

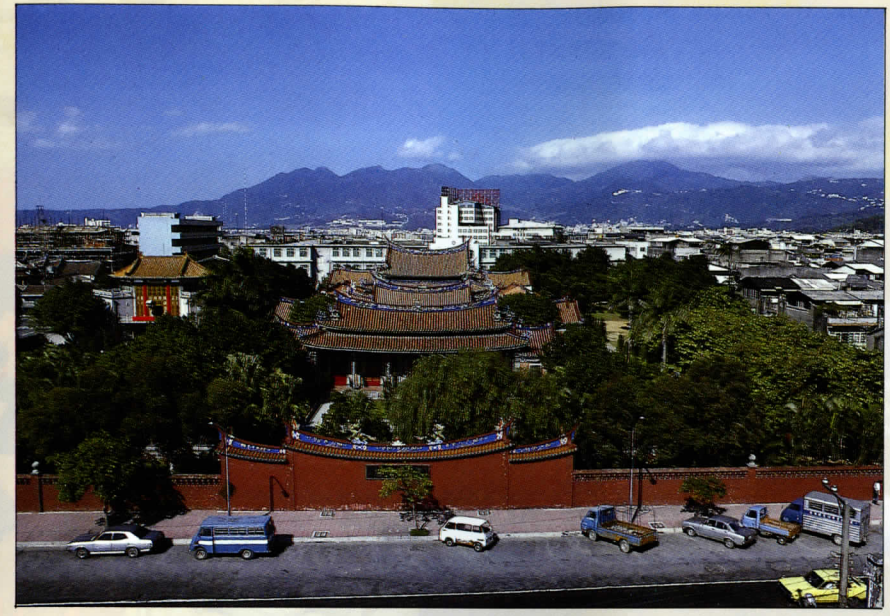
# I. The History of the Taipei Confucius Temple

Temples to Confucius are a concrete symbol of Chinese Confucian culture. As everyone knows, the Confucius Temple of Chufu, Shantung, is the largest and most ancient of China's Confucius temples. At the ancient home of Confucius, it has grown over the course of some 2,000 years to become of magnificent scale, and it has also served as a blue print for Confucius temples in every province of China. In the Ming and Ching Dynasties, counties and municipalities all over China built Confucius temples, which were called Confucian schools, to serve as centers for Confucian study and education in general.

