A Study on Conservation and Sustainable Use of “Old Villa House”

in Shanghai China

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Abstract:
The “Old Villa House” was called "Luxury House” in the foreign settlement period of Shanghai. Since 1949, almost all of the “Old Villa Houses” were seized or purchased by Shanghai municipal government, and most of these houses became apartments, which are lived for two or more families in one house. In the 1990s, with development of the city, some valuable historic buildings were demolished by the urban construction. For this reason, 225 “Old Villa Houses” are recognized to the “Outstanding Historic Building” (abbreviated to OHBs) in 12 “Historical and Cultural Areas” in 2003. However, the others which are not OHBs are facing living environmental problems and illegal reconstructions.

This study aims to analysis and classify the conservation status of “Old Villa Houses” in the “Historical and Cultural Areas”, in order to conservation and sustainable use of “Old Villa Houses” in the future. In this study, we conducted the observation survey and the interview survey within the historical and cultural areas where are gathering most of “Old Villa Houses”.

According to the observation survey, the present utilization condition of “Old Villa Houses” can be classified into 3 types: 1) Residential use, 2) Commercial and residential combined use, and 3) Commercial or business use. According to the interview survey, most of residents and shop or business owners answered “It is necessary to conserve the “Old Villa House”. However, the residents who are living with two or more families or sharing one house with shops are dissatisfied with the actual condition of the houses. Some private companies expressed that because of no actual management of commercial or business use, they transformed the original styles of the “Old Villa House” by themselves in order to suit the business of the company. Although, they want to conserve the “Old Villa Houses” if the government can restore the appearance of the house, most of them still want to renovate the interior of the house by themselves.

So, it is necessary to improve the living environment and to control the density of occupancy of the houses in order to continue residential use. And it is also necessary to set a government policy to restrict the illegal reconstruction and to establish a conservation management system which should include the guideline for the renovation and remodeling of the “Old Villa House”, in order to prevent the origin style of these houses from destroy by commercial or business use in the future.

Keywords: Old Villa House, Historic and Cultural Area, Conservation, Sustainable Use, Outstanding Historic Building, Shanghai

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1. Introduction

The “Old Villa House” is one of the Shanghai-Style Architectures, which was called "Luxury House" in the foreign settlement period of Shanghai, and about 4,000 houses (Construction Area is about 1,600,000 m²) existed in the 1950s. Before 1949, the “Old Villa House” is the single-family house with the yard. Since the People's Republic of China was founded, almost all of the “Old Villa Houses” were seized or purchased by Shanghai municipal government, and these houses were used as governmental office, public facility, apartment house, etc. As an apartment house, there are two or more families living in one “Old Villa House”.

In the 1990s, with development of the city, the “Old Villa Houses” were demolished by the urban construction of Shanghai. For this reason, the Shanghai municipal government proclaimed “Regulation of Shanghai Historic and Cultural Area and Outstanding Historic Building”, and specified 12 “Historical and Cultural Areas” in 2003 (Fig.1). According to the regulation, there are 225 “Old Villa Houses” which are recognized to the “Outstanding Historic Buildings” (abbreviated to OHBs) are conserved by Shanghai government, and most of these houses have been transformed into governmental or commercial use. According to our previous survey, however, the others which are not OHBs are facing living environmental problems and illegal reconstructions. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the actual condition and analysis the sustainable use of those “Old Villa Houses”.

Some previous researches have been mainly focused on the history formation, or studied on the conservation of the “Old Villa Houses” which were recognized to the OHBs. However, there is almost no research on the overall conservation of “Old Villa Houses” in the whole historic and cultural areas.

Thus, this study aims to analysis and classify the conservation status of “Old Villa Houses” in the “Historic and Cultural Areas”, in order to conservation and sustainable use of “Old Villa Houses” in the future. In this study, we conducted the observation survey (area ④～⑨) and the interview survey (area ④ and ⑥) within the historic and cultural areas, which are gathering most of “Old Villa Houses” in Shanghai.

Fig.1 The map of “Historic Area”
2. Selection of the object area and research methods

In this study, the historic and cultural area ④～⑨ where concentrate almost all “Old Villa Houses” were selected to be the object areas for the observation survey. (i) The observation survey which included investigation of the utilization and the present condition of appearance and inside of the “Old Villa Houses” from 2009 to 2012.

(ii) In area ④ and area ⑥, we also took the interview survey of “Old Villa Houses” in July 2010 and November 2011. The interview survey is to make interviews with residents who are using or living in the “Old Villa House”. As an interviewee who needs to answer the questions such as the actual condition evaluation and conservation consciousness, etc. of the “Old Villa House”.

