

# CHINA AS THE HERITAGE OF DANISH ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: THE TRANSMISSION OF CHINESE ART AND ARCHITECTURE FROM THE SOCIO-CULTURAL VIEW OF JØRN UTZON'S DESIGN EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT:

The Sydney Opera House is one of the most important masterpieces in the 20th century. The lifetime obsession with Chinese art and architecture of its original designer, Danish architect Jørn Utzon (1918-2008), is well noted. However, why Utzon interested in China and how he perceived Chinese building culture were almost unheard and unknown in the previous studies. Moreover, what the precise role of China in Utzon's architectural career is and how China contributes the ideas and value of Utzon's design are still unsolved. Exploring the transmission of Chinese art and architecture from the view of Utzon's Danish design education reveals specific social and cultural patterns of Denmark which had a formative influence on design students, teachers and the institutions. This helps us to understand how Danish design education took place in Utzon's time and provides us a crucial way to access the resources, values and heritage of Denmark generally and of the Royal Academy in particular. This significantly presents the real "place" in Danish design education and another "tradition" of Denmark. This further questions the uncritical reference to Utzon as an iconic "Danish" hero simply.

**Keywords: Jørn Utzon, transmission, China, Denmark, Chinese art and architecture, design education**

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2004 marks an important milestone in the career of Danish architect Jørn Utzon (1918-2008) when the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark launched the first retrospective exhibition of his lifetime work.<sup>1</sup> For this event, Utzon selected only two books as the summation of his architectural inspirations: one was the 1937-edition of *Billeder fra*

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<sup>1</sup> Utzon was fully involved with the preparation, after having repeatedly declined prior invitations. The information was from the interview with Utzon's oldest son – Jan Utzon – in the Sydney Opera House in 2008.

*Kina (Images of China)*<sup>2</sup> by Osvald Sirén 喜龍仁 (1879-1966); the other was the 1925-edition of an ancient Chinese technical treatise on architecture and craftsmanship first published in 1103 AD *Yingzao fashi* 營造法式<sup>3</sup> (Bech 2007). In a documentary film to commemorate the exhibition, Utzon alluded to the significance of *Billeder fra Kina* by presenting two lavishly-printed photographs of the Great Front Hall of the Ancestor Shrine 太廟 in Imperial Beijing from this book (Bech 2007). The roof/earthwork juxtaposition shown in these photographs directly recalls Utzon's now well-known sketch of "Chinese houses and temples"<sup>4</sup> in 1962 "Platforms and Plateaus: Ideas of a Danish architect" manifesto (Utzon 1962). As one of the keys indicating the architect's "inspiration and vision" for the Sydney Opera House (1956-66), Utzon explained his perception of Chinese architecture with his sketch (Utzon 2002):<sup>5</sup>

*Chinese houses and temples owe much of their feeling of firmness and security to the fact that they stand on a platform with the same outline as that of the roof or sometimes even of larger size, depending upon the importance of the building. There is magic in the play between roof and platform (Utzon 1962).*

In fact, this is not the first time Utzon presented Chinese architecture as one of his important inspirational sources. In his first architectural manifesto - "Tendenser i Nutidens Arkitektur (Tendencies in present-day architecture)" (1947) co-written with Tobias Faber (1915-2010), two young architects delivered their severe critique on the failures of contemporary Danish architecture. Their text was followed by twenty-eight images and added captions, which demonstrate a variety of architectural ideas. Interestingly, these images contained four illustrations of Chinese architecture, including the historical temple - Tsingyang Zhai 青陽寨 - in Taishan 泰山 (Mount Tai), the Lingxiao pagoda 凌霄塔 at Tianning Monastery 天寧寺, the city wall and gate tower of Yongding Gate 永定門 at Beijing and the vernacular building in Yunnan province. These four images significantly reflect young Faber and Utzon's appreciation of Chinese architecture through their varied readings.<sup>6</sup>

Served as the aesthetic confirmation for his architectural works, the ideas of Chinese architecture further appeared in Utzon's descriptions of his creations. In 1953, Utzon's statement for his own house at Hellebæk (1950-2) near Helsingør presented his embrace of Chinese-inspired dualism - a studied juxtaposition between stereotomic loadbearing yellow brick walls and tectonic timber roof frames painted black:

<sup>2</sup> Osvald Sirén, *Billeder fra Kina*, (Copenhagen, Gyldendal, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> For the origin, content and purposes of the *Yingzao Fashi*, see Jiren Feng, *Chinese architecture and metaphor*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press and Hong Kong University Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> This sketch was first published in Utzon's 1962 manifesto "Platforms and Plateaus: Ideas of a Danish Architect", en/in *Zodiac 10*, (1962), 116, to indicate his inspiration received from Chinese building culture.

<sup>5</sup> Later, in Utzon's *Sydney Opera House: Utzon design principles*, (Sydney: The Sydney Opera House Trust, 2002, 6), he republished the same sketch to present his "vision" for the Sydney Opera House.

<sup>6</sup> These image include the historical temple – Tsingyang Zhai 青陽寨 - in Taishan 泰山 (Mount Tai) from Ernst Boerschmann's *Picturesque China, Architecture and Landscape* (1925), the Lingxiao pagoda 凌霄塔 at Tianning Monastery 天寧寺 from Osvald Sirén's (1879-1966) *Billeder Fra Kina (Images of China)*, the city wall and gate towers of Yongding Gate 永定門 at Beijing from *Billeder*, and the vernacular building in Yunnan province from D'hélène Hoppenot's *Chine (China)* (1946). Today, these books are surviving in Jan Utzon's collection.

