

CITIES OF CHINA

Beijing International

An Ancient Capital's Renaissance in the Age of Globalization

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BEIJING INTERNATIONAL

An Ancient Capital's Renaissance in the Age of Globalization

By Lowell Bennett



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



The China International Publishing Group's Foreign Languages Press is currently publishing the "Cities of China" series. I believe this is a very timely move, and one of great significance.

The Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, "Men come together in cities in order to live; they remain together in order to enjoy life."

In 1800, only two percent of the world's population lived in cities. By 2007, this rate had soared to over 50 percent. The UN predicts that by 2010 urban dwellers will make up 55 percent of the world's total population. Today, the pace and scale of urbanization, which is unprecedented in the history of humanity, indicates that the world is entering a new era.

The steady rise of a group of developing countries represents one of the most striking trends in international relations of this century. The population of these countries adds up to over half of the world's total population. The level of change and the number of countries involved are also unprecedented in human history. All the countries concerned share one common feature, that is, they are going through a simultaneous process of industrialization and urbanization. In the context of the rapid and extensive urbanization, due attention must be paid to the challenges the cities face.

In this regard, the theme "Better City, Better Life" of the 2010 World Expo Shanghai, China, responds to the tide of human development. It is the first time in the World Expo history that the city becomes the theme, as confirmed by the support from the Bureau of International Exhibitions (BIE) members.

The "Cities of China" series is characterized by a foreign perspective on China's cities. As the world's oldest civilization with an uninterrupted history going back thousands of years, China boasts a profound urban culture which constitutes an important component of its civilization. The world's first city with a population of half a million was Linzi in China, and the world's first city with a one million population, Chang'an (today's Xi'an), was also in China. Today, fast-developing cities of all sizes are scattered throughout the country. Among them, metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai are well-known throughout the world while smaller ones, though less known, have their own charms. They are the focus of the "Cities of China" series. New and dynamic cities like Nanjing, Kunshan, Nantong and Wuxi covered by this series will help the readers know better China's urbanization and development.

The books in this series are written by foreign writers familiar with an English-speaking readership. They show the important aspects of Chinese cities and their cultures.

The past 100 years have witnessed many twists and turns in China's revolution and rebuilding. There was a period in which we severely criticized and even negated our own culture. Now, however, with China's rise, our people are becoming ever more appreciative of their own culture and are trying to rediscover it. The "Cities of China" series is designed to assist with this process. People from other countries have a perspective that is quite different from our own. They are more likely to notice the things that we take for granted and overlook. As a Chinese idiom says, "Advice from others may help one overcome one's shortcomings." An outsider's view of China's cities can give us a broader picture of our own urban culture.

Western culture has made great contributions to the world. Without it, we would not have been in a position to enjoy our material wealth and our rapidly developing science and technology. The whole world has something to learn from Western culture. But, we also have to realize that Western culture, like any other culture, has its own weaknesses. While it has certainly driven human civilization forward, it has brought with it many problems. Over the past few centuries, the world has been dominated by Western culture, and the Eastern contributions have been overlooked. In the 21st century, it is time once again for Eastern culture to make its presence felt. The "Cities of China" series can help the world to better understand and learn from the East, and thereby find solutions to the problems created by and faced by all our cities.

Wu Jianmin

Honorary President, International Exhibitions Bureau



Contents

15 Considering the Recent History of Foreigners in China The Opium Wars and Other Instances of World-class Meddling	107 Tech Zone Powering Up: The Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone
35 Enter Beijing The Foreigners Return – For Festivities and Fiscal Fun	121 Cultivating the Business of Technology Beijing’s Leading Position in China’s Tech Field and International Outlook
51 City Sectors Major Districts of Profit, History and Entertainment Profiled	129 Green Gain Environmental Efforts, Clean Industry and a Greener Beijing
85 Civic Structure Edifice Institutions of Culture and Public Service	147 Of Brutality, Beauty and Building: The Mark of Zhu Di Mongols Beat Back, an Aggressor Emperor Destroyed, He Built the City
	155 Author Addendum – Being in Beijing: A Visitor Primer Achieving Enlightenment and Entertainment in the Age-old Metropolis

History Briefs

30

Center of Past and Power

Beijing Becomes a Base of Tribal Reach and Military Machinations

82

Before There Was Cambaluc

Beijing in the Time of Kublai Khan and Marco Polo

96

The Masterly Life of Mei Lanfang

A Peking Opera Legend Furthers an Art and Resists Japanese Occupation

102

And Then There Was Dadu

A “Grand Capital” Is Conceived and Created

116

From Routes of Rebellion, the Manchu

A Dynasty Falls to the “Dashing King” but a Northern Foe Snatches Victory

151

The Non-emperor

Deng Xiaoping: Reforms and an Opening to the World

Personal Perspective

41

Meant to Be There

Confronted with Olympic Opportunity, Trespassing Seemed the Only Option

43

The Grand Gate, T3

Beijing’s Artfully Awesome International Air Terminal

47

Heritage

A New-worlder Considers a Lost Concubine and His Tree-bound Ancestors

61

A Question of Culture

Glitz, Glamour, Good-looking Women and Asking the Obvious

74

A Laowai at Loss

Lingering, Local Ladies and the Concept of Cocktail Hour

76

Serene Seduction

A Lovely Lake and the Alley of Welcome Trouble

126

Making Like Marco

Why the Author Claims to Be Like Marco Polo

157

Ways of the Word

Locating Nightlife and How to Say San-li-tun





Considering the Recent History of Foreigners in China

At dusk, elegantly historic structures in Ditan Park.

The unifying of their forces to repress a native people, carve up their country's assets and occupy a foreign capital may be the only instance in history that Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US agreed on any issue of any sort.

A Dowager Disturbed

Empress Dowager Cixi was not sleeping well. Ever since the First Opium War in 1840, after decades of unwelcome Western incursions and military assaults, the looting and destruction of priceless art and ancient structures, the mass marketing of narcotics and a generally comprehensive meddling in the affairs of China, now in 1900 the foreigners, the Eight Nation Alliance, including the British, American and Japanese, were barricaded in Peking's Legation Quarter. Fired from there the arc of a short-range cannon could easily reach her crimson silken bed chamber in Forbidden City. But she was not the target of the foreigners. Not yet.

To the Empress it seemed an especially noisy affair, worse than usual for a small-scale war. The typical shouts, screams, explosions and gunshots of armed conflict were joined by a new mechanized auditory irritant. It was like the hooves of three brass ponies cantering fast and hard on the palace stone, pausing to turn, cantering back the other direction: tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat... tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat... tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat...

It was not a pleasant sound, but at least the explosive clapping was not upon the palace gate. Just days before they became trapped she had received them; a few of their viper-tongued diplomats and boy-like strutting commanders – the latter with their pretty bejeweled costumes, pulling in their over-attended stomachs, pushing out their underworked chests, all smelling so different and... peculiar. Beneath her veil she discretely held a jasmine-scented silk satchel to her nose, while reluctantly granting their attendance for a few moments, allowing them to boast, berate and plead. She replied in calm and careful tones, assuring them: Their problems did not lie with her. It was the



Before hostilities, Empress Dowager Cixi granting a very rare audience to the privileged wives of foreign diplomats. To her left the empress holds the hand of the Western woman who became her friend, Sarah Conger, wife of Edwin H. Conger, US minister to China during the Boxer Rebellion.

Colonial Construct – In what was the Foreign Legation Quarter, the US Consulate during the time of the Boxer Rebellion and the reign of Empress Dowager Cixi still stands. Today it houses an elegant (and expensive) French restaurant. – Photo by Lowell Bennett





History in Stone -
A well preserved ancient wall of Beijing.

Righteous Harmony Society Movement that was causing the trouble. She had no control over those rampaging ruffians. She said.

Fists of Fury

Known to the Westerners as the Boxers and to themselves as the Righteous Harmony Society Movement – also as Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists – they were nationalist farmers and other hardy types disgruntled with the exploitive, land-thieving and generally arrogantly suppressive ways of Western imperialist forces. Their angry energy was channeled into their practice of martial arts and to the essentially hopeless mission of running all the barking foreign dogs out of China. And so, by June of 1900 they were in Peking disturbing the Empress' sleep while laying noisy siege to the foreigners' walled compound.

The very fit and very ruthless Chinese fighters believed that for the purpose of their cause they were spiritually ordained and supernaturally empowered; actually able to deflect a bullet shot to the chest. That belief was conceived while they were still forming and frothing up, training in the eastern countryside of coastal Shandong Province. Then they marched into Peking and began to confront the foreign officials and attached military contingents, eventually cornering about 900 of the intruders in the walled Legation Quarter enclave. The Western, Russian and Japanese diplomatic staffs and their troops were trapped, but among other devices of gunpowder and metal at their disposal were three examples of a new contraption of war: The machine gun: tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat...

So early in what became known as the "Battle of Peking", the Boxers' belief in their supernatural imperviousness to explosively-fired metal projectiles quickly diminished and they applied more earthly tools to the task at hand. They assaulted the compound and defensive perimeter posts with small cannons, small rockets, grenade-like handmade bombs, satchel charges planted in tunnels beneath foreign installations, sniper fire, rifles, handguns, spears, arrows and fists.

It didn't work out. The foreigners were stubborn and they did have those three big guns that never seemed to require reloading and cocking. Then, landing on the eastern coast of Tianjin, a 55,000-man foreign force captured that city. From there about 20,000 multinational marines, infantry and artillery personnel marched on to bolster the besieged forces in Peking. In fact, the varied nations' military units actually raced to see which would be the first to rescue the besieged Legation Quarter. The British won, the rest quickly followed and the Boxers were crushed.

Styly siding with the Boxers months before in August of 1900, Empress Dowager Cixi and her entire royal court were forced to abandon Forbidden City and flee to Xi'an in the westerly province of Shaanxi. Protected beyond a range of mountains and with the support of Kansu Braves forces led by General Dong Fuxiang, the displaced royals had safe refuge. But the city of Peking was lost, and the foreign forces saw no need to pursue the Chinese royals.



Romanticized depictions of Boxer Rebellion -
Left: The U.S. Army's 14th Infantry Regiment
racing to the besieged Legation Quarter,
here pinned down before moving to scale the
wall near Tung Pien Gate. Right: British and
Japanese troops engage Boxer forces at the
Battle of Tientsin.



A quiet corner of Imperial Palace cast in afternoon shadow.

Multinational Mayhem

The Boxers' siege lasted from June 20 to August 14, 1900, when the Battle of Peking was lost to the Eight Nation Alliance. The unifying of their forces to repress a native people, carve up their country's assets and occupy a foreign capital may be the only instance in history that Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US agreed on any issue of any sort.

More agreement was at hand when their collective forces set about pillaging Peking and punishing those who sought to rid their land of intruders. In Peking and beyond to the countryside, Boxers, their families, their allies, presumed allies and many others along the way and standing around were beheaded, tortured, hanged, caged until dead, or simply summarily executed.

The American commander, General Adna Chaffee, commenting on the wave of looting, rape, murder and general mayhem, in particular as perpetrated by the Japanese, Russians and Germans, stated: "It is safe to say that where one real Boxer has been killed ... fifty harmless coolies or laborers on the farms, including not a few women and children, have been slain." It is notable that General Chaffee ordered his US troops to not loot and assault women, and to otherwise generally behave, but his directives were largely ignored.

