidentified persons', or because the curators tried to avoid what Bourgois (2001, p. 11) described as 'pornography of violence', where 'voyeuristic impulses subvert the larger project of witnessing, critiquing, and writing against violence' (Springer, 2011, p. 92). I would contend, from my personal experience and my understanding of Chinese attitudes towards death as a Harbin local, that the former is not the case. As a matter of fact, when I was a primary school student (that was in the late 1990s and early 2000s), I, along with my teachers and fellow students, did visit some exhibition about Unit 731 that was made up of panels of such unpleasant photographs.

Considering that the curators consciously 'present the bloodthirsty atrocities and crimes in an artistic way' in order to 'set a mood for the exhibition' and 'evoke people's imagination and reflection' (*Beijing Evening News*, 2019, n.p.), and that the designers of the exhibition building also preferred to avoid emphasising 'darkness or terror' from a highly subjective point of view (He *et al.*, 2016, p. 99), I would suggest that the avoidance of gruesome pictures is a deliberate strategy to exercise restraint. Such restrained hot interpretation is indeed appreciated by many visitors. For example, Tripadvisor member 'Amy B' wrote in her review that the exhibition hall 'presents the material in a way that is clear and informative, emotive but not mawkish', and felt relieved that 'the museum chose not [to] include some of [the] more atrocious details'[34]; the Tripadvisor member 'Emma V' commended the new exhibition hall as 'world-class', highlighting that the information 'is presented in a factual, balanced way': 'You

[34] Review written in English in 2019. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r648484782-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 4 March 2022).

will not be bombarded with over-the-top propaganda. The truth is gruesome, but the museum is not full of gruesome images.'[35]

- Establishment of Memorial and Other Interpretation Facilities

In 2011, a stele named 'Peace Monument for Apology and Nonbelligerency' was erected in a corner of the Unit 731 heritage site. It was initiated by the Japanese non-governmental organisation ABC Planning Committee [ABC 企画委員会] in commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the Victory of the World Anti-Fascist War in 2010, as a gesture of goodwill to Chinese people. The monument was unveiled on 9 July, and the event was widely reported in the Chinese media (see for example: Li, 2011; Yu and Peng, 2011). The stele is black with white inscriptions on both sides: Chinese on the one side, and Japanese on the other. The text reads:

> In China, Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army had committed war crimes at a national level, which was unprecedented in world history. We, as citizens of the perpetrator state, sincerely apologise to the victims, including the soldiers who resisted against Japanese aggression and the numerous innocent Chinese civilians. Our sincere apologies also go to their living relatives.
>
> We must learn from history and warn our later generations. Here we pledge that we will never commit such crimes again.[36]

While the interpretations on/beside the relics and in the exhibition hall focus on the Chinese victimhood and highlight the idea of 'never forget' by clearly separating 'us' as Chinese from 'them' as Japanese, this monument offers an invitation to reconciliation from the perspective of Japan as the former perpetrator. The erection of the stele aims at the future and echoes the slogan 'never again', which is frequently associated with the Holocaust and other genocides,

[35] Review written in English in 2016. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r441704267-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 4 March 2022).
[36] English translation by the author from the original Chinese text.

especially in the Western context. Unlike the phrase 'never forget' which underlines the *past*, 'never again' puts the emphasis on the *future* by suggesting that people should move forward with their wretched experiences in the past to a peaceful future.

In early 2021, the International Peace Archives [国际和平资料馆] was open to the public at Heilongjiang International University, as a branch of the Unit 731 Exhibition Hall. A joint project of the exhibition hall and the university, this archive was set up in celebration of the CPC's centenary and adopted 'war, memory, peace' as the theme of its exhibition. As the audio guide of its virtual tour[37] explained, the exhibition was developed around how 'the peace-loving people around the world have been demanding accountability [from Japan] for the Japanese Imperial Army's biological warfare and related atrocities during the war'. The archive aims to 'present the historical facts authentically and objectively' and turn the memory of Japanese biological warfare 'from some individuals' memory and a city's memory to a people's memory, a country's memory, and even memory of the world'. According to the virtual tour guide, the management team of the former site of Unit 731 is striving to get the site listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage and its related documents and oral history included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, thus 'achieving the ultimate objectives of keeping common memory, conserving world heritage, and passing on the message of peace'. Undoubtedly, the interpretation here was still developed along the line of 'never forget', it nevertheless pays more attention to the future and puts future peace at its centre.

Harbin's official heritage making based on the past that relates to Unit 731 has been constantly evolving throughout the past four decades, from listing the relics and explaining the facts to setting up monuments and museums to interpret the past. As regards the interpretation

[37] The virtual guided tour of the International Peace Archives is available at: http://www.731museum.org.cn/wszg/fgzl/index.html (Accessed: 23 February 2022).

of the past relating to the Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731, or more broadly the Japanese colonial past, the victimisation and national humiliation discourses have been at the centre since the 1990s. Thus, 'never forget' is always the predominant official message that the Unit 731 heritage site passes on to the masses, regardless of whether they are domestic or international. In recent years, 'peace' has been increasingly mentioned in the official interpretation of Unit 731-related past and heritage, in which circumstance there seems to be a paradigm shift in Harbin's understanding of the Japanese atrocities during the Manchukuo period from focusing on the past ('never forget') to focusing on the future ('never again'). However, I would contend that this shift is rather ostensible since the discussion on peace is basically to reinforce the idea that Japan must be held accountable for the past atrocities and Chinese people must not forget their miserable experience under the Japanese colonial rule: the Chinese national and local authorities constantly emphasise that real peace can only be achieved when Japan pleads guilty and takes the responsibility for its past wrongs. In other words, it is more likely that the Chinese authorities are partially adopting the Western discourse on war and peace as a tool to make China's current negative and sometimes hostile attitude towards Japan even more morally justified. In the name of peace, nationalism and patriotism are further consolidated through the heritage making and interpretation relating to Unit 731.

Popular Perceptions of the Unit 731 Heritage

It can be seen from my fieldwork interviews that the Unit 731 heritage is the only Japanese colonial heritage that is widely known by the Harbin locals. People easily called it to mind when they were asked about Harbin's Japanese-era heritage or even simply colonial heritage. Although Harbin's heritage making based on the past relating to Unit 731 was largely top-down, the view it took is unanimously supported by the local people in Harbin, regardless of whether they have visited the heritage site in person. Interviewee L-10 underlined the importance of the relics of Unit 731 as a witness to history and emphasised how essential it is to preserve the site:

'Nowadays some Japanese people disavow such things [i.e., war crimes such as lethal human experimentation and biological warfare] … or they may acknowledge the fact but don't know how serious the situation was at that time. The relics are evidence of the crimes.' This idea was echoed by Interviewee L-4, who had not visited the site: 'if you ask about what bad things the Japanese did when they invaded China, this is concrete evidence'. Interviewee L-16, who visited the site in her 20s, found the place 'gloomy and horrible': 'I felt that the Chinese people were so weak that we were conquered and bullied by Japan which is such a small country. I felt angry.' Nevertheless, she thought that colonial heritage such as the Unit 731 heritage is a useful channel of communication between contemporary Harbin and its former colonisers: Russian and Japanese people today 'may not really know what their elders had done and left in China', but they can 'learn about that history' by visiting the colonial heritage sites.

Many other local people such as Interviewee L-9, Interviewee L-22, Interviewee L-25, and Interviewee L-27 dare not even visit the Unit 731 heritage site because they heard that those who visited it found it frightening and creepy, or were even warned not to go: 'I have the feeling that nowadays people seldom go to places such as the Unit 731 [heritage site] because we don't really want to look the painful history in the face. People all want themselves to be happier' [Interviewee L-9]; 'I know someone who did visit [the exhibition hall] and said, "don't visit that place, I had [obscenity] nightmares for several nights after the visit!"' [Interviewee L-22]. However, even these people may feel it necessary to conserve and publicise the Unit 731 heritage. For example, Interviewee L-9 thought that the relics of Unit 731 'must be preserved' because they have 'historical value and educational significance': 'the former site of [the] Unit 731 [camp] is a warning sign to us' and helps the school students to 'know the history of [Japanese] invasion'.

Interviewee O-2 indicated, from the perspective of the local tourism industry, that the Unit 731 heritage is not very popular among tourists. On the one hand, domestic tourists are

generally not interested in the 'political stuff' such as the Unit 731 relics. On the other hand, in regard to international tourists, travel agencies normally do not suggest such sites to their Japanese clients, although they can certainly arrange a trip to those sites if the clients ask for one. The Unit 731 heritage's lack of popularity is obvious if we look at its number of reviews on those major travel websites with user-generated content. On Tripadvisor, the majority of whose members are international tourists, the Unit 731 heritage site in Pingfang District[38] has got 151 reviews by 1 March 2022. Comparatively, Harbin's most popular tourist attractions such as Central Avenue and the Ice and Snow World have got over 1,000 reviews[39]. On Mafengwo, a major travel website in China whose members are mostly mainland Chinese, the gap between the review numbers is similarly large.

Nevertheless, people generally made very positive comments after visiting the Unit 731 heritage site (i.e., the Pingfang site). The site has got an average score of 4.5/5 on Tripadvisor, the same as those of Central Avenue and the Ice and Snow World. However, given that the reviews after the new exhibition hall opened on 15 August 2015 are generally much more positive than those before, and only 2/3 of the existing reviews (that is 101 out of the 151 reviews as of 1 March 2022) were written by users who visited the site after that date, the average score of the current site should be even higher. In the following paragraphs, the user-generated reviews of the Pingfang site on Mafengwo and Tripadvisor are analysed to understand the popular perceptions of the Unit 731 heritage from the perspectives of both domestic and international visitors.

[38] Although the nationally listed heritage 'Former Site of Unit 731' consists of 6 parts, the Pingfang site is considered to be the most representative of the past that relates to Unit 731 and is the only site regarded as a tourist attraction. Thus, in travel websites and other forms of travel guide, 'the Unit 731 heritage site' commonly refers to the Pingfang site.

[39] As of 1 March 2022, Central Avenue has got on Tripadvisor 1059 reviews, while the Ice and Snow World has got 1499 reviews.

- ‘Never Forget’

In the reviews on Mafengwo[40], which are almost exclusively written by mainland Chinese, the feelings of ‘shocked’, ‘angry’, and ‘painful’ are frequently expressed. ‘Never forget’ is evidently the dominant keyword: the overwhelming majority of those reviews include phrases such as ‘never forget the past’ and ‘never forget the national humiliation’. Moreover, ‘receiving patriotic education’ is also highlighted by those Chinese reviewers. It is obvious that China’s domestic tourists, along with the local people in Harbin, take a relatively hostile and tough stance towards Japan, which is in line with China’s official stance. This is also evident from the reviews in simplified Chinese on Tripadvisor, which are presumably written by mainland Chinese users.

As regards the perceptions of international tourists, it can be seen from the Tripadvisor reviews that many non-Chinese visitors have noticed China’s official intention through its interpretation of the Unit 731 heritage site: user ‘pressonjh’, who visited the site in August 2012, pointed out that ‘the intention of the exhibit is “Never Forget”’ and applauded ‘the People’s Republic of China for this […] reminder to the world’[41]; while user ‘Passportalwaysready’, who visited the site in January 2019, noted that ‘the [Chinese] government wants to be sure that Japanese aggression and egregious acts of war (and more) are well-remembered by all’[42]. It is noteworthy that many international tourists also expressed their agreement on the idea of ‘never forget’ and even that of ‘(China’s) national humiliation’ in their reviews[43], though by ‘never

[40] See: https://www.mafengwo.cn/poi/11156.html (Accessed: 6 March 2022).
[41] Review written in English in 2012. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r140844118-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 6 March 2022).
[42] Review written in English in 2019. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r646214914-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 6 March 2022).
[43] See for example, the reviews of user ‘Dbeep_trip’ [written in Korean in 2019, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r703962559-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user ‘DL_SB_07’ [written in English in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r626895027-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user ‘nancy921’ [written in traditional Chinese in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r569037405-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user ‘Descubriendo_China’ [written in Spanish in 2018, available at:

forget' they usually mean that we should not forget what atrocities people are capable of in wartime, which barely has nationalistic connotations but highlights a call for peace instead. The international tourists' support of China's official interpretation is typically illustrated by the closing sentence of the review written by user 'Athanasios F': 'Nations with Memory have a Future.'[44]

- 'Auschwitz of the East' and the Relationship between China and Japan

While Chinese people's perceptions of and attitudes towards Japan have been fairly stable throughout the past decades, which is a combined result of collective memory, patriotic education, and the status quo of international relations, international tourists' understandings of the current relationships in East Asia can change significantly by a visit to the Unit 731 heritage site and by China's official interpretation of its related past. The Tripadvisor reviews show that non-Chinese people, especially those from Western countries, may know very little about this piece of history as it is often glossed over in their textbooks[45]. User 'DougieMManchester', for example, admitted that he 'had no idea this place even existed' before his business trip to Harbin, and thought the Unit 731 heritage site 'was an absolute eye opener': 'we are all very aware of the holocaust in Europe and are not so aware of what was happening in China during WW2'[46]. This lack of historical knowledge about Japanese atrocities in China seems to be widespread in

https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r557725360-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], and user 'gazillion' [written in English in 2015, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r335172683-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 6 March 2022).

[44] Reviewed in 2016. See the original review in English: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r337775567-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 6 March 2022).

[45] See for example, the reviews of user '132kevinp' [written in English in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r592095440-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'NeoAxion' [written in English in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r556037444-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'inevdlv' [written in Dutch in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r553868793-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'Ronsku' [written in English in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r417097223-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], and user 'pressonjh' [see Footnote 41] (Accessed: 6 March 2022).

[46] Review written in English in 2014. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r222067077-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 6 March 2022).

the West, as Clausen and Thøgersen (1995, p. 120) noted, 'Ishii's misdeeds have received surprisingly little international attention compared to those of the German Nazi doctors with which they are directly comparable.' User 'DougieMManchester' is not the only reviewer who compared the Japanese atrocities with the German ones. Many international reviewers found the Unit 731 heritage site reminiscent of Nazi Germany's concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Buchenwald[47], and some compared these sites in terms of presentation and interpretation[48]. The Japanese user 'Connector805150' even referred to the Unit 731 camp as 'Auschwitz by the Japanese'[49], while users 'limlimc' and 'Astilbe_Arendsii' called the site 'Auschwitz of the East'[50]. The latter wording was also adopted by Yang and Tam (2018) as the subtitle of their book on Unit 731. Moreover, the Japanese wrongdoing was further amplified by some reviewers, who underlined that the Japanese government refuses to apologise for such wartime atrocities and even denies their existence altogether[51].

[47] See for example, the reviews of user 'P-a-u-1-a' [written in Spanish in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r388703185-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user '1111kam' [written in Russian in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r373923711-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'sunjoe075' [written in English in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r372769663-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'vadim3814' [written in Russian in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r352787411-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'iriishin' [written in Japanese in 2015, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r299755765-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], and user 'BrunoldL' [written in German in 2011, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r98532055-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[48] See for example, the reviews of user 'Jedai79' [written in English in 2017, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r486211616-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] and user 'edwinkwan2016' [written in traditional Chinese in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r416768866-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[49] Review written in Japanese in 2015. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r288420611-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[50] The review by user 'limlimc' was written in English in 2020 [available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r738031830-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], while the review by user 'Astilbe_Arendsii' was written in English in 2013 [available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r151659044-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[51] See the reviews of user 'Redfoot' [written in English in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r348947920-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'M3255ZXrichardb' [written in English in 2018, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r610472103-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], and user 'MisterAccountant' [written in English in 2018, available at:

In this context, many international tourists feel it understandable and justified that the Chinese harbour a grudge against the Japanese and are hostile towards Japan even today[52]. Even Japanese visitors such as user 'kinkanboy' expressed similar ideas: 'It is nothing good, but I think it is OK to know the fact that the Japanese had committed inhumane acts, which made them the enemy in the eyes of the Chinese.'[53] Some Westerners took it one step further and thought that the Unit 731 heritage site can be seen as a justification for the Allies' use of atom bombs against Japan. User 'M3255ZXrichardb' wrote in his review that 'any sympathy for Hiroshima and Nagasaki is quickly erased when you see what they did to the [Chinese] local people, [including] women, children, babies and even unborn embryos'[54]. The American user 'sunjoe075' reviewed the Unit 731 heritage site in May 2016, just after the then US President Barack Obama decided to visit Hiroshima, saying 'it is only fair or necessary to develop a more balanced view of the war by visiting this [Unit 731] museum to understand why […] WWII must end and must end quickly and why the use of atomic bomb against Japan was justified'[55].

China's official interpretation of the Unit 731 heritage site appears to be highly appropriate and successful, not only in domestic terms but also in international terms. This is especially so after the new exhibition hall opened in 2015. In effect, the calm and restrained narration of the Japanese colonial past, which focuses on the facts of Japan's wartime atrocities, has found favour with its international audience. Additionally, the professionally created solemn but oppressive atmosphere unleashes their emotional responses. International visitors,

https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r556585774-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[52] See for example, the reviews of user 'sunjoe075' [see Footnote 47], user 'A5064UB_' [written in Russian in 2016, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r355194910-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], user 'ElmiraMekhtieva' [written in Russian in 2015, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r274938954-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html], and user 'bleckb' [written in English in 2012, available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r138705984-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html] (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[53] Review written in Japanese in 2020. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r739213557-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

[54] See Footnote 51.

[55] See Footnote 47.

especially those Westerners, can feel very comfortable when visiting the Unit 731 heritage site, as its 'world-class' presentation and interpretation are basically of a high Western (or so-called 'international') standard, with which those international tourists are generally very familiar. Thus, they are comfortably 'educated' by China's official interpretation of the heritage site and easily accept it without having the feeling of being fed propaganda. Those who did not know much about the past that relates to Unit 731 and the Chinese people's suffering during the Second World War then feel shocked but at the same time generate great sympathy for the Chinese people of the past and the present. In extreme cases such as those where visitors turned to support the atomic bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Chinese government has not only achieved communication with their international audience but may also be seen to have influenced their views. Notable also is the fact that Harbin's most recent making and interpretation of its Japanese colonial heritage have avoided the common pitfalls of 'overdone propaganda'[56]. They have thereby become an effective tool for international political communication.

- Peace and Reconciliation

Another common theme that can be recognised in the Tripadvisor reviews is the reflections on war and peace. As previously indicated, such reflections also carry a connotation of the frequently mentioned phrase 'never forget'. Some reviewers made the thoughts on war and peace explicit by underlining the cruelty of war or highlighting the preciousness of peace. As for the former, user 'kinkanboy' stressed that people 'should know how terrifying wars are'[57], and user 'Waynejourney' thought 'it is good to know' the 'human cruelty' that can be

[56] This is exactly how the Tripadvisor user 'Polyglot_Solider' described the previous Unit 731 Exhibition Hall in his review written in English in 2013. See: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r177485418-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 8 March 2022).
[57] See Footnote 53.

awakened in wartime[58]. As for the latter, user 'TOsunnyfirst' saw the Unit 731 heritage site as a 'reminder of how precious peace is': 'this place would make you appreciate your life and the peace we now enjoy, well most of us these days'[59].