*In traditional Chinese architecture, the constructions are all visible; the elements have been divided up into male, bearing, and female, borne, and this system is also carried through in the treatment of colour (Weston 2002).*

In the same year, for his competition design for the Langelinie Pavilion at Copenhagen, Utzon described his rationale for proposing a "pagoda-like structure":

*[...] The tower construction chosen with the pagoda-like structure and the circular design with the means of communication at the centre provides rooms with pleasing shapes, is statically ideal with very short distances from the service rooms at the centre and – in contrast to a tower with bearer constructions in the facades – had facades with unbroken stretches of window (Weston 2002).*

Utzon's words directly recalled his looking at Chinese pagodas in *Chinesische Architektur* (1925) written by German architect and historian Ernst Boerschmann (1873–1949). Today, Utzon's two-volume book is surviving with his notes and sketches for the Langelinie project.<sup>7</sup>

While more evidences suggesting that the role of Chinese architecture in Utzon's early career as both the aesthetic inspiration and confirmation of his architectural works, the questions - why Utzon interested in China and how he perceived Chinese art and architecture – are not answered. To answers the above questions, the authors surveyed *The Utzon Archives* at Aalborg and the collection of Jan Utzon in Saunte, Denmark, and interviewed Jørn Utzon's family and close friends. The authors seek to clarify young Utzon's artistic debt to China, by closely examining his early perception of Chinese art and architecture. The article argues that young Utzon's affinity with China was intimately connected to his Danish socio-cultural background within a specific cross-cultural context. The scope of this article is to understand young Utzon's perception of China as a significant example of cross-cultural knowledge making, dissemination and transformation between China and Denmark. This article also contributes to the potentially rich historiography on the relationship between the maturity of Utzon's architectural artistry and his own growing understanding of Chinese culture.

Indeed, Utzon's receiving China represents a matrix of cultural transmission between China and Denmark; a subtle manifestation of cross-cultural influence and mastery of design within the history of modern architecture. Together, these should represent an amalgamation that assimilated diverse aspects of China taken by different people and represented by varied media before and during Utzon's early career. As one would expect, the path leading to Utzon's receiving Chinese art and architecture can be traced back to the intermittent three-hundred-year connection between China and Denmark in general and the legacy of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in particular.

## DENMARK'S CHINA

Trade and shipping best describe the relationship between China and Denmark from the seventeenth to twentieth century (Bramsen 2000). The three hundred years of intermittent interrelationship can be basically defined into three different periods: 1) the Danish East India Company (1616-1729); 2) the Asiatic Company (1732-1843); and 3) the Great

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<sup>7</sup> The author found this book with Utzon's notes and sketches for the Langelinie project inside Jan Utzon's collection at Saunte, Denmark.

Northern Telegraph Company (1872-1939).<sup>8</sup> The contact of each of the Danish companies with China was influenced by earlier paths of other European powers. Each trading period with China brought financial benefit and wealth to Denmark. Since the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1731, when the first Danish ship – “King Frederik IV” – reached China and purchased porcelain, lacquerware, silk and tea at Canton – today’s Guangzhou, to be shipped back to Denmark, China has influenced and stimulated the social and cultural life of Denmark.<sup>9</sup> This trade also influenced the popularity and later unpopularity of certain styles of decorative arts, applied arts, tea culture, furniture and garden designing (Bramsen 2000).<sup>10</sup> Together, they contributed the emergence of Nordic Chinoiserie and the establishment of Anglo-Chinese gardens in Denmark.<sup>11</sup> Among them, Utzon noticed and further studied the famous Chinese Pavilion and its picturesque setting located at the Frederiksberg Garden with his 1922 book *Det Chinesiske Lysthus: Frederiksberg Have (The Chinese Pavilion: Frederiksberg Garden)* written by Danish architect Alfred Marinus Andersen (1895-1985).<sup>12</sup>

As a transformation of the previous Anglo-Chinese gardens in Denmark<sup>13</sup>, when opened in 1843, Tivoli<sup>14</sup> included two Chinese pavilions, a Chinese bazaar and a railway station in the Chinese style, all with light timber construction painted in rich colours.<sup>15</sup> With similarly picturesque settings and elaborated Chinese styles, Tivoli reflects the popularization and secularization of Nordic Chinoiserie (Oxfeldt 2005). In young Utzon’s time, the two most significant applications of the Chinese style in Tivoli were the Pantomime Theatre (1874) designed by Jens Vilhelm Dahlerup (1836-1907) and the Sino-Japanese Tower (1900) designed by Knud Arne Pedersen (1862-1943). The former was an open-air theatre fronting a stage with its Chinese-inspired facade; the later was a restaurant tower on the small lake serving Chinese-inspired menu. Unlike Danish *Post-Classicism* (1850-1885) with its more moderate use of historical references, Dahlerup’s theatre and Pedersen’s tower strongly recalled the contemporary European Historicism and its endeavour to attain a correctness of

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<sup>8</sup> Each of these companies eventually ended its commerce with China after Denmark was involved in several European wars. The first half period of the Danish East India Company ended following the Thirty Years’ War with Sweden (1618-1648). The second was concluded by the Great Northern War also with Sweden (1700-1720). Later, the Danish Royal Asiatic Company’s trade with China was terminated by the Napoleonic Wars (1800-1813) and the Gunboat War (1807-14) with Britain. Finally, the Great Northern Telegraph Company ended its business after Japan’s invasion of China (1937-45) and Nazi Germany’s occupation of Denmark during the Second World War (1939-45).

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the trades between China and Denmark, see Ole Feldbæk’s “The Danish China Trade” in *Treasures from Imperial China, The Forbidden city and the Royal Danish Court*, (Copenhagen, Christiansborg Palace, 2006), 322-27.