A Duck to Pluck

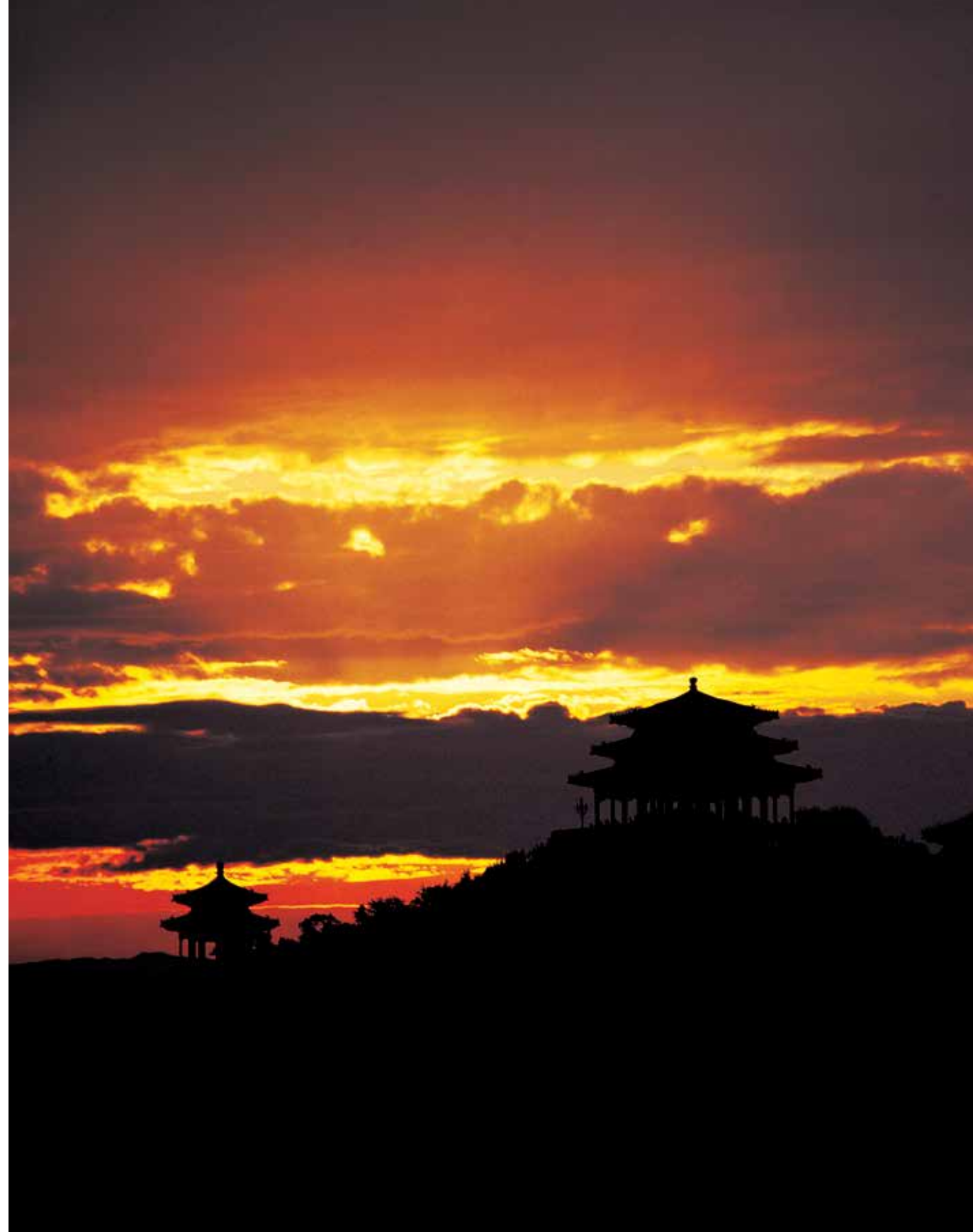
In return for their determination and hard work, the Eight Nation Alliance demanded reparations from China. And they got them. From 1901 to 1939, a struggling China disbursed to the eight nations 668,661,220 taels of silver. In today's dollars, that's equivalent to about \$61 billion.

Perhaps partially in appreciation for the agreed-upon handover of hard currency, and most certainly because the foreigners realized it would be easier to control China using long-established dynastic levers of power, after the Boxer Rebellion was put down the Dowager Cixi was allowed to resume her role as Empress.

In an ironic way, the Empress deserved this foreign retainer agreement. More than a decade before she proved to be a vital if ignorant ally of the Western powers. In 1888 the Empress essentially embezzled an enormous sum of tax monies collected for the building up and modernizing of the Imperial Navy, instead channeling the funds to the construction of her new Summer Palace and its lush gardens. Thus, 12 years later, with effectively no naval forces to guard the surrounding seas and coasts, and on land an outgunned, ill-trained and divided Chinese Imperial Army, to the militaristic and imperial powers of the world, the territory, cities and markets of China were like a flock of fat, slow-waddling ducks ready for plucking. And the fattest duck of all was Peking.



An English officer's photo of a rampart tower being demolished by Eight Nation Alliance occupation forces.



The sun sets over the Beijing countryside.

No doubt, in large part the Empress Dowager disregarded the desperate needs of the Imperial Navy and the defense of her country to instead undertake the building of the new Summer Palace because she was short-sighted, selfish and obsessed with her personal comfort. (On personal staff she retained more than 220 chefs.) But, perhaps there was some measure of nationalistic motivation involved. She maybe felt the need to construct the 1.39-square-kilometer royal compound to replace the Old Summer Palace, which was burned, blasted and beaten to rubble by French and British forces during the Second Opium War.

A Dowager's Destiny

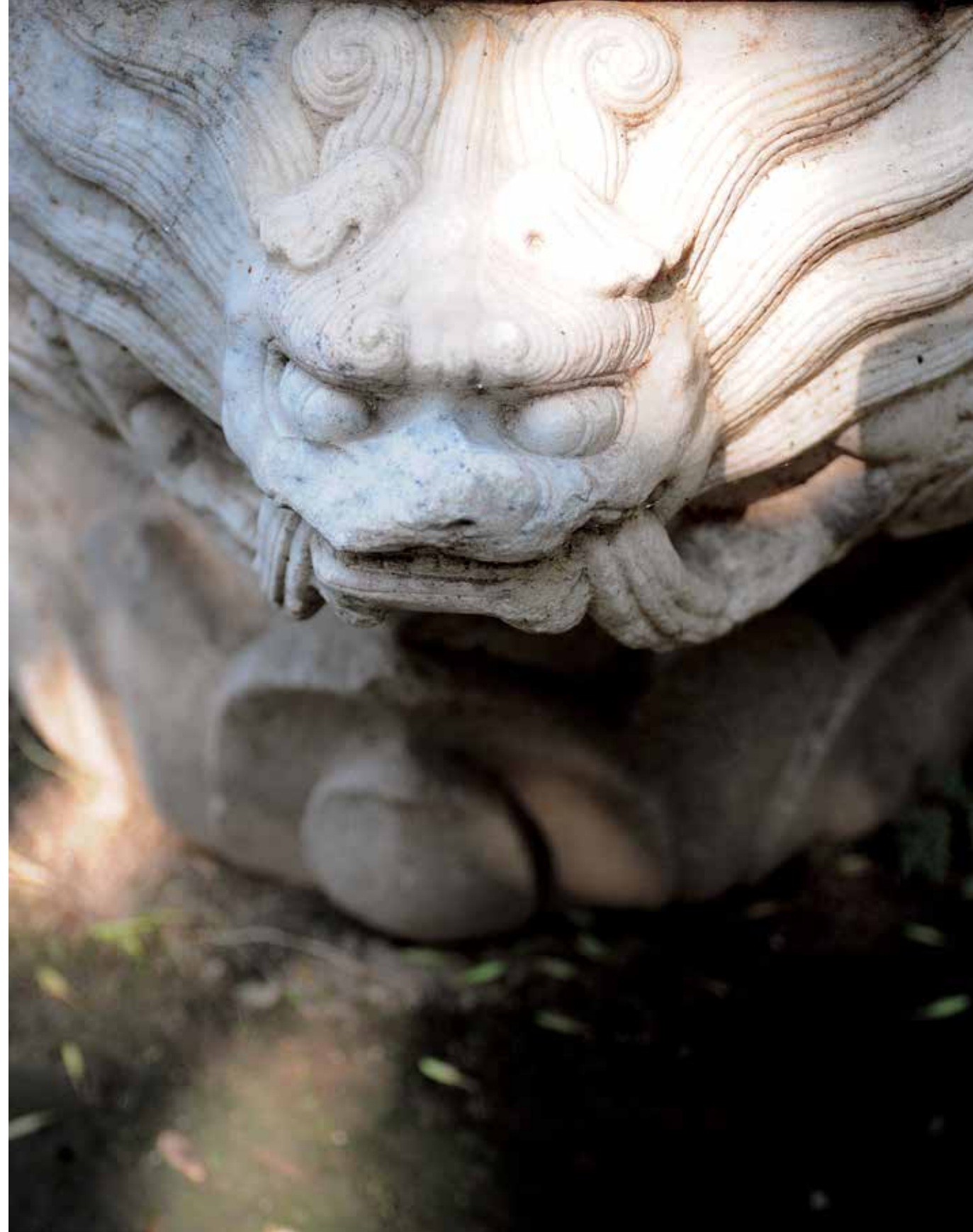
Seemingly fated to cross paths and contend with intrusive Westerners, the course and milestones of Empress Dowager Cixi's life in some ways paralleled and intersected the accelerated intrusion of foreign powers in China.

Best accounts have her born on November 29, 1835. A few years later, marking the beginning of the modern era in China, in 1840 the First Opium War commenced after Qing Dynasty rulers took exception to the import and sale of opium in the country by the British and Americans. The Chinese authorities effectively seized the UK and US stocks of the narcotic and after a few skirmishes and inciting incidents, in June of 1840 the British East India Tea Company, once holding the monopoly on the opium trade in China, persuaded its government to attack the Chinese mainland. First came naval artillery bombardments, then the Royal Marines and other fighters. The superior British naval forces, arms and training proved their worth and in August of 1842 the war was over.

Among other concessions, the British took Hong Kong, they were free to ply five additional ports and their trade in opium resumed unabated. By 1881, out of a population of about 370 million, it is commonly estimated that more than 120 million Chinese were addicted to the deadening drug.

In 1851, the young woman who would become Empress Dowager Cixi was accepted into the Forbidden City as "Lady Yehenara" to serve Emperor Xianfeng as a lower-status concubine of the fifth rank, a so-called "Noble Person". In 1856 she gave birth to Zaichun, the emperor's only son, and her opening path to royal preeminence was laid.

Residual relic of Yuanmingyuan.



Empress Dowager Cixi, the power "behind the curtain".





The Guests Left a Mess - Constructed in the early 18th century, the Old Summer Palace was a masterpiece of elegant architecture and precise engineering. By the time of its obliteration it was full up with priceless imperial art and artifacts. It was destroyed and looted by an alliance of French and British forces in 1860. It took them three days to get the job done and the energetic plan called for the blocking of the gates and the torching of the palace. More than 300 maids, workers and eunuchs were burned alive. Emperor Xianfeng was so distressed by the loss that he turned to drink and drugs and was dead months later in 1861. Thus the stage was set for the rise of Empress Dowager Cixi. Her foreigner problem was just beginning.