While most international visitors are sympathetic towards Chinese people and feel their anger and hatred justified, there are also a few reviewers who are critical of the Chinese government for not putting peace and reconciliation at the centre of its interpretation of the Unit 731 heritage site. The Singaporean user 'edwinkwan2016', for example, compared the Unit 731 camp with the Auschwitz camp and thought they are now very different types of heritage sites in that 'you can feel in Europe that the Germans and the Jews have reconciled to some extent, but here [in Harbin], [the Unit 731 camp as a heritage site] aims to retain the unceasing hatred'[60]. The South Korean user 'Coastal807134', from the perspective of a non-Chinese East Asian, found it problematic that the site 'is not used as a place to commemorate the peace in East Asia but as a place for political propaganda of China's Asia strategy'[61]. It is noteworthy that similar concerns are also expressed in scholarly publications. Zhu (2022) studied the heritage interpretation at the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, which is also an exhibition hall in China that focuses on Japanese wartime atrocities, and argued that unilateral heritage interpretation by the Chinese government is not enough to achieve real reconciliation and peacebuilding. Rather, these require international collaboration and open dialogue between relevant nation states. This view is certainly correct because, for one thing, China is not able to express forgiveness if Japan does not officially admit its past wrongs and apologise in the first place, in

[58] Review written in English in 2019. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r732508472-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 8 March 2022).
[59] Review written in English in 2017. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r512259945-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 8 March 2022).
[60] See Footnote 48.
[61] Review written in Korean in 2015. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r312907963-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 10 March 2022).

which case a process of true reconciliation is not possible to start. This also illustrates the political dimension of heritage and heritage interpretation from a different angle.

Having said all that, how the Japanese colonial heritage can contribute to the future in terms of both China–Japan relations and the identity construction of Harbin itself is still open to debate. As regards the Unit 731 heritage, although its related past has not had an impact as serious as that of the Nanjing Massacre on China–Japan relations, the view of the Japanese Tripadvisor user 'NorthStar803525' that the Unit 731 heritage has the potential to 'develop to have a considerable impact'[62] makes eminent sense. McCormack (1991, p. 123) insightfully pointed out that the past relating to Unit 731 has been 'a past which the Chinese authorities tend alternately to reconstruct and to forget, at will, in cycles as the vagaries of the Japan-China relationship of today requires more or less pressure to be applied'. Despite the fluctuations in the effort that China puts into publicising this past at the national level, results of Unit 731-related history and heritage researches have been published steadily, and the Unit 731 heritage is constantly in the making. Clausen and Thøgersen (1995, pp. 121–122) understood such phenomena as 'the production of ammunition for the struggle of historical interpretation has been proceeding steadily, while it has been up to the higher levels to decide when to fire the bullets'. But the question is: are those scholarly publications and heritage sites merely bullets? If the Unit 731 past and heritage are going to have a significant impact on international relations in the future, how to ensure that the impact is not only nationally but also internationally positive is yet another problem that must be resolved by joint efforts between China, Japan, and other regional and international stakeholders.

[62] Review written in Japanese in 2016. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g297433-d495090-r341906983-Unit_731_Museum-Harbin_Heilongjiang.html (Accessed: 10 March 2022).

Discussion

Unlike the Russian colonial past, Harbin has an overall negative attitude towards its Japanese colonial past and Japan more broadly. This difference is a combined result of the differences in the start, course, and aftermath of the Russian and the Japanese colonisations of Harbin. The city's collective memory of the Japanese era is dominated by the Japanese atrocities during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and local people can hardly identify the Japanese colonial remains within the city except for the former site of the Unit 731 camp.

Harbin's current heritage making and interpretation concerning the Japanese colonial past generally follow two paths. The first is the 'social amnesia' path, where the scattering of Japanese-era eclectic buildings and modernist buildings in the city is purposefully ignored. Although these benign Japanese colonial remains are officially granted heritage status and conserved, they are at the same time deliberately 'profaned' by being assigned banal uses. With only inconspicuous heritage plaques marking their significance, such Japanese-era remains are almost 'invisible' to most Harbin locals and 'forgotten' by the city. The second path is the 'never forget' path, where certain Japanese colonial remains are focused on as evidence of the Japanese atrocities and the Chinese suffering during the Japanese colonisation, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Second World War more broadly. The former site of the Unit 731 camp is its best-known representative. The heritage making and interpretation surrounding such remains put the victimisation and national humiliation discourses at the centre and aim at patriotic education. Although the two paths seem to be very different at first sight, especially in terms of collective remembrance/amnesia, they nevertheless serve the same strategic goal set by the Chinese authority. Indeed, forgetting the benign and even potentially positive contributions of the Japanese colonisers also helps to reinforce the collective memory of a negative Japanese colonial past that people should 'never forget'.

Harbin basically understands its Japanese colonial past from a political perspective and treats its Japanese colonial heritage as a negative heritage, which serves to construct China's national identity. Therefore, the central theme in relevant heritage practice has been stable throughout the decades. This is best illustrated by the making, presentation, and interpretation of the Unit 731 heritage. Harbin's official heritage making based on the past relating to Unit 731 has been constantly evolving, from the listing of the Unit 731 relics to setting up various types of memorials; and its presentation and interpretation also develop from a simple description of facts and 'overdone propaganda' to professional hot interpretation with restrained narration. The relevant Chinese authority has learnt to tactically adopt Western discourses (for example, the 'peace' discourse), curation strategies, and presentation techniques, so that successful international political communication can be achieved in a relatively effortless fashion. Despite all the changes, what should be borne in mind here is that the main idea behind the Unit 731 heritage making is always 'never forget' the Japanese atrocities, the Chinese collective suffering, and China's national humiliation: it has never changed but has rather been reinforced, as demonstrated by the user-generated reviews on Mafengwo and Tripadvisor.

Although there are some critics suggesting that the interpretation of Japanese-era heritage should move away from nationalistic and antagonistic doctrines and focus mainly on peace-building and reconciliation, the current status of the Japanese colonial heritage making in Harbin is not expected to change significantly as long as Japan's attitudes towards its past colonisation of Northeast China and wars with China do not change fundamentally. The Japanese-related heritage making has become and will continue to be a significant and effective political tool that reflects and responds to contemporary regional and international relations.

* * * * *

Chapters 2 and 3 have discussed how and why Harbin makes its colonial heritages relating to the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts as such and, in the cases of (relatively) successful heritage making, how the resultant colonial heritage sites are presented and interpreted, and why. However, heritage making is not always that successful in practice, because it may not be able to serve the many different interests of the various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, even when those stakeholders do have the common goal of making a certain heritage. This problem is particularly notable when the target property has an effect on a much larger area surrounding it or is itself large in scale. Indeed, all the previously discussed successfully made heritage sites are either individual buildings or small-scale areas: those existing sites do not have a significant adverse impact of any kind on the long-term development of their surrounding areas and only have limited property owners/residents, not to mention that some sites are even newly built. With the case studies of Jihong Bridge [霁虹桥] and the Chinese Baroque area, the following chapter focuses on Harbin's colonial heritage making on the basis of already existing sites which have large-scale negative effects on urban development or are large-scale in themselves. In Chapter 4, the difficulties and possibilities of such colonial heritage making are discussed from a more practical perspective.

4

COLONIAL HERITAGE IN THE MAKING

Stakeholders, conflicts, and predicaments

Zeng Yizhi (1954–2017) is perhaps the most renowned cultural-heritage-protection volunteer in Harbin. During her career as a journalist for *Heilongjiang Daily* (the official newspaper of the Heilongjiang provincial government), Zeng founded in 1998 a supplement entitled 'City and Citizens [城与人]', which had been constantly appealing for cultural heritage conservation until it ceased publication in 2004. Besides this supplement, Zeng also conducted her cultural heritage campaign via China's online platforms Sina Blog and Weibo, where she kept voicing concern about the fate of Harbin's historic sites until the very end of her life. On 31 January 2017, weeks before she died of cancer, Zeng posted her last blog on Sina Blog and shared that blog on Weibo. The title of the blog reads 'The New Year's sun rose, Jihong Bridge will always be with me in the garden of heaven'[63]. Jihong Bridge, the nationally listed cultural heritage site which Zeng had made every effort to protect in a remarkable period of over eight years, was nevertheless not left intact but transformed to meet the present transportation needs of the city.

[63] Available at: https://weibo.com/1254230710/EtnOU2020 (Accessed: 5 May 2022).

The Transformed Untransformable: A case study of Jihong Bridge

Jihong Bridge (Figure 4.1) is the first flyover in Harbin. It is located just beside Harbin Railway Station. The bridge stretches from Nangang to Daoli, allowing motor vehicles and pedestrians to cross the railways that separate one district from the other. Under the bridge pass trains departing from or arriving in Harbin. Jihong Bridge was built in 1926 – the year in which the Self-Administrative Council was dissolved and the White Russian community completely lost control of Harbin. Marking the complete transfer of power from the Russian colonisers to the Chinese, Jihong Bridge uncommonly features a European appearance *and* a Chinese official name. The bridge was a joint work of the Russian railway engineer Vladimir Andreevich Barry and architect Petr Sergeevich Sviridov. Being an integral bridge, this beautifully designed and embellished reinforced-concrete structure is a masterpiece in terms of both engineering and architecture. As regards its aesthetically pleasing European-style decorations, the obelisks at each of its abutments are decorated in high relief with golden garlands; the artistically designed ornamental sculptures on the green balustrades feature at their centres a wheel with a pair of wings, which was the logo of the CER; on the piers, there are exquisite lion-head reliefs. The bridge was, upon its completion, officially named Jihong [霁虹] by Liu Zhe, a politician who served as the president of the HIT from 1928 to 1938. The name of the bridge was taken from a famous line of the Tang dynasty poet Du Mu's rhapsody *On the Epang Palace*: 'The long bridge lies upon the waves; how can the dragon come without clouds? The double walkways stretch in the air; how can the rainbow appear without having a clearing-up sky? [长桥卧波，未云何龙？复道行空，不霁何虹？]' In a very traditional Chinese way, Liu poetically compared the newly built bridge to the rainbow in a clearing-up sky.

Figure 4.1 The original Jihong Bridge

Source: Wang Kai, 2017. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com//2017-02/12/1120452227_14868890742131n.jpg (Accessed: 22 May 2022).

During the decolonisation process in the second half of the twentieth century, landmarks of the Russian Harbin around Jihong Bridge, such as the old Harbin Railway Station, the Holy Theotokos of Iveron Church, St. Nicholas Cathedral, and St. Sophia Cathedral, were either damaged or demolished. However, Jihong Bridge managed to avoid destructive actions. Perhaps due to its crucial role in the city's transportation, or because its European-style design was not conspicuous enough compared with those targeted buildings, this Russian-built bridge had been kept intact and well-maintained. Even during the Cultural Revolution, when the PRC's decolonisation process reached its peak, only the name of the bridge was changed from '雾虹' (pronounced 'Jihong', meaning 'the rainbow in a clearing-up sky') to the homophonous '继红' (also pronounced 'Jihong', meaning 'inheriting the red/revolutionary spirit'). After that period, the bridge was later listed by the Harbin municipal government as a 'First-Class Preserved Building [I 类保护建筑]' in 1986 and then a 'Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the Municipal Level' in 2007. Although the 78-year-old Jihong Bridge was assessed as an unsafe bridge in 2004, the local government, considering the significant impact of possible construction projects on the inner-city transportation and the cultural heritage conservation

issues, did not plan major construction works to deal with the bridge's structural problems. As a result, the transportation department only put weight-limit signs on both ends of Jihong Bridge, indicating that vehicles over 12 tons were not allowed on the bridge; the bridge itself was left unchanged (Yang, 2017). This peace was, however, disturbed by the construction of high-speed rail between Harbin and Qiqihar.

In 2009, the then PRC Ministry of Railways[64] and the Heilongjiang provincial government issued the Approval for the Preliminary Design for the Construction of a New Passenger Dedicated Line from Harbin to Qiqihar [关于新建哈尔滨至齐齐哈尔铁路客运专线初步设计的批复], which approved the proposal to 'construct the Harbin–Qiqihar Passenger Dedicated Line (HQPDL) to Harbin Railway Station along Harbin–Manzhouli Railway and on its right side' and to 'reduce the length of Jihong Bridge so that through trains running between Harbin–Suifenhe Railway and Harbin–Manzhouli Railway are able to pass through' (Ministry of Railways (PRC), 2009, n.p., as cited in Yang, 2017, p. 12). These planned works directly evolve the transformation of Jinghong Bridge and its surrounding area. Considering that under Jihong Bridge there is not enough vertical space for the HQPDL's high-speed trains to pass, and that the bridge itself has prolonged structural problems, the local authorities of Harbin decided to demolish Jihong Bridge and reconstruct it with the 'three original' principle, which refers to 'original style, original material, and original location' (Cao, 2009, p. 11). When this decision was publicised, it immediately sparked a heated debate among the public.

[64] In 2013, the State Council of the PRC broke the Ministry of Railways up and separated its former functions of railway regulation and operation. The railway regulation function was incorporated into the Ministry of Transport, under which the National Railway Administration was created; the China State Railway Group Co., Ltd. (CHINA RAILWAY), a solely state-owned enterprise, was created to operate the railway network (*Xinhua News Agency*, 2013).

A Wrangle between Stakeholders: Jihong Bridge waiting to find out its fate

Northeast Network [东北网], the official news website of the Heilongjiang provincial government, opened a special webpage for the Jihong Bridge debate[65] in early July of 2009, following its initial reports on the planned demolition and reconstruction of the bridge. The website integrated relevant information, news, and interviews into that webpage and even conducted an online survey on the issue. As of 5pm on 1 August 2009, the survey question asking people whether they are in favour of demolishing Jihong Bridge saw 83.41 per cent of the 9632 respondents selecting 'No' (Cao, 2009). Local people in Harbin generally have a strong, quiet feeling about Jihong Bridge. My interviewees in the 'local people' group hardly mentioned this Russian-built European-style bridge when they enumerated Harbin's Russian-related heritage sites. However, they frequently used it as a landmark to indicate the location of other buildings such as Harbin Railway Station and the No. 3 High School. The local people's sentiments regarding Jihong Bridge are more about a sense of familiarity rather than admiration or appreciation. This was also manifested by their reactions to the 'demolition and reconstruction' decision in 2009, which were reported in the news articles at that time. For example, a retired local resident who lived only a few dozen metres from Jihong Bridge said, 'Aged people commonly get unhealthy, so do aged bridges. It [i.e., Jihong Bridge] has serviced Harbin for so many years, how can they simply demolish it?' (*ibid.*, p. 11); another Harbin local, who took a walk on Jihong Bridge every day after retirement, was strongly against the 'demolition and reconstruction' plan:

> There is only one Jinghong Bridge in Harbin. A reconstructed bridge will not be the Jihong Bridge any more. If this bridge is demolished and reconstructed, the history about the Harbin of decades ago will lose its carrier. They say that history should not be forgotten. Thus, I

[65] Available at: https://special.dbw.cn/system/2009/07/04/051993654.shtml (Accessed: 14 May 2022).

> think the bridge should not be demolished. Rather, it must be well preserved.[66]

Soon after the controversy arose, on 6 September 2009, Zeng Yizhi sent a letter to the then governor of Heilongjiang Province Li Zhanshu. In the letter, Zeng called for protecting the listed cultural heritage site Jihong Bridge in accordance with the law; conveyed several leading specialists' objections to the 'demolition and reconstruction' plan and some civic-minded citizens' suggestions about alternative solutions; and delivered a detailed proposal for the in-situ preservation of Jihong Bridge by Wang Yaping, a local professional. The citizens' suggestions offered various ways to accommodate HQPDL without transforming Jihong Bridge: a citizen suggested lowering the railway tracks rather than building a higher new bridge, while another citizen suggested that high-speed trains be rerouted via Wanggang–Wanle Railway to avoid passing under Jihong Bridge (Zeng, 2016). Wang Yaping's proposal was later developed into a detailed package to address the transportation and heritage issues concerning the area around Harbin Railway Station and Jihong Bridge (Wang, 2016 [2010]). In late 2010, when the municipal government started its annual collection of citizens' suggestions on urban development (Wang, 2010), Wang submitted his package proposal and won first prize in the accompanying proposal competition (*Modern Evening Times*, 2011). Although Zeng received a positive reply from Governor Li, and the local authorities of Harbin spoke highly of Wang's proposal, the railway department was not suitably impressed, which can be seen from their statement in a letter that was sent to Heilongjiang Development and Reform Commission in October 2009:

> Although Jihong Bridge is a heritage site protected at the municipal level, it has serious structural problems and cannot meet the present live load demand. The bridge has become an unsafe bridge that is not worth reinforcing or maintaining. If it is not transformed [i.e., demolished and reconstructed], the bridge will severely restrict the development of the urban

[66] The original news article has been removed from the Northeast Network website. A snapshot of the article is available on the Jihong Bridge special webpage [see Footnote 65].

> transportation and rail industry. […] The best option is to transform the bridge and keep its original style only. (Wang, 2011, n.p.)

The view of the railway department does carry some weight in such a situation. In China, the railway network and its related land and industry are under the charge of the railway department, which is independent of direct local (provincial/municipal) government control. Therefore, when it comes to railway-related works in a city, the local government has to negotiate with the railway department to reach a consensus and then make a final decision.

With all the disputes, the demolition and reconstruction of Jihong Bridge were put on hold. In 2013, Jihong Bridge was included in the register of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level as a part of the national heritage property 'CER buildings'. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics prohibits the demolition of national heritage sites and requires that all built heritage items be kept in their original state during repair, maintenance, and, when necessary, relocation (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Wenwu Baohu Fa (2017 Nian Xiuzheng Ben)*, art. 20, 21, 26)[67]. Considering that Jihong Bridge is an integral bridge that is technically not able to be relocated, it seemed that the bridge must be preserved in situ without any kind of transformation. For some time, many people believed that Jihong Bridge would live a peaceful life forever. However, it was soon revealed that this is not the case.

The Triumph of Development: Transformation in accordance with the law?