<sup>10</sup> For issues about Chinese influence on Danish social and cultural phenomena, see Thomas Lyngby’s “Danish Vogue for Things Chinese” in *China in Denmark 1600-2000*, (Beijing, The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg, 2008), 38-49.

<sup>11</sup> These gardens are including: the first Chinese garden in Dronninggaard with three Chinese Pavilions designed by architect Andreas Kirkerup (1781-86), the Chinese garden on the island of Mon near Liselund designed by Antonie Bosc de la Calmette (1752-1803) and the gardens of the Frederiksberg Palace (1799-1800) designed by Andreas Kirkerup. See Tove Clemmensen and Mogens B. Mackeprang’s *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950, Kinafort or Kinamode*, 220-234, 263-266.

<sup>12</sup> *Det Chinesiske Lysthus* is surviving in Jan Utzon’s collection at Saunte, Denmark.

<sup>13</sup> These gardens are including: the first Chinese garden in Dronninggaard with three Chinese Pavilions designed by architect Andreas Kirkerup (1781-86), the Chinese garden on the island of Mon near Liselund designed by Antonie Bosc de la Calmette (1752-1803) and the gardens of the Frederiksberg Palace (1799-1800) designed by Andreas Kirkerup. See Tove Clemmensen and Mogens B. Mackeprang’s *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950, Kinafort or Kinamode*, 220-234, 263-266.

<sup>14</sup> Tivoli was established by Georg Carstensen (1812-1857), designed by architect H.C. Stilling and built on the old fortification area with the permission of Christian VIII (1786-1848).

<sup>15</sup> Hanne Lopdrup, “China in Andersen’s Fairy Tales,” *China in Denmark 1600-2000*, 96.

classical style through his adopting of Chinese monuments as the prototypes (Millech and Fisker 1951). With the elaborated handicraft and polychrome stucco decoration, the two works accurately interpret a Chinese style with many sophisticated details, such as bracketing units, lattice work and roof details, done with the help of early photographs of classical Chinese architecture. Dahlerup and Pedersen's works in Tivoli were served as inspirational sources for Utzon's Sydney Opera House design (1956-1966) and Langelinie Pavilion competition proposal (1953): the former a monumental theatrical setting with Chinese-inspired built forms and colours; the later a multi-floor restaurant on the water front in central Copenhagen.<sup>16</sup>

Historically, the appearance of China in Denmark also represented the rise of Denmark as an international power, as well as the growing authority and monopolies both of the Monarchy and Danish capitalists. While the larger powers of the Continent were at war with each other, the 'neutral' position of Denmark generally benefited her overseas trade and domestic economy. However, eventually, Denmark ended its commerce with China after her involvements with several European wars. Denmark's searching for, later acquiring of, and subsequently losing of China, the somewhat ephemeral presence of this exotic faraway territory, as a reflection, revealed the power struggles and survivals of Denmark in the rise-and-fall sequence of emerging powers. From a cultural and political point of view, the appearance of China in Denmark can be read as an allegory of Danish history and maritime power. This three-hundred-year relationship between China and Denmark was represented clearly in the Danish Maritime Museum established at the Kronborg Castle since 1915. In 1937, Utzon's family moved from Aalborg to Helsingør near by the Castle. As the son of Aage Utzon (1885-1970), a Danish naval architect, Jørn Utzon was well informed and familiar with the national and maritime history of Denmark.<sup>17</sup>

In 1864, China eventually opened her ports to Denmark, after first permitting England in 1842 and then France and the United States in 1844, after China's defeat against Britain in the First Opium War (1839-42). This brought the success in international business for Danish companies which benefited many cultural exchanges between Denmark and China in young Utzon's lifetime. For example, Robert Christensen, an engineer with the Great Northern Telegraph Company, published his travel literature *Kineseren I sit Rige* (*Chinaman in his Kingdom*) in 1947. As one of young Utzon's favourites, this book recorded young Robert Christensen's observations on everyday life in China in great detail. Published with numerous photographs taken by the author in the early 20<sup>th</sup>, *Kineseren I sit Rige* reflected the author's cultural sympathy for China and "Chinamen" both of which had been suffered from the World War II, as Christensen wrote: "[...] *No people deserve more sympathy than the Chinese, and no people have been previously judged so incorrectly as the Chinese* (Drew 1999)."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This was confirmed by Utzon's son, Jan Utzon, in author's interview in Sydney, Australia, 2008. For more details see, CHIU Chen-Yu, Peter MYERS and Philip GOAD, "Colours and the Sydney Opera House (1956-1966): Jørn Utzon's Reinterpretation of Traditional Chinese Architecture", *Journal of Design History*.

<sup>17</sup> This was confirmed by Utzon's son, Jan Utzon, in author's interview in Sydney, Australia, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> This book had been mentioned by Philip Drew in his interview with Tobias Faber. See Philip Drew, *The Masterpiece, Jørn Utzon: A Secret Life*, (South Yarra, Victoria, Hardie Grant Books, 1999), 515. Robert

Another example is the conduit between Denmark and China provided through Carlsberg - a highly successful brewery both in China and worldwide. Its success enabled the establishment of the New Carlsberg Foundation, the largest of such institution in Denmark, which assisted the establishment both of the Museum of National History (Nationalmuseet) in 1878 and Museum of Decorative Art (Kunstindustrimuseet, today's Danish Museum of Art and Design) in 1895. The Nationalmuseet documented, collected and published the archives of the Danish Monarchy's relationship with China which was politically beneficial to the relationship between Denmark and China in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> The Kunstindustrimuseet began a significant collection of Chinese arts and crafts, as well as related international movements, such as Chinoiserie, Japonism, French Art Nouveau and Neo-Chinoiserie. All these collections were always available to Danish designers associated with the Royal Danish Academy.<sup>20</sup> Utzon's uncle, Aksel Einar Utzon-Frank (1888-1955), a well-known sculptor and professor at the Royal Danish Academy, was one of its board members (1928-43).