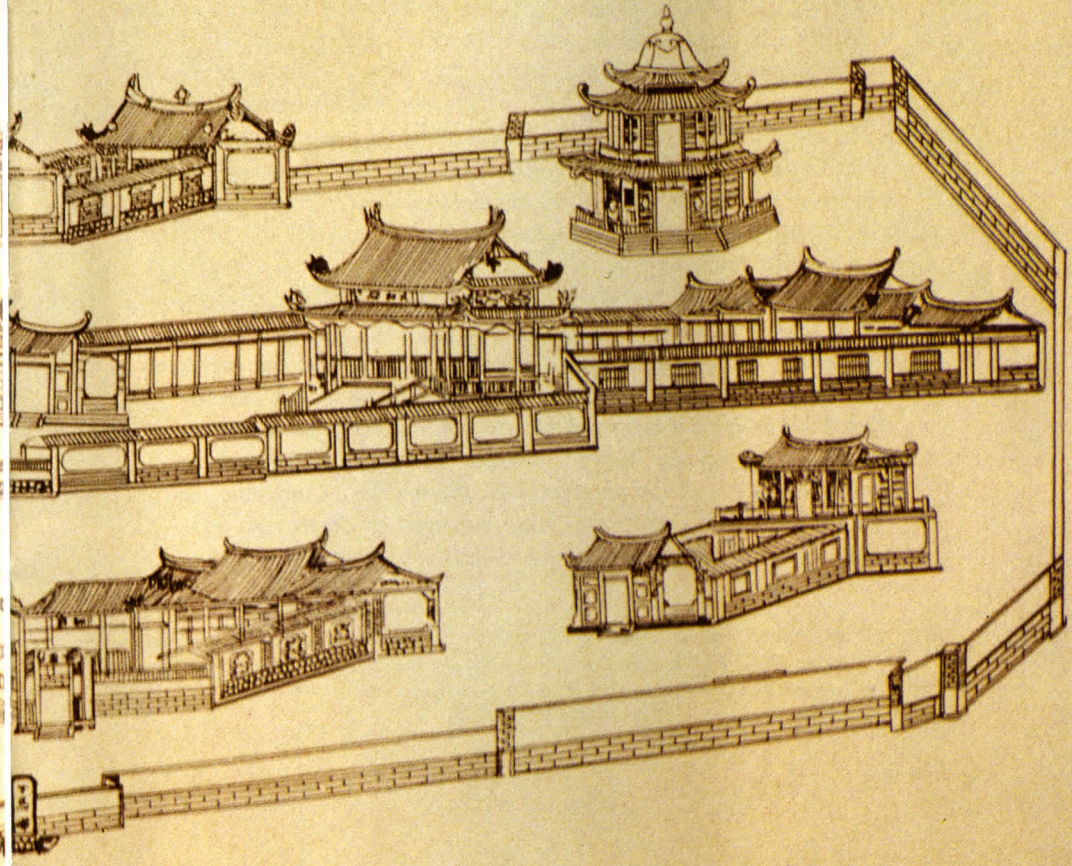
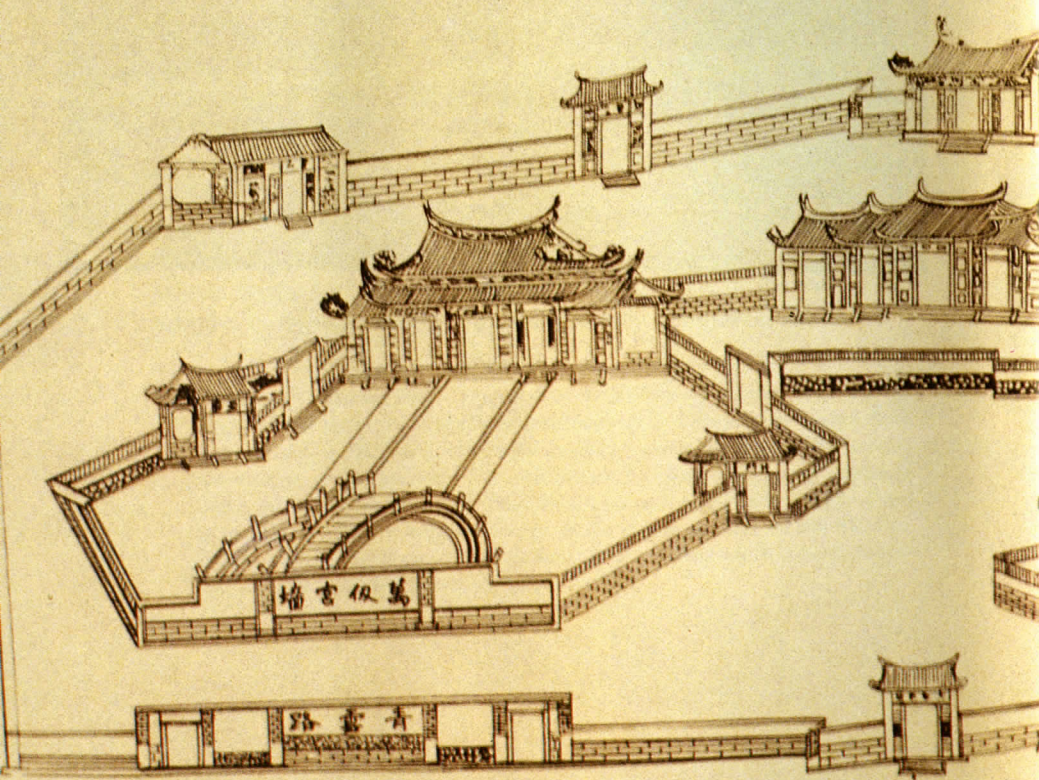
The Confucius Temple of Taipei has its origins in 1875 when the Ching court established Taipei as a prefecture city for northern Taiwan. In 1879 construction began on the city, including the Confucius Temple. The plans for it consisted of literary and martial temples to be built inside the southern gate of the city. The temples both faced south, with the Literary Temple on the