- Photo by Lowell Bennett

Opium War II

The same year that the concubine Lady Yehenara gave birth to an emperor's heir, 1856 also saw the outbreak of the Second Opium War, this time bringing together the British and the French in alliance against a militarily weakened and internally-conflicted China. This time more about imperialism, market expansion and British politics than opium, the conflict was also known as the "Arrow War", so named for the Arrow, an ostensibly Hong Kong-registered Chinese-owned ship suspected of piracy which was boarded by Chinese authorities, an action to which the British objected. The British claimed the vessel was British registered and exempt from Chinese jurisdiction, but this official assertion was later proved to be false by an expired registration and witness reports of the failure of the ship to fly the Ensign, the British flag.

No matter. Back at Parliament the relatively minor incident was used as a pretext for military action to further expand markets and gain greater access to Chinese territory. On October 13, 1856, the Royal Navy opened fire on Chinese ships on the Pearl River while raining down shells on contiguous ports, forts, towns and villages.

By 1860 the Second Opium War was winding down and British commanders were considering how best to punish the Chinese for what they viewed as poor sportsmanship in war. Specifically, they sought revenge for the mistreatment and execution of about 20 Westerners captured by Chinese forces. The destruction of Forbidden City was considered, but it was the Xanadu-like Old Summer Palace which was finally destined for ruin. Three days were dedicated to the looting and destruction of the marvelously artistic 18th century palace. Central to the foreigners' punitive project, the gates were locked and more than 300 maids, workers and eunuchs were burned alive.

The theft of the priceless art therein and the leveling of the remarkable structure occurred as Emperor Xianfeng fled Peking. Among his accompanying entourage was a concubine, the mother of his son, now known as the Noble Consort Yi.

Entitlement

Taking refuge in an imperial summer resort in Jehol, more than 200 kilometers northeast of Beijing, Emperor Xianfeng learned of the full and total extent of the Old Summer Palace destruction. Already not a well man, after receiving the news he turned heavily to drink and drugs. In 1861 he died and the Noble Consort Yi was immediately entitled as Empress Dowager Cixi. Her son, Zaichun, Emperor Xianfeng's heir, was five years old. It would be by virtue of his bloodline and through her political cunning that Cixi would outmaneuver



Puyi, the twelfth and final ruler of the Qing Dynasty and the last emperor of China.

competitors to become the de-facto and long-reigning ruler of China – a female ruler; the power "behind the curtain".

She was a clever, resourceful and strong-willed woman, but Cixi's conservative thinking, regressive developmental policies and total dedication to maintaining her power and personal indulgences set the stage for stagnation and a further weakening of China in the face of a modernized and increasingly militaristic West. At age 72, after an extraordinary 47 years of rule, ultimately failing to outmaneuver and head off meddling foreigners and their military machinations, she died in 1908.

In 1875, at age 18, her son Zaichun, Emperor Tongzhi, succumbed to a disease of disputed origin. His cousin, Zaitian, succeeded to the throne as Emperor Guangxu. In 1898, in the course of a palace coup, Zaitian was effectively removed from power by Empress Dowager Cixi, the power "behind the curtain". Thereafter subject to a form of house arrest, he died on 14 November, 1908. Speculation persists (and there is residual evidence strongly suggesting) Cixi had him poisoned – one day before she herself finally departed her earthly chamber. On her deathbed Empress Dowager Cixi chose as the new emperor Puyi, then aged 2 years and 10 months. Handled by varying advisors and for a time under the tutelage of a British teacher, later taking the English name "Henry", he would be the twelfth and final member of the Manchu Qing Dynasty to ostensibly rule China. And he would be the last and least potent emperor. In 1912 the Republic of China came to be and the days of dynasty and the dictates of royalty in China were ended.

.....

For China, the following decades would prove to be turbulent, dangerous and extraordinarily complex in the unfolding. Wars, internal strife, developmental setbacks and cultural upheavals which may have ended other nations were endured at great loss and with severe societal stagnation – then overcome. And while formidable challenges remain ahead, by the millennium opening with the year 2000 foreign meddling was long past and the world had a new respect for the people and power of China. Remaining at the forefront of the nation's geopolitical and cultural progression is its extraordinarily dynamic and rapidly advancing capital, the international city of Beijing.

History: Center of Past and Power

The civilization and the history of Beijing began long before it became “Beijing”; long before it was known as “Peking”; long before it was “Yanjing”; long before it was “Beiping”; before Marco Polo wrote of it as “Cambuluc”; before it was Kublai Khan’s “Dadu”; even before it was “Zhongdu”, in the 11th Century.

The first human resident of the land that became Beijing is estimated to have lived as long as 500,000 years ago. In the caves of what is today Zhoukoudian Village in Beijing’s Fangshan District were found the bones of the Homo erectus known as Peking Man. (Now a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, the site, overseen by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage, is open to the current residents of Beijing, as well as overseas guests.) Relics and ancient tools found at other archeological sites of Neolithic times indicate primitive forms of agriculture were common on the plains here 6,000 to 7,000 years ago.



Residual relic of Yuanmingyuan.

About 3,000 years ago the place of Beijing became a city in the true sense as Ji, capital of the State of Yan. During the period roughly defined as the 10th to the 13th centuries, the nomadic tribes known as the Khitan and Jurchen successively moved south to settle there by force, and the city grew in terms of population, trade and strategic value. The dynasties of the Khitan and Jurchen came to be known as the Liao and Jin, respectively.

In the 11th Century the tribal Jurchen, who would later become known as the Manchu, unified under their self-proclaimed emperor Wanyan Aguda. In 1120 they assaulted and took over the Khitan’s northern capital of Shangjing (also Huanglongfu). Assimilating the Khitan and using their newly taken city and its battlements as base, the Jurchens pushed on into Han Chinese territory, then under the Song Dynasty. Eventually, they took over nearly all of northern China and founded a dynastic state they called the Jin (meaning “Golden”).

In 1153 the Jurchen established their capital in what would become Beijing, and they called it Zhongdu. This would be the first time in history Beijing would be a major dynastic capital. The Jurchen settled, warlike ways eventually ebbed, they came to intermarry with other ethnic groups and their leaders and thus many of their people came to abide by the ways of Confucianism.

But a few decades later the Mongols were again mounted up and on the march and in 1215 the Jurchen were finally forced from Zhongdu (Beijing). By 1234 the Jin Dynasty was no more.

But the Jurchen remained a people. In the latter half of the 1500s a leader known as Nurhaci emerged to again unite the Jurchen tribes and in so doing formed the State of Manchu. His son, Hung Taiji, officially and finally renamed his people Manchu, going so far as to outlaw the term Jurchen. In 1644 the Manchu took, or one could say retook, Beijing. Thus came to be the Manchu Qing Dynasty.



Beijing, the historic capital of power and culture in China, today also a booming and increasingly modern international metropolis.

Enter Beijing



*Sundome -
Atop the National Stadium, also known as
the Bird's Nest.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

A century ago the foreigners came by ocean, their ships of war and mercantile purpose largely unwelcome. Today they arrive by air, and the city of Beijing is in welcome modes both business and leisure. And, no doubt, Beijing's Grand Gate is Terminal 3 at Beijing Capital International Airport.



*Outlanders Onsite –
Three formidable foreign forces occupy
Beijing's Wangjing commercial corridor.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Exactly 100 years after the 47-year reign of Empress Dowager Cixi ended with her final breath in 1908, leaving behind a nation weakened and humiliated by occupying external powers, and decades after China threw off the shackles of Western imperialism and assumed her role as a major world power, the foreigners were back.

This time they were not importing opium, carrying rifles and lobbing cannon shells. This time the foreigners poured in for world-class athletics, leisure travel and big money. At 8:08 p.m. on August 8, 2008, the Beijing Olympics opened and Beijing raised its international profile like never before in history.

The Corporate Contest

Before 11,028 athletes took to the fields, tracks and pools of competition, before hundreds of thousands of foreigners piled into Beijing to be a part of perhaps the biggest sporting / PR event in history, first came the corporations. Out to introduce their products to China's 1.3 billion potential new consumers, corporations paid out a collective \$1 billion to be a part of the Beijing Olympics. Among the bigger international names in the Olympic Partner Program were Johnson & Johnson, Coca-Cola, Atos Origin, General Electric, Kodak, Manulife, McDonald's, Omega, Panasonic, Samsung, Visa and others.

*Structural Support –
IBM does its PR part for Beijing's 2008
Olympics with its torch-themed building. This
was shot from inside the National Olympic
Stadium's girder-like shell.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



Chinese corps included Bank of China, China Netcom, Sinopec, PetroChina, China Mobile, Air China, Lenovo, Haier, Sohu, Yili, Tsingtao Beer, Yanjing Beer, BHP Billiton, and the venerable textile producer, HYX China (Group), Ltd., founded in 1927 as Heng Yuan Xiang, then with annual revenue of about 4 billion yuan.

The US's NBC TV network revealed the historic and advancing Beijing to an audience then still largely unfamiliar with China's capital city. The privilege came at a hefty price tag. NBC paid nearly \$900 million for broadcast rights in the US; \$300 million more than the network paid for the rights to broadcast the prior Winter Games in Turin.

Olympian Structure

The Olympic legacy architecture is now a dramatic and permanent part of Beijing's cityscape. Eleven of 31 athletic facilities were newly constructed for the Games, including the showpiece 91,000-seat National Olympic Stadium ("Bird's Nest"), an exotic yet highly functional \$377-million design by Herzog & de Meuron. The co-starring premier venue, accommodating swim and dive events, the National Aquatics Center ("Water Cube"), with a skin resembling multi-hued soap bubbles, was priced at about \$120 million.



The closing ceremony of the Beijing Games took place years ago and today, to large extent, Beijing's major Olympic structures remain in practical use. Most notably, the "Bird's Nest" serves as a venue for major international sporting events and entertainment productions. And when not in use for happenings like soccer matches and rock concerts, citizens and tourists can tour the structure, or sit with friends and family and simply take in the design and vast open-roof interior space. They can do the same at the "Water Cube", but added there for those who pay a nominal fee is an interior water park of extraordinary size and fanciful design.

Bolstered infrastructure set in place in advance of the Games included 59 roads either newly constructed or renovated to accommodate traffic to and from venues, and six new subway lines. These roadways and light rail lines are now an integral part of the city's transportation network. Beijing Municipal Government also undertook an aggressive urban beautification campaign, with trees planted on an additional 12,000 hectares. Back then the final objective was to increase the city's green coverage to 42.5 percent. That goal was realized and now the city is out to boost green coverage to more than 50 percent of greater Beijing. The overall result is that today the city is ringed, lined and laced with trees, cultivated garden greenery and flowers.

*Progress and Purpose –
Bolstered infrastructure and a gain in
greenery represented by the Central Business
District and a new extension of the still
expanding Beijing Subway System.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett*





*Before They Were Beautiful -
On a bitterly cold, overcast day in December
2007, construction goes on.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Civic Assets -
The National Aquatics Center ("Water Cube").
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*



Perspective: Meant to Be There

I once sneaked into the great and grated dome that is the National Olympic Stadium, otherwise known as the "Bird's Nest", as well as the glowing structure that is the National Aquatics Center, the "Water Cube".