The construction of HQPDL, which started on 30 November 2009, was finally completed in 2015 (National Railway Administration (PRC), 2015; Zou and Wang, 2015). The railway was

[67] As of May 2022, the 2017 revised version of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics is in force. When the issue of Jihong Bridge was raised in 2009, the version in force was the 2007 revised version, which is available at: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/china_lawprotectionclt_corof.pdf (Accessed: 17 May 2022). Regarding the above-mentioned principles of heritage management, the wordings have not been changed since the 2007 revised version.

subsequently renamed 'Harbin–Qiqihar High-Speed Railway (HQHSR)', highlighting that the newly built railway is the first high-speed line that operates within Heilongjiang Province and is China's northernmost high-speed railway, which can operate in the extremely cold environment (Liang, 2015). This change of name, along with the railway project itself, shows the local government's ambition of resuming the economic strength of Heilongjiang Province and especially its capital city Harbin. High-speed rail is seen as a symbol of modernity and rapid development in the China of today; to the local cadres of Harbin, it offers a hope of reviving the city's economy (Yang, 2017). Soon after HQHSR opened on 17 August (Zhou and Chen, 2015), Zeng Yizhi took a tour with the new high-speed train from Harbin to Qiqihar and witnessed the train's successful passing under Jihong Bridge (Figure 4.2). She thus asked, 'High-speed trains *can* pass under Jihong Bridge, why do they [i.e., the relevant authorities] still want to transform this national heritage site?'[68]

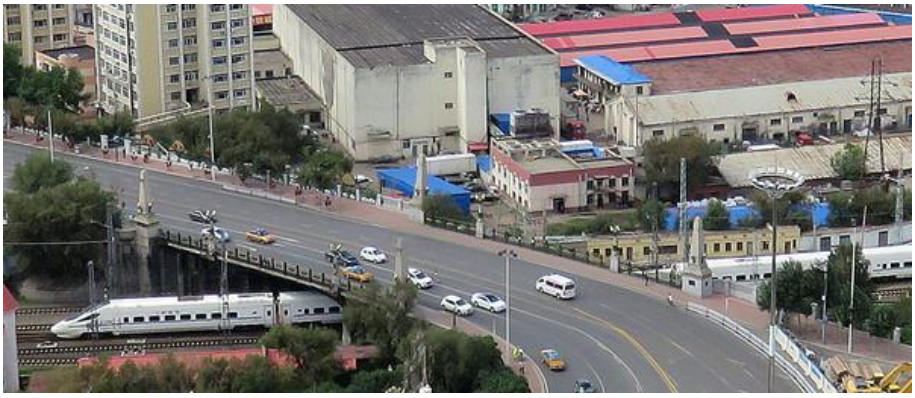


Figure 4.2 A high-speed train passing under the original Jihong Bridge

Source: Zeng Yizhi, 2016. Available at: https://s4.sinaimg.cn/large/001mSCHAgy70Srpy8sb93&690 (Accessed: 19 May 2022).

However, this time the local government, along with the railway department, determined to transform the bridge. In April 2016, the Harbin municipal government and Harbin Railway Bureau jointly made an announcement, soliciting public opinions on how to

[68] See Zeng's Weibo posted on 26 August 2015. Available at: https://weibo.com/1254230710/CxwRqxALm (Accessed: 19 May 2022).

properly conserve the heritage Jihong Bridge (*Xinhua News Agency*, 2016a). This announcement marks the authorities' new attempt to transform the bridge, though in the name of heritage conservation this time. After several months of consultation and discussion, the final decision was reached, which is a plan called 'in-situ conservation and use' (Chen, 2021, p. 28; Yang, 2017, p. 12). Technically, this means to

> Change the original (9+23+9) m three-span structure of Jihong Bridge to a (11+21.6+11) m three-span structure, which stretches across the two lines of Harbin–Mudanjiang High-Speed Railway and the two lines of Harbin–Jiamusi Rapid Railway; take the No. 2 Pier that is connected to the first truss as an axis and rotate the bridge clockwise 4.41 degrees, in order to meet the distancing requirements between railway lines; lift the bridge 0.96 m up so that the vertical space under the bridge is enough for the operation of high-speed trains; number the symbolic elements of the bridge, including the obelisks, lamp posts, balustrades, abutments, and lion-head reliefs, and make an inventory of them, then dismantle the bridge; build new piers, primary and secondary beams, and deck for the bridge; after the main structure is completed, restore the symbolic elements of the bridge to their former positions. (Chen, 2021, p. 28)

The authorities emphasised that the project aims to keep Jihong Bridge in its original state as required by the law. Interviewee O-3, a government official in the provincial cultural heritage department, insisted that this project is a project of 'in-situ conservation that complies with the cultural heritage conservation principles'. Chen (2021, p. 28), an engineer at China Railway Harbin Group Co., Ltd. (the former Harbin Railway Bureau), stressed that many aspects of the bridge, including the bridge's length and width, its three-span structure that features 13 trusses with π-shaped beams, the relative positions of its four obelisks, and its material (i.e., reinforced concrete), are kept unchanged by the plan. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the very beginning that this 'conservation project' is in fact to transform the legally untransformable Jihong Bridge into a brand-new structure with only the original bridge's ornaments retained. Unsurprisingly, Zeng Yizhi stood up passionately for the bridge once again.

Back in 2009, the heated debate over the planned transformation of Jihong Bridge was fully recorded and dynamically updated on a dedicated webpage, and strong objections from the public finally stopped the authorities from implementing their plan. In contrast, the local news media were not active in the new round of bridge transformation planning since 2015, thus the public knew much less about what was going on with Jihong Bridge during the process (Yang, 2017). It is noteworthy, however, that the local elite took the role in organising relevant discussions and campaigning against the transformation of this heritage site. At the initial stage of the process, when the local authorities were soliciting public opinions and considering relocating Jihong Bridge, the HIT School of Architecture faculty wrote a letter to the municipal government and also posted that letter on several online platforms, calling for in-situ conservation of this heritage bridge (*I'm Harbin*, 2016). After the final decision to transform Jihong Bridge was made, in early 2017, a bridge protection volunteer group was quickly formed, with most of its members being scholars, professionals, and artists. Some, including its initiators, were born in Harbin but working in other cities. The volunteer group members jointly wrote an open letter entitled 'Care about Harbin! Protect Jihong Bridge! [情系哈尔滨！保护雾虹桥！]'[69], in which they expressed their concern that the officially declared 'in-situ conservation and use' will turn out to be destructive transformation and, in turn, appealed to the relevant authorities to reconsider their decision on the planned Jihong Bridge project (Luo and Liu, 2017; Yang, 2017).

For many of the elite volunteers, their passion for Jihong Bridge is derived from nostalgia for their own pasts rather than for the city's past. This is demonstrated by Yang's (2017) interviews with some core members of the bridge protection volunteer group, who

[69] The letter has been removed from its original website (http://t.cn/RJPiDF4). However, there are still traces of this letter on Weibo as people shared the link at that time. See for example: https://weibo.com/1786885317/Eu6wiB5O2?refer_flag=1001030103_; https://weibo.com/1899019960/EufkW5RGv?refer_flag=1001030103_ (Accessed: 20 May 2022).

willingly associated Jihong Bridge with past experiences from their youth. Interviewee P-2, the urban planner who had contributed to the then ongoing Harbin Railway Station project, got to know the local cultural-heritage-protection volunteers exactly because of Jihong Bridge: he saw on the bridge the volunteers holding banners with slogans about protecting the heritage bridge and soon became interested in their 'mission'. The interviewee commented on the importance of Jihong Bridge to Harbin locals:

> Many memories are on that bridge. You won't feel anything special about it when walking [back and forth across it]. […] There are lion heads on the piers and winged wheels on the balustrades, but you won't see their importance or even notice them. You may think it's not a big deal if they are gone. But when they really don't exist any more, you will find they have taken the associated memories along with them.

The municipal government did respond to the elite volunteers' campaign, but this did not change the results.

Wang Xianmin, the deputy secretary-general of the Harbin municipal government who led a delegation to Beijing and had a meeting there with the representatives of the bridge protection volunteer group, attributed the local government's determination regarding high-speed rail development to the deindustrialised city's long-lasting sense of loss, which makes this seemingly huge opportunity for economic development look especially precious (Yang, 2017). With the ever-urgent desire for Harbin's economic revival as background, transforming the legally untransformable national heritage site of Jihong Bridge is, to the local government, an acceptable cost. It is worth noting that some local people also took a similar stance. The comments under a Weibo news post on 11 February 2017 about the bridge protection campaign[70] are representative: a user commented that 'it is much more significant to bring high-

[70] The news post and its comments are available at: https://weibo.com/1699493494/Ev1zDFEhn (Accessed: 22 May 2022).

speed railways to the city than to protect this bridge [i.e., Jihong Bridge], not to mention that [the bridge] is only going to be transformed, not demolished', another user wrote that

> Most Harbin locals will not agree if [the government decided to] demolish the old bridge and build a completely new one. […] But the current plan is to […] keep the decorations and the style of the bridge. This bridge will fall into decay if it is not transformed at all.

With various views of different stakeholders, the transformation works of Jihong Bridge started in March 2018. Seven months later, the transformed Jihong Bridge opened – the nationally listed heritage bridge is no longer old, except for its ornamental elements (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 The transformed Jihong Bridge

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2022.

Colonial Heritage: A means, not an end

In the cases presented in Chapter 2, Russian-era-related built environments facilitate the contemporary social and economic development of Harbin to a certain degree and thus became targets of the heritage making for city branding and tourism marketing. Unlike those cases, the case of Jihong Bridge describes a rare situation in the present Harbin, where a Russian colonial heritage site has a significant adverse effect on the city's future development because of its critical location in terms of inner-city and intercity transportations.

Initially, the Harbin municipal government gave Jihong Bridge a heritage status primarily because of its unique and artistic European-style embellishments and its being a witness to the close of the Russian colonial era. Nevertheless, to most of the Harbin locals, elite and ordinary people alike, the bridge is valuable chiefly because it carries their personal memories and thus reflects their own pasts. In this sense, whether the local people are in favour of conserving this heritage bridge depends largely on how they evaluate the importance of their memory of the past Harbin (and also of the time when they were younger) in comparison with their convenience in the future urban life. In the case of Jihong Bridge, there were actually two types of Harbin locals among the stakeholders: elite cultural-heritage-protection volunteers who were born in Harbin but currently work and live in other cities tended to be more insistent on strict in-situ preservation of the bridge, while people who still live in Harbin were generally prepared to compromise, though to different extents. Certainly, in Harbin, there are also – though very few – cultural elite residents like Zeng Yizhi, who strongly support cultural heritage conservation with no personal consideration at all. In such cases, they see heritage conservation as a mission that is solely to retain the city's collective memories and for what they themselves understand as 'public good'.

For the relevant authorities, including the railway department and the local governments at municipal and provincial levels, the nationally listed cultural heritage site of Jihong Bridge is an especially difficult issue: the once appreciated European-style landmark had turned into an obstacle to bringing the modern high-speed rail to Harbin since the late 2000s. The cultural relics protection law must be obeyed, but urban and regional development also needs to be achieved. In such a context, even officially made heritage can be covertly *unmade*. During the decision-making and plan implementation processes regarding Jihong Bridge, the relevant authorities frequently described the bridge as an 'unsafe bridge' rather than a 'heritage bridge', thereby legitimising the transformation of the legally untransformable site, even though the

primary reason for the bridge transformation is in fact not Jihong Bridge's being unsafe but rather its hindering potential economic growth. Moreover, the bridge transformation project was officially named 'Jihong Bridge cultural heritage conservation project [霁虹桥文物保护工程]', which ostensibly complied with the cultural relics protection law but in effect undermined the law's legal effect. The result is that the local government, along with the railway department, circumvented the law and covertly unmade a nationally listed heritage to make way for the potential economic development of Harbin. Or rather, although Jihong Bridge was included in the national heritage list amid controversy over whether to develop high-speed rail at the cost of this bridge, the heritage making of Jihong Bridge at the national level was never fully completed. Indeed, to the local authorities as well as most local people, colonial heritage is a means, not an end in itself; colonial heritage (un)making always serves the city's present needs, which may vary from case to case.

Despite a decade of conflicts and debates, the Jihong Bridge project was finally launched and done. The decision on bridge transformation received mixed views, nevertheless, Jihong Bridge found out its fate at last. In comparison, the Chinese Baroque area in Daowai District, whose future is still opaque, is in a bigger dilemma.

The Transformation Trap: A case study of the historic Chinese Baroque area

In the context of Russian colonisation, Western architecture was brought to Harbin along with European immigrants. As the newly affluent urban populace, the then-emerging domestic entrepreneurs in the city's Chinese ghetto 'Fujiadian' viewed those ornate and/or fashionable Western buildings as symbols of wealth and sophistication. Thus, those richer Chinese sought to build 'Western' buildings that can meet their own residential, commercial, and even psychological needs. In that context, the Chinese craftsmen adapted the highly decorative and theatrical Baroque architecture for the requirements of Chinese everyday lives and created a

hybrid architectural style for their clients, which basically combines the Baroque façade with the Chinese traditional quadrangle [四合院]. This hybrid style was later termed 'Chinese Baroque' by the Japanese architectural historian Yasuhiko Nishizawa (1996, as cited in Sheng and Ueda, 2016a), and 'Chinese Baroque' henceforth became the official name of this architectural style.

Most of the Chinese Baroque buildings are two- or three-storey brick and wood structures, with the ground floor used for commercial purposes and the upper floor(s) for residential purposes. In terms of façade, the buildings adopted twisting elements and the often-dizzying array of rich surface treatments of Baroque architecture, thus giving a European appearance. But when examined closely, traditional Chinese architectural decoration themes, such as bat, peony, the Eight Immortals, and the Three Friends of Winter (i.e., pine, bamboo, and plum), are easily noticed on their façades (Sheng and Ueda, 2016b) (Figure 4.4). As regards spatial organisation, behind the Westernised façades are surprisingly Chinese quadrangles with wooden exterior corridors and staircases. The elaborate decorations on those corridors and staircases are also mainly traditional Chinese (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.4 An example of Chinese Baroque architecture

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Figure 4.5 The Chinese quadrangle inside a Chinese Baroque building

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

The Past and Present of the Chinese Baroque Area

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Russian political turmoil since the late 1910s finally led to the official reversion of Harbin to China. In that context, Chinese Baroque architecture flourished along with Chinese business and industry. In the 1920s, a large number of high-quality Chinese Baroque buildings were built in the then Fujiadian. Many of those still remain today. Such buildings now comprise a large proportion of the historic urban centre of Daowai District – the current administrative district that covers the former Fujiadian – with the majority situated along Jingyu Street and its side streets.

Once a most prosperous commercial centre of Harbin, Jingyu Street and its surroundings fell into a decline in the 1990s. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the area had become a slum-like place with considerable dilapidated Chinese Baroque buildings – the wooden floors and staircases have been decaying throughout the past century, thus many of the Chinese Baroque buildings were degraded into rickety old houses with poor infrastructure and unpleasant environments. Moreover, those century-old brick and wood structures are not up to

standard in terms of fire resistance and pose a major fire risk (Liang, 2001). Occupied mainly by two- or three-storey buildings with large inner courtyards, the area has a building density that is very low in an urban sense. Nevertheless, its population density had been extremely high. Lu *et al.* (2005) reported that the population density of the historic Daowai centre (with the Chinese Baroque area located in its heart) had reached 44.3 thousand people per square kilometre, and the average apartment space per person was only 9.62 m^2.

It is against this background that the local government decided to highlight and promote the heritage status of the 'Chinese Baroque area' in Daowai District and, in turn, renew and revitalise this historic area by launching a heritage-led urban redevelopment project in 2007 (Cui *et al.*, 2007; Zhang, 2007). The so-called 'Chinese Baroque area' was an earlier-designated conservation zone with Jingyu Street cutting across it. In 2010, Harbin Municipal People's Government re-demarcated the conservation zone and officially named it 'the Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood of Daowai Traditional Market [道外传统商市历史文化街区]'[71]. The Neighbourhood covers an area of 47.23 hm^2, including a 20.27 hm^2 core zone and a 26.96 hm^2 buffer zone (Tao *et al.*, 2012). It henceforth became the main arena of the Chinese Baroque project. Currently, the Chinese Baroque project covers an area of 30.57 hm^2, almost all of which is within the Neighbourhood. The project has been divided into three phases by the local government (Figure 4.6). Phase I (started in 2007, 2.18 hm^2) and Phase II (started in 2010, 9.37 hm^2) were already completed and opened to the public, while the construction of Phase III (19.02 hm^2) is yet to start: by now, only a relatively small part of the conservation zone has been renewed and, in turn, transformed into a pedestrian precinct and tourist zone, whilst many historic buildings within this area are still left empty and even unattended to decay.

[71] Nevertheless, 'Chinese Baroque area' is still the most commonly used term to refer to the re-demarcated conservation zone as well as the place in a more general sense.

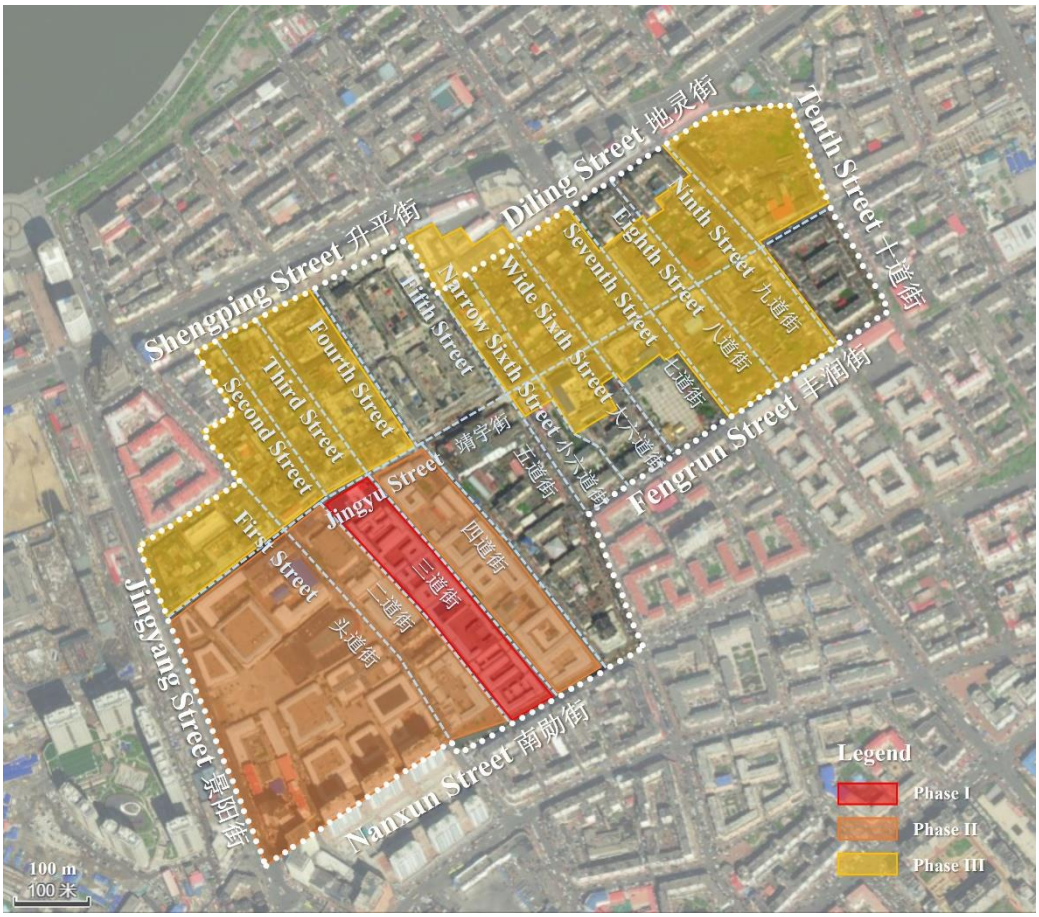


Figure 4.6 The location of the Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood of Daowai Traditional Market and the land coverages of the three phases

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang; base map: Baidu Maps.