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(1) *The Taipei Confucius Temple is located in the Talungtung quarter. Since the old days, this place has had a tradition of scholarship and the fame of "every three steps there is a Hsiutsai (a successful candidate under the former civil service examination system) and every five steps there is a Chujen (a successful candidate in the provincial examination)." This Confucius temple faces south with Mt. Tatun at its back and is very majestic looking. In the picture one can see the Wan Jen Palace Wall and the layout of various halls. It is very clear which is the principal hall and which are the secondary halls.*



孔子廟設計圖



(2) This is the design that Wang Yi-shun, a famous Chuanchow craftsman, drafted for Taipei Confucius Temple. In the center of the design is the main building of the Confucius Temple, above are the Martial Temple and Kuei Tower, below are the Minglun Hall and the Chu Tzu Shrine, but these were never built.

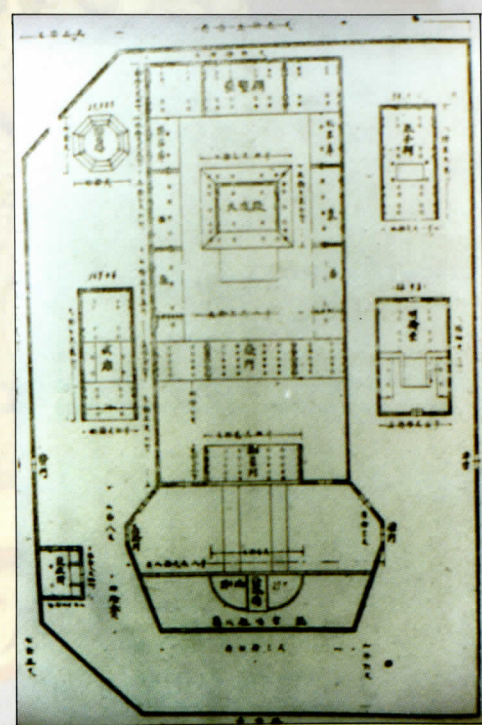
left and the Martial Temple on the right.

When construction started on the Taipei Confucius Temple, Taiwan military commissioner Hsia Hsien-lun and Taipei prefect Chen Hsing-chu oversaw the construction. In 1881 the Ta Cheng Hall, Yi Gate and Tsung Sheng Shrine were finished. In the second year, the gentry of Taipei suggested asking for donations, and work began on the Li Gate, the Yi Path, the Ling Hsing Gate, the Pan Pond and the Wan Jen Palace Wall. Everything was finally completed in 1884, and the complex had become quite a big Confucius temple.

During the time that Liu Ming-chuan was the Taiwan governor, every year the temple would hold a major ceremony, an important event for the literati. In 1891, after Shao Yu-lien was appointed as governor, people were sent to Fukien to buy ceremonial objects and to hire musicians and people who performed the rites to come to Taipei to teach.

Then the unfortunate happened. In 1894, war broke out between China and Japan, and Taiwan was ceded to the Japanese. The following year, Japanese troops occupied Taiwan and the period of the Japanese occupation began. At the beginning of this period, during the height of the resistance to the Japanese, the Japanese military occupied the Taipei Confucius Temple, and most of the memorial tablets of the greatest sage and teacher, Confucius, and other ancient saints and sages were damaged or destroyed, and many of the ceremonial objects and musical instruments were lost.

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- (3) *The Taipei Confucius Temple in 1930. Only the Yi Gate, the East and the West Rooms, the Ta Cheng Hall and the Tsung Sheng Shrine can be seen. The Ling Hsing Gate and the Wan Jen Palace Wall have yet to be built.*
  - (4) *Original plan of the Taipei Confucius Temple.*



The buildings gradually fell into a state of disrepair, and the ceremonies to worship Confucius ceased.

In 1907 the Japanese tore down the temple and used the space to build the Taipei First Girl's High School. Not long after, within the Japanese school, they built a pavilion and put inside the carved memorial tablets of the greatest sage and teacher, Confucius, and other ancient saints and sages. Every year on Confucius' birthday, the pavilion would be opened up so that the students and teachers at the school could worship.

In January 1917, the Ocean Society of Poets and the Tacheng Association organized the Tsungsheng Society. Kimura Tadashi, a Japanese, was made president, and Yen Yun-nien and Li Ching-sheng, two members of the Taipei gentry, were made vice presidents. Every year, on Confucius' birthday (the 27th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar) the tablets were respectfully taken out of the pavilion of the Japanese school and sent to the Tataocheng public school, the Penglai public school, the Lungshan Temple at Mengchia or the Paoan Temple at Talungtung for a ceremony of worship to be held. Although the people responsible for this ceremony wanted to rebuild the Confucius Temple, their wish could not be realized because of the lack of money.

In January 1925, Huang Tsan-chun, Chen Pei-ken and Ku Hsien-jung, three members of the Taipei gentry, joined forces

(5) *The main entrance of the Taipei Confucius Temple now is the Hung Gate. This is a graceful tower above a gate. It has a double-eaved style roof, with an arch in the middle and circular windows on both sides. It is very welcoming.*

(6) *The front picture of the Li Gate. The Li Gate and the Yi Path are the side doors of the main building of a Confucius temple. To show respect to Confucius and to honor his doctrines, there is no front door in a Confucius temple. People who come to a Confucius temple have to enter through the Li Gate or the Yi Path.*



and invited some 200 officials, gentry, and businessmen to come to a discussion meeting at which it was decided how to collect donations. In February, the Taipei Confucius Temple Construction Preparation Office was established to handle all matters regarding the collection of donations and construction. At last, the Taipei Confucius Temple that had disappeared for some ten years was to be rebuilt. In March, Chen Pei-ken donated more than 72,000 square feet of farm land, Ku Hsien-jung bought and donated more than 36,000 square feet of land, and the preparation office used the donations it had collected to buy another some 36,000 square feet of land. This total of more than 180,000 square feet of land was to be the site on which the Confucius Temple would be constructed.

After the problems with land and finances were resolved, an architect was hired. Since at the time no one in Taiwan had any experience in building Confucian temples, the mainland architect Shih Fu-lai was hired. In 1920, the famous craftsman Wang Yi-shun accepted an invitation to come to Taipei to repair the Lungshan and Mengchia Temples and the City God Temple. His designs were widely admired, and so he was hired by the general engineer for the Confucius Temple to work on the design and construction.

Wang Yi-shun was from Hsiti Village, Huian County, Chuanchow. In the late Ching Dynasty he was the most famous

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(7) *Although the style of the Wan Jen Palace Wall is just like that of any Chinese temple, the Wan Jen Palace Wall has its origin from the Analects of Confucius: "Our master's wall rises many times a man's height, and no one who is not let in by the gate can know the beauty and wealth of the palace that, with its ancestral temple, its hundred ministrants, lies hidden within."*



(8) The inside wall of the Wan Jen Palace Wall has a Chinese unicorn painted on it. The unicorn stands on four treasures, symbolizing bringing luck and fortune.



carpenter for the building of temples in Fukien Province. He took many of the best features of Southern Chinese architecture and displayed them in the Confucius Temple of Taipei. As a result, it can be said that the Confucius Temple of Taipei is a typical example of Southern Fukienese architecture.

When the temple was being built, a professional was hired to check on the geomancy of the site, and he set it on a north-south axis. Construction began in 1927, and in April 1928 a ceremony was held for laying the main beam of the Ta Cheng Hall, and work began on the Yi Gate. By 1930, the Tsung Sheng Shrine, the Yi Gate and the two small rooms to the east and west of the main building were already completed, as was the carving of the tablets of the ancient saints and sages. On August 27, 1930, Confucius' birthday was celebrated in Taipei for the first time in over thirty years.

After the three main halls (the Ta Cheng Hall, the Yi Gate and the Tsung Sheng Shrine) and the two small rooms off the main hall were completed, construction work was temporarily halted because a sudden drop in donations plunged the construction into dire financial straits. By 1935, Huang Tsan-chun and Ku Hsien-jung were again urging for construction to be resumed, and they again went out to collect donations. When funds had once again been

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- (9) From the Pan Bridge above the Pan Pond looking at the Ling Hsing Gate. Pan ponds are unique to Confucius temples and their function is similar to the half moon shaped ponds in front of ordinary temples, but it also means the pond of a Pan Palace. The stone arch bridge over it is called the Pan Bridge.
- (10) The Pan Bridge stone arch bridge of three arches. The balustrades resemble the shape of bamboo, symbolizing noble character and incorruptible principle; the pillar heads are shaped like brush tops, symbolizing bringing a good future for literature.



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collected, materials were bought and workers were hired to continue construction. But by this time, the original designer Wang Yi-shun had already returned to Chuanchow (where he had since died) and construction was finished with Taiwan craftsmen. First the Ling Hsing Gate was built and then the Li Gate, Yi Path, Hung Gate, Pan School, Pan Pond and Wan Jen Palace Wall. Construction was finished in 1939, when it reached the impressive completed scale that can be seen today. Altogether, two different fund-raising campaigns were held in which a total of NT\$260,000 was raised. The temple compound covered an area of more than 185,000 square feet and the buildings covered an area of more than 50,000 square feet.

The newly completed temple had only been in use for a few years when World War II broke out. The Japanese ordered an end to traditional Chinese ceremonies, and Japanese Shinto ritual music began to be played in the temple instead. But this was only during a brief period, and in 1945 Taiwan was returned to the Republic of China (R. O. C.).

In the immediate post-war period there was so much else to be done that the ceremonies were temporarily suspended. In 1946, in order to restore the ceremonies held for Confucius's birthday, it was decided that the Taipei Tsung Sheng Association should be restored. The mayor of Taipei City, Yu Mi-chien, was appointed as chairman of the committee. Huang Chi-jui, the minister of education, and Koo Chen-fu were selected as vice chairmen. The

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(11) *Ling Hsing Gates are entrance gates unique to Confucius temples. Some Confucius temples built their Ling Hsing Gates as honorific arches, but the Taipei Confucius Temple built a temple as its Ling Hsing Gate, and it looks very magnificent. This picture is of the inscribed wooden tablet hung on the beam over the door of the Ling Hsing Gate.*





(12) The dragons wrap around the octagonal stone pillars twice in the Ling Hsing Gate; they look very lifelike. There are waves in the bottoms of the pillars, clouds in the tops of the pillars and many human figures everywhere. The carvings are very fine and of a high artistic level.



(13) The Ling Hsing Gate is as wide as seven normal sized rooms with a pair of stone pillars that have dragons carved on them in the middle and a row of ornamental eaves brackets hung under the eave. The decoration here is abundant.

committee handled the yearly celebration of Confucius' birthday. In 1950, to celebrate Confucius' 2,500th birthday, the celebration was expanded and R.O.C. President Chiang Kai-shek gave the temple an inscribed wooden tablet on which he personally wrote "Instruction Recognizes No Castes."

In 1951, relevant people decided to organize the Taipei Confucius Temple Administration Committee and selected Wu San-lien, Taipei's mayor, as the chairman. This committee was responsible for taking care of day-to-day operation and ceremonies. In 1971, on behalf of all those who had contributed to build the temple, Koo Chen-fu and Chen Hsi-ching, descendants of people who worked hard on behalf of the temple during the early period of construction, gave the temple to the government in the belief that respecting the ways of Confucius should be an important priority for the nation. The Executive Yuan approved the donation of the temple and transferred authority over it to the Taipei city government. In July of 1972, the Taipei Confucius Temple Administration Committee was formally established and put under the authority of the Civil Affairs Bureau. Since construction began in 1881, the temple had truly endured numerous twists of fate.

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- (14) *There are numerous huge pillars inside the Ling Hsing Gate. All these pillars are carved out of Chuanchow white stone. These pillars are all very simple but elegant. The reason there are no poems carved on the pillars is to follow the ancient rule of "not daring to show off one's literary skill in front of Confucius."*
- (15) *There are protruding decorative studs on the doors of Ling Hsing Gate. These kind of protruding studs were originally used in city gates. Later generations set that each door must have 54 protruding studs and so there are 108 studs altogether.*
- (16) *There are stone drums on the left and right of the center door of the Ling Hsing Gate. The stone drums have spiral decoration on them, and there are napkins carved in the front. These are typical Southern-Fukienese stone drums.*



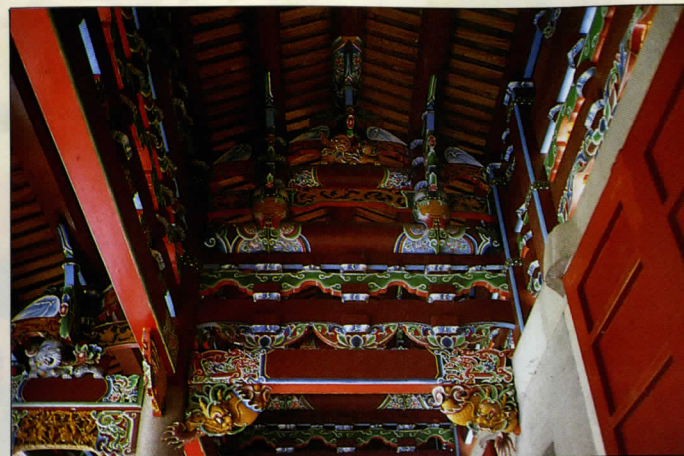
While the Confucius Temple at Talungtung is the one reconstructed in the 1930s, the people of Taipei have continually respected the teachings of Confucius all the while -- before, during and after the Japanese era. This is something we should keep in mind when we visit the Confucius Temple in Taipei.

## II. The Architecture of the Taipei Confucius Temple

In 1927, during the period of the reconstruction of the Taipei Confucius Temple, the blue prints drawn up were very thorough and well considered, allowing for future adaptation. The main architectural structures along the central axis, starting from the front, were the Wan Jen Palace Wall, the Pan Pond, the Ling Hsing Gate, the Yi Gate, the Ta Cheng Hall and the Tsung Sheng Shrine. To the east were the East Room and the East Storehouse and to the west were the West Room and the West Storehouse. And in the open space on the left, the Minglun Hall was planned

(17) *The Ling Hsing Gate has several layers of beams to ensure its soundness. There are stone sea-tortoises under the main beam with lion and elephant carvings, which symbolically carry the weight of the roof on their backs.*

(18) *The Yi Gate is located in front of the Ta Cheng Hall and is sometimes called the Ta Cheng Gate. The Yi Gate is open only on worshipping days. The Chinsheng Door on the left and the Yuchang Door on the right are the doors for everyday use.*



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