It was midwinter before the opening of the Games and the pace of construction was frantic, with workers, supervisors and engineers on the job 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week.

The busy workmen and foremen did not pause long, though all who saw me seemed to freeze at least a few seconds. Security paid more attention, but did not approach. I walked along purposefully, inspecting, quickly swinging up my camera to snap off a shot. Some who belonged there may have thought: "He looks like he is supposed to be here. And if he isn't, how did he get in?"

Thus unhindered and moving freely I managed to cover the entire Olympic Park site, wondering at the scope and engineering of the Nest and his sister structure, the Cube. They are so different. Yin and yang, hard and soft. The Nest, oblong, his metallic shielding so formidable, logistic, curving with purpose of strength and protectiveness. The Cube, she is elegantly square, prettily pastel, liquid-like, seeming as soft as a bubble, luxuriantly relaxed, about to float away. Each is an individual with a task at hand; yet they are of a single greater purpose.

Future Space

A century ago, the foreigners came by ocean, their ships of war and mercantile purpose largely unwelcome. Today they arrive by air, and the city of Beijing is in welcome modes both business and leisure. And, no doubt, Beijing's Grand Gate is Terminal 3 at Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA).

Arriving by international air carrier, before departing by newly laid expressways or along its ultramodern dedicated subway line, T3's extraordinary expanse, arching lines, modernistic systems and elegant trappings inspire awe in the most jaded of air travelers.

Completed in February of 2008, in time to accommodate arriving Olympic visitors and athletes, at 986,000 square meters of interior space and with a 3,800-meter runway, T3 is today the world's second largest air terminal, Asia's busiest, and the world's second busiest. Annual capacity is estimated at 82 million passengers. BCIA handles more than 1,400 flights a day, accommodating more than 70 airlines connecting 208-plus cities around the world.

Constructed at a cost of about \$3.5 billion, besides the main passenger terminal there are two branch concourses, 3C and 3E, linked to their T3 parent via a state-of-the-art intra-terminal passenger train. The vertical layout of T3 is at seven floors; five above ground and two below ground. Restaurants run the range from fast food to high-end gourmet, and strolling the retail corridors you could imagine yourself in a top-flight designer-brand shopping mall. Indicative of Beijing's inclination to broadband telecom, high-capacity Wi-Fi is accessible throughout the entire facility – no charge.

Also online in time for the Olympics was Beijing Subway's Airport Express, in operation since July 19, 2008. At 28.1 kilometers, the line is limited to four stops, linking it with central Beijing and other metro lines. The light rail hits speeds of up to 100 kilometers per hour.

In 2009 the perfectly composed logistical and design elements of T3 led *Condé Nast Traveler* to designate BCIA as the "World's Best Airport".

*Infinity in Transit –
Beijing Capital International Airport Terminal
3 Departure Level.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Subport –
Beijing Subway Airport Express, connecting
Beijing Capital International Airport to
downtown, four stops in between. Here it
departs (or launches from) the ultra-modern
Terminal 3.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Hi-tech HQ –
Beijing Capital Airport Logistics and
Security Command Center.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Perspective: The Grand Gate, T3

Having flown in and out of Beijing Capital International Airport's Terminal 3 more times than I can recall, I still marvel at the expanse and lines of the structure. At an elevated position in the second-floor gourmet Chinese restaurant at the southerly side of the building, looking to the north the interior seems to pass over the sun-washed horizon. Far away, the columns and arching roof lines, illuminated by expansive glass walls, converge and on a bright day actually disappear into something like a heavenly glow, and there seems to be no end to the structure.

Less ethereal is the glitz. Seemingly free of even a particle of dust, all surfaces are aglow and the designer-brand shops sparkle at their exteriors and within. Some of the retail corridors bring to mind the expensive malls of Beijing's Central Business District (CBD) and the Financial Street corridor. For that matter, you may as well be walking down an expansively expensive retail interior in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Paris, New York, or San Francisco.

Perhaps less grand and glitzy, but entirely as functional, is the airport subway port. I call it a "port" because it brings to mind a spaceport in a science fiction film. It could be the port of a futuristic high-speed train, or perhaps it is a shuttle about to launch down the tracking rail and into space. Indeed, it is a shuttle, it is futuristic and it did just launch into the space between T3 and its terminal destination, downtown Beijing.

*AirSpace -
Beijing Capital International Airport Terminal 3
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*





Lama Temple
- Photo by Lowell Bennett

Heritage Held Safe -
Constructed in 1694, originally a residence for Ming Dynasty court eunuchs, the Lama Temple became a house of Buddhism in the early 1700s. Today, the monks practicing their faith here while looking after the place are primarily from Inner Mongolia and Tibet.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett

Heritage in Keeping

Departing the fantastically futuristic T3 by express light rail, taxi or bus, a metropolitan experience like no other in the world awaits first-time visitors.

It begins with the history. Dating from prehistoric times, Beijing's legacy is tangible and touchable. Today at the city's Zhoukoudian cave complex in Fangshan District, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are housed the remains of Peking Man. The fossils of adults and children were discovered in 1923 and carefully excavated for years thereafter. Estimates vary on when the craniums, jaws, teeth and other bone remnants were in real time use, up and walking around, but the range is agreed to fall between 300,000 and 500,000 years ago. Along with the human parts, many primitive tools were also discovered.

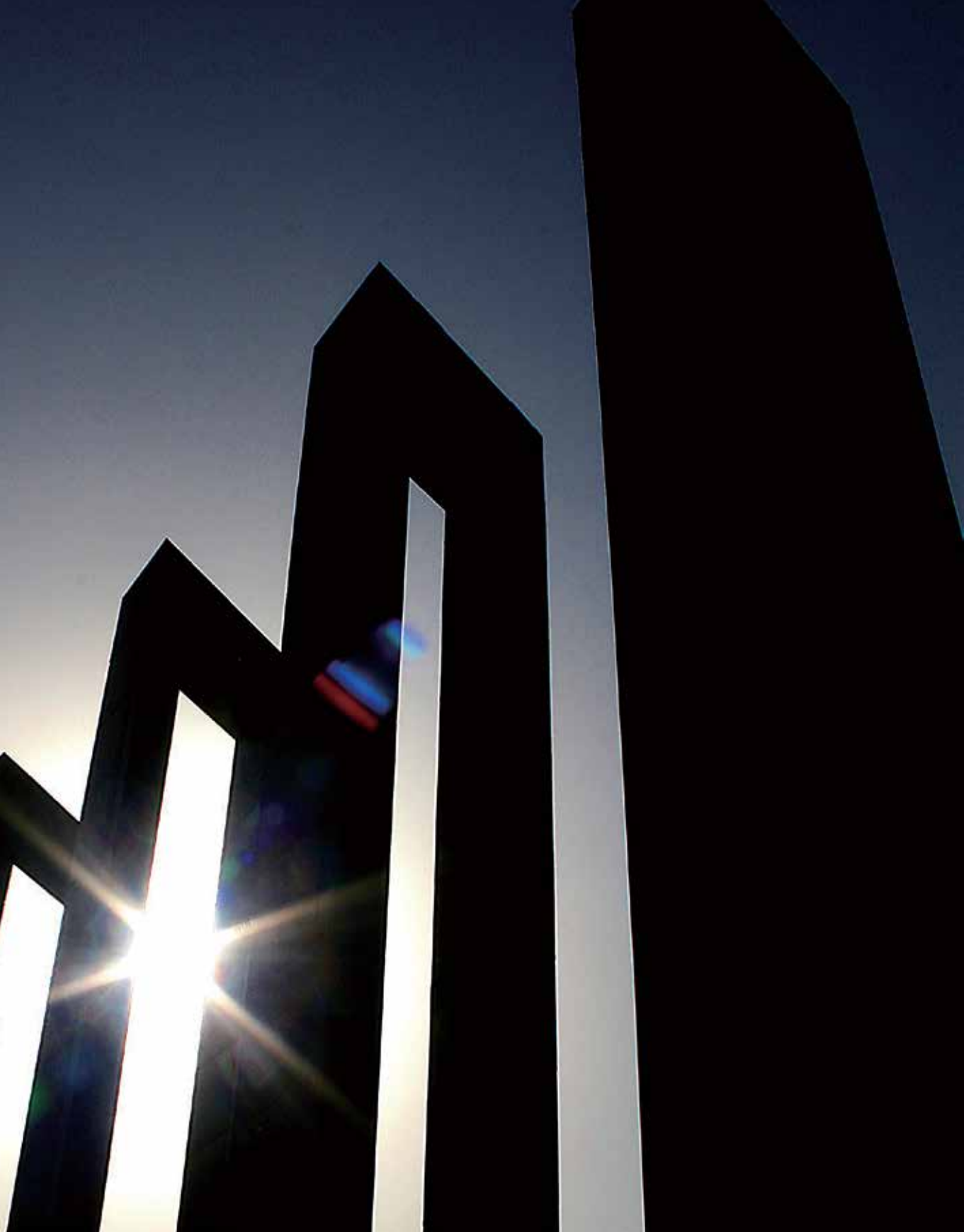
Overseen by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage, besides Zhoukoudian and the also well known Ming Tombs, a total of more than 40 other so-called "New Stone Age" discovery and dig sites have unearthed fossils, vessels and tools. Today several sites remain active, with excavations ongoing. Typical to operations, when a site is discovered, the area is protected and, eventually, a museum may be constructed on the spot. This allows for the protection and sharing of the finds, even as new artifacts are being uncovered.

Besides looking after the sites of excavation and caring for those ancient fossils and artifacts uncovered, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage looks after those more recent and best known historic treasures. These include: The Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, Forbidden City, the Lama Temple and much, much more.

Perspective: Heritage

I was touring Beijing's gleefully glitzy and architecturally arresting China National Film Museum, kindly escorted by a patient guide speaking fluent and very polite English. She stopped to explain a model, representative of an early form of image-projected entertainment. The setting and figurines were of ancient elegance; a seated male royal looking to a person-sized screen of silk. Behind an elaborately dressed woman seemed to be dancing, and behind her a focused torch projected her image in profile to the silk.

The very polite guide explained that this is Emperor Wu, who, grieving over the death of his favorite concubine, Li, had another concubine dress in Li's favorite courtesan gown and do a dance of hers behind the screen. Thus was the depressed emperor diverted and soothed by the projected image.



*A Tower at Rest -
Willows in wintertime veil a Forbidden City
guard tower, once a battlement, now a
valued structural representation of history
and heritage.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*



Emperor Wu of the Western Han Dynasty lived from 156B.C. to 87B.C. I remarked to the guide that about then I believe my ancestors were hanging from trees and beating each other over the head with sticks. She didn't get it, but that's not far from the truth.

For perspective, consider: Even after the great, grand and intricate 8,700-room Forbidden City was completed in 1420, Europe was still in the Dark Ages and it would be 72 years later that Columbus would stumble across the Atlantic and into what would be the land of my birth, then a virgin New World.

Indeed, a Westerner new to the city of Beijing can be made to feel a bit humbled among the ancient structures, wondering at the capacity of the engineering and workmanship of the day. The symmetry, for instance, is astounding. Almost supernatural in precision, massive structures and compounds are seemingly exact to the millimeter at all edges. It is almost as if an advanced race of aliens landed, directed their lasers and gravitational beams to cut, align, place and set. Perhaps snickering: "Wait until some guy from the Western side of this planet drops by a couple thousand years from now. This should really blow his mind."