## AKSEL EINAR UTZON-FRANK

Utzon-Frank played a significant role not only in Utzon's architectural career but also in Utzon's early interest in China. Originally, before he entered the School of Architecture at the Royal Academy, Jørn Utzon wanted to be an artist. However, his uncle encouraged him to become an architect, as architecture was financially "safer than the artist's vocation (Drew 1999)." After the intensive examination for admission, Utzon was last on the list of 25 to be admitted in 1937 (Drew 1999). As the youngest student, aged 19, Utzon was enrolled despite poor results in the mathematics exam (GCSE Eksaminer). It was possible that Utzon-Frank might have helped his nephew gaining entry to the School of Architecture.<sup>21</sup>

In his uncle's studio at the Royal Academy, young Utzon encountered "many kinds of things" about China.<sup>22</sup> Although Utzon-Frank never went to China, Imperial Chinese decorated roof tiles, status of deities and noble women, ceremonial objects, paintings and masks were all in his large collection (Rindholt 1942). Among Utzon-Frank's Chinese collection was the 1919-edition of the *Yingzao fashi*<sup>23</sup> (*Chinese Building Standards*), an architectural treatise written in the mid Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) of China. This *Yingzao fashi* was originally purchased by Finnish-born and Swedish-based art historian Osvald Sirén (1879-1966) in Shanghai in 1920 and later sent to Utzon-Frank as a personal gift.<sup>24</sup> Utzon's first encounter with the *Yingzao fashi* in Utzon-Frank's studio before he entered the Royal Academy certainly encouraged Utzon's later acquisition of the 1925-edition *Yingzao fashi* in Beijing during his

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Christensen, *Kineseren I sit Rige*, (København, Det Danske Forlag, 1947), 12.

<sup>19</sup> See Tove Clemmensen and Mogens B. Mackeprang's *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950, Kinafort or Kinamode* (Copenhagen, National Museum, 1980). The foundation also support the related exhibitions and publications between China and Denmark, see *Treasures from Imperial China, The Forbidden City and The Royal Danish Court* (Copenhagen, Den Kongelige Udstillingsfond, 2006) and Thomas Lyngby, Mette Skougaard, *China in Denmark 1600-2000*, (Museum of National History at Frederiksborg, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> "Many Kinds of things" is the English translated title of the portfolio for Utzon-Frank's collection - *Mange slags Ting* (1942).

<sup>23</sup> The *Yingzao fashi* is a technical treatise on architecture and craftsmanship written by the Chinese author Li Jie (李穡; 1065–1110), in the mid Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) of China.

<sup>24</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

trip to China in 1958.

Utzon-Frank's Neo-Gothic works, with their references to the Greek and Nordic myths, and the pre-Renaissance and exotic cultures, proclaimed a primitivism against the neoplasticism and synthetic Cubism of his time. Utzon-Frank's critical primitivism was also reflected in his working collection of traditional arts and crafts, which did not contain luxurious or delicate objects and was intended to contrast with the elite art preferences of many his contemporaries. No doubt Utzon-Frank cultivated young Utzon's creativity and later his critical approach to architectural design. To young Utzon, China was part of his uncle's exoticism and primitivism in opposition to the European elite culture. As Utzon explained: "[...] *my uncle Einar Utzon Frank let me know the East, when I was young [...]* (Bech 2006)". Utzon's eldest son - Jan Utzon - further explained: "*My grand-uncle told my father to search for inspiration from the unknown Eastern cultures, instead of the West with which we were more familiar.*"<sup>25</sup>

## AAGE MARCUS AND JOHANNES PRIP-MØLLER

In the Royal Academy, Utzon-Frank was not the only staff interested in China. Aage Marcus (1888-1985), Director of the Royal Library (1928-58), published *Den Blaa Drage (The Blue Dragon)* in 1941: an introduction to the romanticism and mysticism of Chinese art, literature, religion and philosophy. Marcus synthesized much previous international China scholarship, especially that concerning Taoism, Zen Buddhism and Confucianism. Literally, *Drage* is an extended chapter of Chinese writer Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* (1937), which was translated into Danish in 1938 and undoubtedly inspired Marcus's writing (Marcus 200). Moreover, inspired by Osvald Sirén's 1917 seminal book *Rhym och Form (Rhythm and Form)*, Marcus also adapted Sirén's ideas about Chinese art and artists. Further with Sirén's help, *Drage* contained many illustrations of Chinese painting to support Marcus's eclectic occultism.<sup>26</sup> As with Marcus's previous work *Mystik og Mystikere (Mysticism and Mystics)* published in 1930, *Drage* was very popular in the Academy during Utzon's time, and he certainly read this book (Weston 2002).<sup>27</sup>

During Utzon's study at the Royal Academy, Marcus's Library had a sophisticated collection of academic studies on Chinese art and architecture. This included most monographs written by Osvald Sirén<sup>28</sup> and Ernst Boerschmann<sup>29</sup>. These books offered young Utzon an opportunity

<sup>25</sup> Jan Utzon interview, Sydney, Australia, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Marcus had been inspired Sirén's *Rytme och Form och andra Fragmenter om Kinesisk och Europeisk Målar Konst (Rhythm and Form and other Fragments of Chinese and European Paintings, 1917)*, which was later published in English as *Essentials in Art* (1919). See the foreword of *Den Blaa Drage*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> In Tobias Faber interview in Copenhagen, 2009, he confirmed Utzon's reading of Marcus's book.

