Arrival Cities

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After World War I, the Russians detained many soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army in labour camps in Siberia. Some of them were able to flee via Manchuria to China, where they found a new home in the international communities of the cities of Tianjin and Shanghai. To date, little research has been carried out on how they designed their networks and integrated into their new environment (Mervay 2018). The refugees included some architects who built their careers in the new host country and left a legacy which still partly shapes the historic parts of cities such as Tianjin and Shanghai today. In this article I introduce the networks of some architects and show that, thanks to the education they had gained at the beginning of the century in Vienna and Budapest, they were able to make a significant contribution to a modern understanding of architecture in China and to offer Chinese clients a new aesthetic programme that was distinctly different from the colonial mainstream.

The Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who entered China from Siberia often headed for Tianjin in northern China, where the old Austro-Hungarian Empire had ruled a small concession between 1901 and 1917. Many foreign concession areas were concentrated in the port city of Tianjin at that time; Japan (until 1945), France (until 1946), Great Britain (until 1943), Germany (until 1917), Belgium (until 1931), Russia (until 1920), Italy (until 1947) and Austria-Hungary (until 1917) had urban areas under extraterritorial control. This internationality also made it possible for foreign architects to get involved, above all – as in the case of Austria-Hungary – because the state that had founded the concession had already disappeared, leaving the architects unencumbered by history vis-à-vis their Chinese customers. However, most of the architects moved on to Shanghai, which was a more interesting city from an economic point of view. With the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the war, the refugees in China lost their nationality and had other identities bestowed on them by such newly-founded states as the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Czechoslovakia and the Hungarian
Some of the architects discussed here, such as Ladislaus Edward Hudec and Rolf Geyling, remained in China for economic reasons and because difficult times were anticipated in Europe after the war. However, their success depended not only on their talent, but also on their networks, which made contracts possible in the first place.

The young men discussed here came to the Chinese Republic at a time of internal transition, when the country’s leading politicians and intellectuals were striving to find new ways towards economic and cultural development. After 1919, the advocates of radical modernisation along Western lines (or along the lines of the Japanese Meiji Restoration) fought in the so-called New Cultural Movement against traditional values, as embodied in Confucianism. Experts who did not belong to the still-active colonial powers, Great Britain and France, were therefore in a position to gain orders from Chinese clients. The well-trained Austro-Hungarian experts were able to fill a gap and become active for both foreign clients and Chinese reformers.

The following description of the networks is not so much aimed at a discourse critical of architecture, but rather attempts to show how the aforementioned individuals formed networks and how links to Chinese clients opened up opportunities for innovative solutions. The investigation is based primarily on reports in daily newspapers and other publications, since there are no localisable archives for many of the protagonists, or they contain only fragmentary information. The local Chinese archives are difficult to access and often it is not possible for foreigners to get the desired information (Mervay 2019).

**Austrian Networks in Northern China**

Rolf Geyling arrived in Tianjin via Siberia in 1920, and there he worked until his death in 1952. Geyling, who was born in Vienna in 1884, was enrolled at the Technical University (TH) in Vienna between 1904 and 1909, passing his first state examination in 1906 and his second in 1910. At the TH, the emphasis was on the engineering aspects of construction, which is why Geyling continued his studies at the University of the Arts for another four semesters, as a master’s student of Otto Wagner. At the same time he also worked in Wagner’s studio on the major light rail project for Vienna. After opening his own practice, he built residential buildings, pavilions and villas until the outbreak of the war. In his designs Geyling adopted the ideas prevailing in Vienna, which varied between Otto Wagner’s decorative approaches and Adolf Loos’ material-oriented designs (Scheidl 2014, 17–35).
Having arrived in China in 1920, Geyling went first to the seaside resort of Beidaihe (Peidaiho) where he met the Chinese politician Zhu Qiqian, who had developed a great interest in planning and architecture. Zhu was not only Interior Minister of the young Republic between 1911 and 1916, but was also very involved in the urban transformation of the capital Beijing. In Beidaihe, he succeeded in introducing modern planning regulations to which all construction practices had to adhere. Geyling was responsible for the construction of the resort’s roads and public facilities. His expertise was needed here because both the Chinese elite from Beijing (about 280 kilometres west of the coast) and Tianjin (about 250 kilometres southwest) and foreigners spent their summers in the resort’s villas. Later, after he had been living in Tianjin for a long time, he received many commissions in Beidaihe (Kloubert 2016, 69).