Mass Inhabitant Relocation for Urban Redevelopment

The Chinese Baroque project aims to transform the historic area into one of the three largest tourist zones in Harbin, the other two being the Central Avenue zone in Daoli District and the museum zone in Nangang District (Levoshko and Kirichkov, 2016). To carry out the plan, all the residents living within the declared project area were asked to move out.

- Housing Expropriation of the Phase I and Phase II Areas: Exploration with vacillation

Four approaches to the buildings within the Chinese Baroque area were proposed for the first phase of this project. These are rehabilitation (i.e., historic buildings in good condition will be repaired and refurbished), reconstruction (i.e., historic buildings that are identified as

dilapidated with little rehabilitation value will be demolished and reconstructed according to their original designs), renewal (i.e., as regards historic buildings that have well-preserved façades but severely damaged structures, only the façades will be retained, while the internal structures will be renewed), and redevelopment (i.e., non-historic buildings which negatively affect the character of the Chinese Baroque area will be demolished, and new buildings that harmonise with their surroundings will be developed on-site) (Zhang, 2007). To realise this ambition of heritage-led urban redevelopment, all the residents within the Phase I area were relocated elsewhere in 2007.

Obviously, some government officials saw in Phase I the deficiency of mass relocation. A piece of news published before the completion of Phase I reported that, according to some informant from the Daowai district government, the subsequent phases of the Chinese Baroque project would not seek mass inhabitant relocation any more. Instead, the renovated historic residences would be returned to their original owners because

> If all the inhabitants on those historic streets are relocated elsewhere, the conservation zone will be an empty neighbourhood. Even turning the area into a stylish tourist zone will not reverse this unfavourable condition: the area's tourist value will have already been significantly diminished as tourists going there only have the old buildings to see. (Li and Ren, 2007, n.p.)

In this scenario, the existing inhabitants of the Chinese Baroque area are conceived as an important part of the 'historic street tourism': 'they will serve the tourism development of the historic streets and will benefit from this flourishing tourism industry' (*ibid.*). In spite of this, when Phase II commenced on 1 March 2010, housing expropriation and inhabitant relocation were once again conducted.

Interviewee L-30 [born in 1975, female] had two small apartments along Jingyu Street, one of which was situated in the expropriation area of Phase II. She works as a high-school

teacher and is also a well-connected member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Daowai District. Being a relatively affluent person who did not live in the Chinese Baroque area at the time of expropriation, Interviewee L-30 readily accepted the terms of compensation offered by the local government, handed her keys over to the housing expropriation office staff on the first day of the Phase II expropriation, and received a new apartment in compensation. The compensatory apartment is in the Ceramics Residential Area [陶瓷小区], which is to the west of Jingyu Street and farther away from the city centre than the Chinese Baroque area. Despite the slightly worse location, the new apartment is 10 m^2 larger than her old one. Interviewee L-30 thought that although the terms of compensation were not as favourable to inhabitants as those for her other apartment along the same street, which was expropriated several years later, they were still fair considering the very bad condition of those old buildings.

However, there were residents who thought otherwise at that time. They refused to hand over their dwellings and accept the compensation offered by the government, but demanded more compensatory payment and/or larger compensatory apartments. Interviewee L-30 recalled that those uncooperative inhabitants were 'finally arrested' by the authority and were only released when they agreed to move out: 'it was some ten years ago, at that time it was not as democratic as it is today'. It was reported in the local press then that it only took 40 days for the expropriation task to be completed (Meng and Liu, 2010). This was, however, denounced by Zeng Yizhi in her Weibo posted on 28 April 2011 as 'fake news': 'The report published on 12 April last year saying that "the expropriation task of the Chinese Baroque conservation zone (Phase II) has been completed on 9 April" is a lie, because many residents and business owners were forced to move out. They have not signed any compensation agreements until today.'[72] In fact, forced evictions had been pervasive in China before the promulgation of the Regulation

[72] Available at: https://m.weibo.cn/1254230710/9758169352 (Accessed: 6 April 2022).

on the Expropriation of and Compensation for Houses on State-Owned Land [国有土地上房屋征收与补偿条例] in 2011. Such actions ceased as this new law became effective, and also because forced eviction was later thought to jeopardise social harmony, thus being a sensitive approach (Ho, 2013; see also: Demgenski, 2015).

- Housing Expropriation of the Phase III Area: Resistance, regret, and renegotiation

The Conservation Plan of the National Distinctive Historical and Cultural City of Harbin (2011–2020) was completed in September 2010 and approved by the Heilongjiang provincial government in 2012. According to that plan, Jingyu Street and its three side streets (North/South First Street, Second Street, and Third Street) were to be transformed into pedestrian streets, in order to keep their traditional features and create some attractive public space. Moreover, it was planned to develop a 'traditional market' themed precinct by completely transforming the relevant mixed-use land into commercial land, that is to expropriate all the residential buildings within the area between First Street and Fourth Street and relocate those residents elsewhere (Tao *et. al.*, 2012, pp. 33–34). Given that plan, it was without doubt that the inhabitants within the Phase III area would also be relocated.

Yin and Wang (2014) interviewed some inhabitants of the Phase III area about their perceptions of the housing expropriation and inhabitant relocation, and reported that they were resisting the relocation mainly for concerns about quality of life. Those people heard that the government planned to relocate them to Qunli, a suburb that was then regarded to be underdeveloped and very far away from the city centre. In that case, they did not want to move out of the much more developed Chinese Baroque area and 'turn from a citizen to a villager' (*ibid.*, p. 26). In May 2016, the Phase III expropriation officially commenced. However, it was unexpected to most residents of the area, who had vivid memories of the Phase I and Phase II

expropriations, that this new round of expropriation soon came to a halt – in fact, the Phase III expropriation has not been completed until today.

Interviewee L-29 [born in 1961, male] has an apartment in the Phase III area. His family refused to hand it over to the local government when they were first approached by the housing expropriation office. The interviewee felt regretful for their resistance to the expropriation at that time: 'That place [where the government planned to relocate us] was then in the middle of nowhere. Nowadays it is indeed a very good location.' For some reason that Interviewee L-29 does not really know, the expropriation office stopped negotiating with the residents of his building and simply left that building behind. He explained that the residents who refused to move had various reasons: some wanted a compensatory apartment in a better location, some wanted more money in compensation, and some had disputes over property rights. These are in fact very typical factors that contribute to the local governments' difficulty in implementing redevelopment projects within inner-city dilapidated neighbourhoods in China (see for example: Demgenski, 2015; Shin, 2010a).

Interviewee L-29 conceded that there were residents who wanted to take advantage of 'the party state's expropriation' and went too far in demanding compensatory money at that time. The phenomenon described by him accords with Demgenski's (2015, p. 165) observation of the Dabaodao area in Qingdao, the condition of which was very similar to that of the Chinese Baroque area in Harbin. Demgenski understood that residents of such dilapidated neighbourhoods tend to try their best to get the most out of negotiations on compensation, because in most cases, their current property is their only possession that has any potential value, and yet this value is not direct market value, but can only be redeemed through the in-kind or monetary compensation in events of housing expropriation under redevelopment projects. In other words, the compensation will be 'an opportunity of a lifetime for becoming rich, for securing a flourishing life' (Ho, 2013, p. 425).

In addition, in the field of housing expropriation in China, there is 'a practice and culture of distrust' (*ibid.*, p. 426) due to the chaos and unfairness in the expropriation processes prior to the 2011 Regulation. Rumours and hearsay have been circulating among the inhabitants of expropriation areas about people getting better terms of compensation after hard and long-lasting bargaining. Interviewee L-32 [born in 1992, male] had an apartment of less than 20 m^2 in the building at the intersection of Jingyu Street and North Narrow Sixth Street [北小六道街], which was within the Phase III area and was thus expropriated. Although the interviewee felt satisfied with the terms of compensation offered by the district government and signed the expropriation agreement early, he suspected that the government was in collusion with the developer to undermine the inhabitants' interests. Furthermore, he said there was the rumour that the inhabitants of the Phase III area 'who waited until the end got a lot of money [as compensation]' and thought it credible, as he heard that one of his old schoolmates, a then resident on Third Street, had refused to move out until a later stage of the expropriation process and did get more compensation, although this again is hearsay. It is not surprising, therefore, that households within an expropriation area tend to believe that there is a 'first-mover disadvantage' (*ibid.*, p. 421) and, in turn, prefer to sit and wait at the initial stage(s) of an expropriation process.

The combined result of these considerations and calculations is the pervasive 'holdout problem' in China's urban renewal processes (Ouyang *et al.*, 2019). In extreme cases, the so-called 'nail households [钉子户]', who only own a small portion of the property under expropriation, refuse to vacate dwellings when their neighbours have all signed the expropriation agreement and moved out; instead, the nail households bargain with the local government for a more favourable distribution of profits, as they know the developer is not able to start renewal works when the property has not been taken in full. Despite such not-so-honourable actions, those residents' rhetorical questions such as 'Other people all got richer by

moving out. Why should I become poorer by moving?' (Ho, 2013, p. 419) and 'Other people all benefitted from housing, why should I not be allowed to do the same?!' (Demgenski, 2015, p. 165) can nevertheless arouse public sympathy in the context of China's increasing polarisation of wealth. In the Chinese Baroque area, such nail households also exist (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 A 'nail household' in a mostly demolished Chinese Baroque building

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

It is evident in the case of the Chinese Baroque project that the reasons for the residents' refusal to be relocated are all closely linked to their economic demands rather than cultural/social demands. The residents easily changed their mind when they realised that the compensation cannot be further negotiated and was, in effect, reasonable considering the condition of their very old and even unsound buildings. Some of the left-behind residents initiated a relocation request a few years after the Phase III expropriation paused. Nevertheless, their request was declined by the district government because of the government's funding

restrictions. The reason given by the government is very likely to be truth rather than a mere excuse, as Interviewee L-30, who knows the local situation of Daowai District very well because of her everyday life in Daowai and also her participation in the CPPCC, confirmed that 'the Daowai district government […] *really* doesn't have money'. It has been over six years since the Phase III expropriation initially started. Today, most of the Chinese Baroque buildings within the Phase III area are vacant. The buildings that have not been handed over to the government are no exception: those decaying buildings are now on the verge of collapse and too dangerous to live in, thus most of their residents have moved out. As a result, the area has become a 'ghost city' with a large number of shabby old buildings and very few residents.

People who are still living there are generally too aged and/or too poor to leave the place. Interviewee L-31 [born in 1953, male] is one of them. He has been living in a Chinese Baroque building on North Third Street for over 40 years and has witnessed the ups and downs of the area. Interviewee L-31 was not able to clearly explain why the government postponed the expropriation of his apartment and did not have much idea about what will happen to that building and the broader area in the future: 'The building where I am now living will certainly be repaired. It cannot be demolished. But they [means "the government"] never told us how they will demolish or repair these buildings.' When asked about his expectation of the Chinese Baroque area in the future, the interviewee roughly said that he hopes the area 'can be better than it was before' but did not articulate his thoughts. Like the many other residents in the Chinese Baroque area, Interviewee L-31 cares most about his own living condition and is interested in the location and quality of his dwelling rather than the cultural inheritance of the historic neighbourhood. Ignoring my question about his perception of the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct in architectural terms, he instead expressed his disappointment that several of the best restaurants on North Third Street have moved southwards into that precinct, feeling that this move made his daily life less convenient.

A Brand-New Historic Precinct: Thorough renewal, failed revitalisation

The Phase I and Phase II areas have been thoroughly renewed but in a very radical way. Some historic buildings were completely demolished and reconstructed. Many others only have their façades or four outer walls kept, and everything behind those was demolished and constructed anew. When the renewed area was opened to visitors as primarily a cultural attraction, there were only brand-new 'old buildings' accommodating shops and restaurants (Figure 4.8, Figure 4.9).

- Locals' Perceptions of Chinese Baroque Architecture

Coined in the 1990s, the term 'Chinese Baroque' was new and unfamiliar to most local people back then. Prior to the Chinese Baroque project, even people who frequently saw those hybrid-style buildings in Daowai District might not have heard of this term. As a new cultural attraction, the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct has been promoted by the local government and has received widespread media coverage since its opening. It is from this point that the term 'Chinese Baroque' became widely known to Harbin locals. Several local people mentioned during their interviews with me that they got to know about Chinese Baroque architecture only recently via mass media because of the highly publicised Chinese Baroque precinct. Interviewee L-1 recalled that she only started to hear the term 'Chinese Baroque' after she went to university in 2010. However, she did not know much about architecture and was not able to tell what exactly 'Chinese Baroque' or 'Baroque' means. She merely heard that the Chinese Baroque area is famous for local delicacies.

Figure 4.8 The renewed Chinese Baroque precinct

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Figure 4.9 The quadrangle of a renewed Chinese Baroque building

Source: Wenzhuo Zhang, 2021.

Interviewee L-1's understanding of Chinese Baroque architecture and that specific area in Daowai District is very typical among Harbin locals. Interviewees frequently told me that they went to the Chinese Baroque area mainly for food and often named a few time-honoured restaurants and food stores as examples. But when it comes to the Chinese Baroque buildings per se, most of them were not able to tell the key features of this architectural style, although

some interviewees, such as Interviewee L-6 and Interviewee L-11, gave a good guess by taking the term in its literal sense. Interviewee L-11 inferred that 'Chinese Baroque' must be a hybrid architectural style: '"Chinese [中华]" refers to "China", while "Baroque [巴洛克]" should be something from abroad, thus "Chinese Baroque" must be a combination [of Chinese and foreign architectural styles].'

Although the local people may not have a clear idea about what Chinese Baroque architecture is, they can easily recognise the Western feature of the Chinese Baroque buildings. It is evident from my interviews that people tend to judge the quality of Chinese Baroque buildings by comparing them with the Western- or European-style buildings. Interviewee L-19 saw Chinese Baroque buildings as primarily Western and expressed her appreciation of them: 'There are some European-style buildings [in the Chinese Baroque area]. I like them and think they are pretty beautiful – much more beautiful than those many buildings in China which are arranged like overlapping matchboxes. They look special.' In contrast, Interviewee L-21 criticised Chinese Baroque buildings for being neither fish nor fowl: 'It's just like that people wanted to add a beautiful façade to a dirt-walled country cottage, so they built a European-style façade which does not look authentic. I can't see what's good about it!' Whether they favour the Chinese Baroque buildings or not, they have nevertheless reached a consensus that European-style buildings are beautiful and of high quality, which is unsurprising given the analysis and discussions in Chapter 2. Their contradictory judgements about Chinese Baroque architecture, in effect, reinforce their appreciation of European/Western architecture from different angles.

- Is the Renewed Precinct Authentic?

The concept of heritage has long been understood mainly from the perspectives of history and aesthetics. For example, Hall (1999, p. 4) pointed out that the British idea of heritage

is basically 'to preserve for posterity things of value, whether on *aesthetic* or *historical* criteria [italics added]'. It is, therefore, not surprising that authenticity, which is generally understood in Europe as 'a kind of integrity of being and doing things in a certain way', has two main versions in disputes about heritage: the version concerning *origins* (i.e., 'which is older or "who got there first"') and the version concerning *aesthetics* (i.e., 'what is more "in keeping" with the "atmosphere" of the place') (Macdonald, 2013, p. 119). In a similar vein, Wang (1999, p. 352) identified two types of 'object-related authenticity' in the tourism that involves the representation of the past: *objective authenticity*, which refers to 'the authenticity of originals'; and *constructive (or symbolic) authenticity*, which refers to 'the authenticity projected onto […] objects […] in terms of […] imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc.'. In the case of Harbin's Chinese Baroque area, the authenticity of the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct has also been questioned largely along these two lines.

When interviewees in the 'local people' group were invited to comment on the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct in terms of built environment, quite a few frowned upon the historic buildings which appear 'too new' and 'too commercial'. Interviewee L-19 thought the renewed precinct was 'just so-so' because its current buildings 'are replicas', or even if some historic buildings were partially retained, the newly added parts 'do not look real': 'I hope those renewed buildings look as old as the original ones. If they appear very new, they don't look like [historic buildings]… thus the feeling changes.' This idea was echoed by Interviewee L-11, who thought the renewed precinct has lost its historical character because of the 'reconstructions': '[The buildings in the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct] are obviously newly constructed. The feeling of history is not as strong as before.' Similarly, Interviewee L-22 recalled her childhood memories of the bustling Chinese Baroque area and felt sorry about its current situation: '[The renewed precinct] does not have a feeling of the past. […] Now it is an attraction, but unfortunately, an attraction without people!' She felt that the Chinese Baroque

area without its 'authentic liveliness' is 'like a vase only for watching'. Likewise, Interviewee L-21 succinctly described the precinct as 'bland': 'the essence of Chinese Baroque architecture has gone'.

It is evident from my interviews that the ordinary local people in Harbin are, in general, not advocators of strict protection. They do not mind the renewal and even reconstruction of historic buildings, as long as the renewed/reconstructed buildings *look* authentic. These local people have conceived some ideal appearance(s) of the area, which can best keep their associative values and arouse their sense of place. They care about the *atmosphere* of the place much more than whether the things there are original or not. In other words, ordinary Harbin locals tend to emphasise constructive authenticity rather than objective authenticity. It is also due to considerations of such constructive authenticity that some travel agents hesitate to promote the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct, although tourism has been a main focus of the area's redevelopment. Interviewee O-2 said that his company did not recommend this precinct to clients because the renewed and reconstructed Chinese Baroque buildings lack historical significance and failed to address the substance of the Chinese Baroque area:

> The 'soul' of the Chinese Baroque area was not represented nor even recognised. The buildings are only constructed and shown as images. Restaurants were introduced [into the renewed precinct] when it [means 'the Chinese Baroque redevelopment project'] had difficulty in attracting businesses. […] [But] the Chinese Baroque area is not only about the material buildings.

This is somewhat an echo of the concern expressed by the Daowai district government official in the 2007 news article, which puts authentic residents and lifestyles at the centre.

As regards objective authenticity – the authenticity in terms of origins – the problem of the Chinese Baroque project has been raised several times by the local cultural-heritage-protection volunteers such as Zeng Yizhi. They started to call attention to the project's

authenticity issue as early as when its Phase I was still in progress (see for example: Zeng, 2011; Zhao and Wang, 2017). Zeng (2011) had prepared an investigation report about the first two phases of the Chinese Baroque project and sent the report to *China Culture Daily*, a major Chinese newspaper that focuses on culture. In that report, she condemned the developers of the Chinese Baroque area for seriously violating the authenticity and integrity of the historical and cultural neighbourhood: in practice, they did not comply with the professionally approved statutory conservation plan, but altered, partially or fully demolished, and reconstructed historic buildings within the declared project area as they wished. Zeng suggested in her report that some government officials in Daowai District had tacitly allowed this to happen. However, the cultural-heritage-protection volunteers' concerns like this were, in most cases, heard by neither the district government officials nor the relevant business elite.