<sup>28</sup> During the 1920s and 30s, Sirén visited China frequently, documenting art with his camera and also purchasing select art works. In 1924, he issued his first monumental volume – *The Walls and Gates of Peking* – with a highly preservationist, romantic tone in the text juxtaposed with large, lavishly printed photographs and illustrations. Two years later, Sirén published *The Imperial Palaces of Peking* (1926) both in English and French with a similarly extravagant format. In 1927, Sirén published the article "Tch'angnagn au temps des Souei et des T'ang (Chang'an city in the time of the Sui and Tang Dynasties)" in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, as a result of his study of ancient Chinese city planning. In 1929, Sirén's *A History of Early Chinese Art* was published both in English and French, one of the first scholarly surveys and a summary of his earlier academic writing on traditional Chinese art and architecture. In 1937, Sirén published *Billeder fra Kina (Images of China)* both in Danish and Swedish, as the sober edition of his early work on Chinese architecture for the general readers in the North. All these books have the format of plates with descriptive text and a short historical narrative. Later, confined to Sweden during the Second

to closely study on China, and Utzon requested some copies of their books in his later career.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, in Marcus's Library, there was a 1:20 scale model of a Chinese palace building of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).<sup>31</sup> This two metre long model was commissioned by Danish missionary architect Johannes Prip-Møller (1889-1943) and paid for by the New Carlsberg Foundation in 1933 (Faber 1994). Through Prip-Møller's friendship connection with Professor Liang Sicheng 梁思成 (1901-1972), this model was constructed by a Chinese craftsman, Yang Wenchi 楊文起 and then painted by Fan Shihchang 范世昌, under the supervision of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture in Beijing (1933-35).<sup>32</sup> Even though it had a removable roof, the interior decoration and painting had to be omitted to reduce the price.<sup>33</sup> The exhibition of this large model and its related publication written in 1937 by Prip-Møller for *Architekten*, together gave Utzon a powerful encounter with Chinese building culture.<sup>34</sup> In 1958 Beijing, Utzon met Liang Sicheng who helped Utzon request two copies of the *Yingzao fashi*: one for himself; and the other for his son Jan who had decided to be an architect.<sup>35</sup>

The Academy Library also had Prip-Møller's extensive archives of rough designs for buildings and projects both in China and Denmark, as well as his collection of Chinese monks' clothing, Buddhist sculpture, textiles, rosaries and so on.<sup>36</sup> These objects were collected during Prip-Møller's early missionary work and architectural practice in China from 1921 to 1927. His sympathy with Chinese Buddhism and ambition to converting Chinese Buddhists and Taoists into Christian were the main reasons for his later study of Chinese Buddhist monasteries and monastic life in southern China. During the years 1929 to 1933, with the financial support of the Carlsberg Foundation, Prip-Møller divided his time between staying mainly in Shanghai and Beijing during winter, occupied in studies and examining what he had surveyed, and travelling in China through the summer months (Faber 1994). In 1929, Prip-Møller

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World War, Sirén wrote and published his first survey in Swedish – *Kina konst under tre Årtusenden* (*Chinese Art over Three Millennia*, 1948). Utzon studied all above-mentioned books and essays of Sirén, initially while he was working in Stockholm during the Second World War. Soon after the War, Utzon and Tobias Faber visited Sirén in Copenhagen, seeking more knowledge about traditional Chinese art and architecture. Sirén gave Utzon *Den Gyllene paviljongen, minnen och studier från Japan* (*The Golden Pavilion, memories and studies from Japan*)(1919) for commemorating their friendship.

<sup>29</sup> In 1923, Boerschmann published his most successful book, *Baukunst und Landschaft in China* (1923) (*Picturesque China*), which boasted a print-run of 20,000 in German alone. In addition to that two English versions have been released, one in London the other in New York. In 1925, he published a two-volume work titled *Chinesische Architektur* (1925). This was followed in 1927 by a book on architectural ceramics in China – *Chinesische Baukeramik*. In 1931, the first volume of his two-volume opus on *Chinesische Pagoden* (*Chinese Pagodas*) appeared. He worked on revising volume two until it finally appeared in 1942. These two volumes become the third book within the series of *Die Baukunst und religiöse Kultur der Chinesen*. The work of Boerschmann became the important precedent of Osvald Sirén and Johannes Prip-Møller's later study. Utzon also studied most monographs of Boerschmann and owned *Picturesque China* and *Chinesische Architektur*.

<sup>30</sup> Utzon owned *Picturesque China* and *Chinesische Architektur*.

<sup>31</sup> Today, the model is removed to the Danish National Museum.

<sup>32</sup> The names of two model makers and the name of Society for Research in Chinese Architecture were written in Chinese on the plaque in the front elevation of model.

<sup>33</sup> See the letter from Liang to Prip-Møller, dated 22 July 1933, (Prip-Møller Archives, The National Library, Denmark).