Then, as if those same aliens returned for more mischief at the expense of ogling Westerners, there is the CCTV Tower...

*Structural Drama -
China National Film Museum is the world's
largest film museum, opened in 2007. The
arches (the writer is guessing) represent the
frames of film. Others explain them as being
inspired by clipboards, commonly associated
with the process of filmmaking.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Cultural Curvature -
Commonly commingled, architecture old
and new.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Not everybody sees the new CCTV Headquarters tower as being futuristically striking. Reportedly it was a taxi driver who first remarked, “It looks like a pair of big shorts.” Thus, perhaps not to the great pleasure of city managers and the building’s designers and developers, more than a few Beijingers now refer to the building as “Big Shorts”.

The seemingly just laid pavement and stone walks of the tree-lined boulevards seem to pulse with it. The increasingly sci-fi city skyline radiates it. The broad plate glass windows of the expensive designer shops and high-end restaurants glow with it. The historic shopping streets and eclectic nightlife hutong are alive with it. It is the energy of capital, commerce and culture.

As far back as the 13th century reign of Kublai Khan, the same sort of mercantile brew –combining vast domestic potential with a spike of international import / export – was in evidence. Though Kublai named the city Dadu (Grand Capital), his foreign friend, Marco Polo, interpreted the Mongol, Khan Bhalik (City of the Emperor). And so he wrote of “Cambaluc” when he set ink to paper:

The city of Cambaluc has such a multitude of houses, and such a vast population inside the walls and outside, that it seems quite past all possibility. There is a suburb outside each of the gates, which are 12 in number, and these suburbs are so great that they contain more people than in the city itself. In those suburbs live foreign merchants and travelers, of whom there are always great numbers who have come to bring presents to the emperor, to sell articles at court, or because the city affords so good a market to attract traders. And thus there are as many good houses outside the city as inside, without counting those that belong to the great lords and barons, which are very numerous.



Designer Glitz – Exchange Walk, Financial Street District, boasting big brands and big bucks. – Photo by Lowell Bennett



Posh Pool – At the spa level, the Ritz Carlton, Financial Street. – Photo by Lowell Bennett

Guards patrol the city every night in parties of 30 or 40, looking out for any persons who may be abroad at unseasonable hours (after the great bell has struck three times). If they find any such person he is immediately taken to prison, and examined next morning by the proper officers. If these find him guilty of any misdemeanor they order him a beating with the stick.

To the city also are brought articles of greater cost and rarity, and in greater abundance of all kinds, than to any other city in the world. For people of every description, from every region bring things (including all the costly wares of India, as well as the fine and precious goods of Cathay itself), some for the sovereign, some for the court, some for the city which is so great, some for the crowds of barons and knights, some for the great hosts of the emperor which are quartered round about; and thus between court and city the quantity brought in is endless.

As a sample, I tell you, no day in the year passes that there do not enter the city 1,000 carts of silk alone, from which are made quantities of cloth of silk and gold, and of other goods.

Round about this city there are some 200 other cities, from which traders come.

Capital Capital

The fiscal power centers of the Central Business District (CBD) and Financial Street are like sisters – rival sisters. Their respective developers and directors are proud to proclaim their increasingly important position in the world of global finance and media, happily boasting of their many Fortune 500 corporate residents, their ultra-slick shopping malls, their internationally acclaimed five-star hotels, their myriad top-flight international dining houses and their many other salient selling points. In short, the directors of those two globally significant districts proudly proclaim their preeminence in commercial clout. In Beijing they are, the directors of each might say, Number 1.

And maybe they are – both Number 1.

Fiscal Fortress

Among the more than 1,000 major corporate players headquartered within the 35-block Financial Street district are the national headquarters of China Construction Bank, Commercial and Industrial Bank of China, CITIC Industrial Bank, Communication Bank of China, and People's Insurance Company of China.

On the foreign side, Financial Street accommodates the China HQ offices of institutions like Bank of America, UBS, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Royal Bank of Canada. Not surprisingly, Financial Street also has its share of five-star international hotel brands, including InterContinental, Ritz Carlton and Westin.

Financial Street is now China's most important center of financial regulation. The fiscal police here include China Insurance Regulatory Commission, People's Bank of China, China Banking Regulatory Commission and China Securities Regulatory Commission.

According to its directors, at 13 trillion yuan the assets held within Beijing's Financial Street zone accounts for 60 percent of the nation, with a daily transaction flow of more than 10 billion yuan. Handling 90 percent of China's loans and 65 percent of the nation's insurance premiums, by virtue of Financial Street's concentration of powerful global institutions, Beijing comprises China's largest currency and financial market.



*Skyhigh –
Beijing TV Center at the fore in the CBD and,
inside, angling up the open-mech elevator
shaft at the core of the building.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Nearing Completion -
CCTV HQ maintains its martial arts-like
horse stance as construction nears
completion in late 2011.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Stature of Purpose

While Financial Street is solidly grounded in the nation's business, Beijing's 4-square-kilometer CBD soars in terms of commercial clout, structural heights and entertainment.

About 120 Fortune 500 firms reside within the CBD, as well as 60 percent of Beijing's foreign funded companies. Along with financial institutions, CBD leans heavily to media, home to both the Beijing TV building and the new CCTV Headquarters, plus major firms in advertising, marketing and public relations.

CBD's five-star accommodations include St. Regis, Radegast Hotel CBD Beijing, H.Q. Ritz Hotel, Park Hyatt, Ascott Beijing, China World Hotel, New World Hotel, Grand Millennium, JW Marriott Beijing, Sofitel Wanda, Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel and the Shangri-La Kerry Center.

The CBD skyline, without a doubt, wins the city contest in the class of modernistic structure and height. In ascending order, here rise: CCTV Headquarters at 44 floors, 234 meters; Beijing Yintai Center with its central tower at 42 floors, 250 meters high and its two sister towers about 186 meters; Fortune Plaza at 63 floors, 260 meters; and China World Trade Center Tower 3 at 74 floors, 330 meters.



*Standoff –
Yintai Center, to the left, is taller, but the new
CCTV HQ stakes out its ground with a uniquely
sturdy stance.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



Not the tallest, but the newest and certainly the most unusual of Beijing's sky-scraping structures is the new CCTV Headquarters. Set on a land area of 187,000 square meters, with a total floor area of 50,000 square meters, the total development price tag was estimated at about \$600 million. The building's unusual design – angular twin towers joined and capped by a branching horizontal hip section – is visually striking. No doubt this is Beijing's most talked-about new structure since the Olympics and the unveiling of the "Bird's Nest" and the National Center for the Performing Arts ("the Egg"). Seen from the roof of nearby higher skyscrapers, the marvel of urban architecture looks something like an enormous transforming robot, about to raise its torso and take another step.

But not everybody sees the new CCTV Headquarters tower as being futuristically striking. Reportedly it was a taxi driver who first remarked, "It looks like a pair of big shorts." Thus, perhaps not to the great pleasure of city managers and the building's designers and developers, more than a few Beijingers now refer to the building as "Big Shorts".

Geared-up and Glitzy

It is also within the CBD's geographic scope where most foreign consulates are based. Thus, not surprisingly, here too is the city's most active Western-inclined food and beverage district.

Sanlitun has come a long way from its beginnings as an embassy district where foreign journalists and consulate personnel might meet and venture no further than their hotel restaurant and lobby bar.

*Aerial Angle –
In the CBD, Beijing Yintai Center,
42 floors, 250 m tall.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Gold Plated -
At the Village, Sanlitun.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Chic Center -
Besides some of Beijing's premier retail
operators, the Village is home to salons,
cafes, coffee houses, high-end Chinese and
high concept Western dining.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Village Gate -
Entering one of Beijing's premier dining and
shopping centers.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Village Vision -
The Plaza at night, Sanlitun.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

After reform and opening up commenced in the late 1970s, branching out from the traditional hotel lobby lounge settings, locals and foreigners began to more readily mingle among the ever-expanding number of freestanding pubs and nightclubs. By the time the Olympics rolled around in 2008, many of Sanlitun's beloved but dilapidated *hutong* (alleys) had been necessarily sacrificed for the sake of safety, modernity, trends and cash.

And it all comes together at the Village. The high-style open-air retail complex houses varied upscale stores, salons, bars and restaurants. These compete for the center's well-dressed and very international clientele. Notably, facing the central piazza is the largest Adidas store in the world and a seemingly always-jam-packed Apple store. They and their neighboring designer shops and food and beverage operators look over a remarkably vibrant urban plaza, with its leisurely lingering multinational minglers, multiplex cinema, high-resolution LCD billboards and open-deck fountains.

Perspective: A Question of Culture

In the later evening at the Village, pausing along one of the elevated walks, watching the pastel-hued centerpiece fountains pulsating, the music and happy conversation pouring forth from the bars and cafes, the giant LCD billboards flashing the sharp faces and slender bodies of scantily clad female and male models, fashionable Beijing women strolling by, you could be forgiven for perhaps turning to an accompanying Chinese associate and asking: "What do you think Mao would think about all of this?"

But this remains Beijing. And in Beijing you are never far from more traditional elements. Exit the backside of the Village to the left of the five-star The Opposite House boutique hotel and you are back in a *hutong* setting. Alongside casual Chinese and Western restaurants and pubs are the street vendors, still serving up their grilled, fried and steamed fare for a tiny fraction of what you would pay for the more delicately presented cuisine offered at the Village's upscale and trendy establishments.

At the corner make a right and you are on Bar Street – and there is no mistaking it. Perhaps 50 smaller bars line either side, some with their outdoor seating and pitchmen out front and their bands and DJs inside. Later in the evening the street can be crowded and a little boisterous, but in general the crowds are well behaved.



Yang Quanren, the industrious founding proprietor, obtained an entirely unique and very special royal recipe from a chef retired from the imperial kitchens. And so it came to be that a dish previously reserved for emperors and the imperial court was available to average citizens.



Mercantile Elegance

A commercial mercantile hub since the late 1300s, by the close of the 1800s Qianmen Street was perhaps the most vibrant of old Peking's centers of business, dining and culture. It remained so until 1900, when the forces of the Eight Allied Nations destroyed the district in the course of ransacking the city after crushing the Boxer Rebellion.



Today, restored, modern in structure but with exterior designs along the lines of early 20th Century architecture, Qianmen Street looks like a cross between an upscale designer brand Disney World Main Street and a classic merchant district. Here are some of Beijing's most venerable retail, food and theatrical brands.

Within the 1.45-square-kilometer district, linked end-to-end by a silently running vintage-look trolley car, are 50 courtyards and *hutong* certified as state-level heritage sites. About 80 of the area's small to mid-sized retailers have operated in Beijing for more than a century. Among the quaint and esteemed brands are Tongrentang Drugstore, Liubiju Sauce and Pickle Shop, Ruifuxiang Silk Shop, Neiliansheng Shoe Store and Zhangyiyuan Tea Shop. And perhaps no food or retail operator better represents an established and venerated Beijing brand than Qianmen's star resident, Quanjude Roast Duck restaurant.