On arrival in Beidaihe, Geyling, together with his German partners E. Wittig and K. Behrendt, founded a company, Yuen Fu Building & Engineering Co. Ltd., through which they were soon also carrying out projects in Tianjin. The first major public contract from a Chinese client was awarded in 1921, for the Northeast University (Dōngběi Dàxué) in Shenyang (then Mukden). The architectural concept for the main building was rather conservative, with a triangular gable in the front and two flat domes to the left and right. The main auditorium space, which was depicted in a perspective drawing, follows classical design ideas (Scheidl 2014, 205, fig. 1). A further important project, in connection with a coal mine in Shandong province, was probably an order from the politician Zhu Qiqian, who was General Manager of the Zhongxing Coal Mine Company in Shandong Province from 1916 to 1938 (Yang 2007, 5).

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Fig. 1: Main Building at Northeast University in Mukden (Shenyang) in 1921 (Architekturzentrum Wien, Collection, Inv. No.: N15_019_001_F_01).
In 1921, another Austro-Hungarian architect, Josef Alois Hammerschmidt, came to Tianjin from Siberia and for the next three years worked for Yuen Fu, the company co-founded by Geyling. Hammerschmidt, who was born in Vienna in 1891, studied at the TH, where he was enrolled for three years and passed nine individual examinations. However, he did not pass the state examination as he was ex-matriculated in the 1913 summer semester “for non-payment of tuition fees”. According to a CV published in the 1930s (Nellist 1933, 158), he also studied at the Adolf-Loos-Bauschule, which was founded in 1912, and began to work in Vienna in the same year. From 1913 until the beginning of the war he worked in his home town’s public works department. He was captured during the war and lived in camps in Siberia until 1918. After working for Yuen Fu, Hammerschmidt ran a private practice in Tianjin from 1924 to 1931, before moving to Shanghai. In Tianjin, he was involved in designing the residence of the former president, Li Yuanhong, the residence of the former emperor, Pu Yi, and a power plant (ibid., 158).

The Yuen Fu company closed around 1924 because of financial problems and Geyling began a cooperation with the young engineer Felix Skoff, who arrived in Tianjin from Vienna in 1922. Born in 1889 in Vienna, he had studied civil engineering at the TH between 1909 and 1914, where he passed his first state examination in 1913 and his second in 1922. Besides planning the buildings, the partners operated their own construction company. The architects also participated in competitions, such as the tender for the national monument to Sun Yat-sen in Nanjing in 1925. The partnership between Geyling and Skoff lasted until 1929, after which Geyling continued working alone (Scheidl 2014, 197). In the 1930s, he was commissioned in Beidaihe and Tianjin, and his architectural expression was increasingly reduced to the functional language of modernism. Geyling worked on around 250 projects during his time in China, many of which have now disappeared.

By the mid-1930s, the modern formal language had apparently established itself in Tianjin, replacing decoration with the staging of material. The three apartment buildings designed by Geyling – Cambridge Flats, Herakles Building (today Hong Kong Building) and Min Yuan Building – have exposed brick walls, concrete surfaces and flat roofs. Geyling acted as both architect and investor for the Cambridge Flats. The complex consists of two three-storey wings that are vertically accentuated at the corner by a four-storey staircase. Flat cornices above and below the windows underline the horizontal design. The plinth is made of exposed masonry, while the main parts of the façade are plastered (ibid., 222–224).

The horizontal, three-storey Min Yuen Building is divided into several sections, each with a different design. The central part, which is plastered, has continuous balconies over the façade. The main part is made of exposed masonry and has large,
square windows, with cubic balconies of exposed concrete on the narrow side. The low demarcating wall to the street has a characteristic perforated pattern. With just a few elements, the architect succeeded in creating a diverse architecture (fig. 2).