Until the early 2010s, the practice of partially or fully demolishing dilapidated historic areas and then reconstructing the area with pseudo-antique architecture in the name of heritage conservation had actually been pervasive in China (Zhang *et. al.*, 2016). This practice is criticised as 'demolishing the real and reconstructing the fake [拆真建假]', the authenticity issue of which has been raised by scholars with examples of various Chinese cities (see for example: Ruan and Sun, 2001; J. Wang, 2016; Z. Yang, 2021). On the one hand, this reveals the inconsistent understandings of cultural heritage within the Chinese government. The housing and urban–rural development department, which has charge of the conservation and management of 'historic buildings' and 'distinctive historical and cultural cities', adopts a broader conception of heritage and thus can take a whole area/neighbourhood as cultural heritage as long as it possesses a certain historic character. In this sense, the Chinese Baroque area is always seen by them as a historic neighbourhood and cultural heritage site, even after its large-scale demolition and reconstruction. The cultural heritage department, which has charge of all types of cultural heritage, including built heritage, takes heritage as basically a

status of being *old*, thus they do not label reconstructed historic buildings as heritage. In this regard, the demolition and reconstruction strategy does not merely result in an authenticity issue of heritage[73], but it fundamentally challenges the eligibility of a site as heritage. As Interviewee O-3 explained,

> While the Harbin municipal government has been working on the conservation and reuse of heritage relating to Chinese Baroque architecture, it is notable that some [of the Chinese Baroque buildings within the renewed precinct] were newly built and are thus not cultural heritage. Comparatively, they have been doing more intangible heritage projects.

On the other hand, the widely observed phenomenon of demolition and reconstruction in historic neighbourhoods indicates a systematic problem in China at that time, which was closely linked to the then urban-management-related norms, policies, and laws. In this sense, the trend of 'destructive reconstruction' (Z. Yang, 2021) could hardly be reversed by a few cultural-heritage-protection volunteers. Since their intervention to save the historic Chinese Baroque buildings had been recurringly unsuccessful, those local volunteers in Harbin felt a crushing sense of powerlessness, which later led them to other (more personal) ways of 'heritage protection'.

Interviewee L-21 was among those cultural-heritage-protection volunteers for a time. He was then active in protecting the historic buildings, thereby being on intimate terms with other volunteers in Harbin. The interviewee expressed his frustration after 'so many unsuccessful efforts of the [volunteer] group' and playfully remarked that several heritage-protection volunteers had turned into 'cultural heritage thieves' after being turned down so many times by the local authorities along with the developers: when the Chinese Baroque buildings were being demolished, one of the 'cultural heritage thieves' would go to the site and negotiate with the members of the demolition crew to buy some beautiful and potentially

[73] The concept of authenticity and its relationship with the concept of heritage is further discussed in Chapter 5.

valuable parts of the buildings with a small amount of money. In this way, the 'thief' had successfully got several artefacts, which would otherwise be destroyed by the demolition workers. Although purchasing artefacts like this is, strictly speaking, not a lawful action, Interviewee L-21 is respectful of those 'thieves', for they just wanted to 'retain the historic things' and were actually acting out of a sense of duty rather than self-interest. Being self-interested or not, these 'cultural heritage thieves' have nevertheless played their parts in safeguarding the (objective) authenticity of the Chinese Baroque area by rescuing from destruction what they presumed to be the best and/or most significant components of Chinese Baroque buildings, whereby the perceptions and concerns of Harbin's cultural elite regarding the authenticity of built heritage are clearly demonstrated.

- Whom is This Renewed Precinct for?

The authenticity issue is one reason that the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct is not well-accepted by the public, but not the only reason. The forms and models of the businesses within the renewed precinct also significantly affect people's perceptions and subsequent actions. Interviewee L-31 observed the difficulties faced by the businesses in the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct: the once flourishing restaurants on North Third Street have been struggling since they moved into this precinct in the southern part of the area. This is not only because the precinct is not very successful in attracting tourists, but also due to the fact that it lacks support from Harbin locals. It is noteworthy that Harbin locals are, in general, still price sensitive. Interviewee L-29 reported that 'many restaurants there were finally closed because it is too expensive to eat [in those restaurants]'.

Interviewee L-30 narrated her experience in the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct one day with some of her old school friends: they went there for a get-together and decided to go to the time-honoured Zhang Steamed Bun Restaurant (hereafter 'Zhang Restaurant') to buy some

steamed buns [包子] at the close of their day. Zhang Restaurant, originally located in the northern part of the Chinese Baroque area, was moved into the precinct after the renewal was completed. For Interviewee L-30 and her friends, the steamed buns of Zhang Restaurant are something that can bring back their childhood memories. However, she was very disappointed when hearing that the steamed buns were priced at some 40 yuan (approximately US$6) per steamer, which was much more expensive than the common price in Harbin: 'The food in Daowai is well-known for its good value for money. It is not that delicious, after all. Now those restaurants are no longer cheap – it's so expensive that the restaurants are obviously robbing people blind! Apparently, their target is the strangers.'

Evidently, Harbin locals are in effect not appreciative of the upgraded businesses in the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct. Because of the mismatch between their real needs (e.g., inexpensive food) and the available businesses which have been upgraded to target middle- and high-end consumer groups, the local people can have the feeling that the precinct was renewed for strangers/tourists rather than for themselves as Harbin locals. Furthermore, some think that the renewed precinct is not good enough even merely for tourists. Interviewee L-32 felt the current renewed precinct, which is filled with restaurants, lacks tourist attractions that can offer a special visiting experience. Interviewee L-30 evaluated the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct more comprehensively and thought the authenticity issue is by far not its biggest problem:

> How can tourists like to go there?! They will not recommend this place in their travelogues [posted on travel websites] even if they do visit it. There is nothing attractive: [the surrounding area is] neither beautiful nor tidy; [the renewed precinct is] not successful in attracting businesses and thus does not have things that are good enough to sell; the food there is not that special but is indeed expensive… Just tell me what deserves your visit to that place!

In addition, the current COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduces the number of visitors (especially tourists) and, even worse, leads to an overall economic downturn. This has created an extremely difficult situation for the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct, especially given that inside the precinct there is no resident at all, in which circumstance the precinct depends exclusively on visitors coming from the outside.

A Large Area Awaiting Reuse: Perennial inconvenience, fading sense of attachment

Besides the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct, which is a relatively small area within the conservation zone, there is still a large area with vacant and dilapidated Chinese Baroque buildings (including the Phase III area) that awaits reuse and revitalisation. Interviewee L-10 thought it problematic for the local government to move all the residents out of the area because unoccupied buildings easily get damaged in Harbin's extremely cold winter, in which case the decline of the Chinese Baroque area must have been accelerating after the mass relocation. What is worse, the ongoing construction of the Harbin Metro Line 3 has resulted in a long section of Jingyu Street, which is in the heart of the Chinese Baroque area, being closed for years, although this construction was meant to better connect the historic area to other parts of Harbin.

Interviewee L-30 indicated that the area around the metro construction site, which is large and at the centre of the Chinese Baroque conservation zone, had become 'the worst place in Harbin' due to prolonged inaccessibility. Interviewee L-32 also complained about the inconvenience of the Chinese Baroque area today. He pointed out that what connects places within this large historic area are mainly extremely narrow alleys, and if the current alley network is retained, the area will not be able to meet people's contemporary needs. Thus, Interviewee L-32 thought the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct is enough for cultural promotion, and there is no need to conserve an even larger zone:

> Honestly speaking, the transformation of the Chinese Baroque area has seriously impacted the economy of Daowai District. You can transform the whole area into Chinese Baroque [pedestrian] zone, but then what? People have difficulty in going there as well as parking. […] There is no gainsaying that the time-honoured Tongji Mall [同记商场] went out of business *because of* the Chinese Baroque transformation [project].

Although some may imagine that the relocated former residents of a historic area must feel nostalgic for their old neighbourhood, in the case of the Chinese Baroque area, the interviewees' responses seem to counter such imagination but, instead, confirm Jackson's (1994, p. 151) opinion:

> Most of us, I suspect, without giving much thought to the matter, would say that a sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learn to know its peculiarities. It is my own belief that a sense of place is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom.

Interviewee L-32 pointed out that it is people's *habits* that really matter: 'They might be forced to stop living in and strolling around that place and thus have felt uncomfortable about this for some time. But if they return [to the Chinese Baroque area] now, they may feel the strong contrast instead.' After years of the area's being under redevelopment, the former residents have gradually acquired new habits and lifestyles in their new neighbourhood, and their sense of attachment to the Chinese Baroque area has been constantly fading. As a result, as time goes by, fewer and fewer people feel attached to this now isolated historic area, which has a small part being entirely commercial and a greater part vacant and deserted.

Dance in Fetters: The heritage predicament of the Chinese Baroque area

It seems that the heritage-led redevelopment of the Chinese Baroque area, along with the making and management of the Chinese Baroque heritage, is unsuccessful in every aspect. The local inhabitants had to move out of the area, the initial phases of the project were completed

but did not really achieve the social, cultural, and economic objectives of urban revitalisation, and an even larger piece of land within the area is still left unused along with its decaying historic buildings. But it is too easy to say that the Chinese Baroque project is just a mistake. Given its extremely high population density and poor living environment, the Chinese Baroque area undoubtedly requires urgent and serious work for its renewal and revitalisation.

In China, a huge number of urban redevelopment projects, which focused heavily on infrastructure renewal, have been launched and proceeded in the past decades. Moreover, local governments of many Chinese cities have wielded officially sanctioned heritage discourses to make cultural heritage and then incorporated those official heritage sites as an 'essential component in city beautification and the production of urban space' (Zhu and González Martínez, 2022, p. 477). Heritage-led urban redevelopment projects, where the redevelopment of historic and often dilapidated inner-city areas is associated with official heritage making and management, typically lead to the commodification of heritage and history, as well as a gentrification of the declared project areas (Herzfeld, 2015). Sometimes they can also promote a drastic transformation of historic urban landscapes (Zhu and González Martínez, 2022). Despite the repeatedly raised social justice issues such as that of 'the right to the city' (D. W. Harvey, 2008) as well as the previously mentioned authenticity issues, the gentrification path of heritage-led urban redevelopment has been proved effective, at least from an elite perspective, in many cities in China (see for example: He and Wu, 2005; Shin, 2010b; Y. Zhang, 2018). In this context, it is understandable that the local governments of Harbin and its Daowai District have chosen to redevelop the Chinese Baroque area on the basis of heritage making and consumption, as it does seem to be a viable option.

Urban planners who are closely involved in the urban regeneration practices of Harbin generally feel sympathy for the current situation of the Chinese Baroque area. However, they do not think it is simply the result of a failure of urban planning or urban management.

Interviewee P-2 thought it is a pity that the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct only retained memories of the historic buildings, while the former lifestyle was completely erased from that neighbourhood. He nevertheless pointed out that urban planners only offer possible solutions in such cases, and decisions about heritage management are not really made from the urban planners' perspectives: 'Damage and renewal can hardly be avoided in the urban development process.' Interviewee P-1 further posed the question of whether urban renewal focusing on daily lives or that focusing on business/consumption is more suitable for Harbin, or more specifically, for its Daowai District:

> When I was a student, I didn't regard mass commercially oriented renovation and commercial expansion as a good way for local governments [to achieve urban renewal and revitalisation]. Having been a practitioner for so many years, now I have realised that the local governments, especially those high-ranking government officials, can understand a district so deeply that their knowledge is perhaps beyond my imagination. It needs investigation as to whether Daowai District needs more internal or external impetus [to revitalise its historic centre]. Before we have an answer to this question, I cannot say which approach to its renewal is better.

Not only do urban planners think that the Daowai district government just did what it had to, but some former residents of the Chinese Baroque area also have similar opinions. Interviewee L-30 thought that the infrastructure in their new residential area is much better than that in the historic urban centre, and their daily lives are very likely to be disturbed if they still live in the Chinese Baroque area when it is successfully transformed into a commercial zone:

> It is surely not economical for the reconstructed [Chinese Baroque] buildings […] to be used for both commercial and residential purposes. […] The problem is that the area was not successfully revitalised in the subsequent years and has stagnated. Without enough visitors, it looks deserted. If some residents were kept in the area at the time of relocation, there could still be liveliness in that place even when the project failed – at least some people are living there! Now the area looks vacant as all its residents are gone. Nonetheless, I think there is

> nothing wrong with the initial strategy of relocating all the inhabitants and transforming the area into a commercial zone, only that they failed to successfully develop this commercial zone.

- Satisfy Them All: What is the possibility of juggling the needs and interests of various stakeholders?

Interviewee O-1 once worked in the headquarters of the Chinese Baroque project. From the perspective of the municipal government, he indicated that the current failure of the Chinese Baroque project is a combined result of various factors: 'We certainly want to reuse it [means "the Chinese Baroque area"] as soon as possible after pouring in the government funds. There is always some reason if such an area remains unused.' Interviewee O-1 attributed the Chinese Baroque area's predicament primarily to the economic problems of Daowai District and the broader Harbin City. Comparing Harbin with Shanghai, where heritage-led urban redevelopment projects are generally very successful, Interviewee O-1 highlighted that Shanghai has a much stronger economy: 'The economic gap between Shanghai and Harbin is *huge*. […] Although our government was well-prepared at the initial stage, the historic area can be revitalised and reused only if it is accepted by the market and receives their investments.' He thought the main difficulty faced by the Chinese Baroque project at the moment is that private capital has not been successfully channelled into the area because investors are not willing to take the potential risk of a relatively long payback period.

Indeed, the heritage-led urban redevelopment project of the Chinese Baroque area is, to a large extent, an economic game, despite the project's strong cultural and social dimensions. Given the current adverse condition of the Chinese Baroque area and its resultant necessity of the area's renewal, the paramount question is in effect how to work through the problem in a way that juggles the needs and interests of various stakeholders. It is this question that has been posing a serious challenge in actual practice, which should not be simply attributed to an urban

planning or governance failure. On the one hand, the local inhabitants within the area hope to get the most out of the relocation, so that they can live better lives after their handover of the historic buildings. On the other hand, the relevant government departments are trying their best to attract investments and tourists, not only to make profits and revitalise the once impoverished neighbourhood, but also to recoup the high initial outlays of the local government itself. Considering the overall economic conditions of Harbin and its Daowai District, as well as the extremely large scale of the declared conservation zone, it is indeed difficult to balance the economic needs of the two parties at the current stage.

Furthermore, the stakeholders of this economic game also include the local people in the broader Harbin, the entrepreneurs from within and outside the city, and tourists, for they are also target groups of this redevelopment project. Clearly, the heritage-led urban redevelopment of the Chinese Baroque area represents an urban strategy for the municipal and district governments in consort with private capital, and the Chinese Baroque project aims at an 'ambitiously and scrupulously planned' gentrification (Smith, 2002, p. 439). The term 'gentrification' was coined by Ruth Glass (1964, p. xviii) to describe a then novel urban process in London, where the middle classes, as a new urban 'gentry', transformed working-class quarters by replacing the original working-class occupiers and upgrading their residential buildings, thus changing the entire social character of those quarters. The concept of gentrification has been constantly broadened ever since. Today it includes not only the above-mentioned phenomenon, which is now referred to as 'classical gentrification', but also a variety of other gentrification types such as new-build gentrification, tourism gentrification, commercial gentrification, and ecological gentrification (see for example: Cocola-Gant, 2018; Davidson and Lees, 2010; Dooling, 2009; Zukin et al., 2009). Despite the diversity in form, they all share the key elements of 'having a "gentry"' and 'displacement'.

In the case of the Chinese Baroque project, whose gentrification goal is primarily about commercial gentrification, the area however lacks a 'gentry' due to, again, the relatively weak economy of Daowai District and Harbin City more broadly. Interviewee P-2 pointed out that although Harbin has been expanding rapidly, the city lacks pillar industries that can act as the backbone of its economy, and is, therefore, 'not really energetic'. Rather, it simply sprawls to accommodate more people from the surrounding areas, few of whom are skilled workers. Such immigrants mainly work to 'serve others in small businesses, such as selling cars or being a real estate broker'. Like Interviewee O-1, Interviewee P-2 also made a comparison between Harbin and Shanghai. He thought that the local people in Harbin are generally not so interested in the 'bourgeois lifestyle' because they are not rich enough yet: 'If I have 50 yuan (approximately US$7), why don't I buy some steamed buns?' This is interestingly echoed by the 'steamed buns' example given by Interviewee L-30, whereby she illustrated why the businesses within the renewed Chinese Baroque precinct cannot satisfy the present needs of Harbin locals.

In addition, the previously mentioned lack of characteristic tourist attractions for consumption and, as a result, lack of tourists per se make tourism gentrification of the Chinese Baroque area infeasible as well. The combined result of these factors is that, as Interviewee O-1 indicated, entrepreneurs from within and outside the city do not show much interest in investing in the area. That is to say, the Chinese Baroque project in its current form is not able to satisfy the needs and interests of its major target groups in economic terms. In this sense, gentrification through heritage-led urban redevelopment is in effect not an economically viable solution to this run-down inner-city area.

- Conserve It All: What is the possibility of revitalising a large-scale low-building-density area in the inner city?

In the past decade, China has been increasingly promoting a 'softer' and more qualitative form of urbanisation, where cities are no longer regarded as mere growth engines (Demgenski, 2015). In 2014, the central government promulgated the National New-Type Urbanisation Plan (2014–2020). Being the first urbanisation plan in China, the Plan was prepared by a working group which was led by the National Development and Reform Commission and consisted of members from 13 ministries. It serves as a strategic plan that guides the urbanisation of the whole country during its period of validity (State Council Information Office (PRC), 2014). In this plan, inadequate heritage protection and the 'constructive destruction' phenomenon in cities is identified as a major problem in China's past urbanisation process, and 'passing on the culture to display characteristics' is, therefore, made a basic principle of future urbanisation. The plan further highlights the importance of constructing 'cultural cities' and puts particular emphasis on the conservation of cultural heritage:

> In urban renewal processes, it is important to conserve historical and cultural heritages, ethnic customs, and traditional scenes, and to reconcile functional upgrading with the protection of culture and heritage. […] We should put more effort into […] integrated conservation of historical and cultural cities, towns, and neighbourhoods […] to pass on and promote outstanding traditional cultures, to stimulate the development of locally characteristic cultures, and to retain urban cultural memories. (Central People's Government (PRC), 2014, n.p.)

The central government's attitude towards cultural heritage conservation in the context of China's rapid urbanisation and its most recent expectations of the local governments in terms of cultural heritage management have been further emphasised by President Xi Jinping in 2016. As he put it bluntly, 'conserving cultural heritage is also a way of scoring political points [保护

文物也是政绩]' for local cadres (*Xinhua News Agency*, 2016b). Recently, the CPC Central Committee and the PRC State Council jointly issued the 'Opinions about Better Conserving and Inheriting History and Culture in Urban and Rural Constructions', which requires local governments to ensure full-scale and systematic conservation of cultural heritage sites from every historical era, and particularly aims to 'resolve the severe problem that historical and cultural heritage sites have been constantly damaged or demolished in urban and rural constructions' (Central People's Government (PRC), 2021, n.p.).