<sup>34</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Jan Utzon interview, Sydney, Australia, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> This is despite that Prip-Møller did not teach at the Royal Academy, as there was no course on Chinese architecture in Utzon's time. Tobias Faber, *Johannes Prip-Møller, A Danish Architect in China*, 61.

discovered the Franciscan church<sup>37</sup> built in 1324 in Nanjing and made a survey and reconstruction drawings which was published in *ARTES III* in 1935. In 1937, Prip-Møller's monumental work was completed with the publication of *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*. In 1944, the widow of Prip-Møller, Antonette Prip-Møller (1888-1977) published *Kina før og nu* [*China before and now*], as a collection of articles writing by Prip-Møller about Chinese history, art, architecture and Buddhism, after the husband death in 1943. Utzon subsequently acquired *Kina før og nu* and two copies of *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* in Hong Kong, and visited the Franciscan church in Nanjing during his 1958 trip to China.<sup>38</sup> *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* was further served as one of the key inspirations for Utzon creating Bagsværd Church (1968-76). Today, Utzon own copy still contained many surviving sketches and notes of his church.<sup>39</sup>

## KAY FISKER AND STEEN EILER RASMUSSEN

Utzon's 1958 study trip to China was directly inspired by the precedent of his two revered professors at Royal Academy. Kay Fisker (1893-1965) was granted a travelling scholarship in 1922 by the East Asiatic Company (EAC) to travel to China and Japan, as a guest on one of EAC's ships. With his wife, Kay Fisker spent four months in China and two months in Japan (Faber 1995). In 1923, Fisker published his article - "Peking" in *Arkitekten* with his own photographs. In this article, Fisker described the monuments of Imperial Beijing and defined the "inaccessibility" of the Imperial Palaces for contemporary practice. Fisker implied a long-term dynastic degeneration in Chinese Imperial monuments. Fisker's criticism of the Imperial Beijing echoed his disapproval for contemporary Danish Neo-Classicism (Faber 1995).

Despite his qualified acceptance of Chinese Imperial building culture, Fisker's functionalist convictions were certainly influenced by his perception of China. After this trip to China, Fisker designed several urban schemes in the 1920s, in each case, the materiality of the brick wall expressed a massive building volume and with their tiled roofs recalled the monumental city walls and gate towers of Imperial Beijing. Later, Fisker's design for the University of Aarhus (1933), one of his best works was, possibly influenced by the expressivity of earthwork, wall and roof form of Chinese Imperial monuments (Faber 1989). Juxtaposed with his 'Chinese' style monuments, Fisker also designed a coffee pot, silver box and a stove heater, all incorporating patterns resembling Chinese lattice work. To Fisker, China simultaneously presented a primitive and classical role model, helping him to distance his design work from dominant Neo-classicism and German functionalism.

Steen Eiler Rasmussen (1898-1990) was granted a travelling scholarship in 1923 by the East Asiatic Company (EAC) to travel to China for his extraordinary academic performances, one year after Fisker's receiving the same grant. During his 5-month stay in China, Steen Eiler Rasmussen made numerous photographs and sketches during his trips between Hong Kong,

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<sup>37</sup> Today, the church was rebuilt with three naves and displayed as a former Buddhist temple hall, "the Hall without Beams" or "Wu Liang Dien".

<sup>38</sup> Jan Utzon interview, Sydney, Australia, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> The book is surviving in Jan Utzon's collection at Saunte, Denmark.

Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou and Suzhou. These materials provide a solid ground for Steen Eiler Rasmussen's many writings related to China in his later career. Fortunately, these materials are surviving in his family collection.

At the Royal Academy, Utzon attended both Kay Fisker and Steen Eiler Rasmussen's lectures, which often included Chinese architecture as case studies.<sup>40</sup> Utzon further read Rasmussen's many publications related to China. Utzon knew of Rasmussen's trip to China in 1923 from his book, *Billedbog fra en Kinarejse (Pictures from a Journey to China)* published in 1935. Later, it was edited by Rasmussen and published again as *Rejse i Kina (Travel in China)* in 1958. In Rasmussen's *London: The Unique City* (first published in Danish in 1934, English in 1937), he described the so-called Chinese ideas and role of William Chambers in the emergence of "The English Landscape Garden (Rasmussen 1967)". In *Towns and Buildings: Described in Drawings and Words* (first published in Danish in 1949, English in 1951), Rasmussen synthesized his understanding both of traditional Chinese architecture and planning in the case of old Beijing under the title "THE CITY A TEMPLE" (Rasmussen 1951). In *Experiencing Architecture* (first published in Danish in 1957, English in 1959), Rasmussen conceptualized the monumentality of the Imperial Beijing and the picturesque setting of the Imperial Gardens (Rasmussen 1964). In the Danish version of Lin Yutang's *Imperial Peking, Seven Centuries of China* (1962), one of Utzon's most favourite books,<sup>41</sup> Rasmussen wrote the contradictory introduction on his "grey" city of modern Beijing in contrast to Lin Yutang's vibrant *Imperial Peking* (Lin 1962). Rasmussen's enthusiastic approach to Chinese building culture heavily influenced young Utzon's interest in China, and certainly inspired his trip to China and visiting Beijing in 1958.

## ASGER JØRN, TOBIAS FABER AND ELSE GLAHN

Following the legacy of predecessors at Royal Academy, in Utzon's generation, Asger Jørn (1914-1973), Tobias Faber (1915-2010) and Else Glahn (1921-2011) further presented their different approaches to Chinese art and architecture in their early careers. As one of the most important Danish artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Asger Jørn, after working with Le Corbusier on Le Palais des Temps Nouveaux for the 1937 Paris Exhibition, returned to Denmark and studied at the Royal Academy from 1937 to 1942, during which time Utzon was also a student (Atkins 1977). In 1940, Asger Jørn published mere twelve copies of a little book- *The Jade Flute: Some Chinese Poems*<sup>42</sup>, inspired by Franz Toussaint's collection of Chinese poems, *La Flute de Jade (The Jade Flute)* (Jørn and Tin 1970). This book contains several classic Chinese poems from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), which were first translated from French into Danish by Yang Shihjia. Yang Shihjia's translation was further interpreted by Asger Jørn's lithographs (Jørn and Tin 1970). This important multicultural translation of classical

<sup>40</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Jan Utzon interview, Sydney, Australia, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Later in 1970, *The Jade Flute* was further edited and republished. In this version, the Danish translation of these classic Chinese poems was further translated into English by Yang Shih-Jia and then further translated into modern Chinese by Walasse Ting (1929-2010). With French (red) and English (green) printed texts, Walasse Ting's calligraphy of his modern Chinese lyrics and Asger Jørn's lithographs with Danish texts, four different languages with their four 'different' literal interpretations and graphic representations are compiled in one book. See Asger Jørn and Walasse Tin's *La Flutede Jade / Jade Floyten / The Jade Flute*, (St. Gallen, Erker-Verlag, 1970).