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Fig. 2: Min Yuan Building in Tianjin designed by Geyling (Architekturzentrum Wien, Collection, Inv. No.: N15_024_001_F_03_fr).

For the Herakles Building Geyling designed round windows at the corners, reminiscent of the ship motifs used in Europe by modernist architects. In addition, he combined horizontal window formats with an arch motif and cubic, abstract compositions using materials such as exposed bricks, simply plastered surfaces and exposed concrete. The four-storey block consists of two parts. In one, the façade consists of visible masonry, which is continued at the base of the second part of the building. The passage to the inner courtyard is an archway. The second part extends beyond the aforementioned plinth and is plastered in white. The horizontal window formats are taken round the corners of the building (ibid., 222).

Like other architects in China, Geyling initially adapted his designs to his Western or Chinese clients’ wishes, designing more or less decorated buildings reminiscent of the turn of the century in Vienna and echoing the ideas of his teacher, Otto Wagner. In the 1930s European modernism found its way to China via magazines, returning students and architects visiting their respective homelands. Soon decoration was replaced by materiality. His client network included Chinese elites and foreigners who had their houses built both in the port city of Tianjin and in the seaside resort of Beidaihe. Zhu Qiqian was a key contact in this context, because not only was he interested in architecture, he was also part of an important political network centred in Beijing. However, Shanghai was too far away to accept orders from, and there were obviously local networks in nearby Beijing which commissioned their own architects.
Hugo Sandor was another Austro-Hungarian refugee. He came from the small town of Ungvar in the Carpathians (today Ukraine) and had studied at the Vienna Commercial Academy (*Handelsakademie*). From 1912, Sandor worked for the Roman & Szivos Electricity Co. in Budapest. He served as a lieutenant during the war, becoming a prisoner in the labour camps in Siberia in 1917 (Nellist 1933, 336). He fled to China in 1920 and worked as a manager for Frank Raven’s American Oriental Bank in Chongqing in 1923 (*The China Weekly Review*, 22 September 1923, 131). In the same year, he joined the Asia Realty Company in Shanghai, a realty company also owned by Raven (Nellist 1933, 326). Josef Alois Hammerschmidt moved from Tianjin to Shanghai in 1931 to establish the architecture department of Asia Realty Company. Having set up the department, Hammerschmidt opened his own practice in Shanghai in 1933 (ibid., 158). Not much is known about Ferenc (Ferry) Shaffer, who had been trained as an architect in Budapest and had been a lieutenant during World War I. He had been with Sandor in the Siberian labour camps and fled with him to China. In 1922, Shaffer earned his living as a road engineer in Sichuan Province (Service 1989, 248 and 262) and later worked for the Asia Realty Company in Shanghai (*The New York Times*, 1 February 1949, 25).