3. Present condition of the “Old Villa Houses”

(1) The “Old Villa Houses” in each object area

I. Area ④ - Hengshan Road - Fuxing Road Historic Area (Fig.2)

Hengshan Road - Fuxing Road Historic Area is the biggest “Historic Area” (Construction Area is about 7.75km²) includes 4 districts of Xuhui, Luwan, Changning and Jing’an, and has about 2,000 “Old Villa Houses”. In this area, we selected the Hengshan road and its surrounding roads as the survey area from the “Hengshan Road - Fuxing Road Historic Area”. Hengshan road and its surrounding roads, belongs to Xuhui District, where has 1,336 “Old Villa Houses” (Construction Area is about 6.57km²) is the biggest area of “Hengshan Road - Fuxing Road Historic Area”.

In the survey area, there are 288 “Old Villa Houses” and 33 houses are recognized to the OHBs. According to the observation survey, among 288 “Old Villa Houses”, there are 212 houses (including 6 OHBs) are residential use, 23 houses (no OHB) are commercial and residential combined use, 47 houses (including 21 OHBs) are commercial or business use and 6 houses (all OHBs) are public facilities (Fig.3).

II. Area ⑤ - West Nanjing Road Historic Area (Fig.4)

West Nanjing Road Historic Area (Construction Area is about 1.15km²) is located in Jing’an District, where is the one of the most famous areas of the Shanghai International Settlement in 1930s. 16 “Old Villa Houses” in this area, all of those houses are OHBs. Among those houses, 5 houses are residential use, 10 houses are commercial or business use and the other 1 house is used for public facilities.

III. Area ⑥ - Yuyuan Road Historic Area (Fig.5)

Yuyuan Road Historic Area (Construction Area is about 2.23km²), includes 2 districts of Jing’an and Changning, has about 150 “Old Villa Houses”. In this historic area, we selected the survey area where is the both sides of Yuyuan Road from Urumqi Road to Zhenning Road in Jing’an District.

In the survey area, there are 55 “Old Villa Houses” and only one house is the OHB. Among 55 “Old Villa Houses”, 45 houses (including 1 OHB) are residential use, 7 houses are office use, and 3 houses are vacant (Fig.6).

IV. Area ⑦ - Xinhua Road Historic Area (Fig.7)

Xinhua Road Historic Area (Construction Area is about 0.34km²), is located in Changning District, has 68 “Old Villa Houses” including 24 OHBs. Among those houses, 65 houses (including 22 OHBs) are residential use, 2 houses (all OHBs) are office use and 1 house is public facility.
Fig. 2 Hengshan Road - Fuxing Road Historic Area

Fig. 3 The survey area in Area ④

Fig. 4 West Nanjing Road Historic Area

Fig. 5 Yuyuan Road Historic Area

Fig. 6 The survey area in Area ⑥
V. Area ⑧ - Hongqiao Road Historic Area (Fig.8)

Hongqiao Road Historic Area (Construction Area is about 4.81km²), is located in Changning District, has 12 “Old Villa Houses” and all of those houses are recognized to OHBs. Among those houses, 8 houses are commercial use and 4 houses are public facilities.

VI. Area ⑨ - Shanyin Road Historic Area (Fig.9)

Shanyin Road Historic Area (Construction Area is about 1.29km²), is located in Hongkou District, has 86 “Old Villa Houses” including about 56 OHBs. Among those houses, 77 houses (including 47 OHBs) are residential use, 7 houses (all OHBs) are commercial use and 2 houses (all OHBs) are public facilities.
(2) Analysis and classify of the present utilization condition of “Old Villa Houses”

Table 1 shows the present utilization condition of “Old Villa Houses” in each area. According to utilization conditions, those six areas can be mainly classified into 3 types: 1) Residential use (area ④⑤⑥⑦⑨), 2) Commercial and residential combined use (Area ④), and 3) Commercial or business use (Area ⑤~⑨). In area ⑤ and ⑦, all the “Old Villa Houses” are recognized to the OHB. As the OHB, the appearances of these houses have been repaired by the each district government. However, in the other areas, the “Old Villa Houses” which are not recognized are facing living environmental problems and illegal reconstructions, such as extension in the garden or transformation of the original doors, windows, etc. of the “Old Villa House” by users.