Chinese literature was showing Asger Jørn's critical approach to cross-cultural motifs with an extreme way of interpreting ideas of China.

In 1947, Asger Jørn published article "Yin/Yang, The dialectical materials philosophy of life" in the Danish architectural students' journal *A5* (no.3).<sup>43</sup> This article exposed Asger Jørn's observation and interpretation of Taoism, *I Ching (The book of Changes)*, Chinese philosophy and symbolism. Before and after this publication, several of Asger Jørn's early paintings revealed an inspiration from classic Chinese calligraphy, similar to the lyrical sentiments of his lithographs in *The Jade Flute* (Atkins 1977).<sup>44</sup> It is unlikely that Utzon would have overlooked Asger Jørn's China both in his early publications and paintings.<sup>45</sup>

Following Utzon's winning the Sydney Opera House competition in 1957, Asger Jørn's 1958 manifesto – *Pour la forme (In Defense of Form)*, included Utzon's competition proposal and entitled it "Charm and Mechanics (Fromonot 2002)." Asger Jørn saw the Opera House as a first manifestation of his critical ideas applied to architecture (Fromonot 2002). In 1963, Asger Jørn invited Utzon to design a gallery to house his own work, the Silkeborg Museum. Asger Jørn's interest in China triggered Utzon to reveal his own China to both his clients and the public. Utzon's initial proposal sent to Asger Jørn, a conceptual diagram drawn with salt, directly alluded to Asger Jørn's 'calligraphic' works. Later, in the 1964 *Arkitektur* publication of this diagram, Utzon demonstrated that the initial idea of the Silkeborg Museum came from his 1958 trip to China, when he visited the Yungang Grottoes at Datung (Utzon 1964).

The lifetime friendship between Utzon and Tobias Faber was established while they were both studying at the Royal Academy. The two young students shared many interests together, including their obsession with China and readings on Chinese architecture.<sup>46</sup> Early in his architectural career, Faber proposed to establish an architectural firm with Jørn Utzon, but this idea was eventually and timelessly postponed.<sup>47</sup> This was a result of the plagiarism scandal associated with their first joint architectural manifesto in 1947 in which, after Faber's main texts, Utzon's reproduction of seven illustrations from Swiss émigré architect Albert Frey's (1903-1998) book *In Search of a Living Architecture* (1935) was without proper acknowledgement.<sup>48</sup> Unlike Utzon who continued to pursue a career as a practising architect, Faber became an assistant lecturer at the School of Architecture (1951-56), then lecturer (1956-62) and Professor (1962-85) and, finally, the Director of all of the Royal Academy Schools (1965-74) and subsequently the Director for the School of Architecture (1974-85).

Many accounts of Utzon's early perception of China survive, because Faber was not only a close friend of young Utzon but also a scholar with many publications on China and Chinese

<sup>43</sup> For more details about this article, see Ruth Baumeister (Editor), Paul Larkin (Translator), "Asger Jørn's writings on art and architecture, 1938-1958, (Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 2011), 120-135.

<sup>44</sup> Asger Jørn could be inspired by Lin Yutang's 1937 *The importance of living*, which is surviving in the collection of Museum Jorn and presenting practicing Chinese calligraphy as an innovative way of creating art.

<sup>45</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> For the issue about the plagiarism scandal, see the author's conference paper "Transcultural Intention and Exotic Inspirations: The Role of Albert Frey in the Work of Jørn Utzon," The 25th annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, 2008.

influences on Danish architects (Faber 1986). In 1978, Faber first visited China after his 1976 trip to Japan.<sup>49</sup> After this trip, Faber published his travel writings - *En Kinarejse (A Travel to China, 1979)* and later *Kina (China) (1985)*, their format and content directly inspired by Rasmussen's *Rejse I Kina* and Lin Yutang's *Imperial Peking, Seven Centuries of China*. In 1989, he finished the first account of Johannes Prip-Møller's China – "En dansk arkitekt i Kina (A Danish Architect in China)" published in *Architectura 11*. The manuscript was translated into English in 1994 and published as a monograph *Johannes Prip-Møller, A Danish Architect in China* (Faber 1994). Faber also researched earlier approaches to China by graduates of the Royal Academy in his *Kina-Danmark: the arkitektionisk set (China-Denmark: the architectonic set, 1989)*. Of course, he also wanted to write a monograph about Utzon's China, but unfortunately, he was rejected by Utzon several times.<sup>50</sup> Notwithstanding, Faber's *Houses in Fredensborg* (1991), an essay on Utzon's courtyard housing proposals, clearly set down the idea of China in Utzon's work from his view as an architectural historian.