The Asia Realty Company commissioned another Austro-Hungarian countryman, Ladislaus Edward Hudec, to design a series of garden villas on the Route Louis Dufour (1925–1926) in the French concession, immediately after he had opened his own office in 1925. Asia Realty also awarded him another contract for an estate with garden villas on Route Herve de Sieyes (1927–1930). He obviously already had a reputation as a young, promising architect in Shanghai, but it was certainly no disadvantage that his fellow countrymen held key positions at Asia Realty. Hudec had received his training at the Royal Joseph University in Budapest and came to Shanghai in 1918, via a Siberian labour camp. In his case, the question of nationality had a very personal aspect to it, as well as influencing his status and possibilities as an architect. He was born in 1893 in Banská Bystrica, in present-day Slovakia, into the family of master builder György Hugyecz and studied in Budapest, where he received his diploma as an architect in June 1914. At the end of that year, he was drafted into the army and became a prisoner of war in Russia in June 1916. He escaped from the Siberian labour camp and reached Shanghai in November 1918. In the labour camp the Russians had issued him with a ‘Frontier Passport’ in which they shortened his name from Hugyecz to Hudec. As all Germans and their allies in China were arrested after World War I ended on 11 November 1918, Hudec thought that it would be better to retain his Russian identity for the time being.
As a result of the war, the Austro-Hungarian Empire disappeared and independent nation states emerged. When his father died in 1921, the Czechoslovak consulate in Shanghai issued him with a new Czech passport. At home, however, he learned that the authorities had frozen his father’s assets pending clarification of open questions in court. This obviously made it very difficult for him to accept the new Czech nationality, since he was convinced that the accusations against his father were politically motivated. Back in Shanghai in the summer of 1922 he married Gisela, the daughter of the German merchant Carl Theodor Meyer and his British wife. Hudec visited Budapest in 1927 and 1928 to promote his naturalisation in Hungary and received a temporary Hungarian passport in 1929, as until then there had been no Hungarian consulate, Hudec was appointed honorary consul. However, Czechoslovakia did not release him from citizenship and offered to decide the case against his father in his favour. Soon, however, he learned that the state authorities had de facto auctioned off his father’s property. The matter remained in limbo until 1938, when the ‘Munich Agreement’ was concluded in which Hitler annexed Sudetenland to the German Reich. During this time, the Shanghai press were reporting that he was an architect with Czechoslovak citizenship and Hungarian nationality, which regularly led to problems. It took until the autumn of 1941 for the Hungarian embassy in Japan to issue him with a Hungarian passport, so that he could carry out his duties as consul from 1942 to 1944 during the war (Hudec 1941).

L.E. Hudec is today the best known of the architects with Austro-Hungarian roots. After his arrival in Shanghai, he joined the office of the American architect Rowland A. Curry as a draughtsman. In 1920, Hudec had already been named associate partner for the design of the Chinese-American Bank of Commerce in Shanghai. The newspaper reported, “The elevation shows the influence of a Palladian idea with an adaptation of Greek motives [sic]” (Millard’s Review, 25 September 1920, 165). Hudec opened his own practice on January 1925 (The China Press, 3 January 1925, front page). The first building under his name became the Country Hospital, a donation from a “wealthy Shanghai resident” (The North-China Herald, 26 February 1926, 239). It had some special features such as a roof garden, but its architecture expressed conventional references to historical European styles. In 1927, Hudec built the “Luxurious Estrella Apartments”, as The North-China Herald dubbed them; here too he provided a special roof garden, “divided into two parts, one being a Spanish garden with fountain, pergolas and verandahs. The other part is a children's playground and is protected from the north wind by loggias” (The North-China Herald, 5 February 1927, 192). In the same year, he also designed the Moore Memorial Church next to the racecourse, “which follows the older Gothic lines”, as the newspaper reported (South China Morning Post,
12 January 1929, 14). It was a complex programme, with a cloister garden in the Chinese style, playground, hostel and social facilities. *The Joint Savings Society Bank Building* for a Chinese client was also completed in 1928 and the critics praised it for its unconventional style. “[…] [T]he architect has broken utterly with the classical design of pillars and pilaster, columns and capitals, so generally used throughout the world of banks […].” According to the newspaper critic, the design “borrowed from the American colonial dwelling house” (Bryant 1928, front page). A Chinese bank probably wanted a different aesthetic from that of the already existing foreign banks with their symbolic, classicist references. All the buildings designed by Hudec up to that point had been variations of Western architectural historical types in one way or another, without showing even a hint of the new design ideas of abstraction or modernism that his colleagues in Europe had been testing since the early 1920s.