*Culture of Commerce –
As far back as the 1300s, Qianmen Street was a major merchant hub. Restored to resemble its structural look in the early 1900s, today international retailers sit side-by-side with uniquely Beijing brands extending back hundreds of years. The trolley shuttles passengers along the otherwise pedestrian-only corridor of culture and commerce.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett*

The Classic Duck

When Quanjude was established as a brand in 1864, variations of the dish known as Peking Duck had been around for hundreds of years. But Yang Quanren, the industrious founding proprietor, obtained an entirely unique and very special royal recipe from a chef retired from the imperial kitchens. And so it came to be that a dish previously reserved for emperors and the imperial court was available to average citizens.

That process of preparation, still today precise to its centuries-past origins, calls for particular low-smoke fruity woods to be fired within an open earthen oven. Above the coals each duck is carefully and individually roasted until perfectly crisp on the outside and succulent on the inside.

Today there are eight Quanjudes in Beijing, with several additional affiliated franchises. The Qianmen restaurant is the chain's showpiece operation. Expansive in open space with more intimate private dining rooms on several upper floors, all classically designed and adorned, the restaurant can seat 900 diners at once. In a single good day of business, 5,000 guests may satiate themselves within the seductive ambience of this one restaurant.



*Grand Ducky –
Quanjude Duck became a brand in 1864.
Prior to the particular recipe was reserved
for royalty. The founder employed a former
chef of the royal court and the style became
available to the average Beijinger of the day.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Branded –
Since 1864 Quanjude's Peking Duck has
remained a mainstay cuisine of Beijing; a
favorite of locals, expats, foreign dignitaries
and other international visitors.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett*



Around the Square

A short stroll from Qianmen Street, Tiananmen Square is at the approximate geographic center of Beijing and at the precise center of political power in China. It can seem a hard place: stark, resolute. This is especially so during the writer's first visit. A light snow had fallen the night before and light flurries continued. The day was cold and grey as granite. On the flat slab plane of this manmade open space, with visibility trailing to nothing just beyond, the scene was enveloped by the muting mist, the chill of winter and the rock of state. In the distance, fronting the Square, are the imposing edifices: the Great Hall of the People, the China National Museum and the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall.

At this place choices were made, destinies cast and power on Earth was changed. And still from here a nation is driven to advance in the world. As if embodying the determination and resilience of both nation and citizen, the Tiananmen guards are for hours in the open air. The young sentries patrol and watch over this people's place and its monuments to struggle, revolution and sacrifice. At particular spots, honor guards are rigid, solidly locked-up at attention, unflinching in the adversity of cold, wind and snow. Standing here beneath another nation's banners and its imposing constructions of state, an American of ease can perceive a harder force sourcing from the stones of Tiananmen.

Area Note: Tiananmen Square

Originally constructed in 1651, Tiananmen Square would be enlarged to four times its original size. The curb-to-curb coverage spans an area of more than 440,000 square meters (526,000 square yards / 109 acres). Centerpiece on the Square is the Monument to the People's Heroes. The flagstones of the expanse are numbered to allow for quick assembly of parades.



Strolling Tiananmen



Tiananmen Square is a must-see for visitors foreign and domestic.



Zhongshan Park

Retreating from the Square, and after a short stroll through the passage beneath the wide boulevard of Chang'an Avenue, an entirely separate reality is reached. The way of a softer China is manifest within the tranquil gardens of Zhongshan Park. Further hushed by the soft blanket of snow, the garden and its ornate structures are subdued beneath the contiguous walls and watchtowers of Forbidden City. But in this tranquil setting, the natural things and more gentle buildings hold their own. This is a domain without need for ostentation or force. Paths through the snow lead to far corners of sheltered tranquility. A gazebo masters its own frozen realm; independent, inoffensive, intelligent of design, with no need of great walls or battlements. Here, as a small child, a future emperor may have climbed a cypress tree. Years later, as a man fully empowered by blood, army and country, smiling, he may have watched his own child climb that same tree.



*At Peace -
Under a soft blanket of snow, the calm of
Zhongshan Park in quiet contrast to the
adjacent battlements of Forbidden City
- Photos by Lowell Bennett*

The ancient cypress trees remain, on warmer days perhaps accommodating somewhat different children. But on this cold inhospitable afternoon, the regal trees simply disregard the foreigner in their midst. Below them their native subjects, the plants of the garden, doze within a quiet quilt of snow, patiently waiting out the winter.

Area Note: Zhongshan Park

In the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) what is today Zhongshan Park was the site of Xingguosi (Temple of National Revival), a place where royalty worshipped their gods of land and grain. Spanning 240,000 square meters (287,000 square yards/60 acres), the park was reconstructed in 1914 based on designs dating back to 1420. In 1928, the site was renamed Zhongshan Park, in memory of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (known more commonly in China as Sun Zhongshan), the founder of the Republic of China.

Forbidden City (Imperial Palace)

A few steps east of the frozen fantasy of Zhongshan Park loom the massive walls and watchtowers of the Forbidden City. Pass through these battlements and you cross threshold to a formidable fortress, but you will also walk upon vast palace grounds of extraordinary beauty and remarkable history. The Imperial Palace of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties is primarily known to Westerners as the Forbidden City. In 1401 the residence and fortifications were ordered built by Zhu Di, Emperor Yongle or the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty. Completed in 1421, with more than 8,700 rooms, the palace would serve as perhaps the most extraordinary live-work space of all time.

There would be 24 emperors who would reside and conduct the business of government here. Once this was the private domain of royalty, attendants, privileged concubines, garrison troops and honor guard. Soldiers still keep watch, but the intruders today are placid foreigners and intrigued citizens armed with mobile phones and digital cameras. Of some threat perhaps are the well-groomed boys in designer clothes who may dash about and toss the occasional snowball. Nearly 600 years ago, under the watchful eyes of the palace guards, perhaps the elegantly-garbed children of the royals ran down these walkways, into these courtyards, laughing, throwing their own snowballs.

*Guarding the Gate -
A place of past intrigue and military
occupation, Forbidden City today faces no
Mongol aggression, but hordes of foreigners
and sightseeing citizens occupy the
compound on a daily basis.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*



*Puyi was the last emperor and the last person
to sit upon this throne in a royal capacity.*



And what were the ancestors of this American doing about then? Hard to know. When China's royal family first moved into their new home, Europe was just beginning to awake from the Dark Ages. It would be more than 70 years before Columbus would cross the Atlantic and stumble onto what was then a virgin New World.

Area Note: Forbidden City

The Forbidden City is comprised of 150,000 square meters of interior space. The compound occupies more than 720,000 square meters (250 acres) of total area in downtown Beijing. The last emperor to occupy the place was Henry Pu Yi, who at age six formally abdicated on February 12, 1912. In years prior, the Qing Dynasty had weakened and China's national affairs were subject to the mercenary dictates of Western powers. Thus the ground was made fertile for revolution and the reign of emperors in China was ended.

*His Domain -
A young citizen holds his ground at the foot of
the dragon stairs, Forbidden City.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Invasion -
Armed with camcorders and mobile phones,
forces both foreign and domestic temporarily
occupy the compound that is Forbidden City.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*





Wangfujing Night Market, a must-see and a must-sample (the exotic snacks).

The Way of Wangfujing

Within walking distance of Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City, in Dongcheng District, also close to the geographic core of Beijing, is perhaps the city's best-known shopping district, Wangfujing. Today home to more than 275 famous Beijing brands and major upscale hotels, since the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) Wangfujing has held a position as the city's high-energy retail and food district.

In large part a pedestrian-only area, at the center of it all is the Wangfujing Night Market. Here street vendors market snacks ranging from the routine, like lamb kebabs and noodles, to the exotic. The adventurous can sample roasted and fried scorpions, centipedes, beetles, starfish, grasshoppers and more.

Two massive malls call Wangfujing home, Sun Dong An and Oriental Plaza. Residents include Sony, VW / Audi and Apple. Nearby is China's largest bookstore, the six-floor Wangfujing Xinhua Bookstore. On its shelves are about 200,000 printed volumes, plus digital media, VCDs and DVDs.

Now something of an historic shopping destination, Dongan Department Store.



*Pastel Shores –
The cafes, restaurants and nightclubs
along Houhai Lake.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Perspective: A Laowai at Loss

My first month in Beijing I hiked from Xidan District to Houhai Lake. I took the long way, and after Tiananmen Square, Zhongshan Park and Forbidden City I entered Wangfujing. I was just past the Night Market when I was approached by two young ladies. They were recent university graduates anxious to try out their English. After pleasantries I was invited to tea. I explained that it would soon be cocktail hour and I would hold off. I was already aware that evening cocktails is a ritual not widely practiced in China, and here again the reaction was nonplussed. “I think too early... What about tea?”

It was about then I whipped out my map and asked of them the best route to Houhai Lake. And it was at this point offense may have been taken. Before they abruptly turned to go their own way, I was advised to “Take a taxi.”

So I did. Thus was perhaps made my first antisocial mistake in Beijing.

Lakeside Linger

Once set aside along with nearby Beihai Lake as the private waters and gardens of the royals, today Houhai Lake is a place of relaxation, dining and partying for locals, Western expats and tourists. The waters and shoreline shops, restaurants, tea houses, coffee houses, bars and nightclubs are popular with an international clientele and the people watching is perhaps the best in Beijing. The area is commonly and collectively known as “Houhai”, but here are actually several interconnecting lakes, including Houhai (Rear Sea), Qianhai (Front Sea) and Xihai (West Sea).

Where the Houhai and Qianhai lakes meet is the main point of pedestrian traverse, the Silver Ingot Bridge. A few steps away begins Ya’er Hutong and within, among the vendors and their usual tourist goods, more astute buyers can find authentic ethnic arts and crafts, token reminders of past political eras, polite street vendors, unusual cafés and hidden houses of libation. It all comes together in a concentrated rush of local color and energy not to be found elsewhere.

Trimming the lake is Lotus Lane. Besides the longstanding Starbucks, more original dining of all types can be had on the decks and patios at water’s edge. But only during warmer months. During the winter bring your ice skates, for while it’s too cold for al fresco dining, the frozen lake is ideal for skating – or just slipping and sliding.



*Café Calm –
Cool and collected with a latte, biography and
fashion magazine, at Starbucks, main gate to
Houhai Lake.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Near the lake, constructed in the late 1700s, the former home of Prince Gong is one of the most carefully preserved examples of Qing Dynasty architecture in all of China. Here is a glimpse of the past, and of an imperial era's privileged class. The mansion was originally the home of He Shen, a young, handsome and purportedly very wise officer of the Imperial Guard assigned to Emperor Qianlong, who reigned from the mid-1730s to the mid-1790s.

A short stroll from the shores of Houhai Lake are the Bell and Drum Towers, each more than 45 meters in height. These served as official timekeeping and curfew-notification devices during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties.

Originally the site of a royal palace during the Liao Dynasty (907–1125), and renovated as an imperial playground for Kublai Khan in the 13th century, Beihai Park begins just south of Qianhai Lake and extends to the battlements of the Forbidden City. This lovely area centers on Beihai Lake and the landmark White Pagoda, and here you can stroll along the tree-lined waterfront past gardens, imposing imperial architecture and elegant stone sculptures.

Perspective: Serene Seduction

I first approached the shores of Houhai Lake on a rare snowy evening in February of 2005. Back then Ya'er Hutong, the pedestrian alley connecting the street to the lake and Silver Ingot Bridge, was not yet dressed up, as it is today. It was a little less slick, a little rougher.

On that snowy dark night, full of shadows and the dim red glow of lanterns, Ya'er Hutong looked both serenely seductive and a little dangerous. And so the caption of that photograph would not read as "Ya'er Hutong". It was "The Alley of Welcome Trouble".

I made it safely through and first set eyes on the scene around Houhai Lake. Thick snow is not common in Beijing, so this was special. The lake itself was frozen with a white powdery topping. The willow trees along the shore dipped with their beautiful burden of fresh snow. The neon of the small bars and cafés cast pastel reflections across the frozen sparkling landscape, and inside was the warm glow of soft lighting, candles and local hospitality. Were it not for the Chinese characters upon the signs, I then thought, this could be a resort town in the Swiss Alps.



The bell of the historic Bell and Drum Tower. These very resonant civic noisemakers served for official timekeeping and curfew-notification during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties (1279-1911).



Beihai Park – Once these lush gardens and shimmering waters were for exclusive use by the royals. Today citizens and visitors come for leisurely strolls and relaxation.



*Shimmering Shore -
On Qionghua Island in Beihai Lake,
at the center of Beihai Park.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

“The streets are so straight and wide that you can see right along them from end to end and from one gate to the other. And up and down the city there are beautiful palaces, and many great and fine hostelries, and fine houses in great numbers.”

— Marco Polo

Hutong Hangout

About a one-minute taxi ride from Houhai is Nanluoguxiang. Both in terms of physical size and range of offerings, Nanluoguxiang is something like an expanded version of Houhai's Ya'er Hutong. Dining options range from home-style Chinese foods sourcing from varying regions of the country, to pub grub, Italian and gourmet-level French cuisine. Expat-style pubs, bars and nightclubs compete to draw in the strolling locals, foreign residents and tourists.

Also along Nanluoguxiang are trendy art studios, jewelry merchants, artifact shops, salons, sellers of varied unusual novelty products, travel services and hostels. The melding of traditional and avant-garde elements draws some of Beijing's more trendy young adults, and young Western backpacker types to congregate here for travel consulting and nearby budget accommodations. And so throughout the afternoon and evening hours, the diversity of humans and the A-Z range of personal styles result in a first-rate level of people watching.



Local Lady - A dynamic denizen of Nanluoguxiang. Along this active commercial alley are trendy art studios, jewelry merchants, artifact shops, salons, sellers of varied unusual novelty products, travel services and hostels. - Photo by Lowell Bennett

Neighborhood pockets combining traditional and avant-garde elements can be found across Beijing.



History: Before There Was Cambaluc

Beijing, then known as Dadu and later to Marco Polo as Cambaluc, came to be a true capital city, the seat of power for all of China, in 1279. Then it was the domain of Kublai Khan and would remain the capital for the duration of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368). Excepting two interim periods, from 1368 to 1421 and from 1928 to 1949, when the city was known as Beiping, Beijing remained the capital of China.

From 1421 to 1644 the Ming Dynasty presided, then the Manchu's Qing Dynasty lasted from 1644 to 1911, when the era of dynastic rule was brought to a close. The Republic of China held nominal control from 1912 to 1928. This period was followed by unrest, wars and disputed control until Mao's communist forces took prevailing and lasting control in 1949 and officially founded the People's Republic of China.

It was in 1421, during the reign of Emperor Yongle, the third Ming emperor, that the city was first named Beijing, meaning "Northern Capital". And it was around this time that the city took on the grid format which today remains an integral part of the city's infrastructure, a format central to ongoing development. In 1553 the walls of the imperial quarter were extended to a southerly quadrant to accommodate mercantile and somewhat privileged, if not royal, residential purposes. The design layout remains very much in evidence today, clearly delineated by street maps and visible in satellite images. And, as long as there is a Beijing, its north-south axis will forever center on Forbidden City.

As far back as Kublai Khan the basic layout of the city was as it is today, and other characteristics of what is now Beijing were in evidence. To wit, the recounting of a long-term visitor to the Great Khan's court –

Marco Polo:

Now there was on that spot in old times a great and noble city called Cambaluc, which is as much as to say in our tongue "The City of the Emperor." But the Great Khan was informed by his Astrologers that this city would prove rebellious, and raise great disorders against his imperial authority. So he caused the present city to be built close beside the old one, with only a river between them. And he caused the people of the old city to be removed to the new town that he had founded; and this is called Taidu. [However, he allowed a portion of the people which he did not suspect to remain in the old city, because the new one could not hold the whole of them, big as it is.]

As regards the size of this (new) city you must know that it has a compass of 24 miles, for each side of it hath a length of 6 miles, and it is four-square. And it is all walled round with walls of earth which have a thickness of full

10 paces at bottom, and a height of more than 10 paces; but they are not so thick at top, for they diminish in thickness as they rise, so that at top they are only about three paces thick. And they are provided throughout with loop-holed battlements, which are all whitewashed.

There are 12 gates, and over each gate there is a great and handsome palace, so that there are on each side of the square three gates and five palaces; for (I ought to mention) there is at each angle also a great and handsome palace. In those palaces are vast halls in which are kept the arms of the city garrison.

The streets are so straight and wide that you can see right along them from end to end and from one gate to the other. And up and down the city there are beautiful palaces, and many great and fine hostelryes, and fine houses in great numbers. [All the plots of ground on which the houses of the city are built are four-square, and laid out with straight lines; all the plots being occupied by great and spacious palaces, with courts and gardens of proportionate size. All these plots were assigned to different heads of families. Each square plot is encompassed by handsome streets for traffic; and thus the whole city is arranged in squares just like a chess-board, and disposed in a manner so perfect and masterly that it is impossible to give a description that should do it justice.]

Moreover, in the middle of the city there is a great clock – that is to say, a bell – which is struck at night. And after it has struck three times no one must go out in the city, unless it be for the needs of a woman in labor, or of the sick. And those who go about on such errands are bound to carry lanterns with them. Moreover, the established guard at each gate of the city is 1,000 armed men; not that you are to imagine this guard is kept up for fear of any attack, but only as a guard of honor for the Sovereign, who resides there, and to prevent thieves from doing mischief in the town.

But the civilization and the history of the city began long before Marco Polo came to visit and refer to it as "Cambaluc". The first human resident of the land that became Beijing is estimated to have lived as long as 500,000 years ago. In the caves of what is today Zhoukoudian Village in Beijing's Fangshan District were found the bones of the Homo erectus known as Peking Man. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the dig site is overseen by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage and is open to the current residents of Beijing, as well as overseas guests.

Relics and ancient tools found at other archeological sites of Neolithic times indicate that primitive forms of agriculture were common on the plains of Beijing 6,000 to 7,000 years ago.



*Media Monument -
The Ling Long Pagoda (Linglong Tower)
as seen from inside the National Stadium
exoskeleton. The tower is a component of the
International Broadcast Center (IBC).
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

In particular is the technology afforded “The Readers”. Along the giant rectangle at the library’s core The Readers sit with their books and laptops. Multiple Wi-Fi networks serve the library, and some are reserved for, and user-named as, “The Readers”.

The civic spirit of a city may be measured in part by the sum total of its civically-inspired structures. That is: Buildings and facilities devoted to and used by the general public – average citizens. The mind-boggling exteriors and seemingly endless and impossibly grand interiors of slick office buildings, high-end shopping malls and five-star hotels are impressive, but more inspiring in spirit is when that sort of architecture, technology, esthetics and functionality actually benefits the public good. Beijing’s city managers and Central Government officials seem to understand that the grand and glorious civic institutions and structures belong to, indeed, the people, and thus those average citizens should be able to enjoy and utilize those public assets for a nominal or zero fee.

And that brings us to Beijing’s biggest collective civic investment of all.

Olympic Legacy

During the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, a question often fired-off by the visiting foreign press was to the effect of: “What will be done with the venues after the Games? Is China wasting money on these massive and massively expensive projects?”

China’s press spokespeople expected the question. After the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece’s national government was lambasted when nearly all the new venues were abandoned and went derelict.



*Civic Symbolism –
Styled along the lines of the Olympic Torch,
Pangu Plaza at Olympic Park.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Civic Assets –
The showpiece 91,000-seat National Olympic
Stadium (“Bird’s Nest”).
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



Today in Athens hundreds of millions of dollars in concrete and steel sit idle, the venues overgrown with weeds, the once slick facades fading in color and disintegrating in structure. Chain link fence and razor wire keep the public away. Beijing’s managers worked to avoid a similar scenario.

Spanning an interior space of 258,000 square meters, today the National Stadium (“Bird’s Nest”) holds 80,000 seats, down from 91,000 during the 2008 Olympics. Also within the girded dome are conference rooms and exhibition halls ranging in size from 90-2,130 square meters. Today what is one of the world’s great stadiums accommodates the touring public as well as major sporting events, concerts and more. Notably it was within the “Bird’s Nest” that renowned director and producer Zhang Yimou featured his version of the Italian opera *Turandot*. Rock concerts and other paid public events occur regularly.

Since the 2008 Games came to a close, the National Aquatics Center (“Water Cube”), has welcomed through her doors millions of foreign and domestic visitors, as well as local Beijingers seeking a cool down and to have some fun in the facility’s massive water park. Also included within the pastel translucent walls are offices, conference centers and, of course, world-class swimming and diving facilities. The latter are regularly used for sporting events and aqua-fitness functions.

Seating 20,000, with an additional 13 VIP suites and 560 parking spaces, the National Indoor Stadium today accommodates national and international conferences, expos, performances in theater, song and dance and much more. Also held here was world-renowned pianist Lang Lang's New Year's Concert.

Originally constructed in 1990 and renovated for the 2008 Games, the multi-purpose Olympic Sports Center spans a floor space of 34,975 square meters, accommodating more than 36,000 spectators. Today the stadium regularly hosts world-class soccer tournaments and other major national and international sporting events.

Past and Planned

Four floors in height, with 16,000 square meters in floor area and 8,000 square meters of exhibition area, Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall showcases both the past and future plans for Beijing.

The expo hall's showpiece and literal centerpiece is its 302-square-meter city model. Crafted by 150 workers over the course of one year at a cost of 4 million yuan (\$482,000) to a scale of 1:750, the exacting piece of three-dimensional art is mind-boggling in its detail. And it is revised and re-crafted in almost real time. If a building comes down, the correlating piece comes down. When a building is structurally complete within Beijing's actual cityscape, a new model is structurally complete within the expo.

The model is overlaid, again, precisely, to an enormous aerial photograph embossed to 1,000 illuminated glass floor tiles. Where the model ends, the aerial image takes over, the streets and scaled size of both the model and the aerial image are in perfect sync.

Another of the expo's notable and enormous pieces is the 10-meter-high, 9-meter-wide wall-mounted bronze relief sculpture entitled Old City of Beijing. This depicts Beijing in 1949, the year the People's Republic of China was founded. At a cost of 1 million yuan, formed to scale are ancient city walls, about 120,000 houses, 60,000 trees and the city's lakes, rivers and streams.

