A SUMMARY

The thesis intends to investigate the possibility of a mandala principle in the Chinese architectural tradition. It aims to relate Chinese architecture to one important aspects of Indian culture based on the concept and philosophy of the mandala.

The study begins from an analysis of the predominant characteristics of the mandala in relation to Chinese urban design, architecture and symbolism. It considers the universality of the notions of the mandala, the similarities in cultural development trends and philosophical thoughts in Indian and Chinese traditions. This provides better understanding about the role of religions as carrier of elements from one civilisation to another.

Chapter one analyses the meanings, symbolism, philosophy and principles of the mandala and reviews briefly various types of Chinese architecture. It identifies the predominant characteristics of the mandala and Chinese architecture. These can be classified as: centrality; axially; cardinal orientation; geometrical systems. They serve as a basis of comparison. Each following chapter then examines one of these aspects in relation to Chinese philosophy and architecture.

Chapter two compares the concept of centrality in the two traditions. It explores the earliest notion of centrality in China during the pre-Buddhist era and traces its development into a philosophical dimension in the post-Buddhist era. Thereafter, a comparison on the concept of centrality is made between the mandala and Chinese traditions. In this way, the influence of Buddhism, the idea of centrality, symbols systems and philosophical thoughts can be assessed as forces shaping the evolution of Chinese architecture.
Chapter three examines how the philosophical concept of centrality is transformed into axiality in vertical and horizontal dimensions in the centripetal planning and elongated layouts of Chinese architecture. The symbolism of the Sun, the Moon and the Pole Star are explored to further understand their relevance in such context.

Chapter four relates the concepts and principles of cardinal orientation in the mandala tradition to Chinese Cosmology. The relationship is reinforced by architectural examples to further examine the degree of similarities in more detail and depth.

Chapter five investigates the relevance of mandala ideas as geometrical principles in examples of Chinese architecture. The investigation is divided into pre-Buddhist and post-Buddhist eras. As such the possible relationship between the mandala tradition and Chinese architectural tradition can be examined in a wider spectrum.

The final chapter will make a comparative evaluation of a possible relationship of the ideas of mandala tradition and Chinese symbols systems. An interpretation of Chinese architecture from the standpoint of the mandala ideas and techniques will be presented to evaluate the use of such concept in the interpretation of underlying principles in Chinese architecture and its future implication and application.

The material presented in the thesis are from various secondary sources. The interconnections and possible reinterpretation of numerous concepts represent the essence of the investigations. The finding of the thesis may serve as a basis for future application in Chinese architecture.