In Shanghai, growing demand for luxury villas with large gardens led to new residential developments in the suburbs of the French concession, outside the densely populated city centre. The American investor Frank Raven, and his Asia Realty Company with people from the former Austria-Hungarian Empire in key positions, bought some 66,000 square metres of land for the Columbia Circle development, high-end real property with a business feel. The property was divided into more than 70 plots, each large enough for a garden villa. Asia Realty again commissioned Hudec to design some of the villas, built between 1929 and 1932, in a bouquet of different architectural styles. These include ‘Dutch’, ‘English’, ‘Spanish’ and various ‘American’ architectural styles. Between 1929 and 1931, he built a 1,000 square metre villa for himself in a kind of Spanish revival style, which he sold to the important Chinese politician Sun Ke, the son of Sun Yat-sen (Hua/Qiao 2016, 105). He then built a second house for his family in Colombia Circle in the Tudor Revival style, which was fashionable in Britain in the late 19th century (Hua 2016, 99). His education at the beginning of the 20th century in Budapest allowed him to build in many styles, as all possible variations had been discussed and implemented during the transition from historicism to Art Nouveau (Marótzy 2018, 110). The wide range of choices for creative expression in Shanghai was certainly connected to the multinational elite (including the Chinese), who could realise their personal dreams there without having to take account of local cultural sensitivities. On the contrary, it must even be assumed that ‘exotic’ design not only connected the customers with their roots in old Europe, but also clearly showed where the residents felt they belonged. Both Western businessmen and the Chinese elite rejected the local Chinese architectural tradition. Hudec’s own Tudor Revival-style house on Columbia Circle was designed
in a complex three-dimensional shape, with various steep roof surfaces and characteristic chimneys that reflected the character of an English country house set in a garden (fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Advertisement for Asia Realty at Columbia Circle, Shanghai, in 1928. Architect L.E. Hudec (Collage made by the author from various advertisements of the Asia Realty Company from 1928).

Art Deco as Fashionable Style

Around 1930, approximately 1.5 million Chinese and 70,000 foreigners lived in the core city of Shanghai. British architects built in the Victorian style of the Empire, with its neo-Greek and neo-Roman references. But then the commercial American culture reached Shanghai and Manhattan became a shining example of a new Art Deco skyscraper city. In addition, Hollywood films made their contribution to a change in aesthetic taste (Lee 1999, 11). The characteristic of
Art Deco as a “synthesis of classical symmetry and modernist simplification of form; zigzag terracing and projecting ziggurats on buildings; design symbolism that suggested both the ancient past and the distant future; […]” (Striner 1994, 86) made it easy for the Shanghaiers to accept Art Deco. It could even be read as an alternative to the dominant British presence in the cityscape. It was therefore important for architects like Hudec to find the right architectural language for their Chinese clients in order to offer their own expression for the future beyond the aesthetic programmes of the colonial powers.

In 1930 Hudec’s architectural expression changed with the China Baptist Publication Society Building. “The building as designed by architect L.E. Hudec, exemplifies the modern movement in architecture, the trend of the lines being vertical, and exterior free from any extra garnishment ornamentation” (South China Morning Post, 11 November 1930, 9). The architect also applied the explicitly expressionist design to the neighbouring Christian Literature Society Building, which was completed in 1932.

In 1930, his younger brother Geza Georg Hudec, came to Shanghai. He had studied in Budapest and then went to New York in 1929 to learn English before joining his brother's company. G.G. Hudec died three years later at the age of 26, after an operation in hospital. In the obituary an anonymous author wrote, “He was responsible for much of the detail work on several prominent buildings in this city” (The China Press, 25 February 1933, 4). The author did not provide any further details. G.G. Hudec studied after the mid-1920s in Budapest, which was still in close contact with the Viennese art movements. The local confrontations with Art Nouveau were enriched by German Expressionism, the art of the Vienna Secession and new ideas from the German Bauhaus. Farkas Molnár, one of the first Hungarian students to study at the Bauhaus, had returned to his home town in 1925 and received his diploma as an architect in Budapest (Bajkay 2005). Molnár had worked for Walter Gropius in Weimar and after his return to Budapest published his writings on the new ideas at the Bauhaus. However, whether G.G. Hudec was influenced by these discourses remains unclear. His brother in Shanghai sent him to New York in 1929, even before he had completed his studies. As the world economic crisis was starting there, he could not find work in an architectural practice and went to Shanghai six months later. However, he certainly saw the new Art Deco skyscrapers in Manhattan during his time in New York (Poncellini/Csejdy 2013, 112). If one looks at L.E. Hudec’s practice after 1930 it becomes clear that there was a fundamental change in attitude. L.E. Hudec had himself travelled from New York to San Diego in 1927–1928 (Hietkamp 2012, 66). He also spent six months in Europe during the summer of 1931, “studying the latest developments in technology and architecture” in order to familiarise himself with the new trends
He understood that a new era had dawned in Shanghai that required a new form of expression. Chinese artists, architects and designers were trying to find their own language, inspired by historical models and the latest trends in Western development. Art Deco was an excellent design direction for this, as the more transnational, streamlined shapes could be combined with local decorations. Not only Hudec, but almost all the foreign and Chinese architects in Shanghai, changed their designs from historicism to Art Deco that year (Lee, 1999).

