

***Shi* in Architecture:
The Efficacy of Traditional Chinese Doors**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the concept of *shi* manifested in traditional Chinese architecture by examining the efficacy of the traditional Chinese house doors. Three connotations of the concept of *shi* derived from different philosophical schools of thought during the Warring States Period: the advantageous *shi*, the authoritative *shi* and the self-so-doing *shi*, are re-engaged as the theoretical framework for this study. The three categories of *shi* correspondingly shed light on the understanding of the craftiness in architectural constructions, the embodied cultural meanings in building elements and the aesthetics achieved by the artful arrangement of building elements. This study also further reveals the essential nature of *shi* as *weak* and *amorphous* in parallel with the weak ontology proposed by Gianni Vattimo. It is this weak and amorphous nature of *shi* that results in the complexity, diversity and richness of traditional Chinese house doors. This new perspective of examining architecture through the lens of *shi* also provides a way for looking at the future development of Chinese architecture beyond the limitations of internationalism yet within the realm of a critical local modernity.

Dedication

Dedicated to Sammy & Julie

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