As Wallace (2014, p. 10) pointed out, 'the central regime leadership in Beijing has been effective in instituting a system that rewards [local cadres with] promotions on the basis of adaptation of central dictates and local triumphs'. It is not surprising, therefore, that the policy changes concerning urban (re)development and management at the national level in the past years have significantly affected the local government officials involved in the Chinese Baroque project in Harbin, who are surely concerned for their personal career and political mobility. These officials are expected to realise the urban renewal and revitalisation of the Chinese Baroque area but are also constrained by the increasingly emphasised necessity to systematically retain and conserve the historic neighbourhood in its entirety. Besides the previously mentioned difficulty in balancing the needs and interests of various stakeholders, they are also facing a more technical problem, that is how to manage and keep alive a 30-hectare-large low-building-density area, where buildings are mostly two- or three-storey, in the urban centre of a metropolis.

Interviewee L-17 works as a security guard at the Phase III area of the Chinese Baroque project. His job is to keep this vacant zone safe: 'to make sure the buildings do not flood or catch fire'. The interviewee had seen while on duty Mayor Song Xibin (in office from January 2012 to January 2018) and Mayor Sun Zhe (in office from January 2018 to April 2022), who came while in office to inspect 'the streets and buildings' of the Chinese Baroque area.

Interviewee L-17 explained that the mayors came to the area mainly to see the area's actual condition, in order to facilitate relevant policy making. Whilst Interviewee L-17 only heard the mayors stressing the importance to on-site staff of 'fire prevention and safety', the local resident Interviewee L-31 heard the government officials speak frankly about the heritage predicament of the Chinese Baroque area during an inspection[74]:

> [A group of] around 20 people stayed in front of our door for as long as one or two hours, observing [the surroundings] and discussing. I stood beside them, listening [to their discussion]. They said they [i.e., the local government] can afford neither the demolition [of the old buildings] nor the construction [of new buildings] – now it is not allowed to build high-rise buildings [in the Chinese Baroque area]. They said that now the city's housing market is getting very close to saturation point, thus neither demolition nor restoration [of the buildings within the Chinese Baroque area] is affordable [to the local government]. They said the area is *too large*: from First Street to Tenth Street, such [Chinese Baroque] buildings are everywhere. They asked, 'What to do [with the area] in the future?' They are worried about it!

Such a predicament is not merely an endemic problem caused by the specific economic or social condition of Daowai or the broader Harbin. It is also a general urban issue that reflects some fundamental characteristics of modern cities. The two- or three-storey Chinese Baroque buildings, which have large inner courtyards, make the floor area ratio (FAR) of the current Chinese Baroque area very low. Some Chinese urbanists have recognised the low-FAR problem in many historic cities in China and argued that an urban area's FAR needs to reach a certain level to guarantee the area's population and, in turn, the area's normal functioning, as well as

[74] Interviewee L-31 was interviewed in August 2021. He could not clearly remember when the inspection took place and who led that inspection. When asked about the date and the leading cadre, the interviewee thought it was the governor of Heilongjiang Province who led the inspection team (though he also added that he did not know who the governor was) and recalled that the inspection took place some day in the mid-May of 2021. However, according to the online news record, there was no news report about the governor inspecting the Chinese Baroque area around that time, and the closest one is about Mayor Sun Zhe's inspecting the area on 10 June 2021 (Harbin Municipal People's Government, 2021). In this case, it is very likely that the inspection witnessed by Interviewee L-31 was the one led by the mayor in June.

to create a sense of city: Professor Wang Jianguo, who has rich experience in the historic city conservation in China, called attention to the fact that the FARs of the well-conserved old towns in Europe are generally over 2 (Li *et. al.*, 2022). However, according to an internal report in October 2021 provided by Harbin Natural Resources and Planning Bureau[75], the ongoing urban planning of the Chinese Baroque Phase III area, which must fulfil the heritage conservation requirements that apply to the whole area of planning, intends to limit the area's FAR to only 1.5. Considering that the Chinese Baroque area is located in the heart of the Harbin old town and acts as the district centre of Daowai, such a low FAR is theoretically not enough in the present day to achieve the necessary vitality and efficiency for the area.

The Unpredictable Result of Colonial Heritage Making

The heritage making of the Chinese Baroque area started with an appreciation of the hybrid-style architecture which combines European embellishments with the traditional Chinese spatial arrangement. Like the trend towards Europeanisation over a considerable period of time in Harbin, the initiative to identify and promote the Chinese Baroque heritage was also derived mainly from the admiration of Europe/the West and the belief that beautiful buildings and streets with some European/Western atmosphere can bring successful urban (re)development to the city. However, the very large colonial-era-related Chinese Baroque heritage site has been trapped in transformation for over 15 years. In such a complex and sometimes chaotic situation, the stakeholders are unanimous in their support for the making of the Chinese Baroque heritage, despite their conflicting interests. While how exactly the Chinese Baroque heritage is made, managed, and interpreted is left to the discretion of local authorities, in practice it is constrained by a cluster of factors including national strategies, local economic conditions, and the features and conditions of the heritage site per se. The combination of these constraints may, as we can

[75] A reform of government bodies took place in Harbin in the late 2010s, and current Harbin Natural Resources and Planning Bureau was established in January 2019. The former Harbin Urban and Rural Planning Bureau was integrated into this new bureau.

see from this case study, lead a historic urban area to a long period of stagnation and decline, for which it is hard to put the blame on any of the related parties. In other words, although the heritage making of the Chinese Baroque area is based on a concrete past that relates to the Russian colonisation of Harbin, the result produced by such a colonial-heritage-making process is unpredictable, since it is subject to many dynamics.

Discussion

This chapter offers two recent cases of heritage making in Harbin that are based on the city's colonial pasts (mainly its Russian colonial past), which turned out to be much more complex and long-lasting but less successful compared to the previously presented heritage-making examples in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. While Harbin's local authorities and local people alike are willing to make colonial heritage not only to retain the collective memory of this post-colonial city but also to meet their present needs in cultural, social, political, and economic terms, in practice, heritage making is not, as some may imagine, a panacea for urban (re)development and (re)vitalisation. In the case of Jihong Bridge, the heritage issue became a major obstacle to the transportation development of Harbin and thus hindered the city's potential economic growth; in the case of the Chinese Baroque area, the heritage issue acts as one of the several factors that have strong impacts on the overall revitalisation of that large area. In both cases, there are/were several groups of stakeholders who have sharply conflicting interests that are hard to reconcile. Even though most of those stakeholders have agreed in principle that heritage making is beneficial to the long-term development of Harbin, they nevertheless tend to act out of (reasonable) self-interest. As a result, the proposed colonial heritage was not successfully made or was even unmade, and its relevant site was stuck in a predicament for a rather long time.

This chapter understands colonial heritage making within the complicated urban processes that can have a huge number of contextual variables. As Wang (2012, p. 18) pointed out, 'identities and perceptions may *influence* decision-making behavior but do not unilaterally *determine* such behavior'. Although in Harbin there are some underlying general ideas about why to make colonial heritages and how to interpret them in the light of the present, which have been guiding the city's current heritage practice, it is worth noting that not all the relevant sites can be successfully made and interpreted along those lines. The dynamic nature of cities lies not only in the ever-changing heritage discourses that have been linked to the colonial-era-related built environments, but also in the uncertainty of the colonial-heritage-making process per se. This, again, supports the thought that heritage is a status rather than an object or a process: a site can be overtly or covertly awarded or deprived of such a status, and the meaning of the adjective 'heritage' can always be defined and redefined. In this sense, it is pertinent to understand the historic post-colonial city of Harbin from a dynamic perspective and see its colonial heritage making as a component part of contemporary urban maintenance and development.

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In Chapter 4, the colonial heritage issue is put in its complex and dynamic urban context and examined as a social factor that keeps interacting with other factors. The case studies of Jihong Bridge and the Chinese Baroque area reveal that colonial heritage making as a tool for urban management is not always effective in practice. Despite the many successful colonial heritage projects in Harbin and other post-colonial cities in China, which seem to illustrate the great potential and the overwhelming importance of urban heritage in contemporary cities, we must be aware that colonial heritage, and heritage more broadly, cannot always solve urban problems or direct urban development. Heritage is, after all, a status that is assigned to things by *people*. It is not and will not be above the needs and desires of the present generation. Rather, it serves

those. The following chapter takes all the heritage phenomena and cases studied in this chapter and the previous chapters into consideration. With the example of Harbin, Chapter 5 examines the role of colonial heritage in today's post-colonial cities in China, and further discusses from which angles the current colonial heritage making, remaking, and unmaking in China's post-colonial cities, and the contemporary heritage movement in China more broadly, can be best understood in the light of the present. On that basis, the chapter then reflects on the essence of heritage per se.

5

COLONIAL HERITAGE IN A DYNAMIC CITY

Authenticity or compatibility?

It is obvious in Chapters 2 to 4 that concerns about authenticity were frequently raised by local people, officials, and professionals alike when they commented on the colonial heritage issues of Harbin. It seems important to them that the built environment of this historic city is *real*, whether in terms of origin, appearance, atmosphere, or spirit. In certain circumstances, it is also expected that the heritage sites represent a *real* past. Nevertheless, a consensus has not been reached among the stakeholders on what 'being real' is. While objective authenticity, which concerns whether a thing is original, can be measured using absolute and objective criteria, there can be various versions of constructive authenticity regarding a same thing (Wang, 1999). Therefore, as the case studies in the previous chapters indicate, what is regarded to be real or authentic by some people may not be so for others. The concept of authenticity has been widely used by the various parties in Harbin to justify their attitudes and approaches to the sites that are related to the city's colonial past, especially when there are controversies or conflicts over the heritage (un/re)making of those sites.

Despite authenticity's being a focal point in debates on colonial heritage, being authentic/real is not a guarantee of successful heritage making on the basis of a colonial past. Indeed, it is evident in Harbin – and also in other post-colonial cities in China and beyond –

that the most successful colonial heritage projects are not necessarily those that most 'authentically' present or interpret their corresponding colonial past(s) or legacies, but rather those most compatible with their contemporary urban development strategies. If authenticity is not the decisive factor in heritage making, why do heritage debates so often revolve around this concept? What is the relationship between the concepts of authenticity and heritage? Further, how should the contemporary role of (colonial) heritage be better understood in the (post-colonial) urban context? To answer these questions, this chapter starts with an enquiry into the notion(s) of authenticity.

Authenticity and Its Relationship with Heritage

The Venice Charter, which was adopted in the 1960s and considered to be a foundational framework for modern built heritage conservation, claimed that it is 'our duty' to hand on historic monuments 'in the full richness of their *authenticity* [italics added]' (ICOMOS, 1964, preface). The concept of authenticity has since then been propagated by international heritage institutions such as UNESCO and ICOMOS and thus acted as 'the fundamental rational and touchstone for heritage conservation' and played a pivotal role in heritage practice (Gao and Jones, 2021, p. 91). Through the 1972 World Heritage Convention, UNESCO made authenticity an essential criterion for assessing a property's qualification for World Heritage inscription, which initially concerned the property's 'design, materials, workmanship and setting' (UNESCO, 1977, p. 3). However, these initial actions to include the concept in the field of heritage studies did not lead to a strictly constructed doctrine of authenticity. As Starn (2002, p. 9) sharply pointed out, 'Before the Venice Charter, authenticity was not the crucial term it has since become; since 1964, it has been, like Holy Writ, authoritative and inconclusive.'

Around the time of the World Heritage project's launch, the concept of authenticity was also introduced to sociological studies (see: MacCannell, 1973; 1999 [1976]). The sociological

understandings of authenticity put emphasis on *experience* in addition to *materiality*. Scholars' debates on object-related authenticity in social sciences, such as research fields of tourism studies and consumer studies, often adopt terms that feature a dichotomy, such as cool vs. hot authenticity (Selwyn, 1996), indexical vs. iconic authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004), and the previously mentioned objective vs. constructive authenticity (Wang, 1999). The central idea underlying these dichotomies is that the authenticity of a thing can be understood and evaluated either as an objective existence or as a subjective construction. In contrast to object-related authenticity, activity-related authenticity is the other focus of sociological research on the notion of authenticity. It also highlights experience but from a different angle. This category of authenticity is understood on the basis of existentialism and is thus frequently referred to as 'existential authenticity' (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity denotes the authenticity of Being, that is, to what extent people believe they are engaging with their true *selves* during a certain experience. It is noteworthy that the evaluation of the authenticity of one's self is qualitatively different from the evaluation of the authenticity of something else (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). As regards the authenticity concerning heritage sites, although the physical dimension of place does influence people's experiences of existential authenticity (Rickly-Boyd, 2013), Yi *et al.* (2017) revealed with an empirical study that the object-related authenticity of experienced heritage sites and environments is perhaps irrelevant to existential authenticity. Given that this research is conducted from the perspectives of heritage studies and urban studies and limits its scope of heritage investigation to the built heritage within the urban context, the discussion of authenticity here focuses predominantly on the material world (i.e., not people's inner world) and, therefore, concerns object-related authenticity (i.e., the authenticity of something else, not the authenticity of one's self) only.

The Materialist and Constructivist Conceptions of Authenticity

Similar to the current situation of heritage conception, the current conception of authenticity in the material world is 'characterized by a problematic dichotomy between materialist and constructivist perspectives' (Jones, 2010, p. 181). Being an abstract noun[76], 'authenticity' refers to the quality of being authentic, that is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, original, actual, genuine, real, accurate, truthful, credible, or trustworthy ('authentic, *adj.* and *n.*', 2021). Since the concept of authenticity was introduced to heritage management and conservation, it has been approached from an overwhelming materialist perspective for decades. Like understanding heritage values as intrinsic values of heritage sites, authenticity has long been perceived as 'an objective and measurable attribute inherent in the material fabric, form and function of artefacts and monuments' (Jones, 2010, p. 182). As a result, a parallel can be drawn between the materialist assessments of heritage values and the authenticity of a certain property: while a 'scientific' set of criteria is adopted to evaluate potential cultural heritage sites, the genuineness of monuments, buildings, and places is tested using a 'positivist set of research methods and criteria' (*ibid.*). A historical site is typically regarded to be authentic if the site is true to its origins in terms of its date of building, design, form, context, material, building technique and skill, and function. The materialist approaches to authenticity, as those to heritage per se, still lie at the heart of contemporary built heritage practices (Karlström, 2015).

In contrast, relatively recent scholarly publications from a variety of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and geography, have been focusing on the cultural construction and complexity of authenticity (see for example: Gable and Handler, 1996; Grazian, 2010; Holtorf and Schadla-Hall, 1999; Lindholm, 2008; Lowenthal, 1999). One of their main arguments is that authenticity, as a 'quality' (Ehteshami and Soltaninejad, 2020;

[76] See the section entitled 'Heritage as a Status: Disciplinary understandings for interdisciplinary collaborations' in Chapter 1 for more discussion about abstract nouns and their uses and abuses.

Karlström, 2015) or 'status' (Cohen and Cohen, 2012), is not inherent in the object but is culturally constructed. Whether a certain thing is judged authentic depends on who is observing and in what context. This shift in the conception of authenticity has significantly influenced how this term is understood in the heritage context, which is best manifested in the 1994 Nara Document. Adopting a value-based approach to cultural heritage, the Nara Document considers authenticity assessment as a means of understanding the credibility or truthfulness of information sources about the values that are attributed to the heritage. It suggests that assessing the information sources' authenticity can, to a certain extent, evaluate 'our ability to understand these [heritage] values' and, in turn, offer an index of a heritage property's legitimacy (ICOMOS, 1994, art. 9). The Nara Document acknowledges the differing notions of authenticity within different cultural contexts and, because of this, proposes avoiding fixed criteria for authenticity judgements and linking authenticity judgements to the worth of a greater variety of information sources, which have expanded to include obviously constructivist and even subjective sources like 'spirit and feeling' (*ibid.*, art. 13). These more inclusive understanding of and more flexible approach to authenticity have since 2005 been recognised by UNESCO and included into its Operational Guidelines, thereby institutionalising the updated conception of authenticity in the World Heritage practices (see: UNESCO, 2005a, pp. 21–22). Progressive might these documents be, authenticity is left to depend 'entirely on the situation and the context' without a definite description, in which circumstance the concept remains 'perplexing and slippery' (Karlström, 2015, p. 29).

Along this line, authenticity has been viewed as a 'dynamic concept where change takes place over time' (Taylor and Xu, 2019, p. 317). As an alternative to directly conceptualising 'authenticity', authentication – the social *process* by which the authenticity of a given thing is claimed, confirmed, or certified – has been explored in relevant academic writings in interdisciplinary fields such as tourism studies and heritage studies (see for example: Chhabra,

2019; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Xie, 2011; Zhu, 2015). Notably, the British human geographer Peter Jackson (1999, p. 101) even proposed 'to abandon the search for "authenticity" and to examine the more tractable question of "authentification" [*sic*.]'. The issue of power is frequently raised in such discussions and debates on the constructed authenticity and its corresponding process of authentication. Zukin (2010, p. xiii) contended that authenticity is a 'cultural form of power over space'. Aligned to this, Zhu (2015, p. 605) observed that authentication has become a 'governance strategy to legitimise inclusion and exclusion and to allocate economic, moral and aesthetic values'. Xie (2011) investigated how various stakeholders make claims to and legitimise their constructions of authenticity in terms of ethnic cultures against similar attempts by others. He sees authentication as an 'interactive process in which a balance of forces defines a state of equilibrium', which highlights a more dynamic concept of authenticity that 'can be formulated according to the different stages of development relating to all the parties involved' (*ibid.*, p. xiv).

The Development of 'Heritage' and 'Authenticity' Conceptions: Parallel trends, similar effects

It can be clearly observed from a comparative perspective that the developments of the conceptions of heritage and authenticity are parallel. This parallel, in fact, also confirms from another angle the idea that 'heritage' in the current academic discourse acts as an adjective (or an abstract noun formed from an adjective, which signifies an attribute) rather than a noun (which signifies a certain thing) or a verb, and that heritage is fundamentally perceived as a status rather than a thing or a process. Both the conceptions of heritage and authenticity saw a constructivist turn which separates the status from its material carriers. Authenticity, like heritage, is increasingly understood as a culturally or socially constructed *attribute* that is attached to things, and the *process* of attaching (i.e., the process of making a certain thing 'authentic'), like the heritage-making process, has become a scholarly focus in recent years. Similar to what Smith (2006) coined as 'authorized heritage discourse (AHD)', the issue of

power has attracted attention in studies of authentication, i.e., how the powers of different parties and their power relations shape the authentication process has been investigated and evaluated. Both authenticity and heritage are nowadays viewed by some as the result of a compromise between stakeholders, or as a political tool and governance strategy to achieve certain needs of the present.

Evidently, the conceptions of heritage and authenticity have similar development histories, and, in many cases, these two concepts and their uses serve the present society in similar ways. The abstract nouns of 'heritage' and 'authenticity', both signifying a particular status (i.e., 'being heritage' and 'being authentic'), are indeed separate concepts with no fixed relationship. The two terms have been closely linked to each other from time to time because, in certain circumstances, they to some extent legitimise and reinforce one another: those claimed to be authentic get a fairly persuasive reason (or excuse) to be designated as heritage, while those already having a heritage status tend to be seen by the masses as original, real, true, or at least trustworthy (i.e., authentic). As can be seen from the existing scholarly publications on heritage debates, scholars, regardless of whether they understand heritage from a materialist or constructivist perspective, tend to adopt the concept of authenticity to justify their arguments. Even those who view heritage as an intangible and dynamic process have highlighted the importance of authenticity to heritage by arguing, for example, that 'more local expressions of heritage value are more politically authentic' (Avrami and Mason, 2019, p. 20). Despite this, it is worth reiterating that both heritage and authenticity are essentially *statuses* of some *thing*, and it must be stressed that neither of these two statuses is a precondition or decisive factor for the other: authentic things do not necessarily become heritage, and heritage things are not necessarily unanimously believed to be authentic.