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Fig. 4: German-Protestant Church in Shanghai, 1930–1932. Architect L.E. Hudec (Bundesarchiv, Image 137-043236, Shanghai, Deutsch-Evangelische Kirche).

The funeral service for G.G. Hudec took place in the German Protestant Church, which he had helped to design and build (The North-China Herald, 1 March 1933, 335, fig. 4). The competition for the extension of the existing church had been decided in October 1930. Rolf Geyling from Tianjin received the first prize, the Chinese architect Fozhien Godfrey Ede the second prize and L.E. Hudec was awarded the special prize for a sketch series (G. F. 1930, 298). Hudec’s practice received the commission for the church tower with the elegant Art Deco solution based on vertical lines. This made the church one of the first buildings with a new aesthetic in Shanghai (Warner 1994, 132). Hudec obviously was inspired by North German expressionists such as Fritz Höger, the architect of the Chilehaus.
(1922–1924) in Hamburg, which he knew from his visits to the city (fig. 5). The dark clinker and standing lines dramatised the vertical, as expressed in Hudec's later works (Poncellini/Csejdy 2013, 109).

L.E. Hudec's most striking buildings were designed and built between 1930 and 1934. These include the Park Hotel (1931–1934), the Grand Theatre cinema (1931–1933), the Lafayette cinema (1932–1933) and the Union Brewery (1933–1934). At the time, Hudec's work was very much in line with the local needs of a society that was becoming emancipated and searching for a contemporary expression. Since L.E. Hudec had subscribed to European architecture magazines on the one hand and, on the other, had seen the high-rise development in Manhattan and Höger’s work in northern Germany, it can be assumed that he clearly opted for Art Deco in the competition for new ideas. Around 1930, several new Art Deco skyscrapers were built in Shanghai, all competing to be the city's tallest building.

**The Highest Building in Asia**

In April 1931, the Chinese Joint Saving Society, for whom L.E. Hudec had earlier designed the bank building, announced that it had commissioned him for a new
high-rise building (*The North-China Herald*, 21 April 1931, 87). In October of the same year, the well-known Danish engineer, Aage Corrit, started pile driving to test the particularly soft ground; a new idea for the foundations had to be found to ensure stability. At the end of that month, L.E. Hudec returned from the six-month study trip to Europe mentioned above, bringing with him new ideas about technology and architecture. The difficulties of building a tower of this size on the soft ground in Shanghai required good preparation and the best technology available. In January 1932, the newspaper reported that the building was to be the tallest in Asia. The consulting engineer was the Swede, Bengt J. Lindskog, who wrote, “The most interesting feature […] is the foundation” (Lindskog 1934, 1). The problems were solved by using special technology. “The building is standing on 400 Oregon pine piles, the average length of each being 110 feet” (ibid.). The two-storey basement, which was built as a reinforced concrete box, transferred the weight to the piles. For the first time in Shanghai, the walls in the basement were constructed as rigid, reinforced concrete beams. In order to make the structure really stable it was necessary to ensure that the natural consistency of the ground around the construction site was preserved. A watertight sheet piling system, developed by the German-Norwegian engineer Tryggve Larssen, was supplied by Siemens and used for this purpose. The construction management in Hudec’s practice was in the hands of the young Austrian engineer Wilhelm Neyer, who joined in 1931. The German Dortmunder Vereinigte Stahlwerke supplied the steel skeleton for the building’s construction. The outer façade was clad in a glass-hard, dark brown clinker, which was produced by a company in the province of Shandong, based on a German model. The lower three floors were clad in polished black Shandong granite. The safes and machine rooms were in the basement and the hotel lobby and a bank branch on the ground floor. The dining rooms followed on the second and the hotel kitchen, hall and cocktail bar on the third floor. Above came the hotel rooms from the fourth to the thirteenth floors, and the roof garden and the barbecue room on the fourteenth floor. The final tower began on the fifteenth floor and included private apartments up to the nineteenth floor, technical rooms on the twentieth floor, escape rooms and a viewing gallery for hotel guests on the twenty-first floor. The building measures exactly 91.44 metres (300 feet) to the top of the flagpole (Neyer 1935, 55). When the Park Hotel opened opposite the racecourse on 1 December 1934, not only was the Chinese mayor of Greater Shanghai in attendance, but magazine and newspaper reporters from around the world were also present and reported about the highest building in Asia (fig. 6).
Conclusion