After his retirement from the Royal Academy in 1985, Faber worked part-time as a Chinese architecture tour guide with Peter Porskjaer, whom he first met in Tibet, and together they travelled to China about eleven times.<sup>51</sup> For Faber's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, he dressed as a Chinese emperor to celebrate. For his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he dressed as a Manchurian.<sup>52</sup> At the age of 94, during his conversation with the authors, he excitedly explained his delight in encountering Utzon and China.<sup>53</sup>

Else Glahn (1921-2011) entered the Royal Academy in 1940, and became friends both with Faber and Utzon.<sup>54</sup> Glahn's China was inspired by her early 'reading' of the 1919-version of *Yingzao fashi* in the library of the Royal Academy (originally owned by Professor Einar Utzon-Frank).<sup>55</sup> During the War, Faber, Utzon and Glahn all lived in Stockholm and frequently met.<sup>56</sup> In 1944, Glahn entered the Stockholm University and studied classic literature of the Song Dynasty under Professor Bernard Karlgren (1889-1978), who had established modern Nordic academic scholarship of China. Glahn worked with Osvald Sirén translating classic literature relating to Chinese painting and painters. Later, Glahn worked with Joseph Needham (1900-95) on the chapters concerning Chinese architecture in his *Science and Civilization in China* (1954) which Utzon studied in great detail.<sup>57</sup>

From 1949 to 1968, Glahn was librarian in charge of books in Far Eastern languages at the Royal Danish Library, a lecturer at both the Institute of East Asia Studies and the University of Copenhagen. Since 1966, with the assistance from American historian Wilma Fairbank (1909-2002), she 'secretly' obtained two passports and started travelling to China during the early Cultural Revolution (1966-76). At the same time, she met with Utzon in Japan and

<sup>49</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009. For Faber's trip to China, see Faber's *En Kinarejse* (1979) and *Kina* (1985).

<sup>50</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Interview Peter Porskjaer, Esbjerg, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Tobias Faber interview, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009. Utzon's own copy of *Science and Civilization in China* survives in the collection of Jan Utzon.

arranged several architectural tours and tea ceremonies for Utzon, who was by then frustrated with the progress of the Sydney Opera House (1957-66).<sup>58</sup> In 1968, she established the Institute of East Asia Studies at Aarhus University, and from 1968-86, she was Director.

Before the mid-1970s, Glahn mainly taught Chinese literature, history and language. Later, she taught traditional Chinese architecture and devoted her late life to translating the *Yingzao fashi* into modern architectural drawings with an English text and commentary, with a list of early Chinese buildings constructed using the *Yingzao fashi*. Glahn's 1981 article "Chinese Building Standards in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century" in *The Scientific American* was a notable example of her scholarship and brought Else Glahn international recognition. Ironically, this whole article was largely rewritten by the editor who also added many extra and incorrect illustrations without Glahn's permission.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, Else Glahn never published any further journal articles in America.<sup>60</sup>

As an old friend and professional colleague, Else Glahn had frequent telephone contact with Utzon. Several of their telephone conversations were related to the subject of the *Yingzao fashi*, following which Else Glahn sent her translations and drawings of Chinese bracketing units documented in the *Yingzao fashi* to Utzon.<sup>61</sup> These drawings were served as an important inspiration for Utzon proposing the precast concrete units and their site assembly to construct National Assembly of Kuwait (1975-84).<sup>62</sup> Also, as a friend of Professor Liang Sicheng, in 1972, she helped to prepare the unpublished notes and drawings of Liang's last work on the *Yingzao fashi* for Tsinghua University in Beijing. Glahn further suggested that Wilma Fairbank sent Liang's posthumous manuscript back to China.<sup>63</sup> With Glahn's editing, this manuscript was published in 1984, *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture*, and was acknowledged as a significant work of modern Chinese scholarship on traditional Chinese architecture, and Utzon was aware of this work by Glahn and owned the monograph.<sup>64</sup>

With Glahn's help, Françoise Fromonot wrote her study *Jørn Utzon: The Sydney Opera House* in 1998, with its many analogies between Utzon's design proposals and illustrations from the *Yingzao fashi*. This inspired Chinese Professor Zhao Chen at Nanjing University in 2003 to write an introduction about Utzon's work and his influences from China. This article also recognized the *Yingzao fashi* as a significant contributing factor to Utzon's work.<sup>65</sup> Glahn also talked to Utzon about Zhao Chen's interest in his China, and Utzon was pleased and asked his Danish publisher, Torsten Bløndal, to send a set of his retrospective *Logbook Series* to Zhao

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<sup>58</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009. This manuscript was finished by Professor Liang before the end of the WWII and brought to America by the author for future publication in 1947. However, due to the many interruptions, finally in 1980, the materials were sent back to Tsinghua University in Beijing and published as *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture* (1984). See the introduction by Wilma Fairbank, in *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture*, (Hong Kong, Joint Publication, 2001), 9-14.

<sup>64</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009. *A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture* is found in Jan Utzon's collection at Saunte, Denmark.

<sup>65</sup> Zhao Chen interview, Nanjing, China, 2009.

Chen in his appreciation.<sup>66</sup> In the same year in China, the *Yingzao fashi* was republished in the same format as the 1925-edition. The editorial celebrated both the republication of the *Yingzao fashi* nine hundred years after its first publication in 1103 AD and Utzon's winning of the Pritzker Prize in 2003, underscoring his lifetime interest in the *Yingzao fashi*.

## CONCLUSION

Young Utzon's perception of China contained many ideas and artefacts directly derived from many predecessors at Royal Danish Academy. Among them, Einar Utzon-Frank, Aage Marcus, Johannes Prip Møller, Kay Fisker and Steen Eiler Rasmussen could play a key role in stimulating young Utzon's interest in China. Utzon further shared his obsession of Chinese art and architecture with his colleagues, such as Asger Jørn, Tobias Faber and Else Glahn. Their varied approaches to China reflected the previous trends, such as Nordic orientalism and national romanticism in Denmark, following the rise and fall of her maritime power and interconnection with China. Indeed, the facts of Utzon's perception of China provide an important channel to understand Utzon as a real person within a specific cross-cultural context. This important context should not be ignored in the history and theories of modern architecture.

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<sup>66</sup> Else Glahn interview, Birkerød, Denmark, 2009.

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