"Zaire: President Mobutu Inaugurates People's Palace Built with Chinese Help," 1979. Reuters; British Pathé.

The Extra-State Effect of the People's Palace, Kinshasa, Zaire, 1973–1979

COLE ROSKAM

In May 1979, inaugural ceremonies were held for the People's Palace completed in Kinshasa, Zaire's capital (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC). The monument was designed and financed, and its construction co-managed, by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Accompanying news footage of the Palace's opening pageantry highlights that not one but two state actors were responsible for the building's production. A close shot of its main façade is foregrounded by two parallel lines of flags alternatively representing the two republics, PRC and Zaire. The scene cuts to Zaire's founding father, President Mobutu Sese Seko (1930–1997), né Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, clad in emblems of what V.S. Naipaul described as "his African chieftaincy": leopard-skin toque, Mao Zedong-inspired jacket, and elaborately carved walking stick.[1] A cutaway shot captures an adoring crowd of Kinshasa residents clapping and wildly waving their hands, held at bay by several armed soldiers. Mobutu cuts a ceremonial ribbon to polite applause from Zairian, Chinese, and other foreign representatives. He then ascends the building's main stairs, swinging his hardwood stick upward and balancing it vertically in his palm. Interior sequences include Mobutu dramatically gesturing for the audience to sit with a slight bow, followed by an awkwardly edited pan of the hall's silent, motionless onlookers. A choreographed group dance by Zairian performers is followed by a glimpse of Zhou Boping (周伯萍), Chinese ambassador to Zaire, watching impassively with an interpreter from the audience. Other foreign diplomats, including Chinese and Belgian officials, are also featured, each attentively facing the camera. End scene.

Both the building and reportage of its inauguration projected a distinctive merger of state actors on the broader urban landscape of Kinshasa—and the world at large. The building and its massive adjacent public square, glimpses of which can be seen in the accompanying newsreel, composed the first phase of a Chinese master plan for a new urban center completed several kilometers away from Kinshasa's historical, colonial-era center. Even today, the People's Palace continues to defy prevailing architectural and urban historical narratives that characterize Kinshasa's landscape as a "territorial palimpsest" of the

continuity between the city's colonial and postcolonial development.[2] Visual analysis of the city's colonial-era legislature building and the People's Palace may suggest some aesthetic affinities—both are extravagantly large, ceremonial edifices ostensibly commemorating state power in the Congo—but the Chinese-financed, Mobutu-championed structure departs from Kinshasa's architectural and urban precedent in ways that make it a distinctive iteration of stateness at work.[3]

There is, to begin with, the intense personifications of the state leaders involved in the building's complicated history. Mobutu, the inventor of Zaire and a self-defined "homme d' État" (man of the state), and Mao Zedong (1893–1976), Chairman and "Great Helmsman" (伟大舵手, *weida duoshou*) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), both aimed to commandeer, undermine, and dismantle the state apparatus to their own personal and ideological ends, albeit in different ways and to different effects. Mobutu was a Congolese military officer who came to power through two coup d'états, embarking on a bloody decades-long power struggle to mold Zaire in his singular image, expropriating financial and natural resources in ways that weakened the country's economy and prompted observers to describe his government as a cult, kingdom, and kleptocracy.[4] Mao helped to found the CCP in 1921, before earning his revolutionary credentials over the course of a decades-long campaign of guerrilla warfare against China's ruling Kuomintang (KMT) Party and its leader, General Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975). Following the PRC's founding on October 1, 1949, and Chiang's retreat to the island of Taiwan, Mao launched ambitious nation-building efforts rooted in a strident anti-statism, the belief that successful proletarian revolution would eventually lead to the demise of the state entirely.

Both leaders shrewdly capitalized on the circulation of images, objects, radio, television, and film to thread themselves into the spaces, minds, and lives of not only their respective nations and citizenry, but also the world's.[5] The People's Palace promised similar potential, namely, as a platform from which the two leaders could project Zairian and socialist Chinese society both in the image of their own politicized bodies and as the exclusive product of two state actors. Yet despite this personality cult, the building's design and construction was informed not simply by mutual autocratic tendencies or political ideologies, but also by pressures from a tangle of competing geopolitical interests, state rivalries, and contested relationships.

Mao and Mobutu meeting for the first time in Beijing. *Peking Review*, January 19, 1973.

By the mid-1970s, yearslong campaigns marked

by violent cultural nationalism in Zaire and the PRC had begun to undermine both Mobutu's and Mao's respective grips on power while weakening the financial and social health of their respective nations. Each country, already positioned against the Soviet Union, looked toward the United States for financial support at a time in which American leadership had also begun to reassess its position in the world in the wake of its own disastrous entanglement with Vietnam and growing concern regarding the consequences of Cold War–era brinksmanship.

Another important influence in this regard was Chiang's Republic of China (Taiwan). Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, KMT aspirations to retake mainland China and retain China's single seat in the United Nations reverberated through Taiwan's exportation of financial aid, architecture, and technical expertise to Mobutu's Zaire, and to other locations in decolonizing Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, often in alignment with American interests.[6] In 1971 the UN recognized the PRC as the only legitimate government of China, throwing Taiwan's already contested statehood further into question—a consequential geopolitical inflection point not merely for Zaire and the PRC, but for East Asia and the world at large.

These complex international political relations lie at the core of the history of the People's Palace, making it a material expression of nation-building where nationhood itself was fragile, if not in certain aspects absent altogether.[7] Two geopolitically disputed agents, whose respective statehoods were only partly recognized by the international community, resorted to architectural theatrics in order to carve out an alternative state effect that capitalized on a shared condition of contested statehood. As a stage that accommodated both personal image-making and broad geopolitical mass culture, the People's Palace contributed to a shell game of extra-state effects, derived from architecture, with its design- and construction-specificity, as well as other media.

This article situates the People's Palace in what may be considered a pocket of interstate space between three authoritarian regimes in Africa and Asia, the United States, and the Soviet Union. It locates this moment within the flux of a global war that was being waged on numerous political, economic, and ideological fronts with no discernible boundary or endgame. Historicized in these terms, the People's Palace offers new perspective on governance and its attending architecture just beyond normative models of the modern sovereign nation-state. As historian Partha Chatterjee has pointed out, the equation of statehood and stability pertains only to "the very peculiar historical conditions" of Western Europe and nowhere else in the world.[8] The People's Palace in contrast offered a state-making tool adapted to the continuing sovereign struggle experienced by the majority

of the world's population, simultaneously within and between regimes, and perpetually in transition.