The architects mentioned above left a strong legacy in the cities of Tianjin and Shanghai, and many of their buildings are now listed as cultural heritage. They came from Budapest or Vienna with the late Empire style in their luggage and were among the first to introduce Art Deco or aspects of modernism to Shanghai and Tianjin, which still contribute to the city’s historic identity today.

The Second Sino-Japanese War began with the Japanese invasion of 1937, and thereafter none of the European architects received major commissions. It was not until the mid-1940s, at the end of the war, that Geyling was able to build a villa for his family in Tianjin. The American allies of the republican government in China confiscated the building a short time later and tore it down. The family lost its fortune following the communists’ rise to power in 1949; they fought in vain for its recovery until Geyling’s death in 1952 (Scheidl 2014, 257 and 263).
His archive was largely lost in the turmoil of the time. In 2002 the Modern Tianjin and World Museum was founded, in which his contribution to the architectural development of the city is honoured in a photo exhibition.

L.E. Hudec emigrated from Shanghai to Switzerland in 1947 and worked briefly in Italy before going to California the following year. The network of people who shared the same fate after World War I had enabled him to pursue a career in Shanghai. But his special position as an architect who was not connected to colonial Great Britain and France also gave him access to the Chinese elite, who found in him a congenial partner for their dreams of a big city. Without Hudec, Shanghai would certainly have been a poorer city today, even if his buildings have almost disappeared between the skyscrapers of recent years. He died in 1958 in California at the age of 65 and requested in his will that his ashes be taken to the family grave in his native Slovakia (Areddy 2010). He never forgot his roots and wrote in a letter, “It doesn't matter where I go, I will always be a stranger, a guest, a Flying Dutchman, who is at home everywhere he goes, but still has no fatherland” (ibid.).

In both Geyling’s and Hudec’s cases the network of Austro-Hungarian colleagues in various positions helped to obtain contracts. Equally important, however, was the fact that the architects did not come from a country operating in China with colonial claims. In this way, the architects could also work for important Chinese clients without being hampered by political or ideological problems.

Notes

1 Upon arrival, the question of nationality had to be clarified so that they could open an office or travel. In some cases, citizenship of a particular nation could easily be clarified (e.g. Geyling – Austria) because the family had its roots in that country. In other cases there were difficulties with the new nationality, which led to individual solutions (e.g. Hudec – Hungary/Czechoslovakia).

2 Information from Dr. Paulus Ebner, head of the archive of the Vienna University of Technology.

3 However his name cannot be found in connection with the Adolf-Loos-Bauschule.

4 Sandor was probably of Jewish origin, because Ungvar was a centre of Jewish culture and he commented together with others in 1939 on Sun Ke's proposal to establish a settlement area in southwest China for Jewish refugees from Europe (Sandor et al. 1939).

5 Asia Realty Company operated between 1923 and 1941 in Shanghai.

6 Shaffer died in New York in 1949.

7 Often simply called Laszlo or L.E. Hudec.

8 Molnár was also a founding member of the CIAM.
From the mid-1920s he had been to Europe many times and was obviously fully aware of developments in architectural expression.

After 1949 he used the name Xi Fuquan.

The church was demolished during the 'Cultural Revolution' between 1966 and 1976.

References