The Role of Authenticity in the Heritage Discourse

The issue of authenticity is frequently brought up during discussions and debates over heritage. In the city of Harbin, this phenomenon has been so pervasive that statements and arguments concerning authenticity have appeared in all the studied cases. For example, in the case of Harbin Railway Station, people gave their opinions on whether the newly constructed replica of the old railway station is true to the post-colonial city in consideration of its Russian colonial past, and what is the essential and most credible thing that has to be inherited as the heritage from the demolished old railway station; in the case of the former site of the Unit 731 headquarters, both the planners and the curators made claims that they conserve the site or convey its relevant historical facts 'authentically'; in the cases of Jihong Bridge and the Chinese Baroque area, the different understandings of authenticity in relation to heritage have been used by various stakeholders as their grounds for supporting or opposing the proposed heritage management approaches. If, as stated above, there is no fixed relationship, such as causality, between authenticity and heritage, how should we understand such phenomena?

Nowadays, both heritage and authenticity are increasingly regarded as cultural and social constructs. As attributes or statuses, they are never given fixed or unanimously agreed descriptions. Instead, thoughts about what can be claimed to be heritage or authentic vary among stakeholders and change over time. In this regard, efforts to pursue things that are 'authentic heritage' or attempts to reach a consensus on the authenticity of a designated heritage thing can, therefore, be unavailing and meaningless. Considering that both the heritage and the authenticity discourses have been used strategically in contemporary China to achieve present and future development in social, political, and economic terms (Y. Zhang, 2018; Zhu, 2015; Zhu and Maags, 2020), the processes of heritage making and authentication in a city can best be understood as instruments of power, by which a society's present values are created, negotiated, modified, and then allocated to the built environment among and by various societal

actors. The differing and sometimes contested values raised and held by those actors reflect the diversity of their visions of the city in the future: through heritage making and/or authentication, the actors express what kind of city they hope theirs to be or become, as well as their agreement or disagreement with their counterparts regarding any proposed urban (re)development plans that are under discussion.

Viewed in this light, the allegations, discussions, and debates about heritage authenticity in the Harbin cases in effect facilitate the negotiations between different parties/stakeholders on what values the city should hold for its long-term sustainable urban development. More specifically, these include what city image should be cultivated, which section of the city's past should be spotlighted and with what attitude, and what are the current priorities in urban management. In some cases, the authenticity of a designated heritage site is claimed, confirmed, or further explained, thereby using the authentication strategy to support the heritage-making strategy and, in turn, achieve a stated urban goal. In other cases, the concept of authenticity is wielded to express one's dissatisfaction with the status quo: by questioning or denying a heritage site's authenticity, the authentication strategy and the heritage-making strategy are in competition with each other for directing the city to its future. In short, the concept of authenticity, which is introduced to the heritage discourse, acts as a force that either strengthens or undermines the effects of a heritage-making strategy, which can only be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Dynamic Post-colonial Cities, Dynamic Colonial Heritage

For a long time until the late nineteenth century, cultural heritage sites in the West had been considered isolated from their settings and preserved to be frozen in time. This situation was effectively challenged by the British sociologist, geographer, and urban planner Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) and the Italian architect, urban planner, and architectural historian Gustavo

Giovannoni (1873–1947), who shared a similar evolutionary approach to cities. They suggested mutually supportive and harmonious co-existence of the historic and modern parts of a *living* city, and integrated heritage management into urban planning and urban development (Azpeitia Santander *et al.*, 2018; Bandarin and van Oers, 2012; Rodwell, 2018; Veldpaus *et al.*, 2013; see also: Geddes, 1915). These thoughts strongly informed the concept of 'historic urban landscape', which regards cities as cultural landscapes (Taylor, 2016) and understands the significance of historic cities from a dynamic perspective.

Historic Urban Landscape and the Layering of Post-colonial Cities

Sauer (1925, p. 46) described 'cultural landscape' as the following:

> Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different, that is, alien culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one. The natural landscape is of course of fundamental importance, for it supplies the materials out of which the cultural landscape is formed. The shaping force, however, lies in the culture itself.

This is exactly how cities are understood in the notion of historic urban landscape. The term was first coined in the 2005 Vienna Memorandum, according to which the historic urban landscape 'is embedded with current and past social expressions and developments that are place-based' and acquires its significance 'from a gradual evolutionary, as well as planned territorial development over a relevant period of time through processes of urbanization' (UNESCO, 2005b, pp. 2–3). The following 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape further extended the idea by enriching the definition of historic urban landscape. In that document, historic urban landscape means not only the physical urban area which is 'the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the

notion of "historic centre" or "ensemble" to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting' (UNESCO, 2011, art. 8). It also represents an approach to urban management, which is aimed at 'preserving the quality of the human environment, enhancing the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces, while recognizing their dynamic character, and promoting social and functional diversity' and rooted in 'a balanced and sustainable relationship […] between the needs of present and future generations and the legacy from the past' (*ibid.*, art. 11). This recently conceived historic urban landscape approach shifts the paradigm of urban heritage management from 'quest for truth' to 'management of thoughtful change' (Bandarin and van Oers, 2012; Getty Conservation Institute, 2010; Khalaf, 2018).

The international documents on urban heritage in the past two decades, led by the above-mentioned two, have indicated a deviation from the conventional yet controversial emphasis on the mutual corroboration of the cultural/social constructions of heritage and authenticity. They have, instead, suggested a recent trend towards focusing on the role of urban heritage in the maintenance and development of the broader city/society. In this regard, the idea that cities are results of historic layering is particularly inspiring to the understanding of the post-colonial cities in China. A city, growing within its natural and cultural contexts, is always living and ever-changing. Overlapping or juxtaposed layers have been generated throughout its history. In post-colonial cities, those layers are exceptionally distinct from each other: on the one hand, colonisation always introduces cultures that are, at least to a certain extent, alien; on the other hand, decolonisation typically strives to rejuvenate the cities' traditional culture(s) or impose new cultures. The dramatic substitutions in history of one political power for another, along with the corresponding cultural, social, and economic formations, are illustrated by the post-colonial cities' physical built environment, especially through distinctively stylish buildings and urban fabrics. In Harbin, such historic layering is clearly demonstrated by the characteristic European-style, Chinese-style, modernist, and eclectic buildings and structures that spread all

over the city, as well as the organically developed or elaborately planned street networks and neighbourhoods.

Colonial Heritage: Representing layers, facilitating layering

As the study of Harbin has shown, colonial heritage sites commonly act as symbols of their corresponding colonial pasts. In general, European-style sites, such as Central Avenue, St. Sophia Cathedral, and Jihong Bridge, represent the city's Russian colonial layer; while modernist sites, such as the former Unit 731 camp, the former Maeda Watch & Jewellery Store, and the Japanese Monument to Loyal Spirits, represent the city's Japanese colonial layer. It is evident from the interviews that the eligibility of a site to represent a certain historic layer is not defined by its origins but rather its appearance. In other words, the 'representative' colonial heritage sites are not necessarily built in the colonial periods they represent, but can also be created at a later stage or even in the present. For example, the reconstructed St. Nicholas Cathedral and Harbin Railway Station are widely seen by the local people, officials, and professionals alike to represent Harbin's Russian past, and many local people regard the hybrid-style Chinese Baroque area as primarily a Russian or cosmopolitan symbol.

This observation also, to some degree, explains why people in Harbin generally have the feeling that Japanese colonial remains are rare in the city. During the Manchukuo period, the already Westernised Japan built in Harbin various Western eclectic buildings. This is perhaps due to, as discussed in Chapter 3, the then Japanese people's fascination with European architecture and conscious preservation of the city's Western atmosphere. Yet these Japanese-era Western-looking buildings further reinforces today's local impression that the Russians have left a great number of buildings to Harbin, while the Japanese barely left anything. To the eyes of most Chinese people in the present Harbin, the Japanese-era Western eclectic buildings do not represent the Japanese colonial layer. They are, instead, viewed as components of the

Russian colonial layer. This signification sliding, like that in linguistics (see: Chapter 1), indicates the constructivist feature of built heritage sites. Given that the official heritage listing in Harbin, and in China more broadly, is based on the sites' origins, the above-discussed examples further illustrate the existing conflict between materialist and constructivist conceptions of authenticity in the heritage discourse and suggest the difficulty in keeping a stable and unanimously agreed status of authenticity for heritage sites in the real world.

The colonial heritage sites in Harbin are not merely representatives of the city's historic layers relating to the Russian or the Japanese colonial pasts. The constructivist aspect of such representation also leads colonial heritage to facilitate the layering process per se. As the first three chapters of this thesis have revealed, the colonial heritage sites' presence or absence can have a significant influence on the city's collective remembrance and/or amnesia. For example, Harbin's decolonisation process before the turn of the twenty-first century, where the finest Russian and Japanese colonial buildings were massively demolished, directly contributed to the later vacuum in urban memory among the local people. The 'profaned' Japanese-era modernist and Western eclectic buildings led to further obscurity of and collective amnesia about the Japanese colonial past. In contrast, the renovation of Central Avenue and St. Sophia Cathedral and the reconstruction of St. Nicholas Cathedral and the old Harbin Railway Station brought the Russian-era built environment back into the spotlight and thereby solidified the collective memory of Harbin's Russian colonial past. Another finding of this research is that different presentations and interpretations of the same heritage site can effectively change or reinforce the local, national, and even international perceptions of and attitudes towards a certain colonial past of the city. This is evident, for example, in the cases of the CER Bridge and the former site of the Unit 731 headquarters. By presenting these heritage sites in innovative ways and reinterpreting their significance with new discourses, such as 'industrial heritage', 'revolutionary heritage', 'peace', and 'never again', Harbin has been using its Russian and

Japanese colonial heritages to develop a post-colonial collective identity for its citizens, produce an updated city image that can be shown to outsiders, and create a new vision of the city towards the future.

The layering process of a city is always ongoing. In Harbin, the re-presentation and reinterpretation of its colonial heritages, which go beyond showing and understanding the city's colonial pasts, aim primarily at the fulfilment of present and future needs. In such cases, the colonial heritage sites in effect act as the current facilitators of the city's layering process. They are components not only of the city's historic layers concerning the colonial pasts, but also of its present layer that is now forming. Along this line of thinking, the predicaments of Jihong Bridge and the Chinese Baroque area are understandable. The dilemmas faced by those heritage sites are not caused by the sites' failure to well represent the historic colonial layer(s), but due to the fact that these sites are not able to facilitate Harbin's current layering process effectively – though this inability may not be the colonial heritage site's own problem but can result from the combined impacts of various external factors.

The colonial heritage's present relationships with multiple layers have, yet again, contributed to the difficulty in reaching a consensus among stakeholders on the authenticity of a given colonial heritage site. As colonial heritage is a part of both the colonial past *and* the present, its authenticity has a temporal dimension: a colonial heritage site that is not seen to be authentic from the perspective of the past can still be viewed as authentic from the perspective of the present, and vice versa. It is worth noting that, since we live in the present, we can *only* understand the pasts and their heritages in the light of the present. There is no pure 'perspective of the past' in the present, only to what extent people's judgements about historic sites are influenced by their present needs and values. As Leggewie and Meyer (2005, p. 353, as cited in Birkner and Donk, 2020, p. 372) rightly pointed out, 'historical consciousness is always framed toward present and future'. The authenticity and significance of colonial heritage sites

are always mainly subject to present values and expectations. Although Harbin's colonial heritage sites originate in the city's colonial pasts in one way or another, they nevertheless exist in the present and serve the present. It is not the status of being authentic that carries forward and sustains a colonial heritage site, but rather the compatibility of the site with its broader settings, that is, the contemporary post-colonial city.

Understanding (Colonial) Heritage in Contemporary Cities: From authenticity to compatibility

As indicated in Chapters 2 and 3, the differences between the Russian and the Japanese colonisations of Harbin lead to diametrically opposed answers to the very same question of how the city perceives its colonial pasts. Harbin's Russian colonial past has been viewed, in general, positively by the local authorities, professionals, and ordinary people, while the Japanese colonial past has been remembered largely from a negative perspective. Nevertheless, the inconsistent memories of and opposite attitudes towards the Russian and the Japanese colonial pasts are mobilised to construct a consistent identity of post-colonial Harbin, and relevant heritage makings serve such a post-colonial identity construction.

Different Approaches, Common Goal: Harbin's colonial heritage making for post-colonial identity construction

It was a real blow to the pride of Harbin's local government and ordinary people that the city lost its long-standing identity as a national industrial hub with the sudden and seemingly incomprehensible deindustrialisation since the 1990s. As a result, both the local government and the citizens are keen to restore the city to its former glory and construct a new collective identity. This is not only evident in the interviews, but can also be observed in recent urban projects, official documents, and scholarly publications (see for example: Gao, 2018; HDRC, 2021; Qiang, 2020). The Russian colonial heritage has been primarily seen as European-style

heritage since the late 1990s. For a long time in China, being Western is the metonym for being modern and international. Like China's other post-colonial cities which were formerly colonised mainly by Western countries, such as Shanghai, Xiamen, and Tianjin (see: Law and Veldpaus, 2017; H. Zhang, 2018), Harbin has been making and managing its Russian colonial heritage in a seemingly nostalgic way. Bissell (2005) contended that such 'colonial nostalgia' is not some desire for the restoration of colonialism, but rather involves the longing for something that has gone and cannot be restored – by emphasising distance and disjuncture, nostalgia critically frames the present. To some commentators, this 'something' for the post-colonial cities in China is cosmopolitanism, modernity, and prosperity (Law, 2020; Law and Qin, 2018; Pan, 2005). In the context of post-colonial Harbin, the case study of Harbin Railway Station has again confirmed the validity of their argument.

In recent years, Harbin's Russian colonial heritage starts to be reinterpreted, under the rubric of 'CER heritage', as 'industrial heritage' and 'revolutionary heritage'. Such reinterpretations are, to a large extent, due to a change in the Chinese imagination of modernity. China's rapid economic development has prompted a significant increase in national confidence among its people. Nowadays, the Chinese are encouraged to pursue their own modern cities with Chinese characteristics that can have international influence, rather than Western-looking cities with a European/cosmopolitan atmosphere. By reinterpreting its Russian colonial heritage as a symbol of China's industrialisation or proletarian revolution, Harbin redefines its modernity and national and international significance from a more China-centric angle. Despite this shift in interpretation, the goal of Harbin's Russian colonial heritage making nevertheless remains unaltered, that is to build a progressive, prosperous, and internationally influential city (see for example: HDRC, 2021).

On the other hand, displaying difficult heritage in commemoration of victims is a practice that has widespread global currency (Macdonald, 2009, p. 7). Adopting China's

national humiliation and victimisation discourses as its core, the commemoration of the victims of Japanese colonisation in Harbin focuses especially on the war crimes of the Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731. The official interpretation of relevant heritage sites has struck a chord with Harbin locals. In turn, the feeling of humiliation caused by the Japanese colonial past reinforces Harbin's identity as Chinese. In the past decade or so, more moderate and reconciliatory internationalist discourses on universal values, such as those on human rights and peace, are occasionally adopted through official or unofficial channels to facilitate the handling of Japan-related memory and heritage in China (see for example: Bofulin, 2017; Xu and Fine, 2010). Harbin has also adopted discourses on, for example, peace and 'never again', to reinterpret its difficult Japanese colonial heritage. Although such reinterpretations seem to indicate a primary goal of reconciliation, they in effect strengthen the narrative of Harbin's victimisation by underlining that Japan must be held accountable for the atrocities committed by its people in the first half of the twentieth century. Again, the shift in interpretation does not change the goal of Harbin's Japanese colonial heritage making, that is to build a city with a strong Chinese identity.

A combination of these two parts is exactly what Harbin once was and hopes to be in the future: a progressive, prosperous, and *internationally* influential *Chinese* city. It is noteworthy that, to achieve this goal of identity construction through colonial heritage making, both the Russian and the Japanese colonial heritage sites have been selectively presented and/or interpreted. While the heritage sites that are compatible with this common goal are highlighted, the rest have been marginalised and downplayed. In Harbin, the common decision of local authorities and the broader society to refer to (or not refer to) certain (dark/bright) sides of a particular colonial past leads not only to selective collective memory but also to selective collective amnesia. The resultant gradual fragmentation of Harbin's theoretically comprehensive and solid history reflects the negotiation and competition between

internationalism and nationalism in the construction of a post-colonial identity of the city. This observation leads to some elemental questions that are still awaiting answers: What will be the ultimate result of the identity construction of a post-colonial city? Can such cities overcome the self–other dichotomy, reconcile the different and even conflicting approaches to colonial pasts, and achieve an essentially new identity that is 'neither the one nor the other' (Bhabha, 2004 [1994], p. 37)?

Compatibility as the Key to Acquiring and Keeping a Heritage Status

Putting aside the concern about the ultimate result of the city's post-colonial identity construction, we can see from the study of Harbin that, for any site relating to the city's colonial pasts, it is *compatibility*, rather than authenticity, that fundamentally supports its heritage status. In Harbin, some historically remaining buildings, structures, streets, and neighbourhoods from the Russian colonial era have been refurbished, some demolished Russian colonial landmarks have been reconstructed, and some brand-new buildings and structures have been designed to possess European-style features. All these were done precisely because the selectively presented Russian colonial past is (re)interpreted as compatible with the conceived identity of the present post-colonial Harbin and is, in turn, actively used to meet the city's present needs in cultural, social, economic, and/or political terms. Similarly, the Japanese-era sites' being purposefully neglected or brought into the spotlight are also, to a great extent, due to the in/compatibility of their corresponding interpretations of the Japanese colonial past with Harbin's current goal of identity construction.

Collective identity construction, as a means of keeping social stability and enhancing social resilience, is a main concern of Harbin, but not the only one. Other concerns, such as economic development and improvement of local people's quality of life and wellbeing, are also of vital importance to the city. In some cases (for example, Jihong Bridge and the Chinese

Baroque area, outlined in Chapter 4), a site that relates to a colonial past initially seemed to be able to help with Harbin's maintenance and development from the angle of identity construction and was thus given a heritage status. However, the heritage site later turned out to significantly interfere with other urban agendas, such as upgrading infrastructure, improving amenities, and maintaining necessary population density within the CBD. In such circumstances, the heritage status of the site is in effect an obstacle to – rather than a facilitator of – achieving the overall maintenance and development goal of the city. Situations like this can cause lengthy debates on a site's values and authenticity among stakeholders. But even then, the final result is often that the site's heritage status and its corresponding conservation requirements give way to the city's overall goal: the colonial heritage site is officially or unofficially deprived of its heritage status, or its heritage status remains existing but in name only.

Admittedly, when giving the heritage status to a site, people typically enumerate the heritage values of the site and the significance of the past that it presents, and confirm their authenticity. When it becomes controversial whether to manage a heritage site as required by relevant laws and/or policies, or even whether to deprive a certain site of the heritage status, debates among various parties are often around the definition of authenticity, whether the site is currently authentic according to a certain definition, and in some cases, what is the correct way to keep this authenticity of the site. It seems that heritage values and authenticity are at the core of heritage theory and practice, which determine whether a site can be granted the heritage status and for how long this status can sustain. However, a close investigation into the colonial heritage making, remaking, and unmaking that happened in the complex urban context of Harbin indicates that these most frequently discussed topics are more of rhetoric rather than the essence of the heritage movement in the China of today. People list the heritage values of a site to justify the heritage status that is assigned to it, and express their agreement or disagreement on a heritage status assignation by arguing that the site is authentic or inauthentic according to

a certain materialist/constructivist definition of authenticity. Nevertheless, neither heritage value nor authenticity is a root cause of the active heritage making in the present day. Rather, what drives the making of built heritage and, in turn, sustains the sites' heritage status is the *compatibility* of the sites with the historical identity and present needs of the current city.

Indeed, built heritage making is a process through which built environment features, such as buildings, structures, streets, and areas, acquire the status of 'heritage' which aims at 'the contemporary use of the past' (Graham *et al.*, 2000, p. 2). To any contemporary city, what really matters is whether a certain past, being a historic layer of the city and presented by the city's relevant built environment, *can* be used in the present. That is to say, whether the past can somehow be (re)interpreted to comply with the current goal of the city and facilitate its present urban maintenance and development. In this sense, for any given site with obvious historical connections, there is no doubt that the key to acquiring and keeping a heritage status is compatibility.

* * * * *

Chapter 5 offers a discussion on some noteworthy and important issues that have been raised in the previous chapters. Based on the heritage study of Harbin, the chapter comes back to the theoretical conception of heritage per se and particularly reflects on the notion of authenticity. With an introduction to the concept of historic urban landscape, this chapter suggests a more dynamic perspective on urban (colonial) heritage. It is argued that the heritage movement in the China of today is fundamentally about using the past to achieve present goals by selectively assigning the heritage status to sites that are connected to a certain past or depriving such sites of the heritage status. It is compatibility that determines whether a site with obvious historical connections can acquire and keep its heritage status. In the next chapter, a conclusion is made for the thesis, and, on this basis, directions for future research are identified.

6

CONCLUSION

Heritage as a part of development

The thesis and its aim are premised on the perceived need to understand the colonial effects on post-colonial Harbin with a comprehensive investigation into the city's heritage-making processes, and to reflect on the conception of heritage per se. Real-world cities are complex and dynamic systems that have been developing in certain contexts. They are also contexts themselves, where urban processes that evolve a huge number of political, cultural, economic, and social variables occur and interact with each other. In this circumstance, the research strategy of case study is used to approach this project, so that the diversity and complexity of Harbin's colonial heritage making, remaking, and unmaking can be examined on a case-by-case basis. This research strategy informs the avoidance of over generalising any specific colonial heritage phenomenon in the field. Because of the case study strategy and the variety of actual approaches and attitudes to the colonial pasts and heritages in Harbin, the analysis of this research has been done under several themes, with relevant literature reviewed for each theme separately.

In general, the most important theoretical question that informs this research is: What is heritage? In the past decades, this question has been addressed variously by people from different professions, from architectural professionals to critical heritage scholars. Notably,

some commentators insist that heritage must be tangible things and emphasise that even the so-called ‘intangible heritage’ always has tangible carriers, while some others state that ‘all heritage is intangible’ (Smith, 2006, p. 3). These contrasting views have resulted in the current heritage debate, which features a dichotomy between ‘heritage as an object’ and ‘heritage as a process’ or, in other words, a dichotomy between ‘heritage as a noun’ and ‘heritage as a verb’. Although such dichotomies make the question on the definition of heritage look like a multiple choice out of two, it is important that we jump out of this existing framework to look at the problem from a different viewpoint. Indeed, even if we follow the suggestion of some critical heritage scholars and try to define ‘heritage’ from the perspective of linguistics, the word ‘heritage’ does not have to be a noun or a verb. With a discussion on the rhetoric in the public language today, which especially focuses on the use and abuse of abstract nouns, this thesis suggests that the word ‘heritage’ is an adjective or an abstract noun formed from an adjective. As an adjective, ‘heritage’ can be used to describe a thing (e.g., heritage building, heritage ritual); as a noun, ‘heritage’ describes the status of being heritage, like ‘sustainability’ describes the status of being sustainable and ‘excellence’ describes the status of being excellent. Along this line, ‘heritage making’ is defined as the process of assigning the heritage status to a thing.

This alternative conception of heritage confirms some claims from both existing conceptions. On the one hand, any adjective or abstract noun is, as claimed by some critical heritage scholars in the heritage debates, ‘inherently intangible’. On the other hand, because debating over the meaning of an adjective or an abstract noun regardless of concrete situations is useless, the concept of ‘heritage’ can only be understood when it is situated in a specific context. The status of heritage must be attached to something in order to be meaningful. In this sense, heritage cannot be defined independently from things. These thoughts lead this heritage study of Harbin to confine its research subject to the built heritage in the urban context, which includes, for example, heritage buildings, heritage structures, heritage streets, and heritage areas.

Pasts, Heritages, Attitudes, and Approaches: The impact of Russian and Japanese colonial factors

The young modern city of Harbin has experienced one third of its history under colonial rule, either by the Russians or by the Japanese. The colonial factors thus have a strong influence on the city, in both physical and spiritual terms. Like the other post-colonial cities in China, the foreign-style buildings and urban fabrics from the colonial periods are the most conspicuous in Harbin, which can easily be recognised by anyone walking around the city. Precisely because of this conspicuousness of the colonial-era built environment, relevant sites are often targeted when people decide to deal with the colonial pasts in one way or another.

For decades after the founding of the PRC, all colonial remains are treated as symbols of foreign domination and national humiliation without distinction. As a result, colonial-era buildings in Harbin were massively demolished to decolonise the city, in which process the finest ones were mostly lost. Along with those demolished buildings, the collective memory of the colonial pasts was also lost (Chapter 1). The situation changed significantly only in the 1990s, as the long-established industrial hub of Harbin took a heavy hit from the nationwide movement to privatise state-owned enterprises. The rapid deindustrialisation and severe impoverishment forced the city to reconstruct its identity and map out a way to address redevelopment and revitalisation. It is in this context that Harbin turned to the tourism industry and also a heritage (re)making based on the city's Russian colonial past. The colonial heritage issue in Harbin has been divided into two parts de facto and considered separately ever since. One part is the Russian colonial heritage; the other is the Japanese colonial heritage.

While the Russian colonial heritage has since then been reinterpreted mainly from a positive cultural and economic perspective, the Japanese colonial heritage remains negative as a political symbol of national humiliation. In the Harbin of today, both the authorities and the

people have opposing attitudes towards the city's Russian and Japanese colonial pasts. While the current attitudes may have been influenced by the different approaches to Russian and Japanese colonial heritages since the late 1990s, they do have historical reasons. The historical and current factors have jointly led to an autocatalytic evolution of Harbin's colonial memories. During this process, the official and popular attitudes have typically reinforced each other. The result is that the collective memories of the two colonial pasts are gradually polarised (Chapter 3).

Nowadays, the Russian colonial past of Harbin is promoted mainly for city branding and tourism marketing. Relevant heritage making has been pervasive: a large number of Russian-era buildings and precincts have been refurbished, a few demolished Russian-era landmarks reconstructed, and many newly built buildings and structures designed to have European features. Although such heritage making seems to convey a sense of nostalgia for the Russian colonial past, the link between the Russian colonial heritage and its corresponding past has in effect been gradually weakened throughout the decades. Harbin has stripped the narratives of its Russian colonial past off its Western-style built heritage and merely uses the latter as a symbol of modernity, prosperity, and internationalism. Sticking to this core, Harbin's interpretation of its Russian colonial heritage has nevertheless been evolving in recent years, from the long-standing 'European-style heritage' to the most recent 'industrial heritage' and 'revolutionary heritage'. These changes reflect how Chinese people's views on the world and on themselves have been changing as China is developing rapidly (Chapter 2).

In contrast, the current presentation and interpretation of Harbin's Japanese colonial past is to a large extent an inheritance from the decolonisation period, with the Chinese central government's national humiliation discourse being adopted. The Japanese colonial heritage in Harbin is viewed as negative/difficult heritage and presented as evidence of Chinese victimhood. Interpreting the Japanese-era remains as witnesses to the Chinese people's

suffering during the Japanese colonial period, the heritage making of Japanese colonial heritage reversely reinforces the Chinese identity of Harbin and thus facilitates patriotic education. Indeed, constructing a Chinese identity has been important for Harbin, since the city was founded by the Russians and long ruled by foreigners. To achieve this identity construction, the vast majority of Japanese-era buildings, which are in Western eclectic or modernist styles and look benign, have been downplayed and marginalised, while heritage sites relating to Unit 731, which represent Japan's outrageous war crimes, are especially highlighted. Like in the case of Russian colonial heritage making, the interpretation of Harbin's Japanese colonial heritage also evolves. Internationalist discourses on peace and 'never again' have been adopted in certain situations in recent years, but this nuance of interpretation does not really alter the nationalist substance of Harbin's Japanese colonial heritage making but rather reinforces it from another angle (Chapter 3).

Although the local attitudes and approaches to the Russian and the Japanese colonial heritages in Harbin look diametrically opposed, they nevertheless have something in common. Firstly, the colonial heritage making associated with these two different colonial pasts are both not only about memory but also about amnesia. Both colonial pasts have been selectively presented in the form of heritage. Harbin tends to show the bright side of its Russian colonial past but to reveal the dark side of its Japanese colonial past. A consequence of such selective presentation of colonial pasts is that Harbin's theoretically comprehensive and solid history is gradually fragmented. Secondly, both the Russian and the Japanese colonial heritage makings in Harbin primarily serve the future. The opposing approaches in effect share a common goal, which is to construct a progressive, prosperous, and internationally influential Chinese city (Chapter 5).

The Extent of Colonial Heritage Influence: The competition and interaction between social factors

It is evident that Harbin has been consciously making colonial heritages that are associated with its Russian and Japanese colonial pasts, in order to achieve a common identity construction goal and meet the city's present economic and political needs. However, we cannot regard such heritage making as an independent process, since it is transcribed by the complex and dynamic city and has to compete and interact with other urban processes. Heritage is, after all, only one of the large number of social factors that exist in a city. In Harbin, there are not only successful colonial-heritage-making projects that showcase how the city's colonial pasts can be well used in the present, but also projects trapped by competing demands and desires, which remind us that heritage is a means rather than an end, and that heritage making as a tool has only limited power.

In the field, urban projects always aim at a 'better' city, and colonial heritage projects are no exception. This 'better' can be defined from different angles, thus there are various ways of achieving the goal – colonial heritage making is only one of them. There can be other competitive options. To achieve the envisioned future of a city, the attractive 'colonial heritage solution' is not always the most effective choice. In such cases, the (colonial) heritage issue is often downplayed and marginalised to make way for other initiatives such as infrastructure construction and urban renewal. In situations where the (colonial) heritage issue can neither be avoided nor understated for some reason, the interaction between the social factor of (colonial) heritage and other social factors in the city will to a large extent shape the outcome of relevant heritage making. The final result is, therefore, unpredictable. Stakeholders play critical roles in such processes. As is evident in the study of Harbin, even if stakeholders unanimously agree upon the heritage significance of a site that is associated with the colonial era and wish to acknowledge it, their conflicting interests may still lead the project to a not-so-positive result.

Stakeholders tend to act out of (reasonable) self-interest by introducing other social factors and processes, which certainly interfere with the heritage making and management tasks.

These findings offer a twofold understanding of the contemporary heritage making of Harbin. Firstly, the colonial factors, along with the identities and perspectives conveyed by them, are influential but not unilaterally decisive in the city's heritage-related decision-making. Harbin's colonial heritage issue must be understood in the complex and dynamic urban context, with the impact of other social factors taken into consideration. Secondly, the ultimate goal of any consciously planned urban process is always to build a better city; heritage is a means, not an end. Colonial heritage making is, in this sense, a component part of contemporary urban maintenance and development. Precisely speaking, this 'heritage making' includes not only the *making* but also the *remaking* and *unmaking* of heritage. The status of heritage can be overtly or covertly awarded to or taken from a site to meet the present urban needs (Chapter 4).

Reflections on the Notion of Heritage and Beyond

The study of Harbin is considerably significant for three reasons. Firstly, the confluence and influence of colonial factors in the heritage making of this post-colonial city is interesting in itself. While Harbin's Russian and Japanese colonial pasts are nowadays presented and interpreted opposingly, the corresponding Russian and Japanese colonial heritages surprisingly collaborate with each other for the city's future. Secondly, as regards its colonial heritage phenomena, Harbin is representative of Chinese cities. Harbin's Russian colonial heritage making that features Europeanisation illustrates how post-colonial cities in China have made their colonial heritages that are associated with Western colonisers in the past two decades; its Japanese colonial heritage making reflects the typical approaches to Japan-related past and heritage in China. In addition, Harbin's recent reinterpretations of both the Russian and the Japanese colonial heritages are a clear manifestation of the rapidly changing Chinese views of

China and the world. Understanding the colonial heritage phenomena in Harbin greatly helps to understand the heritage phenomena and even the general social phenomena in China more broadly. Thirdly, a comprehensive and thorough investigation into the heritage issue of Harbin contributes to the knowledge of heritage per se.

It is noteworthy that, in Harbin, the issue of authenticity has been frequently raised to justify or rebut a certain heritage-making decision. Indeed, 'authenticity' and other concepts such as 'value' are conventionally understood to be at the core of the heritage conception. Nevertheless, considering the various materialist and constructivist conceptions of both authenticity and heritage, I argue that it is almost impossible to establish a stable relationship between the concepts of authenticity and heritage in a meaningful way. In the present day, authenticity as discourse is mainly used to facilitate heritage negotiations among stakeholders. Although concepts such as 'value' and 'authenticity' are often used in heritage debates, it is evident from the real-world heritage practice that these are hardly the fundamental reasons that a certain heritage is made or kept. Counter-intuitive it may be, for any site that has obvious historical associations, the key to acquiring and keeping a heritage status is the site's compatibility with its current context. To those sites in urban areas, this context is the city.

The concept of historic urban landscape, which was first brought up in 2005, freshly offered a dynamic and integrated perspective on urban heritage. It acknowledges the historical layering of cities and focuses on the roles and effects of urban heritage in this dynamic process. Based on the notion of historic urban landscape, it is argued in this thesis that the colonial heritage sites in Harbin, and the heritage sites in urban China more broadly, have two main roles in the layering cities. The first is to represent a historic layer that is associated with a certain past of the city, though this past is not necessarily the one in which that specific heritage site was built. The second is to facilitate the currently ongoing layering process, that is to help with the present maintenance and development of the city. Heritage, in fact, belongs much more

to the present than to the past. Although questions like ‘How to make a balance between heritage and development?’ have been frequently posed in scholarly discussions and writings about heritage throughout the years, it is my contention that such questions are not valid in the first place, because heritage is a part, rather than a counterpart, of development.

Harrison (2009, n.p.) pointed out that heritage is always defined and understood ‘in the light of the present as we look to the past to imagine our future’. The phrase ‘in the light of the present’ indeed offers an apt metaphor in this context. The *present* is precisely like a single street light on the side of a dark road that links the past and the future. The street light shines on objects that are moving forward along the road, which cast shadows on that road. If the object is *development* that is moving towards the future, *heritage* is exactly this shadow. Depending on the position of the object relative to the street light, sometimes the shadow is in front of the object, and sometimes it is behind the object. Similarly, heritage projects can lead development, but can also lag behind or even interfere with development. Nevertheless, like the shadow always follows the object and cannot be separated from it, decisions about heritage are always largely in line with the overall development goal. Development is multifaceted, which aims to satisfy the various present demands and desires in economic, social, and political terms. The making, remaking, and unmaking of heritage will never run in the opposite direction from this broadly defined ‘development’ – heritage does not only serve the narrowly defined ‘culture’ or ‘politics’. The view that ‘*heritage* is a shadow of *development* as the latter is moving on the road towards the *future* in the light of the *present*’ provides a fresh perspective on the conception of heritage. It fundamentally eliminates the dilemma of ‘heritage versus development’ and, in turn, suggests even more dynamic and integrated approaches to heritage in the always-on-the-move contemporary world.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

This study has offered a comprehensive understanding of Harbin's contemporary heritage issues that are associated with the city's Russian and Japanese colonial pasts, and has considered the various perceptions and opinions of local people, professionals, and officials. Pursuing my PhD in the era of coronavirus, I am lucky enough to be able to conduct my study of a Chinese city completely remotely in Australia: the well-developed information technology allowed me to virtually visit the city at any time using the street view service of digital maps and to interview people remotely via video calls or phone calls; my long-established personal and professional networks helped me to secure the necessary number and variety of interviewees for each interviewee group. However, the study still has limitations which cannot be ignored, especially due to the lack of on-site fieldwork.

Firstly, the research was designed based on my general understanding of Harbin and its heritage issues, which was developed during my early life in Harbin and my subsequent visits to the city. Although the interviewees frequently provided new information about the city's most recent urban development and heritage projects during the interviews, there may still be some newest and/or more nuanced heritage phenomena which, perchance, I did not notice. Despite the availability of virtual tours, visiting the sites physically is still the best and most efficient way to know a city, capture its details, and find something interesting and/or questionable about it. Secondly, although I managed to find enough interviewees with adequate diversity to complete this research, it is a pity that I was not able to interview some interesting people who are enthusiastic about built heritage and/or work in relevant government departments. This was not due to a technical problem, but rather because of the failure to achieve their trust. Indeed, it is very difficult for a Chinese researcher in Australia, like me, to establish a close rapport with complete strangers back in China, especially given the political tensions between Australia and China in the past few years. Some potential interviewees that I

have approached explicitly said that a Zoom or telephonic interview is unacceptable but they would be happy to be interviewed face to face when I am in Harbin. To understand the heritage issues of Harbin more deeply on the basis of this study, I believe it is still necessary to do on-site fieldwork in the near future.

As regards directions for future research, the following considerations may be of interest. In terms of Harbin's Russian colonial heritage, the relationship between heritage making and tourism can be further investigated. Cases of the 'CER heritage' can be examined in detail, especially from the perspectives of the recent heritage reinterpretations that focus on industrial heritage and revolutionary heritage. In terms of the city's Japanese colonial heritage, a comparative study of the former Manchukuo cities can be conducted for a more comprehensive understanding of the legacies and influence of the Manchukuo era in Northeast China. The case study of the Chinese Baroque area in Harbin can be deepened by collecting and analysing more interview data from the various stakeholders. Furthermore, given that Harbin was once a cosmopolitan city and an important industrial hub, and has experienced both decolonisation and deindustrialisation, a study that concerns both colonial heritage and industrial heritage, which focuses especially on the relationship and interactions between the two, may achieve inspiring results.

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