Afro Asia, Mao, and the First Intermediate Zone

Originally derived from the Bandung Afro Asian Unity Conference in 1955, the term *Afro Asia* generally connotes a geographic and racial call to shared self-determination among those nations and people who found themselves marginalized by the new world order that emerged in the aftermath of World War II and the dawn of the Cold War. Most of the world, in fact, had little choice but to adapt to radical forms of re-territorialization and new impositions of sovereignty brought about by the tense bipolarity of the postwar era. Over the course of the late 1950s and 1960s, Afro Asia became associated with political movements toward decolonization, solidarity, and mutually beneficial cooperation championed by leaders such as Mao, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, among others, all of which aimed at consolidating and marshaling more than half of the world's population against the perceived threats posed by American and Soviet hegemony.

Mao Zedong was a central figure in this history—a towering revolutionary whose decision to break from the Soviet Union in 1960 prompted the weaponization and exportation of Mao's thought through books, images, objects, and buildings that inspired revolutionaries from India to Tanzania to Peru.[9] Of primary concern to Mao and CCP leadership was the specter of multiple Soviet- or American-led socialist and capitalist imperialisms—a superpower hegemony emboldened by nuclear weapons—and the existential threat it theoretically posed to the Chinese people.[10] Establishing a certain moral authority ostensibly on the part of a disempowered, marginalized global collective was particularly important to Mao's aims, as it theoretically enabled him to neutralize U.S. and Soviet power while dictating the terms by which subaltern forms of resistance would take place, where, and under whose command.

Zhou Anqi (周安琪) and Yuan Jiqing (袁继清). "American imperialism is the most fiendish enemy of world peace!" (美帝国主义是世界和平最凶恶的敌人!), 1960. PC-1965-001, chineseposters.net, Private collection.

Constructing such collectivity, in turn, required the demarcation of a conceptual space, or *intermediate zone* (中间地带; *zhongjian didai*), between superpowers within which the PRC could tacitly exert its own interstate custodianship while publicly claiming the sphere's joint management by the world's oppressed, nonaligned majority. Mao first conceptualized these ideas to the American journalist Anna Louise Strong in August 1946 as a "vast zone which includes many capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. . . . I believe it won't be long before these countries come to realize who is really oppressing them, the Soviet Union

or the United States."[11] Victimization, which had proved a formative mode of transforming individualized experiences into shared identity during the cultural construction of the young Chinese nation, also became central to the PRC's international outreach efforts.[12] By the early 1960s, narratives of China's own historical exploitation at the hands of imperialist foreign powers were deployed to effectively differentiate the PRC and its revolutionary bona fides from those of the Soviet Union and the United States—and, by extension Taiwan.

Early visualizations of such conceptual space can be found in socialist Chinese artwork, which aided in creating both a representational language of solidarity and a conceptual common ground between the PRC and potential allies in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.[13] A series of state-commissioned propaganda posters printed between 1960 and 1965, for example, showed pictorial variations of an empowered global majority mobilized against an embattled United States. One 1960 poster by Zhou Anqi (周安琪) and Yuan Jiqing (袁继清), "American imperialism is the most fiendish enemy of world peace!" (美帝国主义是世界和平最凶恶的敌人！ *Mei diguo zhuyi shi shijie hepingde zui xiong'e de diren*), consists of a circle of multiethnic fists enclosing the U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower, who cowers as he holds a suitcase labeled "warmongering" (备战; *beizhan*) and a bomb marked "invasion" (侵略; *qinlüe*). A 1965 poster designed by Lu Shaoquan (陆绍权) titled "American imperialism is encircled ring upon ring by the people of the world" (美帝国主义在全世界人民的重重包围之中; *Mei diguo zhuyi zai quan shijie renminde chongchong baowei zhi zhong*) captures an armed crowd of interracial soldiers, farmers, and workers angrily prodding a bandaged and bloodied President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Bomb in hand, Johnson flails about in an unidentified body of choppy water.

In their portrayal of the global majority's mobilization around a common interest and enemy, these representations also convey the internationalization of Mao's ideological aims without resorting to the

Lu Shaoquan (陆绍权). "American imperialism is encircled ring upon ring by the people of the world" (美帝国主义在全世界人民的重重包围之中), 1965. PC-1965-001, chineseposters.net, Private collection.

acquisition of physical territory itself. Rather, each image's angry, global mob is separated from their shared American oppressor by indistinct, neutral patches of white and beige suggesting the bodily production of space by sheer solidarity, implicitly mustered by socialist China.[14] Atomic anxiety also figures prominently in this regard, insofar as it, too, helped to bind the PRC and its potential intermediate allies together in grim, mutually beneficial resistance.

Across the range of socialist Chinese artistic production from the era, several posters stand out for their merging of Mao's iconography, sloganeering, and the world's global majority within a specific, physical context. In particular, one 1964 poster titled "Night Festival" (节日之夜; *Jieri zhi ye*), features a portrait of Mao hoisted atop a wave of nonwhite bodies, marching through Tiananmen Square and seemingly propelled forward by the architectural bulwark of Beijing's Great Hall of the People itself. A frail Uncle Sam, alone and cornered by an angry world majority, clutches a single A-bomb. A series of balloon-tethered streamers hail Mao, the CCP, and the PRC.

Completed just five years prior to the poster's production, the presence of both the Great Hall of the People and Tiananmen Square signal the emergence of a physical template with the potential to spatialize the power of the world's proletariat—again, mustered by the PRC itself—to distinctive, concentrated geopolitical effect. Despite obvious compositional and stylistic influences derived from China's pre-1949 absorption of the Beaux Arts and Stalin-era Soviet design, both the building and its adjoining square were designed to re-center the capital and the country at large around the people through massive spaces that signified an openness and visibility largely based on physical scale itself. As the location for the National People's Congress, the Great Hall comprised a massive assembly hall for 10,000 people and thirty-four regional halls named after the country's thirty-four provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. Collectively, these spaces represented—and stabilized—the political geography of the young socialist Chinese nation.[15]

"Night Festival" (节日之夜), 1964. Jean-Yves Bajon, *Les années Mao: une histoire de la Chine en affiches, 1949–1979*.

