

From Ritual City to Modern City: The City Space Transformation of Xi'an in the Early 20th Century

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Abstract : The urban layout of Xi'an city (the capital Chang'an in the Tang dynasty) was shaped by feudal etiquette, but this dominant factor was replaced by modern city planning during the period of the Republic of China. This makes Xi'an a representative case to explore the transformation process of Chinese cities in the early 20th century. By analyzing the contrast and connection between the historical texts of city planning and the realistic construction activities recorded by the maps and images, this paper reviews the transformation process of the urban space of Xi'an in the early 20th century and divides it into four phases according to important events that significantly impacted planning and construction activities. Based on this, the entire transformation of Xi'an's city planning and practices can be characterized by three aspects: 1) the dominant force of the city plan and construction changed with the establishment of modern city administrations; 2) the layout of the city was continuously broadened to meet the demand of modern economy and city life; and, 3) the ritual space was transformed into practical space for commercial and recreational activities.

Keywords : city space, the early 20th century, transformation, Xi'an city

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