Table 1 The present utilization condition of “Old Villa Houses” in each area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area No.</th>
<th>Present utilization condition (Buildings)</th>
<th>Total (Buildings)</th>
<th>OHB (Buildings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential use</td>
<td>Commercial and residential combined use</td>
<td>Commercial or business use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④*</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥*</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑧</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑨</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mark * is the data of a part of area.
As the residential use, most of the “Old Villa Houses” in survey areas are used for multi-family residence, and some of these houses are superannuated both appearances and insides, and disorder in the common areas. As the multi-family residence, kitchen, toilet and bathroom are shared by multiple families in most of houses. In some houses, kitchens have been set in the corridor, and some toilet and bathroom have been extended in the garden (Photo.1).

As the commercial and residential combined use, residents and shops are sharing one house. Not only the first floors but also the annexes or extensions have been converted into shops, and some of them are superannuated inside. In some “Old Villa Houses”, the original doors and windows have been totally transformed into new styles. Because of the excessive transformation, the original characteristics of the “Old Villa Houses” were destroyed in some rooms (Photo.2).

Because of using the same house with the shop, some living environment problems have occurred in those houses. Almost all of those houses are disorder in the common area or in the garden. For example, when the first floor of “Old Villa House” is used for the restaurant, both inside and outside environment of the house is insanitary because of the cooking fumes and accumulation of the goods in the corridor or common area of the house. Because of that the common corridor or garden looks narrow and dirty and the living environment looks uncomfortable in these houses.

![Photo.1 The present condition of residential use](image1.jpg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The shabby entrance</th>
<th>Damaged roof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disorder in the corridor</td>
<td>Extension in the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen in the corridor</td>
<td>Communal kitchen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the commercial or business use, some original characteristics of the “Old Villa Houses” have been damaged, such as remodeling the original windows or doors, changing the color of the outside walls, etc. Because of no enough parking areas, the garden or the roadside has occupied in most of the houses (Photo.3). Some private companies expressed that because of no actual management of commercial or business use, they transformed the original styles of the “Old Villa House” by themselves in order to suit the business of the company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The shabby ceiling</th>
<th>Excessively transformed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roof extension to the 2F</td>
<td>Occupied the common area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo.2 The present condition of commercial and residential combined use

Photo.3 The present condition of commercial or business use

4. The result of the interview survey

According to the observation survey, the area ① and ⑥, where concentrated most of “Old Villa Houses” but have less OHB, have been selected to be the object areas for the interview survey. In the interview survey, each interviewee needs to answer the questions such as the actual condition evaluation and conservation consciousness of the “Old Villa House”.

In the area ④, 250 families are living in 45 houses, and 147 families answered the questions of the interview survey. In the area ⑥, 42 shops and about 150 families are in 23 houses which are commercial and residential combined use, 47 houses are commercial or business use, at last,
42 the shop owners and 94 families of residential combined use and 15 business owners of the commercial or business use answered the questions of the interview survey. The results of the interview survey are as follow.

(1) Evaluation of actual condition of “Old Villa House”

Fig.10 shows ownership of “Old Villa House” in each utilization condition. In the case of residential use, 115 residents have the use right, 31 residents rent the house and only one resident has the ownership of the house. As use right or tenants, most of them are sharing a house with more than 3 families. In the case of commercial and residential combined use, 67 residents and 9 shop owners have the use right of the house, 26 residents and 31 shop owners rent the house. As commercial and residential combined use, the users borrow the rooms of the “Old Villa Houses” from the residents or the district government, and those houses are owned by the Shanghai municipal government. And in the case of commercial or business use, 11 business owners rent the house, 3 have the use right and one has the ownership of the house. As the commercial use, the users borrowed or bought the “Old Villa Houses” from owners such as the Shanghai municipal government, People's Liberation Army, State-owned Companies, etc.

In order to clarify the actual condition evaluation of the “Old Villa House” in each utilization condition, we set 4 items of both commercial and residential conditions, and asked the question about “the dissatisfaction with actual condition”. As the Fig.11 shows that, 63 respondents who are dissatisfied with “room area”, 56 respondents who are dissatisfied with “internal condition of the house” constitute the majority proportions in the residential use. 15 shop owners who are dissatisfied with “room area”, 46 and 39 residents who are dissatisfied with “internal condition of the house” and “relationship with residents or other shops” constitute the majority proportions in the commercial and residential combined use. And 7 business owners who are dissatisfied with “relationship with residents or other shops” are the largest proportion in the commercial or business use.

