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The Role of Mythology in Architectural Identity: The Case of the Temple of Heaven

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Abstract. Architecture is more than the geometric composition of space; it is also the expression of its local culture, which involves mythology, philosophy, architectural prototypes, etc. The research explores the impact of mythology on architectural identity with the Temple of Heaven in Beijing as the main case because, as an extraordinary presence of ancient Chinese imperial sacrificial architecture, the Temple of Heaven preserves the exquisite architectural complex and embodies rich mythological symbolism and cultural significance. This research initially reviews the theoretical outcomes of mythology and architectural identity, investigating their specific contents, characteristics, and interactions. In this phase, the three main categories of criteria regarding the architectural identity manifestation are defined, which are spatial organization (mainly reflected in shape and form), semantic organization (tightly related to design concept and principle), and relationship with context (includes materials as one of the main parts). Next, according to the organized criteria, the research analyzes the Temple of Heaven's design concept, space organization, structural design, and special decoration, which reveals how Chinese mythology appears in its design, proving that the Temple of Heaven is not merely a physical structure but also an incarnation of sacred order. In the design process, mythology is translated and generated into the architectural language and subsequently applied to create the form with symbolic meaning. The research also compares the commonalities and differences between the Temple of Heaven and other mythologically influenced architecture worldwide. Afterwards, it discusses the Temple of Heaven's profound influence and mythology's broader effect on contemporary architectural design. Ultimately, the paper highlights and concludes the detailed approaches and roles in which mythology shapes and promotes architectural identity in the contemporary context.

Keywords: Mythology; architectural identity; architecture design; contemporary architecture; the Temple of Heaven.

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INTRODUCTION

Mythology has historically shaped various civilizations' cultural practices and architectural designs [1]. Mythology and symbolism have allowed architects to insert a deeper meaning for an indissoluble time. The power of ancient myths and symbols is controlled to create a bridge between the past and the future. Mythology in architecture is a deliberate strategy to design something timeless and universally relatable. In the urban environment, the physical structures and landscapes are manifestations intertwined with historical narratives and symbolic interpretations, reflecting the significance and beliefs of mythology [2]. The emergences of mythic symbolism in built environments gradually develop beyond mere visual appearance, which becomes the deliberate design philosophy that engages with essential dimensions of human perception and psychological thinking. Faced with the simultaneous pressures of rapid digital evolution and the complexities of cultural self-definition in our globalized era, modern architectural

professionals are progressively exploring the wealth of ancestral storytelling traditions. This exploration aims to create architectural forms that simultaneously preserve historical continuity and foster universal understanding across diverse cultural contexts.

The Temple of Heaven in Beijing, where the Chinese emperors of the dynasties of Ming and Qing offered sacrifices to heaven, prayed for a good harvest, and prayed for rain [3], is a prime example of this intersection. Through its architectural form, the Temple of Heaven embodies profound mythological concepts, which is why the research selected it as the dominant case study.

The site of the Temple of Heaven is located in Beijing, China. It is an ancient capital of China and also a famous historical and cultural city with a history of more than 860 years as a capital. Five dynasties, namely Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing, established their capitals here [4]. Designed and constructed in the epoch during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Temple of Heaven's layout and symbolism is deeply rooted in the Chinese cosmological principle of "Heaven and Earth", showing a harmonious balance between the celestial body and the land [5]. The design also reflects its time's broader cultural and religious beliefs, integrating mythology into its structure, function, and decoration, which generates a unique architectural identity.

The research intends to first analyze the concepts of mythology and architectural identity in theory, as well as their relations; then use the case of the Temple of Heaven to excavate the intrinsic connections between them; then through the investigation of mythology-related architecture in other countries, examines the universality of the connection and supplement the findings; finally, through the use of mythology in contemporary architecture, the research deduces the role and application of mythological themes and elements in contemporary architecture.

MYTHOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

Mythology

The definition of mythology is a collection of myths or stories that belong to a specific religious or cultural tradition, as a pivotal content through which ancient civilizations understood the world [6]. Myths often explain natural phenomena, human behavior, and cultural traditions, offering a narrative connecting the divine and mortal realms. The etymological is the most straightforward relation between mythology and architecture, such as the origins of the classical orders given by Vitruvius in the Ten Books on Architecture. Mythology may precede architectural artefacts chronologically and provide themes to them; however, architectural compositions are generators, models, or symbols for general mythology [7]. Architecture is a carrier of mythology that extends and spreads mythology's existence and development, it provides a tangible medium through which these mythological narratives are expressed and preserved [8].

Architectural Identity

Architectural identity refers to the distinct characteristics shaped by specific historical, cultural, economic, social, and environmental variables [9]. This information was finally translated into regional iconic architectural expressions such as the building's volume, façade, structures, interior, materials and other specific designs [10]. This translation makes architectural identity reveal the essence of architectural design and gives physical form to the creative ideas and concepts of the architects. Nowadays, because the cultural, economic, and technological transformations of most contemporary societies have been affected by the expression of architectural identity, studying it is more popular than ever [11].

For architectural identity, to define the essence deeply, demonstrate the characteristics in detail, and explore the intrinsic relationships logically, researchers proposed several models to illustrate major parameters that generate and influence architectural identity.

In 2013, Torabi and Brahman [9] listed effective factors in shaping the architectural identity with a model whose relevant parameters are: shape and form, general design principles, materials, relationship with context, temporal organization, semantic organization, and spatial organization. Besides, in 2014, Mahdavejand and Saadatjoo [12] also proposed a model in which the most effective factors can shape the architectural characteristics are: design concept, the shape and form, the construction technology, building materials, and relationship with the surrounding.

With the further arrangement and summarization of the mentioned influencing factors in these two models, a series of criteria can be formed for analyzing the specific cases deeply in the subsequent stage. The dominant categories are:

- Spatial organization (mainly reflected in the shape and form)

- Semantic organization (includes design concept and principle)
- Relationship with context (involves materials as one of the main parts)

Relations Between Mythology and Architectural Identity

Throughout history, many cultures have inserted mythology into their architectural practices, initially transforming the narrative and symbol of mythology into architectural language, appearing primarily in the spatial composition and detailed design, then forming their unique architectural identity. By incorporating mythological narratives into architectural design, architects create architectural artefacts that transcend functionality, giving spaces cultural meaning and special identity. This practice preserves historical continuity and deepens the connection between individuals and their cultural roots.

In this research, the analysis phase applies the above criteria constituted by the three categories (spatial organization, semantic organization, and relationship with context) to deeply analyse the architectural identity forming from mythology. This analysis focuses on the relations between mythology and architectural identity as well as the methods for shaping unique architectural identity through mythology; it provides the specific content for the framework generated by the criteria.

MYTHOLOGY OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

Chinese mythology is a rich collection of traditional stories and legends passed down through Chinese history. These myths encompass a wide range of narratives that explain the world's origins, natural phenomena, cultural practices, and the lives of deities, heroes, and mythological creatures. Chinese mythology is integral to Chinese culture, influencing the centuries of literature, art, religion, and philosophy [13].

The Temple of Heaven, located in the southeastern area of central Beijing, was constructed in 1420 during the dynasty of the Yongle Emperor in the Ming dynasty. It was later expanded and renovated during the Qing dynasty. This architectural complex was designed to facilitate the two most critical annual ceremonies performed by the emperor, considered the "Son of Heaven" and the intermediary between Heaven and Earth [14]. One of the ceremonies is the annual prayer for a good harvest, and the other is the winter solstice sacrifice to Heaven. Offering sacrifices to heaven is an essential part of the ancient Chinese sacrificial system, which aims to pray to heaven (the Emperor of Heaven) for peace and prosperity in the country and good weather. This ceremony is usually held in particular sacrificial sites such as the Temple of Heaven. The deity represents the lofty status of the Emperor of Heaven and is located at the highest point of the altar. These sacrificial ceremonies ensured harmony between the celestial and terrestrial realms, reflecting the Chinese cosmological principle of Yin and Yang and the Five Elements [15], often shown in Chinese cultural relics, literature, and artworks.

The general layout of the Temple of Heaven shows Chinese mythology by the approach of spatial organization. It's influenced by the concept of "The heaven is round, and the earth is square" [14]. In the layout (Figure 1), the overall spatial organization is circular in the northern part (representing Heaven) and square in the southern part (representing Earth), promoting the divine characteristic by the shape setting, which is an essential pragmatic way in the spatial organization approach. Moreover, the Temple of Heaven adopts a north-south symmetrical layout along the central axis, which conforms to the traditional Chinese concept of "the center of heaven and earth".

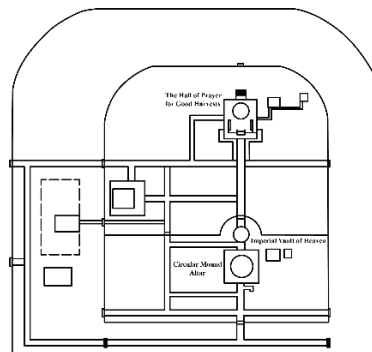


FIGURE 1. The layout of the Temple of Heaven. Source: Drawn by the author.

The architecture of the Temple of Heaven influenced by mythology uses a three-layer layout, symbolizing the three realms. The Temple of Heaven consists of three prominent parts: the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, which was used for plentiful harvests; the Circular Mound Altar, which was used for sacrifice; and the Imperial Vault of Heaven, which was used for worshipping god tablets [16]; forming a symbolic spatial sequence from the human world to the heavens. This hierarchical arrangement of ritual space is similar to the three-realm structure in Chinese mythology, which strengthens the sacredness of the emperor as the "Son of Heaven".

The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests (Figure 2) embodies the "human world", one of the iconic structures, is a triple-gabled circular building on a three-tiered marble base. It was constructed because emperors needed to pray for a bountiful harvest. The design of its interior space and primary structure (Figure 3) is closely related to ancient Chinese mythology, cosmology, and astronomical systems to embody the concepts of "harmony between man and nature" and "order of celestial phenomena." It uses semantic and spatial organization methods to associate the mythological content and present it in the expression of architectural space and structure. In particular, the number of pillars in the hall is closely related to many notions in mythology. For example, the four pillars in the inner circle symbolize the four seasons, which is in line with the "Four Symbols" system in Chinese mythology; the twelve pillars in the middle circle symbolize the twelve months and also echo the gods in charge of months and seasons in mythology, etc. The spaces formed from mythological concepts achieve the combination of the original construction principles and new design innovations, harmonizing the rational spatial composition and the thoughtful creation.

The design of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests emphasizes its divine characteristics mainly by enhancing the semantic organization in the design process: the hall's design incorporates numerous symbolic elements, such as blue tiles representing the sky, the application of dragon and phoenix intricately carved into the marble railings and painted on the wooden beams and ceilings of the temple structures [17]. Dragon is one prominent theme in Chinese mythology, symbolizing imperial power, strength, and good fortune, and phoenix is the other significant element in mythology and is often used in architecture, representing peace, prosperity, and the harmony of the cosmos. It's usually depicted alongside dragon, symbolizing the balance between yin and yang, as well as the unity of the emperor (dragon) and empress (phoenix). This idea is particularly essential in the decorative elements of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, highlighting the building's role as a bridge between Heaven and Earth [18].



FIGURE 2. Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

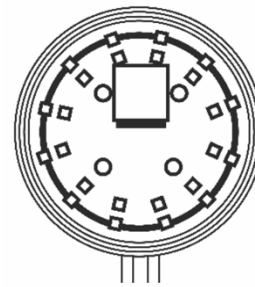


FIGURE 3. The plan of Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. *Source: Drawn by the author.*

The Circular Mound Altar (Figure 4) represents the "heaven". This altar, consisting of three tiers of marble stones (Figure 5) as the most significant manifestation, symbolizes the connection between the earthly realm and the heavens. In this structure, the interpretation and the manifestation of mythology is related to the semantic organization, extracting the specific notion to generate the design idea. According to Chinese mythology, the number nine represents holiness, immortality, and longevity; the number of stones in each tier is considered the most potent number and shows the supreme sovereignty of Heaven [19]. The myth of Pangu, which is said to have created the world by separating Heaven and Earth, is also symbolically represented in this structure, emphasizing the separation and harmony between Heaven and Earth. The harmonious unity of Heaven, earth, and man embodied in the architectural layout reflects the cosmic order formed after Pangu created the world.



FIGURE 4. Circular Mound Altar. *Source: Chen Jie, Tu Shuo Zhongguo Jianzhu (Pictorial of Chinese Architecture), p. 279.*

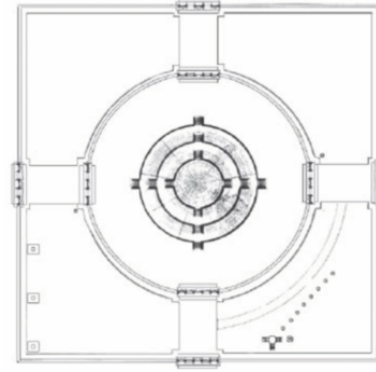


FIGURE 5. The plan of Circular Mound Altar. *Source: Zhang S. Beijing Central Axis: A Century of Images. Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press; 2020*

The Imperial Vault of Heaven (Figure 6) is located between the two. As a shrine, it stores tablets symbolizing the gods. It plays a transitional role, allowing the emperor to gradually complete the symbolic ascent from the "human world" to the "heaven" during the ceremony. It's an essential structure in the Temple of Heaven complex, which carries significant mythological and symbolic meanings. This smaller, circular building with a single-gabled roof houses the spirit tablets of Heaven and the emperor's ancestors, playing a crucial role in the imperial rituals of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Looking at the architectural layout of the Imperial Vault of Heaven (Figure 7), one can see that it uses spatial organization to express mythology in architectural design. The circular wall presents the cosmological concept of the round sky and the square earth. The architectural pattern is centered on the central axis symmetry layout. The north is the main hall (the main body of the Imperial Vault of Heaven), and there are three arches at the southern entrance, forming a "north-south central axis", highlighting the solemnity and ritual sense of the emperor's worship. The building has a strong enclosure, with three doors in the middle, which strengthens the closedness and sacredness of the "heavenly court".



FIGURE 6. The Imperial Vault of Heaven. *Source: Windmemories, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0, accessed March 25, 2025.*

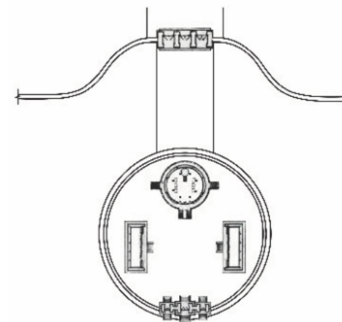


FIGURE 7. The plan of the Imperial Vault of Heaven. *Source: Drawn by the author*

Mythologically, the Imperial Vault of Heaven represents the emperor's role as the "Son of Heaven" and his duty to maintain harmony between the celestial and terrestrial realms. According to Chinese mythology, the emperor was considered the intermediary between Heaven and Earth. This role required him to conduct elaborate rituals to ensure the prosperity and stability of the empire [15]. One specific mythological reference connected to the Imperial Vault of Heaven is the legend of the Jade Emperor, the supreme deity in Daoist cosmology who rules over Heaven and Earth. The Jade Emperor is believed to oversee the order of the cosmos and the fates of all beings, a concept that mirrors the emperor's earthly responsibilities. The Imperial Vault of Heaven rituals were intended to honor these deities and seek their blessings.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ACROSS DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Many commonalities and differences can be seen when comparing the Temple of Heaven with other global mythologically influenced architectures. In this stage, the projects selected to be compared are the Greek Parthenon and the Egyptian pyramids, reflecting their respective cultures' mythological beliefs and cosmological understandings [20].

The Greek Parthenon is not merely a temple but also a symbol of Athens's divine favor and cultural supremacy, presenting the spirits of gods and heroes [21]. The ancient Greeks drew architectural inspiration from their vibrant mythology. The Greek Parthenon's architectural design was designed with great attention to proportion, symmetry, and artistic perfection, which was more aesthetic than ritual. The Greek Parthenon combines elements from the Doric and Ionic styles. Essentially a Doric peripteral temple, it features a continuous carved frieze borrowed from the Ionic style and four Ionic columns supporting the rear roof. The intricate frieze and pediment celebrate the victory of Athena.

Similarly, the Egyptian pyramids serve as monumental tombs for pharaohs, reflecting the ancient Egyptian belief in the afterlife and the soul's journey through the underworld [22]. The shape of the slope points to the sky, symbolizing that the pharaoh's soul rises along the slope to the realm of the sun god Ra to achieve deification. The internal structure of the building, such as the tomb chamber, antechamber, and passage, symbolizes the king's journey in the underworld. The tomb chamber represents the underworld, the antechamber symbolizes the land of dawn, and the passage is the path of the king's ascension. Therefore, the pyramid is not only a tomb but also a human exploration of sacred space, expressing mythological ideas through shape, orientation, and materials (such as the smooth white limestone shell symbolizing the sun's radiance). These architectural forms have influenced later generations, such as the symbolic meaning of monuments and skyscrapers, reflecting the pursuit of eternity and sacredness.

Despite these architectures sharing similar themes of divine connection and cosmological alignment, their manifestations are highly different, resulting from their varying history and cultural backgrounds and the different approaches to transforming mythological content into architectural design. Compared with these cases, in the concept stage, the Temple of Heaven emphasizes the harmony between heaven and earth more, demonstrating the Chinese worldview and its integration into architectural design. While in the design stage, the architectural designs for these selected cases concentrate on the different methods to fulfil the spatial organization and the connection with their local environments, such as the use of shapes, the Parthenon focuses on the arrangement of its main structures to form a special architectural identity; the Pyramids form a fantastic identity through the special shape design of the overall architecture appearance and the symbolic space inside; by contrast, the Temple of Heaven embodies its unique architectural identity through the combination of mythological geometric design of the general layout and the setting of the specific materials, colors, and decorations.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

The Temple of Heaven has had a lasting impact, particularly in China, where its design principles and symbolic elements continue to inspire modern and contemporary architecture.

One notable and famous example is the Beijing National Stadium (Figure 8), also known as the Bird's Nest, designed by architects Herzog and de Meuron for the 2008 Olympics. The stadium's semantic organization incorporates circular forms and structural elements which echo the Temple of Heaven's emphases on harmony, applying spatial organization to define the circular shape and using semantic organization to demonstrate the intrinsic meaning. Its spatial organization echoes the spatial experience of "changing scenery with every step" in Chinese gardens, which came from Chinese mythology and largely shapes the gardens' spiritual core and aesthetic conception. The audience walks through the surrounding stands and intricate corridors, gaining diverse senses of space. In addition, the use of red and white colors in the stadium's exterior facades reflects traditional Chinese symbolism.

Another example is the design of the National Center for the Performing Arts (Figure 9) in Beijing. Inspired by Chinese mythology and using the Temple of Heaven's architecture as its reference, the architecture's spatial organization (especially the dome-like shape) and semantic organization (particularly the reflective water pool) visually link to the ancient temple's circular layout [23] and further embody an Eastern aesthetic where reality and illusion coexist in harmony.



FIGURE 8. Beijing National Stadium.
Source: Arne Müsseler, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 de, accessed March 25, 2025.

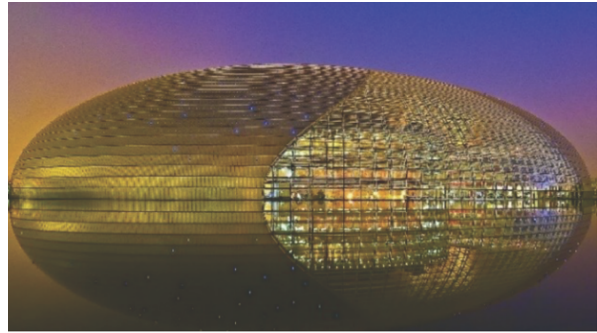


FIGURE 9. National Center for the Performing Arts.
Source: Francisco Diez, Flickr, CC BY 2.0, accessed March 25, 2025.

According to these two projects, contemporary architects select and use several architectural elements and design approaches from the Temple of Heaven to embody the mythological meanings, such as the circular and square forms, to symbolize nature in various contemporary projects. The design of the Temple of Heaven influences much contemporary architecture, not only in their spatial layout but also in symbolic designs. Moreover, by incorporating these ancient components, contemporary architects can create designs that inherit historical memory and cultural heritage while addressing the needs and aesthetics of nowadays.

THE IMPACT OF MYTHOLOGY ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE: SHAPING ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

Mythology continues to play a vital role in shaping contemporary architecture identity; mythology's elements are transferred into architectural languages and then inserted into architectural designs. These architectural designs influenced by mythology not only inherit the ancient culture but simultaneously, due to the mythological elements' abstraction, re-composition, and innovation in the design process, the process can form new special and even unique architectural characteristics. For example, the Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower and the Guangzhou Tower (Canton Tower) were inspired by mythology and subsequently utilized the processed mythological components to design their architecture more innovatively and aesthetically.

The architect of Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower (Figure 10) is Huancheng Jiang. He designs it with inspiration from two traditional Chinese mythologies: the macro concept of "Heaven and Earth" and the specific shape of the pearl. By utilizing the method of spatial organization, the tower appears to have the characteristics of a circular shape and special space.

The "pearl" in the project name symbolizes light and precious in Chinese mythology, while "oriental" represents the glory of oriental civilization. The tower features the pearl by using multiple spheres, which are said to represent "pearls falling onto a jade plate", which is an expression that comes from ancient Chinese mythology and is also frequently used in poetry to describe beautiful things or scenes, symbolizing nobility, elegance and harmony. This symbolic meaning is used in architectural design to convey aesthetic and cultural connotations. The vertical space of the tower represents the harmony of "heaven, earth, and man". The "space capsule" on the top is like the "Heavenly Palace", from which visitors can overlook the whole of Shanghai; the middle sightseeing floor is like the "human world", which is the main sightseeing floor and revolving restaurant; the space formed by the bottom and the ground square can be seen as the "hell" or "earth", with a showroom, exhibition space and multi-function hall inside, symbolizing the stability and tolerance of the "earth".

Huancheng Jiang also integrates modern engineering into the project. While spheres are arranged in a traditional and dynamic vertical sequence, creating a visual rhythm and a sense of ascension, metaphorically connecting the earth with the heavens, these spheres are constructed using modern materials and techniques. The structural use of steel and glass gives it a contemporary look, while the overall form and concept are steeped in mythological significance.



FIGURE 10. Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower. *Source: Gary Todd, Flickr, CC0, accessed March 25, 2025.*

Guangzhou Tower (Canton Tower) (Figure 11) is inspired by the image of the fairy in ancient Chinese mythology. The designers Mark Hemel and Barbara Kuit uses space organization to abstract and symbolize the shape from the fairy's posture to create elegant curves for the tower. The fairy's inspiration creates a light and moving appearance and conveys the aesthetic concept of traditional culture.

The design of the Guangzhou Tower also considers the concept of Feng Shui, the traditional Chinese knowledge about the environment and space layout. The design emphasizes the interaction and harmony between man and nature. The tower's location is on the banks of the Pearl River, promoting the relationship with context to echo the surrounding natural environment and urban landscape, reflecting the integration of heaven and man in the traditional culture shaped by Chinese mythology.

Although using mythological elements, Guangzhou Tower updates the material using contemporary design materials to adapt to the current context. The tower is built using structural steel, which offers high strength and durability and enables the complex, twisted aesthetic intention - a mythical fairy to be realized. The tower's facade uses a large area of glass curtain wall, providing excellent lighting effects and enhancing the building's avant-garde style and transparency. In this way, the relationship between architecture and context is developed, obtaining avant-garde features while inheriting mythology's aesthetic appearance and profound meaning.

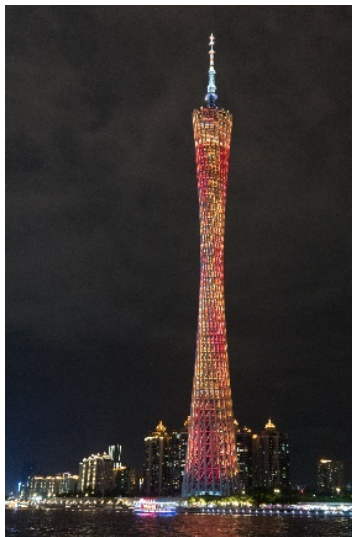


FIGURE 11. Guangzhou Tower. *Source: Shujianyang, Wikimedia Commons, CC0, accessed March 25, 2025.*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Grounded in this research, it's evident that mythology plays a pivotal role in forming architectural identity, and it will even be more significant in future development, which can resist the increasingly homogenous problems caused by globalization. It can provide the architecture's inner meaning and differentiate architectural identities with the intermediary of architectural language, transforming the mythology content into the specific architectural design. The mythology-based architectural design allows architects to connect values, history, and vision, bridging the gap between the tangible and the intangible.

In this research's initial literature review stage, especially the definition and characteristics of the architectural identity, a series of essential criteria is formed. It involves three main categories related to how to use architectural means to generate the architectural identity, which has a prominent effect guiding the subsequent research; they are:

- Spatial organization (mainly reflected in the shape and form)
- Semantic organization (includes design concept and principle)
- Relationship with context (involves materials as one of the main parts)

Based on these criteria, the research uses the Temple of Heaven as the main case, a typical example of mythology shaping architectural identity. The research excavates the approaches applied in the design of the Temple of Heaven, such as how to transfer mythological notions into the architectural language and then appear in the architectural design with mythological meaning and sacred atmosphere, which carry cultural identities and spiritual beliefs. The approaches involve three categories but enrich the specific content: axis distribution, spatial composition, symbolic elements, particular functions, etc. Afterwards, comparing the Temple of Heaven with other mythological architectures in different contexts (Parthenon and Egyptian pyramids), it can be found that although their cultural backgrounds are varied and the ways of translating mythological content into architectural design are diverse, they all reflect each civilization's yearning for the sacred. These ancient architectures constructed their unique architectural identities mainly by integrating mythology notions into semantic and spatial organization, reflecting their worldviews, beliefs, and social structures.

In contemporary architectural design, mythology still plays an essential role, providing architectural projects with symbolic and culturally continuous architectural identities, mainly using the three pivotal criteria above to shape and boost architectural identity. Contemporary architectures, such as the Beijing National Stadium and the National Grand Theater, can create new mythology-related architectural identities by reinterpreting mythological notions in semantic organization, which also influence the spatial organization of the design. Architectures such as the Shanghai Oriental Pearl Tower and the Guangzhou Tower also use semantic and spatial organization, applying mythological elements to express abstract but meaningful forms and spatial compositions. But at the same time, in order to match the surrounding environment and the new era, the designs apply avant-garde techniques and new materials to promote their connections with the local sites.

The research outcomes from these subsequent phases flesh out and enrich the three categories of the criteria: while the three categories are a pragmatic framework, the research outcomes provide specific and detailed content.

"Spatial organization" manifests an architecture's unique perception and spiritual qualities through the composition, structure, and interrelationship of spaces. It can be seen that the analyzed cases utilized the methods of defining the form and shape, establishing the axis and center, setting the hierarchical spatial sequence, coordinating open and closed space, designing the circulation, and strengthening the spirit of place, etc. to achieve spatial organization and further shape the fantastic architectural identities. "Semantic organization" conveys specific meanings, cultural information or symbolic connotations so that the building is functional and carries deeper semantics and identity recognition. It can be achieved by using symbolic symbols and elements, organizing spatial sequence and ritual design, and setting spatialization of cultural narratives. For example, the Temple of Heaven uses circular and square forms to represent Heaven and Earth, which is mirrored in contemporary architecture like the National Center for the Performing Arts, integrating traditional Chinese symbols into the design, especially the overall circular shape and the corresponding space. "Relationship with context" emphasizes promoting the interactions between architecture and its context. The Temple of Heaven emphasizes this method to ensure that architecture integrates tightly with its surroundings and enhances environmental suitability and cultural harmony. Shanghai Oriental Pearl and Guangzhou Tower also follow this method, which not only form harmonies with the surrounding environment but also apply avant-garde techniques and new design methods to suit their contemporary contexts.

In conclusion, mythology not only belongs to the past but is also an effective tool for shaping architecture in the contemporary era. By inheriting mythological elements in preserving historical architecture and innovating contemporary architecture, architects build a bridge between tradition and modernity, generate the architectural

identity in harmony with its surrounding environment, and maintain cultural significance and uniqueness. Globalization nowadays has led to the homogenization of architecture; however, applying local mythology in the design process provides a powerful way to shape and distinguish architectural identities and even enhances the connection between culture, space, and human experience.

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