TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S): AN INTERPLAY OF DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Huaqiao Heritage: Built Legacies of the Overseas Chinese in Guangdong Province

• Author(s) Name:
Kristen Kelly

• University or Company Affiliation:
Yenching Academy – Peking University; University of Pennsylvania

• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present in person (with/without a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):
This paper examines the influence and legacy of Overseas Chinese on the domestic architectural styles of Guangdong Province. Labor migration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a number of Chinese move abroad – establishing significant Chinatown communities throughout Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, and the United States. The economic prosperity of these ethnic enclaves allowed laborers to send remittances back to China to support their families, and led to the development of unique architectural aesthetics that proliferated in the Pearl River Delta in the late Qing and Republican Era. During this period of immigration, shifting dynamics in China and the United States contributed to new immigration policies in both countries, and the substantial population abroad meant that new ways of defining Chinese ethnic and political identities emerged in the Mainland. The Overseas Chinese therefore had a profound impact on both the physical and social landscape of their ancestral home.
The diaolou and qilou of Guangdong brought together traditional folk architecture and Western motifs, creating a hybrid style that epitomized the global scope of Guangdong’s diasporic community, and the information networks that were produced as a result of the region's transnational connections. These structures became a novel form of vernacular architecture, and today serve as a tangible legacy of the Overseas Chinese and their descendants. This paper provides a history of Chinese immigration from the Siyi Region with an emphasis on Taishan and Kaiping, and analyzes how the built heritage of the Overseas Chinese can be situated in a broader conversation of how Chinese labor migrants navigated liminal social and legal spaces.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Kristen Kelly is a recipient of the Yenching Academy Fellowship at Peking University, where she is currently completing her Master's degree in China Studies with a concentration in History and Archeology. Previously, she studied Urban Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where she conducted research on the Asian American communities in Philadelphia, the adaptive reuse of sacred spaces, and historic preservation efforts in Shanghai. Areas of current research interest include East Asian heritage conservation and ethnic enclave formation and community development.