According to ask why the residents are dissatisfied with the internal condition of the house, such as the living environment, floor space, etc. Some residents said that, because of the limited room area, the common area has often been occupied by other residents or by shops who are sharing the same house with them. Some residents told that, since the house have been used for commercial and residential combined, there are no one administer the disorder in common area, so the internal condition of the house and the living environment became worse than exclusive residential use.
(2) Conservation consciousness of “Old Villa House”

Fig.12 shows the conservation consciousness of “Old Villa House”. In the case of residential use, 69 residents answered “It is necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”. In the case of commercial and residential combined use, 19 shop owners and 52 residents answered “It is necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”, however, 22 shop owners and 16 residents answered “indifference”, and 26 residents answered “not necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”. And in the case of commercial or business use, 12 business owners answered “It is necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”, 3 answered “indifference” and no one answered “not necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”.

According to Fig.12, 78 residents of residential use and 23 shop owners and 42 residents of commercial and residential combined use answered “indifference” or “not necessary to conserve the Old Villa House”. Fig.13 shows the reason of unnecessary to conserve or indifference of “Old Villa House” conservation. Most of residents in both residential use and commercial and residential combined use think that, “impossible to thoroughly repair the house” and “superannuation of the house” are the main problems of “Old Villa House” conservation. In the case of commercial and residential combined use, 6 shop owners answered they are indifference of “Old Villa House” conservation, because most shop owners think that the “Old Villa Houses” which belong to the district government, the government should to supply enough money to conserve, repair and administer the “Old Villa Houses”. And some private companies want to conserve the “Old Villa Houses” if the government can restore the appearance of the house, most of them still want to renovate the interior of the house by themselves.

Fig.14 shows the method of conservation of “Old Villa House”. In the case of residential use, 118 residents think “only residential use” is the best way of “Old Villa House” conservation. However, in the case of commercial and residential combined use, 41 residents think the resent utilization condition is better than others. The shop owners also think they want to continue the commercial and residential combined use in the “Old Villa Houses”. According to the survey, some residents of the commercial and residential combined use think that they can buy something more convenient when sharing the house with shops, and some shop owners think when they run the shop in “Old Villa House”, the business is booming because the neighbors can be the regular customer.
Fig. 12 Conservation consciousness of “Old Villa House”

Fig. 13 The reason of "unnecessary to conserve" or "indifference"

Fig. 14 The method of conservation of “Old Villa House”

5. Conclusion

In the historic and cultural area ④～⑨ where concentrate almost all “Old Villa Houses” in Shanghai. According to utilization conditions, those six areas can be mainly classified into 3 types: 1) Residential use (area ④⑤⑥⑦⑨), 2) Commercial and residential combined use (Area ④), and 3) Commercial or business use (Area ④～⑨). In area ⑤ and ⑧, all the “Old Villa Houses” are recognized to the OHB. As the OHB, the appearances of these houses have been repaired by the each district government. However, in the other areas, the “Old Villa Houses” which are not recognized are facing living environmental problems and illegal reconstructions, such as extension in the garden or transformation of the original doors, windows, etc. of the “Old Villa House” by users.

In the case of residential use, most of residents are using one house with multi-families, and in those houses, kitchen, toilet and bathroom are shared by multiple families. In some houses, kitchens have been set in the corridor, and some toilet and bathroom have been extended in the garden. In the case of commercial and residential combined use, most of shop owners borrowed the rooms of the “Old Villa Houses” from the residents or the district government, and those
houses are owned by the Shanghai municipal government. And in the case of commercial or business use, the users borrowed or bought the “Old Villa Houses” from owners such as the Shanghai municipal government, People's Liberation Army, State-owned Companies, etc.

According to the interview survey in area ④ and ⑥, most of residents and shop or business owners answered “It is necessary to conserve the “Old Villa House”. However, the residents who are living with two or more families or sharing one house with shops are dissatisfied with the actual condition of the houses, such as the living environment, floor space, etc. Some private companies expressed that because of no actual management of commercial or business use, they transformed the original styles of the “Old Villa House” by themselves in order to suit the business of the company. Although, they want to conserve the “Old Villa Houses” if the government can restore the appearance of the house, most of them still want to renovate the interior of the house by themselves.

So, it is necessary to improve the living environment and to control the density of occupancy of the houses in order to continue residential use. And it is also necessary to set a government policy to restrict the illegal reconstruction and to establish a conservation management system which should include the guideline for the renovation and remodeling of the “Old Villa House”, in order to prevent the original style of these houses from destroy by commercial or business use in the future.

References: