

Abandoned Urban Heritage: Silent Still or Vocal Anew

An Investigation on Taiyanggou Block and Lüshun Industrial School
Site (Dalian, China)

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Abstract: It is a common understanding to protect the urban heritage all over the world. In fact, some of them are preserved well but others are undergoing the decline and become deserted, even if on the legal protection list. What is the fate of these ‘abandoned’ urban heritage in the future: silent still or vocal anew? Taking Lüshun Industrial School Site (China) as a case study, this paper aims to arouse more attention to the conservation of inconspicuous historical buildings and blocks. Firstly, it introduces the formation and transformation of Taiyanggou area in Lüshun. Then it analyses the survey findings, causes of the ‘abandoned’, and opportunities of the revitalization. Finally, it indicates the significance of analysis on urban context as well as the localized policy in the conservation of urban relics.

Keywords: Heritage Conservation, Urban History, Abandoned, Military Property, Localized Policy

Introduction

The historical building and environment, which accumulated a massive value of the past during the urban evolution, become treasured assets and play a role of increasing importance in contemporary city. To conserve the historical building and site in urban construction is widely accepted in Europe and has become a basic restriction on social morals and laws. In China, historical building conservation has gradually received much attention through the rethinkings on rapid construction

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in last decades, due to the in-depth awareness of irreplaceable historical and cultural values of urban heritage. Still a number of historical buildings and sites cannot get enough attention and are undergoing the decline in the rapid change of urban environments, even if on the legal protection list. The current situation and future destiny of these 'abandoned' urban heritages are worthy of attention and consideration.

Dalian Lüshun Industrial School Site (旅顺实业学校旧址) located in Taiyanggou Block (太阳沟街区) in Lüshun Kou¹, Dalian. Through the replacement of the authorities, the site experienced the rise and fall and became vacant from 2014. It is slowly drifting into dilapidation even listed in the municipal protection list, which means the conservation and revitalization of this site need to be taken seriously. This paper will interpret the transformation of Taiyanggou Block and the findings of Lüshun Industrial School Site investigation, and analyze the causes of its decline and the political actions of conservation and revitalization.

Historical Evolution of Taiyanggou Block in Lüshun

Lüshun has a particular historical setting of urban identity, which had a deep impact on the urban architecture. In 1880, the Ching (清朝) government founded Northern Navy (北洋水师) here and established the city as a naval port due to its important geographical location. For the same reason, Tsarist Russia targeted Lüshun for its Far East project. In addition, Japan made it a priority to carry out its colonial expansion in China. During the leased period of Tsarist Russia (1897-1904) and Japanese Empire (1905-1945), colonial governments constructed the city and left a number of buildings and structures in their native architectural languages. These historical remains with a rich diversity of types and styles are basically preserved well thanks to the few commercial exploitation by virtue of the following militarization domination. In addition, these urban relics constitute the townscape of modern Lüshun.

Lüshun is on the southernmost tip of Liaodong Peninsular (辽东半岛) surrounded by sea on three sides. There was only a coastal defense post in territory in Ming Dynasty (明朝) and emerged a certain size of fishing settlements by Ching Dynasty. In the late nineteenth century, urban settlement in Lüshun mainly centered on a flat off the east

bank of Loong River (龙河) and embraced by Mount Baiyu (白玉山) and Mount Huangjin (黄金山). On the other side of the river, scattered villages straggled along the coast of West Port (西湾) down the south of Mount Anzi (案子山) (Fig.1). In 1897, Tsarist Russia moved into Lüshun and began to build it as a military port. The main constructions at that time still gathered around the traditional settlements on the east side of Loong River, only a few of barracks and defense facilities were erected on the barren coast.

In 1901, the Russia Pacific Fleet Commander Yevgeni Ivanovich Alekseyev, also the Governor-General of Kwantung² (关东州) planned to develop Port Arthur (Old name of Lüshun) fully, including to build a new town on the land of West Port coast. After the approval of 'Port Arthur New City Planning' (*ПЛАНЪ, Новой части города, Портъ-Артура* in Russian) given by the Tsar Nicholas II, the construction of new city started immediately but came to a halt due to the outbreak of Russo-Japanese War³. Tsarist Russia lost the war and withdrew from Lüshun. Japanese Empire occupied it afterward and continued to build the new town mostly according to the Russian planning. The Japanese placed some important military and political departments in and named the new town *New City* (新市街 in Japanese). Correspondingly, the urban area on the east side of Loong River was called *Old City* (旧市街 in Japanese). At this point, the urban pattern of modern Lüshun took shape (Fig.2).

The scope of *New City*, which Tsarist Russia established on the coast of West Port at that time, now is called Taiyanggou, the name of which it is hard to verify the origin⁴. 'Port Arthur New City Planning' of one hundred years ago determined the initial form of this area. It was a carefully crafted design under comprehensive considerations for topography, hydrography and the political demands instead of a simple partition of land.

2. Lüshun Kou (旅顺口), is the official name of the district, which is normally called Lüshun (旅顺) for short, under the jurisdiction of Dalian City (大连市).

3. Kwantung (*Квантунская область* in Russian; 関東州/かんとうしゅう in Japanese), is a leased territory on the southern tip of Liaodong Peninsular in Northeast China from 1898 to 1945, including the two important military and economic port Lüshun Kou (Port Arthur/*Порт Артур* in Russian) and Dalian (Port Dalny/*Дальний* in Russian) which were successively leased to Tsarist Russia and Japan Empire.

4. Russo-Japanese War refers to the war broke out between Tsarist Russia and Japanese Empire in 1904 and 1905, fighting for the control of Liaodong Peninsular (China) and Korea Peninsular. Lüshun Kou was the main battlefield for the significant geographical location. The war ended up with the fall of Russia.

In response to the orientation of the coast, the planning laid a fundamental grid with a westward rotation of 21 degrees and elected a controlling space axis pointing to the Mount Anzi in the north and West Port in the south. Some nodes of the grid were widened in the shape of circle and square in different dimensions to create open spaces. Meanwhile, certain connecting streets were made between these open nodes, shaping the urban form as a radial-centering structure. The layout appeared as a symmetrical pattern in the center while a gridiron with due north-south direction in the west in adaption to the changing terrain. Flexible roads divided the blocks in the north to be in harmony with the landform of back mountains. The planning also retained two major channels down the mountains and turned them into waterscapes passing through the city. A large rectangular plaza surrounded by office, court, post office, government, bank and other public buildings, was set at the axis in the core of this area. Cultural and entertainment facilities such as hotel, city parks and theatre were set in the coastal areas as well as some high-level residential blocks for sale. Other level residential blocks were set on the west and north side. On the east and southwest side, the blocks would be for military installations (Fig.3).

The construction of new city stopped soon after the war broke out without full implementation. During the following colonial domination, the Japanese inherited the initial planning from Tsarist Russia and continued the unfinished project. To achieve their political ambitions, they constructed *New City* elaborately with regards as their domestic cities. A new city gradually formed (Fig.4). Today Taiyanggou Block has 5 square kilometers with 2.7 square kilometers in the core and maintains the historical form integrally, along with plenty of historical buildings and sites of that era (Fig.5-6).

Investigation of Lüshun Industrial School Site

Lüshun Industrial School Site located at the central axis in Taiyanggou, covers an area of 1.4 hectares. The schoolyard covers about 9400 square meters. The total area of school building counting one layer is approximately 1720 square meters. The main building sits in the center and parts the yard into two from front to back. There is an oval pavement in the center of the wider front yard with crowded trees

around. The main entrance is placed in the middle of the front fence and on the central axis line (see Fig.7). The school building presents a rotated 'E' type on the plane of symmetry with a low-pitched roof and a classical style façade. The lower part is made of ashlars while the uppers is of bricks in red with mortar fillings and cornice line decorations in greyish white. On the top is the metal roofing and wooden truss (Fig.8-10).