The adjacent Tiananmen Square was the world's largest open plaza, spanning forty-four square hectares. It could hold up to 600,000 people, primarily for national holidays, in unprecedented displays of Chinese nationalism and meticulous logistical command unmatched by either the PRC's erstwhile Soviet mentor or its rival Taiwan.[16] By the early 1960s, all of the PRC's cities, towns, and villages boasted of large

public squares modeled on Tiananmen, and within which such politicized public spectacles could take place. Over the same period, the political intentions of these spectacles expanded to include government-endorsed rallies against the PRC's external enemies for perceived injustices—the U.S. presence in Vietnam, for example.[17] Linking these spaces and activities together was the ideological alchemy of demonstration itself, or "the pervasive theatricalization of everyday life, evident in all varieties of mass actions, public spectacles, demonstrations, and parades."[18]

Acts of demonstration, which were instrumental both to the production of early Soviet society and the political transformations of late imperial and early republican China, underwent additional adaptation in relation to the bodily politics and ideological righteousness of socialist China.[19] Through the ideological framing of the Chinese people themselves via image and space, CCP leaders transformed the ostensive qualities of demonstration—showing, pointing out, or exhibiting—into embodied spectacles of mass empowerment.[20] Various forms of media, in fact, productively blurred the physical reality of these spaces and the ideological rhetoric that enlivened the people gathered within them. Indeed, although the image of the Great Hall of the People in "Night Festival" seemingly locates the charged multinational rally in Beijing, the lack of the PRC's emblematic five golden stars on all the red flags carried by the angry parade arguably recasts the scene with a kind of Maoist-infused heterotopic ambiguity. The resulting representation offers a socialist Chinese blueprint for proletarian political action that could be enacted and projected both domestically and abroad.

Armed with an arsenal of artistic and architectural signifiers, in late 1963 to early 1964, Mao also began to reconceptualize the international zone into two parts, tellingly named "intermediate." "One part," he proposed, "consists of the independent countries and those striving for independence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and may be called the first intermediate zone." The second part consisted of the whole of Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and other capitalist countries, all of whom could alternatively exploit and oppress colonial populations while also being subjected to American imperialism.[21] Soviet "revisionism," meanwhile, was seen as "violat[ing] the interest of the people of the Soviet Union and all other socialist countries and cater[ing] to the needs of U.S. imperialism." Amid the potential revolutionary terrain identified within and between competing American and Soviet spheres of influence, Africa figured prominently as "both the center of the anticolonial struggle and the center for East and West to fight for control of the developing world."[22]

Exterior of Main Façade of Great Hall of the People, with Tiananmen Square in the foreground. *Architectural Journal*; Jianzhu xuebao (建筑学报), 9–10, 1959.

Demonstration Effects

More of the power of architecture and design was soon leveraged, in implicit coordination with Mao's shifting rhetoric, as Premier Zhou Enlai embarked on a state visit of ten independent African countries between December 1963 and February 1964. The first tour by any high-ranking Chinese Communist leader in Africa, Zhou's outreach coincided with a series of technical cooperative agreements brokered between the PRC and various African nations for long-term, low- to zero-interest loans to support Chinese-designed and -financed construction in Africa. These projects included not only buildings but also infrastructure, such as textile mills, factories, bridges, demonstration farms, stadiums, and conference or legislative halls, also known as "people's palaces" (人民共, *Renmingong*) or "friendship halls" (友谊宫, *youyigong*). The work was to be designed by Chinese state-run design institutes, who largely used domestic templates adapted to the climatic, material, and site-specific contexts within which these structures were to be constructed. Selected architects were often sent into the field to conduct preliminary site analysis, followed by groups of technicians tasked with realizing such work in concert with local partners. Such work, CCP officials and architects alike argued, constituted a mutually beneficial kind of technical and material assistance that stood in contrast to the more technologically sophisticated but financially onerous aid packages offered by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other funding partners.[23]

The era's rhetorical emphasis on solidarity and empowerment still echoes in recent scholarship regarding shifts in the nature of socialist Chinese diplomacy. Architecture here is usually described as being part of a transition to soft power: from the export of "armed struggle" to more "pragmatic" and "effective" forms of Chinese "foreign aid architecture," through technical and design-specific expertise, building materials, and construction equipment.[24] Yet claims of architecture's neutrality and cosmopolitan sensitivities sit uneasily within Mao's radical language and imagery and the role of Taiwan, to say nothing of Zhou's pledges to assist "revolutionary struggles" throughout the African continent. Several African leaders responded nervously to such oratory, dependent as they were on multiple forms of foreign aid.[25]

What might appear to be pragmatism can instead be read as a strategic broadening of PRC support through architecture as political media. The dispersal and diversification of disaggregated design professionals, the individualized circulation of socialist Chinese architects, the design and construction of buildings and physical objects—all were intended to have new and distinctive intermediary effects. The complicated political and spatial history of Zaire supports this corrective. Formerly

known as the Belgian Congo (1908–1960), the Republic of Congo (Léopoldville) (1960–1964), the People's Republic of Congo (1964–1965), and the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa (1966–1971), Zaire's postcolonial nationhood very much depended on its relationship not only to Taiwan and the PRC, but also to Belgium, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union, among other state players. These relationships were also significant to the People's Palace's production.

Taiwan enjoyed diplomatic relations with the Belgian Congo prior to its independence as the Republic of Congo Léopoldville on June 30, 1960. Both the PRC and Taiwan recognized the new Congolese government, but only Taiwan was invited to formalize diplomatic relations with the new nation. Congo Léopoldville was one of the most prosperous in sub-Saharan Africa at the time of its independence, with abundant natural resources, particularly copper. Politically, however, governance was a challenge in a country roughly equivalent in size to Western Europe, or three times the size of Texas, and home to approximately 200 separate ethnic tribes and more than 250 distinctive languages. Periodic uprisings and unrest were common throughout Congo Léopoldville postindependence, with pockets of resistance led by such figures as Laurent-Désiré Kabila continuing to flare up for decades.

In 1964, with the tacit support of the United States, Congolese minister of agriculture Albert Kalonji-Ditunga traveled to Taiwan to sign a technical cooperation agreement to send a Taiwanese agricultural team to Congo to assist the country in developing domestic rice cultivation. The PRC, meanwhile, was providing financial and military support to an estimated 200 Congolese guerrillas from multiple rebel factions.[26] That summer, one PRC-backed rebel faction successfully toppled the government to temporarily establish the People's Republic of Congo, delaying Taiwan's aid mission and prompting Mao to voice his support for the new African country—his first ever public endorsement of a specific African country's leadership.

A specific visual grammar accompanied these events. In alignment with Mao's announcement, and less than one year after Zhou's Africa tour, the PRC circulated a propaganda pamphlet titled *In Support of the People of the Congo (Léopoldville) against U.S. Aggression*. In many respects, the leaflet echoed the visual language of PRC propaganda posters then in circulation, though its fiery rhetoric was accompanied by photographic evidence of hundreds of thousands of Chinese residents gathered within the country's largest public squares to protest the imperialist injustices inflicted on the Congolese people. This includes Tiananmen Square, where 2.2 million people gathered in front of the Forbidden City and the Great Hall of the People, the northwest corner of which is just visible. Organized demonstrations purportedly lasted for

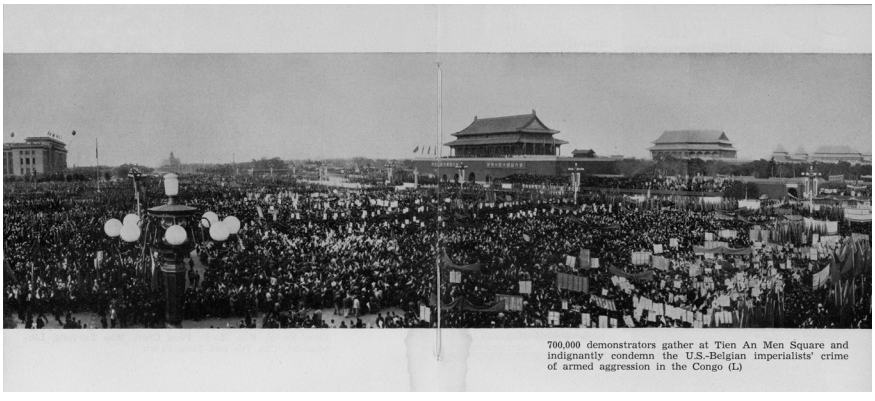
three days; besides Beijing, 8.8 million people also gathered in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, and Kunming. Several images featured armed militias formed by individual citizens, seemingly ready to defend a country they had never visited, and people they had never met.

Designed and printed in English to circulate beyond the PRC's national boundaries, the pamphlet conveyed not only the militaristic speed with which the PRC's masses could be mobilized, but the unbridled commitment of individualized Chinese citizens to the bonds of Afro Asia kinship and shared struggle, seemingly independent of the state itself.[27] Through their international circulation to allies and enemies alike, these demonstrations of revolutionary fervor transformed the PRC's monumental squares from municipal- or national-scale public spaces into images of intermediation between Beijing and Léopoldville. It was within this space, and by being visualized through PRC propaganda posters and pamphlets, that coordinated revolutionary action could coalesce. The collective bodies on display, particularly those armed with weaponry, were essential to such messaging, actively militarizing these spaces through their own physical presence, ready to intervene in Congo's fight for freedom if necessary.

Yet stable statehood remained elusive, despite the PRC's emboldened enthusiasm for Congo's new government. In November 1965, and with the financial and military assistance of the United States, General Joseph Mobutu wrested control over a portion of the country from its short-lived, Mao-backed government. He renamed the nation the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa. Soon after, in 1966, the first team of ten Taiwan experts arrived in Kinshasa for their delayed agricultural mission as part of Taiwan's Project Vanguard (先鋒計畫, *Xianfeng jihua*), an American-supported international agricultural aid program that dispatched 1,239 technical experts in twenty-seven countries.[28] Their work initially consisted of "assisting" with cultivation of rice, corn, cotton, and sugarcane through the construction of an agricultural-industrial zone in Nsele, outside Kinshasa.[29] By 1970, however, and purportedly at Mobutu's urging, Taiwanese technicians had expanded their demonstration farm into a lavish compound featuring a conference hall, residences, restaurants, tennis courts, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Intended to host the

Top: "The capital's militia shout, "U.S. imperialism, get out of the Congo (Leopoldville)'" *In Support of the People of the Congo (Leopoldville) against U.S. Aggression* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964). Special Collections & Archives, Hong Kong Baptist University Library.

Bottom: "700,000 demonstrators gather at Tien An Men Square and indignantly condemn the U.S.-Belgian imperialists' crime of armed aggression in the Congo." *In Support of the People of the Congo (Leopoldville) against U.S. Aggression* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964). Special Collections & Archives, Hong Kong Baptist University Library.



700,000 demonstrators gather at Tien An Men Square and indignantly condemn the U.S.-Belgian imperialists' crime of armed aggression in the Congo (L)

country's National Party Congress, the complex included an imperial-styled pagoda, ceremonial archway, and courtyard structure, also at Mobutu's request.

On the one hand, the project's imperial Chinese aesthetics seemed to respond to the KMT government's ongoing struggle with the PRC and its perceived cultural authority over China's history.[30] That the production of such an overt display of architectural "Chineseness" was realized in the service of fulfilling Mobutu's own political fantasy confused the presumptive sources and impulses of state authority on display, however. For Taiwan, in fact, the desired state effects of such work lay not in its cultural signification, per se, but in the demonstrable value of Taiwanese expertise and skilled labor. American-friendly press outlets had begun to contrast this expertise from what they framed as the PRC's "large prestige projects" which, as these media pointed out, had begun to materialize around the African continent with PRC financial and technical support.[31]

In fact, both the PRC and Taiwan took visible displays of Chinese labor as pivotal to their competing political missions. Taiwan's limited population and resources necessitated a relatively small, nimble deployment of selected technicians that emphasized the "maximal participation" by the host country. Mobutu himself spoke to these qualities, praising the Taiwanese technicians as "people who know only hard work instead of filing reports."[32] The limits of Taiwan's relatively small labor pool and American-managed financial resources occasionally resulted in counterproductive imagery and reportage as well. For example, forced local laborers and prisoners were assigned to work on demonstration projects when they could not be fully staffed by Taiwanese or willing local workers.[33]

By contrast, PRC deployments of architecture and infrastructure, completed at varying scales and to ranging degrees of technical complexity, evinced a broader semiotic framework for physical expressions of a global community facing the challenges of fluctuating state power. Like the demonstration imagery circulating via PRC propaganda art, PRC architectural exports derived their meaning not from their conceptual or physical origins in the socialist Chinese nation, per se, but from the relations they established between nations. Abundant, disciplined, and self-effacing socialist Chinese labor offered an embodied connective tissue binding these projects to and between the various settings in

Nsele Pagoda, ca. 1970s. Kinshasa Then and Now; http://kosubaawate.blogspot.com.

which they were produced.

Among the dozens of architectural projects initiated by the PRC across Africa in the wake of Zhou's diplomatic trip, two conference halls figure as particularly relevant to the distinctive, bodily registers of state formation taking shape between the PRC and its allies. The first, a People's Palace, designed by Chen Deng'ao (陈登鳌), Wang Rongshou (王荣寿), and members of the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design (北京市建筑设计研究院; Beijing shi jianzhu shejiyuan; BIAD), was completed in July 1967 in Conakry, Guinea. A design team led by Wang Dingzeng (汪定曾) of the Shanghai Institute of Architecture Design (上海建筑设计研究院; Shanghai jianzhu sheji yanjiuyuan) was tasked with completing another hall in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1976. Both projects feature an array of public facilities for the practice of a politics of visibility, including conference halls, theaters, and performance rooms for large-scale social gatherings. The Conakry project stands out as the closest to the People's Palace in Kinshasa, due in part to its design origins within BIAD and the prototypical model from which both were derived, namely, the Great Hall of the People and its adjacent public square.[34]

The bodies and collaborative work ostensibly required to realize these projects across states distinguish their architectural value from other acts of nation-building, however. In 1976, Sudanese writer Ali Abdalla Ali described this phenomenon as "the Chinese Demonstration Effect."[35] They included physical demonstrations of discipline, honesty, self-denial, and sacrifice exhibited by individual Chinese workers on site, coupled with the "strong feeling of equality" evident between Chinese and Sudanese workers as each carried bricks, mixed cement, or painted walls in an "unwritten working language" particular to the act of building itself.[36] "It is not the physical aspect of their aid that is important," reasoned Ali, "but the effect they leave on those who work with them."[37]

As individual, anonymous agents of the state, socialist Chinese workers contributed an additional degree of intermediary technics to the conjoined acts of architectural making and nation-building on display in Conakry and Khartoum. Their physical exertion lent material credence to the revolutionary potential of intermediation itself—socialist Chinese and foreign bodies working in tandem, theoretically unmediated by the state, in pursuit of collective liberation and a new world order.

Chen Deng'ao, Wang Rongshou, and members of the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design. People's Palace, Conakry, Guinea, 1967. Photograph courtesy of Yeni Yakpo.

Mao, Mobutu, and the People's Palace

To return to the building where this article began. It was between two demonstrable Chinese models of discipline and reliability that Mobutu effectively triangulated his own state interests between 1971 and 1973, eventually leading to the construction of Kinshasa's People's Palace. In April 1971, just six months prior to Taiwan's removal from the United Nations, Mobutu traveled to Taiwan with a trailing entourage including thirty-two- and twenty-two-person press corps—the largest official mission by an African nation to Asia since World War II.[38] Congo was subsequently one of fifteen African countries to vote against the PRC's admission to the United Nations on October 25, 1971. Just nine months later, however, Mobutu switched his support to the PRC. In the interim, Mobutu also changed his country's name to Zaire, purportedly to cleanse the nation of its remaining colonial vestiges.

In January 1973, Mobutu made his first visit to Beijing, sitting down with Mao to discuss Mobutu's previous pro-American, anti-China behavior and Mao's efforts to overthrow Mobutu's government.[39] During his tour, Mobutu was also introduced to the choreographed spectacle of socialist China's mass mobilization. Mobutu returned to Beijing again in December 1974, at which point he purportedly asked Zhou Enlai if the PRC could help build one in Kinshasa. Zhou immediately agreed, and Mobutu returned to Zaire with a 30-year, no-interest 100-million USD loan, including Chinese assistance for the design and construction of a new urban master plan for Kinshasa, which included the People's Palace, a national museum, and national stadium.[40]

Scholars have argued that exposure to China's extensive state-controlled architectural theatrics informed Mobutu's own *Recours à L'Authenticité* (Recourse to Authenticity) cultural nation-building project, elements of which were in fact launched prior to his travels to Beijing. Nevertheless, it is clear that Maoist society made an impression and would shape his understanding of how forms of "invisible governance" could materialize through cultural production such as dance, music, fashion, and architecture.[41] The extravagant multimedia campaign was designed to further consolidate Mobutu's authority over the country by compensating for the absence of unifying national traditions and separation from precolonial cultural practices in Congo through the invention of new practices.[42] It proved consequential to solidifying his contentious grasp on power insofar as it recentered Zaire's political ideology around expressions of so-called authentic African values, including theater, literature, music, and dance, even as Mobutu also sought greater exposure to the global economy.[43]

Buildings also proved important to the L'Authenticité campaign.[44] More than physical monuments to Mobutu himself, however, such work

facilitated the coordination of several large-scale, internationally televised entertainment and sports spectacles that shrewdly commandeered notable Black Americans—James Brown, B.B. King, the Spinners, and the "Rumble in the Jungle" heavyweight boxing championship between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali—for Mobutu's political gain.[45] The boxing event itself extrapolated a live, localized sporting experience to an international television audience of an estimated 1 billion people worldwide, effectively cementing Mobutu's own persona as an international expression of Zairian statehood itself and exceeding the PRC's command in at least one form of mass media.[46]

In late 1974, BIAD architects Zhu, Lin, and Qi traveled to Kinshasa to undertake preliminary site studies for Zaire's People's Palace, eventually producing plans for a 37,000-square-meter, four-story structure fronted by thirty-two 22-meter white marble columns. Compositionally and programmatically, the building adhered to its architectural antecedents, with a central 3,501-seat auditorium and adjacent conference hall, equipped for 470 representatives with simultaneous interpretation in seven languages. Certain qualities also resonated with the aesthetics of Kinshasa's existing, colonial-era architecture, such as its Palace of the Nation, home to Congo Léopoldville's first independent congress. Yet the Chinese-financed and designed building, like the existing French scheme it had replaced, was intended to formally eclipse Kinshasa's historical colonial core through the initiation of a new downtown for the city.[47]

Technical equipment and building materials were imported from the PRC, though materials and decoration were also purportedly provided by all of Zaire's eight regions and capital city. The building, its accompanying public square, parking lot, and landscaping covered a total area of 18 hectares—the single largest architectural project in China's aid history to the African continent. A physical testament to the domestic narrative promoted by CCP leaders, it seemed to evidence the PRC as both a technological advanced benefactor and an equal partner committed to producing the kind of intermediary spaces conducive to mutually beneficial diplomatic exchange and economic development for Zairians and Chinese.

As construction began in November 1975, however, political circumstances both in Zaire and the PRC had already begun to shift in ways that threatened to disrupt the shared vision of physical and political cooperation taking place. That same month, for example, Mobutu marshaled Zairian troops to invade Angola at the behest of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, discrediting Mobutu's efforts to craft Zaire's image around anticolonialism and African autonomy while damaging the PRC's own reputation in the region. Over the course of late 1976

and 1977, Zairian leaders watched with curiosity as the PRC embarked on its own convoluted process of "démaotisation" in the wake of Mao's passing through further engagement with the United States and Japan.[48] Despite each country's uncertain ideological realignment, Zairian and Chinese leaders continued to publicly express loyalty to the other. Visible performances of diplomatic commitment were also maintained, including military training, medical exchanges, agricultural initiatives, and the ongoing construction of the People's Palace itself.

Construction of the People's Palace was significantly underway on September 1, 1978, when China's new ambassador to Zaire, Zhou Boping, arrived in Kinshasa to facilitate the restabilization of relations between the two countries. The joint Chinese-Zairian construction team, overseen by the PRC's National Construction Committee, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform, and Zaire's Construction Bureau, included over 3,000 Zairian workers and 5,000 Chinese technicians, the largest such group in the country at the time. Despite challenges posed by an outbreak of war in the country's Shaba region, purportedly by Cuban, East German, and Soviet-backed forces, Chinese workers labored tirelessly next to their Zairian counterparts—"side by side under the scorching sun and in the pouring rain"—to complete their work in time for the twelfth anniversary of the founding of Zaire's People's Revolutionary Movement Party.[49] Couching the building in these terms helped foreground ideological entwining of Zairian and Chinese bodies in the arduous process of state production itself. The construction site of the People's Palace quickly became a required stop on the Chinese diplomatic circuit. In January 1979, the delegation of Vice Premier Li Xiannian (李先念) visited the construction site, where they were welcomed by groups of young Zairian men and women who sang and danced, along with teams of Chinese technicians and workers standing in formation on the steps of the building. At a subsequent press conference, Vice Premier Li lauded the African people for solving their own problems, opposing all external interference, and waging "an unremitting struggle against the aggression, subversion, control, and bullying of hegemonism."[50]

At the building's inauguration, held on May 19, 1979, Mobutu, Zhou, and a full Chinese delegation celebrated the monument as a "symbol of Sino-Zairese cooperation" and their peoples.[51] Guests were treated to Zairian songs and dances and tours through the main assembly hall, international conference hall, banquet hall, cinema, and nine regional halls, each symbolizing Zaire's eight provinces and its capital city, and reminiscent of the political geographical semiotics embedded within Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Six engineers (four Chinese, two Zairian) were awarded medals for their contributions to the building's construction.

Images of the building's interior halls reveal architectural features designed primarily to accommodate Mobutu's self-aggrandizing and nation-building efforts with decorative and technological features necessary not only for the kind of theater, oration, and dancing demanded by his L'Authenticité campaign, but emblematic of socialist China's modest reliability.

Amid these intermediate architectural manifestations of stateness, however, a new spatialization of power, and a new semiotics were underway. Later that day, the visiting Chinese delegation traveled from the People's Palace to the mining site of the world's largest diamond production company, Bakwan Mining; open-pit and aboveground mines belonging to Zaire Ore in Koluvic; the Inga Hydroelectric Power Station Dam; and the Diamond Mineral Processing and Valuation Center in Kinshasa. Months earlier, Zhou had also made a visit to Lubumbashi, the capital of Shaba Province, where he visited Shaba's copper reserves, which were estimated at the time to hold 25 million tons of raw copper. It was, in fact, Shaba copper, rolled by the Lubumbashi Copper Rolling Plant to cover an area of more than 4,500 square meters, that comprised the People's Palace roof. Other smaller mines in the area were known for producing zinc, cadmium, cobalt, and tin. Upon his arrival in Zaire less than one year earlier, Zhou had described the country as "the 'world's raw material warehouse'"; months later, standing on the edge of a 20-kilometer open-pit mine, he marveled at the operation of "huge mining machines," backhoes, and dump trucks "speeding back and forth." All unique products and technologies with the potential to support what Zhou identified as China's own recently launched "modernization movement" and the new architectural modes of technical governance it would require.[52]

Effecting the State

Returning to the inaugural ceremony of the People's Palace after this analysis yields new insight and a broadened perspective on the staging of stateness. In the performance and its accompanying media, a range of individualized responses, emotions, and sensibilities are effecting the state itself. Yet the architectural organization of these relations and their anticipated effects are taking place amid consequential changes to the underlying geopolitical considerations that propelled the project forward in the first place. Over the course of the 1980s, and the subsequent end of the Cold War, new and consequential pressures were applied to the politics of architectural production that further altered the particular stateness on display.

Ambassador Zhou, subsequently reflecting on his own diplomatic experiences in Zaire, lamented that the PRC-


Le Président-Fondateur a inauguré le Palais du Peuple

(Photos F. Modeko)

Réflexion sur un anniversaire

La délégation chinoise reçue ...

Elima - 8

Dimanche 20 mai 1979

"Le Président-Fondateur a inauguré le Palais du Peuple." ***Elima*****, May 20, 1979, 8. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.**

Zaire alliance was too easily forgotten. Mobutu had rightfully attacked Western multiparty systems as "political acrobatics," he argued, and Zaire's "national conditions" were better reified by the People's Palace, its showy monumentality, and the Sino-Zairian alliance it signified.[53] The Palace also showed how the PRC could apply its own forms of coercion to consequential political effect, besting its Taiwanese rival through demonstrable, empathetic acts of construction. In 1983, the PRC forgave the remaining $42.3 million of its original $100 million USD loan to Zaire—another performative gesture of state cooperation that did not disrupt the completion of the PRC's original master plan for Kinshasa, the key architectural components of which have been or remain in the process of completion. Coincidentally, the PRC currently owns or holds stakes in fifteen of the largest copper and cobalt mines in the DRC.[54]

If, as argued by Timothy Mitchell, the nation-state is the paramount structural effect of the modern technical era, more architectural-historical attention must be paid to effects that may diverge from the normative standards by which buildings are understood to contribute to nation-building.[55] For those states outside Euro-American paradigms of power, other architectural logics are designed around and informed by the uncertainties of sovereignty. Of these, Zaire's People's Palace provided one model—an architectural origin point for a complex, multilayered economic and military relationship, where multiple historical and current states overlap in their effects.

Buildings like the People's Palace are difficult to categorize in terms of standard architectural historical narratives, because they remain informed by sets of still-unfolding realities specific to the postwar liberal world order: ideological energization and exhaustion, territorial contestation, questioned political legitimacy, resource extraction, social instability, kleptocratic ruin, and cultural disparagement that continue today. In Kinshasa, decades of chronic corruption, violence, and political instability have left the city caught in what Filip de Boeck and Marie-Francoise Plissart identify as "a crisis in meaning," with fiction and fact blurred to the point of bleak architectural irony. One inhabitant of an old, dilapidated shack refers to his dwelling as "the people's palace," which the authors recognize as a double-coded acknowledgment of the PRC-supported building.[56] Patrimonial forms of power arguably remain the most effective means of constructing community in such a context, producing what Bertrand Badie has described as "a layering effect in both the extra-political spaces and the microcommunity spaces."[57] Yet there may exist, between the two distinctive registers occupied by the People's Palace and the people's palace, a role for architecture in giving form and space—and with them, perhaps clearer perspective—on the still-unfolding, multidimensional crises that threaten the DRC today.

Notes

This research was funded in part by the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the Mellon Foundation's collaborative project Centring Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives on Architecture. A preliminary portion of this research was previously published in Cole Roskam, *Designing Reform: Architecture in the People's Republic of China, 1970–1992* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021).

1. V.S. Naipaul, "A New King for the Congo," *New York Review of Books*, 26 June 1975, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/06/26/a-new-king-for-the-congo/; accessed 15 September 2025.

2. Johan Lagae, "Kinshasa: Tales of the Tangible City," *ABE Journal* 3 (2013); https://journals.openedition.org/abe/378, accessed 7 September 2024.

3. See Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds., *Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

4. Naipaul, "A New King for the Congo"; Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 142, 181. Corruption was first institutionalized during the country's colonial period; see David J. Gould, *Bureaucratic Corruption and Underdevelopment in the Third World: the Case of Zaire* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), 9–19.

5. See Alexander C. Cook, *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Naipaul; Norman Mailer, *The Fight* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975).

6. See, for example, Justina Hwang, "What Can I Do for You: The Republic of China's Cold War Courtship of the Republic of Panama," in *China and Taiwan in Latin America and the Caribbean: History, Power Rivalry, and Regional Implications*, eds. Cassandra R. Veney and Sabella O. Abidde (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 145–163; Philip Liu Hsiao-pong, "Planting Rice on the Roof of the UN Building: Analyzing Taiwan's 'Chinese' Techniques in Africa, 1961–Present," *China Quarterly*, no. 198 (2008): 381–400.

7. Luce Beekmans, "The Architecture of Nation-Building in Africa as a Development Aid Project: Designing the Capital Cities of Kinshasa (Congo) and Dodoma (Tanzania) in the Post-Independence Years," *Progress in Planning* 122 (2018): 25; Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds. *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

8. Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 95.

9. Cook, 1–22.

10. Cook, 15.

11. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong xuanji* [selected works of Mao Zedong], vol. 4 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), 1191–1192. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Party Literature Research Center under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, eds. and trans., *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), 45–48.

12. Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature: The Making of Modern Chinese Identity, 1895–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 5–24. See also Chang-tai Hung, "The Politics of National Celebrations in China," in *The People's Republic of China at 60*, William Kirby, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 357–372; A. James McAdams, *Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 337.

13. Joan Kee, *Geometries of Afro Asia: Art beyond Solidarity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2023), 1–2.

14. Kee has critiqued Mao's use of solidarity as a "punitive and manipulative" ideological cudgel that ostracized China's enemies, kept its allies in line, and continues to constrain a more expansive, productive conceptualization of Afro Asia in relation to artwork. See Kee, 1–5.

15. Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the creation of a political space* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 122–126.

16. Wu, *Remaking Beijing*; Hung, "The Politics of National Celebrations in China," 357–372; McAdams, *Vanguard of the Revolution*, 337.

17. Wu, 22, 89; Wei Na, "1949–1977 nian Zhongguo chengshi gonggong kongjian de zhuyao leixing yu xingtai fenxi yanjiu," *Yishu Baijia* 7, no. 117 (2010): 81–84.

18. Devin Fore, "Demonstration," in *Revolutsia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2017), 288–294. See also Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 17–20.

19. Fore, 290–291.

20. Fore, 290.

21. Mao, "There Are Two Intermediate Zones," Working Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, September 1963; Kikunami Katsumi, Politburo member of the Japanese Communist Party, January 1964; Japanese Socialists, July 1964. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 387–389.

22. General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, "Several Important Problems concerning the Current International Situation," *Bulletin of Activities* 17 (April 1961): 25. J. Chester Chang, ed. and trans., *The Politics of the Chinese Red Army* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), 484.

23. Roskam, "Non-Aligned Architecture: China's Designs on and in Ghana and Guinea, 1955–1992," *Architectural History* 58 (2015): 161–191. See also Lukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020); Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, eds., *Architecture in Development: Systems and the Emergence of the Global South* (London: Routledge, 2022).

24. Ke Song, "China's foreign aid architecture in a transitional period, 1964–1976," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 21, no. 2 (2022): 234–248, 236. See also Guanghui Ding and Charlie Qiuli Xue, "Displaying Socialist Cosmopolitanism: China's Architectural Aid in the Global South, 1960s–70s," *Architectural Theory Review* 26, no. 3 (2022): 547–577.

25. Predictably, Chinese and American media offer contrasting perspectives on reactions to Zhou's tour. See Chinese Foreign Ministry, "Situation of the Premier's Visit to Three West African Countries," 1 February 1964, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/cable-chinese-foreign-ministry-situation-premiers-visit-three-west-african-countries; accessed 13 April 2025; "Chou En-lai ends African Tour," *Current Intelligence Weekly Review*, 7 February 1964, 9, https://cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000252399; accessed 17 April 2025.

26. Liang-tsai Wei, "Africa and the Two Chinas" (PhD dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1978), 176–177, 384.

27. *In Support of the People of the Congo (Leopoldville) against U.S. Aggression* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965).

28. See Liu Hsiao-pong, 381–400.

29. *Taiwan Ribao*, November 1971, cited in Gao Senxinnan, "Hei'an zhi xin de Zhonguo baota: Gangguo hepan de Taiwan zhan hou Zhonghua gongdian shi jianzhu," 22 October 2020, https://www.heath.tw/nml-article/the-postwar-chinese-pagoda-at-the-congo-riverside/; accessed 17 January 2025.

30. Roskam, "Non-Aligned Architecture," 264.

31. Foremost among these projects was the Tanzania-Zambia (TAZARA) Railway, which at that time represented the PRC's largest single foreign infrastructure project in the world. See "Taiwan: Diplomacy through Aid," *Time,* 18 October 1968, 37–38.

32. "Nationalist Chinese—Congolese Cooperation Increase," Joint Publications Research Service, *Translations on Africa* 161 (53358), no. 1043, 23–26.

33. Liu Hsiao-pong, 390.

34. Ding and Xue, 557; Roskam, "Non-Aligned Architecture," 273.

35. Ali Abdalla Ali and Gaafar M. Nimeiri, "The Sudan and the People's Republic of China: An Appraisal of Trade and Aid Relations," *Sudan Notes and Records* 57, (1976), 50–71, 66.

36. Ali and Nimeiri, 67–68.

37. Ali and Nimeiri, 68.

38. "President Mobutu visits Taiwan," *Taiwan Today*, 1 May 1971, https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=5703; accessed 1 December 2024.

39. Liang-tsai Wei, "Africa and the Two Chinas," 179; Zhou Boping, *Feichang shiqi de waijiao shengya* (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2004), 257.

40. U.S. State Department, "Zairian Relations with Communist Countries" [Telegram], 7 November 1979, https://forum.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1979KINSHA11710_e.html; accessed 25 April 2025. See also "L'exemple d'une coopération sincere," *Elima*, 20–21 May 1979, 1.

41. Bob W. White, *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 69–70.

42. Kenneth Lee Adelman, "The Recourse to Authenticity and Négritude in Zaïre," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 1 (1975): 134–139.

43. See, for example, David Borman, "Acting Authentically: Performance and Transnational Authenticity in Tchicaya U Tam'si's *The Glorious Destiny of Marshall Nnikon Nniku*," *Research in African Literature* 44, no. 3 (2013), 87–100; Kevin C. Dunn, "Imagining Mobutu's Zaire: The Production and Consumption of Identity in International Relations," *Millenium Journal of International Studies* 39 (2001): 235–258; White, *Rumba Rules*, 14.

44. Borman, 87–100; Johan Lagae and Kim De Raedt, "Building for 'l'Authenticité': Eugène Palumbo and the Architecture of Mobutu's Congo," *Journal of Architectural Education* 68, no. 2 (2014): 178–189.

45. At one point, both boxers and their respective teams were hosted at a reception in the Taiwan-built pagoda and palace complex.

46. See Ron Levi, "Zaire '74: Politicizing the Sound Event," *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2 (2017): 191, 195.

47. Beekmans, 22. See also Zhou, 259; Zhu Shanquan, Lin Kaiwu, and Qi Zhenya, "Zhayi'er Renmingong sheji," *Jianzhu Xuebao* 2 (1980): 18–20.

48. Fox Butterfield, "Where Moscow Goes, Can Peking Be Far Behind?" *New York Times*, 25 June 1978, E4; Kakinda Mbwende, "Le réveil chinois," *Elima*, 30 January 1979, 1, 7; "Chine: réadjustement du plan économique," *Elima*, 6 May 1979, 5.

49. Zhou, 259.

50. Zhou, 267. See also Ntoto Waku, "Une délégation du Gouvernement chinois prochainement au Zaïre," *Elima*, 6 January 1979, 1.

51. Nzonzila Ndonzuau, "Coopération tous azimuts entre le Zaïre et la Chine," *Elima*, 11 May 1979, 1.

52. Zhou, 276–277, 297. See also Kenny Cupers, Cole, Roskam, and Girma Hundessa, "Architecture as Technical Governance at the African Union," *Architectural Theory Review* 27, no. 1 (2023): 103–135.

53. Zhou, 281.

54. The People's Palace has since been joined by the Stade des martyrs, completed by BIAD in 1993, and the Central African Cultural and Arts Center, designed by Tang Wensheng of the Central-South Architectural Design Institute and currently under construction. See also Gracelin Baskaran, "Building Critical Minerals Cooperation between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 25 March 2025, https://www.csis.org/analysis/building-critical-minerals-cooperation-between-united-states-and-democratic-republic-congo; accessed 12 May 2025.

55. Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 89–90.

56. Filip de Boeck and Marie-Francoise Plissart, *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City* (Ghent-Amsterdam: Ludion, 2004), 59.

57. Bertrand Badie, trans. Claudia Royal, *The Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 15, 25–26.