Lüshun Industrial School was built up in accordance with 'Port Arthur New City Planning' and was completed in the first set of constructions before the Russo-Japanese War. Although it has experienced many changes, the main structure, interior space and decorative details kept up to now remain intact.

In the past one hundred years, the building usage has changed several times under the influence of urban revolutions, which could be divided into three stages: (1) In colonial era. In 1903, Kuantung Government of Tsarist Russia erected this building for a vocational school (*Реальное училище* in Russian) sponsored by national finance, schooling 5 years, setting up commerce, reserve and supplement sections to educate the middle and lower level colonial management employees (see Fig.11). In 1905, Japanese troops changed it to the chamber of commissioned officer, a subsidiary venue of Kuantung Army Command after they fully occupied Port Arthur⁵. (2) In military use era. In 1945, Soviet Army stationed Lüshun after World War II and used it as Soviet trophy gallery. In 1955, the People's Liberation Army took over Lüshun and made it a military museum, which is the predecessor of the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution founded in Peking (北京) in 1958. In 1966, the military club directly under the political department of Lü-Da⁶ Garrison took in charge of it. (3) In commercial rent era. In 1977, Lüshun Military Museum closed after all the collections were sent to the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution. Then the Lüshun Office of Dalian Real Estate Administration in Shenyang MAC (沈阳军区) took over the regulation and lend it for business. In 2008, Xiangyang LIU took it to exhibit his private collections of old cars and motorcycles and named it Dalian Old Cars Museum (大连老

5. WEI, 2016. p. A6.

6. SUN, 2012. p. A14

式汽车博物馆). For the personal reasons, the museum closed in 2014 and left unused until now.

Survey Findings

Lüshun Industrial School Site was listed in the fifth group of municipal cultural relics protection units on behalf of “*Important Historical Site and Typical Building in Modern Times*” in 2003 and the second group of Key Protected Architecture of Dalian in 2004. Despite having been put into legal protection list, it received few effective protections and reuse in the commercial rent during the last decade, especially before 2008. «In chaotic managements, it was used as clothing factory, school building, restaurant, jade gallery, etc. Many lessees damaged the appearance and interiors for the purposes of their own just like to kill the goose that lays the golden egg»⁷. In 2008, Xiangyang LIU rented the site and invested in building maintenance and environment renovation at the start, which improved the conditions to a certain extent. However, near the end the situation was far from expectation as the moldy walls inside and squatters outside.

The site is vacant after the closure of old cars museum. The survey conducted on July 2015 gives some findings. The gap in the west side of the enclosure made the lock on the front gate of the yard useless, thus one could easily step inside the yard. The food wastes and traces of picnic found in the grass assured the unattended situation. There is an additional structure in the back yard, apparently illegal. The door of the main building was locked but one could get access through a broken window on the east side. In the main building, a wall placed on the west edge of the lobby divided the whole interior into two; the east part was the closed museum for old cars, the west part was rented to the others, which was closed and abandoned either. The improper partitions and deteriorative coatings indicated the destruction of authenticity and integrity inside the building. The yard was thickly forested mainly with Dragon Juniper⁸ (龙柏). In front of the east wing among the Dragon

7. Lü-Da (旅大), is the short of ‘Lüshun and Dalian’. Due to the historical reasons, there has always been a close association between these two cities. In 1951, Lüshun and Dalian united together called Lü-Da City. In 1981, it was rebranded as Dalian City with the identification of Lüshun as a district under Dalian’s jurisdiction.

8. CHE, 2010. p. A7.

Junipers and locusts⁹ (刺槐), there was a seven-pointed maple¹⁰ (七角枫) which was rare in Dalian area, growing nicely, over 100 years old by inference. The survey also found some newer tiles and wrappings of pesticide left in the grass, showing that the site might not be abandoned completely and certain person might come to maintain it probably. Anyway, such measures of maintenance could not stop the declining and vandalism.

Problem Analysis

The ownership and obligation of historical building are often complicated owing to the multiple changes of the managements and utilizations. For the urban history of Lüshun, many blocks belong to the military. 40% of the blocks in Taiyanggou are military properties. Since the foundation of New China, Lüshun Industrial School Site has always been a possession taken by the military. For lack of effectively integrated system suitable for military and local authorities, Lüshun Industrial School Site is no different to the other historical relics under two management systems in vague identity of whom to be in charge of the conservation. Due to the disjointed relationship between local authority, property owner and lessee, it is hard to ensure the accountabilities for the damage such as the illegal partition and occupancy, feckless maintenance and renovation.

There are about 800 historical buildings built in the Russian and Japanese colonial era left in Taiyanggou now, contributing to the particular cityscape and humanistic values. It is a scientific localized question that how to reuse and bloom them rationally based on the preservation. Before abandoned, Lüshun Industrial School Site was turned into a museum, which took advantage of its inner space. But as to the exhibition of old cars and cultural promotion of automobile, the selected function of the reuse seems not fit the urban demand of Taiyanggou, even Lüshun City.

Despite a military port, Lüshun still is a tourist city with a great wealth of tourist resources, notably the historic and cultural landscape on behalf of modern historical relics. In Taiyanggou, there are so many

9. In Latin: *Sabina chinensis* (L.) Ant. cv. Kaizuca

10. In Latin: *Robinia pseudoacacia* Linn

popular tourist spots formed by historical building and site, for instance, Lüshun Museum¹¹, Kwantung Army Command Site Museum¹², and Sino-Soviet Friendship Tower¹³. With the transformation of being an old cars museum, Lüshun Industrial School Site joined the team of tourist spots. To the contrast of the others, it won few popularities. One of the main reasons is that there is no association between automobile culture and urban historical humanity, thus the local community does not identify the museum as one part of their lives, as well as the recognitions of tourists. From the tourism industrial planning point of view, the reuse strategy of the site neglected the foundation of urban culture and consumer psychology of tourists. From the urban development-planning point of view, the strategy is incomplete in the thinking of integrated conservation of the area and the possibility of public participation.

Opportunity of Improvement

Taiyanggou is the concentration of history and culture of Lüshun with a great significance in conservation and sustainable development. Recently, local government has always been exploiting an effective mode of protection and utilization. In December 2014, Taiyanggou was approved to be provincial experimental park of cultural industry. In April 2015, Dalian Taiyanggou Cultural Industrial Development Co., Ltd. was founded. Besides, Taiyanggou Cultural Industrial Park Management Committee was set in the same year to take the whole house properties in Lüshun under the jurisdiction of Dalian Real Estate Administration in Shenyang MAC. This created a new model of the management of military property to deal with the issue of specified responsibility for the historical relics of being under two management systems¹⁴.

11. In Latin: *Nothopanax rosthornii* Harms

12. Lüshun Museum was established in 1915 and called Man-Mongolian Property Gallery of Kuantung Capitania (关东都督府蒙满物产馆). The main building was completed in 1918 and the name was changed to Kuantung Capitania Museum (关东都督府博物馆). In 1934, it was renamed as Lüshun Museum. In 2006, it was rated as *Important Heritage Site under State Protection*.

13. The main building of Kuantung Army Command Site Museum was erected in 1903 as the artillery department of Russian Kuantung Army (沙俄关东州陆军炮兵部). It was turned into Kuantung Capitania Ministry of Army (关东军都督府陆军部) in 1906 and Kuantung Army Command (关东军司令部) in 1919 by Japanese colonial government. In 2013, it was rated as *Important Heritage Site under State Protection*.

14. Sino-Soviet Friendship Tower (中苏友谊塔), was topped off in 1957 in memory of

At the beginning of 2016, the historical protection and development of cultural industry in Taiyanggou was written again to the government work report of both Lüshun District and Dalian City as a key project of urban construction and economic growth. Five principles as “Government leading, Overall planning, Protection first, Benefit sharing, Coordinated benefit of culture industry and society” and three developing directions as “Film and media, Cultural exposition, and Characteristic commerce”, were established in Taiyanggou development planning¹⁵. The formulation of integrated conservation strategy for Taiyanggou historical district provide the protection and reuse of the buildings inside with an essential foundation for a reasonable direction.

The rising public awareness of heritage conservation also is very useful to protect and reuse historical building. In May 2016, the governor mailbox received a letter from the public concerning a suggestion on rebuilding Lüshun military museum. He suggested returning Lüshun Industrial School Site back to military museum as it was in the fifties of twentieth century with a social significance elaboration and a preliminary feasibility analysis¹⁶. Although it was refused for the unprofessional, in the long term, good conversation and mechanism of public involvement could avoid an incomplete one-sided decision in historical protection and utilization.

Conclusion

Historical building and site are precious unreproducible urban relics. There is no excuse to let them decline. Furthermore, no excuse to add new destroy caused by improper usage. Compared to the other famous historical buildings in Taiyanggou, it seems to be easy to ignore Lüshun Industrial School Site for its small size, lower protection level, and minor historical influence. Nevertheless, none of them could be the excuses for the desertion in reality, and that is why it is chosen as a case study.

The investigation of Lüshun Industrial School Site found some problems of protection and utilization. Through the case study, the

the friendship between Soviet Russia and China, 22.2 meters high. In 1961, it was rated as *Important Heritage Site under State Protection*.

15. YI, 2016.

16. YU, ZOU, 2016. p. A3.

understanding of urban heritage conservation gains an enhancement. Firstly, the evolution and transformation of historical building and site cannot be separated from the urban and historical context that they deeply rooted, thus the conservation study should start from a wider range of backgrounds. Secondly, the basis of protection and reuse strategy making for historical buildings is the objectively historical analysis and evaluation, as well as the comprehensive and integrated social considerations, which could ensure the scientificity and longevity to apply. Finally, urban heritage conservation demands not only the guidance, support and promotion of local policies, but also the involvement and collaboration of multiple social parties, with their duties fulfilled to set up a mechanism functioning well.

Lüshun Industrial School Site hold an important position in the new city planning when Tsarist Russia took Port Arthur and became one of the first built-up constructions. Nevertheless, the fate is unfortunate for the abandonment and decline one hundred years later. When the historical protection and sustainable development of Taiyanggou Block attract more and more attention in the moment, it will doubtlessly be silent anymore but vocal anew in the future. Yet it is lucky. Besides Lüshun Industrial School Site, there are still a great deal of inconspicuous historical relics undergoing declining in the fast changing urban environment now. The future destiny of this abandoned without attention they deserve is worthy of a deep consideration.

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Fig.1. Map of Port Arthur of 1896 by Tokyo Hydrographic Office
(<http://radikal.ru>)

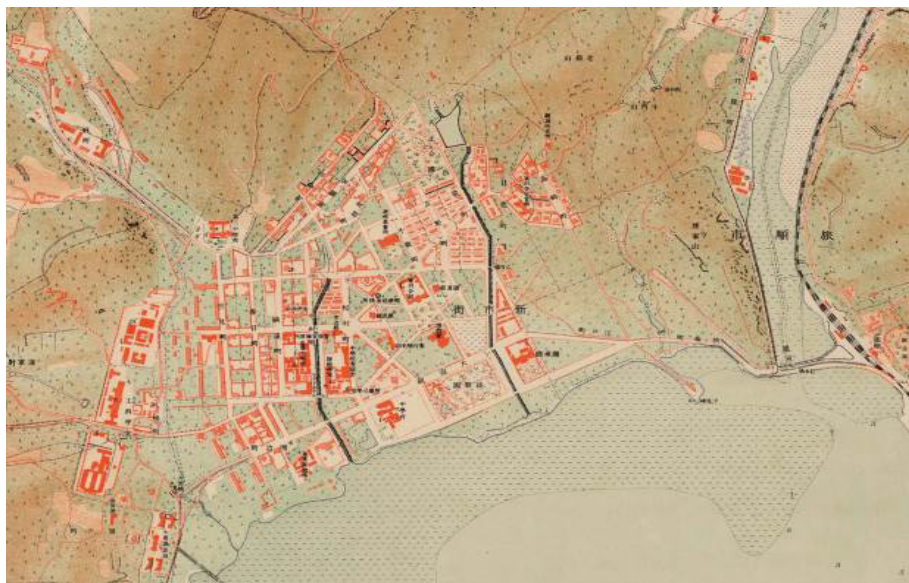


Fig.4. Map of New City (Taiyanggou Block today) of 1918
(<http://gallica.bnf.fr>)



Fig.5. Map of Taiyanggou, Lüshun of 1975
(<http://radikal.ru>)



Fig.6. Aerial map of Taiyanggou, Lüshun of 2016
(<http://www.google.it>)



Fig.7. Location map of Lüshun Industrial School Site (Left: Location on the northern tip of urban axis;
Right: Aerial map of the site)
(<http://www.google.it>)

Fig.8. Digital model of main building of the site (of surveying and mapping conducted on July 2015)
(School of Architecture and Fine Art, Dalian University of Technology)

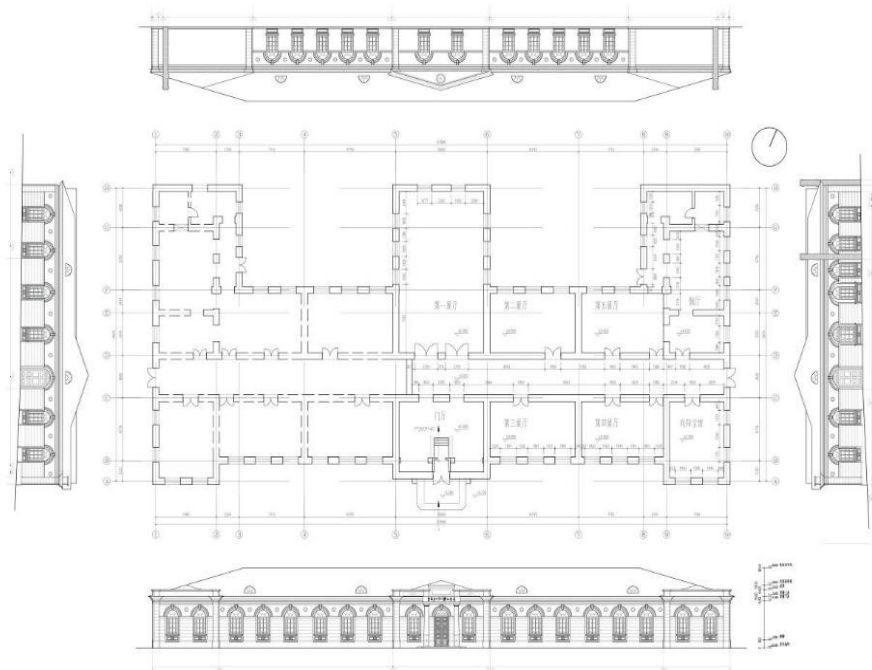


Fig.9. Drawings of main building of Lüshun Industrial School Site surveying and mapping (conducted on July 2015) (School of Architecture and Fine Art, Dalian University of Technology)



Fig.10. Pictures of main building of Lüshun Industrial School Site (Left: Main entrance; Middle: Concave section of northern facade; Right: Southeast corner) (Photo by Liang Lang on July 2015)



Fig.11. Picture of Tsarist Russia vocational school of 1903
(<http://port-artur.su/>)