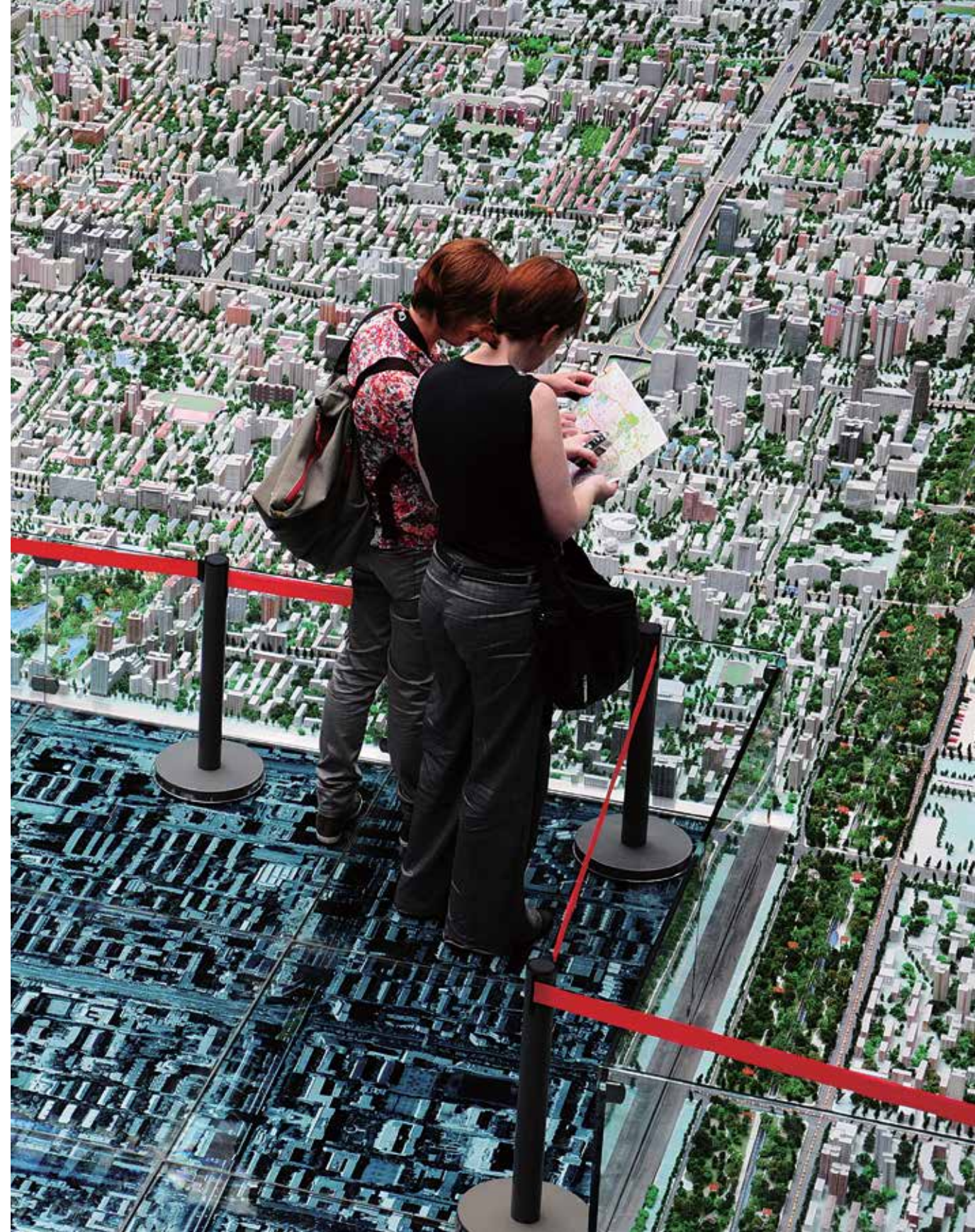
Nearly 10 tons of bronze went into the sculpture's 45 plates, each at 1 meter in width and 2 meters in length.

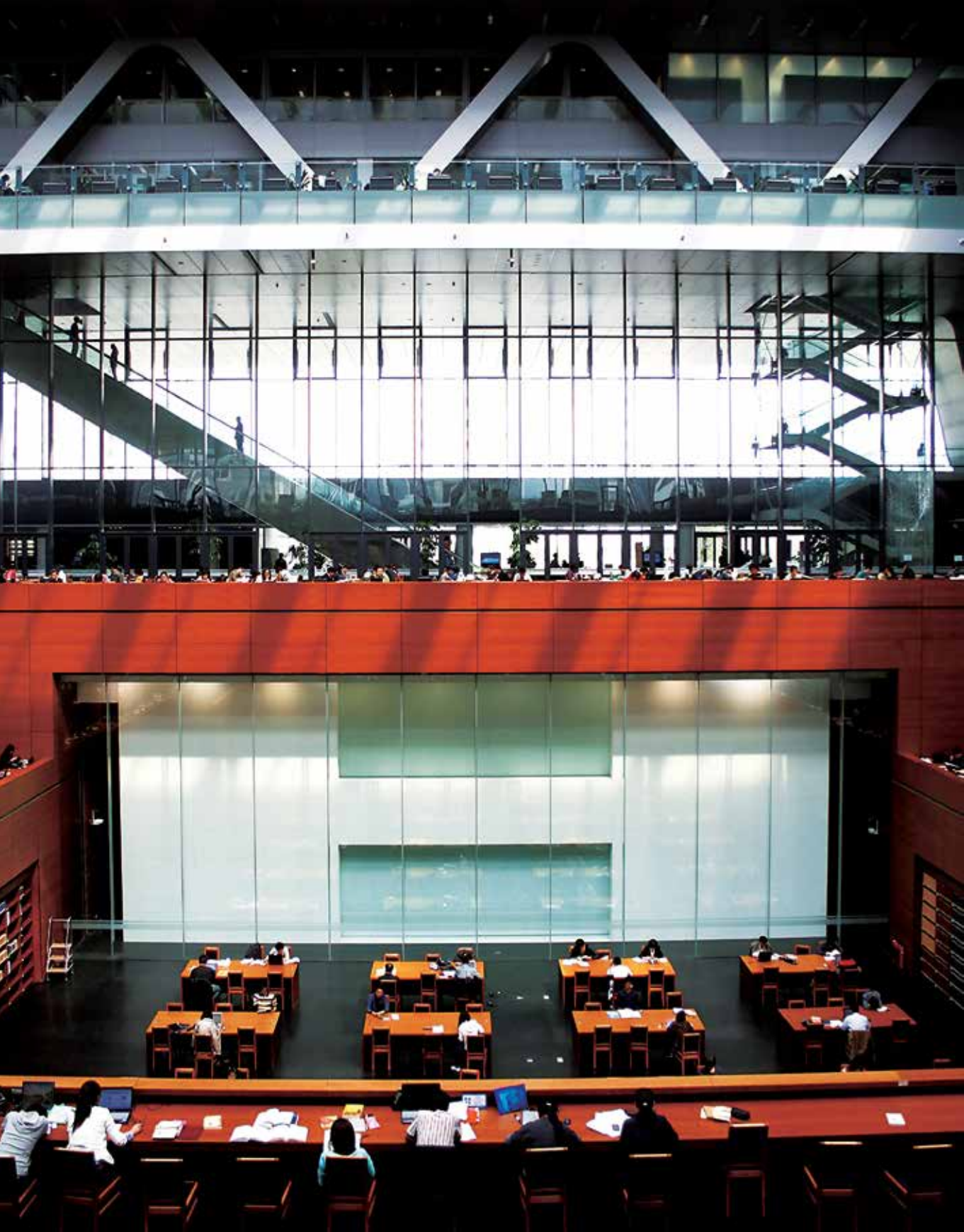
Not all of the expo hall's exhibits are static and historic. Step into the fourth-floor 200-seat 3D multimedia auditorium and fasten your seatbelt for a Disney World-like ride into a Beijing of the future. The auditorium spans 400 square meters, and is equipped with 5.1-channel sound system and an analog simulation system projecting seemingly touchable images to a 6-meter-tall, 20-meter-wide 120-degree arc screen. The effect is informative and dazzling.

A part of the 302-square-meter model of the city at the Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall. To a scale of 1:750, this exacting piece of three-dimensional art is mind-boggling in its detail. More than 150 workers and artisans spent one year on its assembly at a cost of 4 million yuan (\$482,000). Construction (and removals) goes on as the city changes.

*In Relief—
At the Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall, the Forbidden City section, a small portion, of a 10-meter-high, 9-meter-wide wall-mounted bronze relief sculpture entitled the "Old City of Beijing." Depicting Beijing in 1949, the year the People's Republic of China was founded, it was crafted at a cost of 1 million yuan. Formed to scale are ancient city walls, about 120,000 houses, 60,000 trees and the city's lakes, rivers and streams.*

A model of the Bird's Nest, the National Stadium, at Olympic Park.





Arena of Knowledge

Situated on an 18.5-acre site, spanning 250,000 square meters of floor space, including 30-plus reading rooms and seating more than 3,000, the National Library of China (NLC) is the world's third largest national library.

Phase I of the project, at 140,000 square meters, was completed in 1987. Phase II of the project, at 80,000 square meters, was completed in 2008. Importantly, the institution also cares for the Ancient Books Library, at a floor area of 30,000 square meters.

More than 20 million volumes are held within the National Library, with employees numbering more than 1,600. The NLC also incorporates the latest digital technologies and Internet linkups, including multiple Wi-Fi networks.

The library has a long and storied past. Originally conceived as the "Metropolitan Library" and open to the public at the Guanghua Temple in 1912, in 1931 the library was relocated to a new building on Wenjin Street, now the location of the Ancient Books Library. By the 1930s it was the largest and most advanced library in China.



In 1949, with the founding of the People's Republic of China, the library was renamed as "Beijing Library". Upon the completion of Phase I in 1987, Deng Xiaoping inscribed the calligraphy for the library's name. And on December 12, 1998, the State Council approved its renaming as "National Library of China". In 1989, President Jiang Zemin inscribed the present-day name.

Perhaps most notable is Phase II's basis in digital technology. The National Digital Library Project forms an online center of knowledge and learning. In particular is the technology afforded "The Readers". Along the giant rectangle at the library's core The Readers sit with their books and laptops. Multiple Wi-Fi networks serve the library, and some are reserved for, and user-named as, "The Readers".

The NLC is essentially the nation's knowledge and archival warehouse. Here is a national bibliographic center and a center for the preservation of ancient books. Among other important roles, the NLC serves as an important conduit for international cultural exchange. It works with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and that organization's collateral agencies. It exchanges books and periodicals with more than 1,600 libraries and academic research institutions in more than 100 nations.

*Interior Insight -
Inside the National Library of China. It spans
250,000 sq m of floor space, with 30-plus
reading rooms and seating for over 3,000.
Multiple Wi-Fi networks serve the library, with
two reserved for and user-named as "The
Readers." Sitting in the core rectangle, the
readers enjoy quiet study.
- Photos by Lowell Bennett*

Elegantly Enlightened Egg

Surrounded by water, at 212 meters in length, 144 meters at its widest point, 46 meters tall and with an audience capacity of 5,473, at an estimated price tag of \$400 million, the National Center for the Performing Arts is one of the most unique and spectacular of classical entertainment venues in the world.

Comprising about 12,000 square meters of floor space and housing a concert hall, opera house and theater within its spaceship-like titanium and glass dome, this cultural icon wildly contrasts with its edifice neighbors, the Great Hall of the People, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City and the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall.

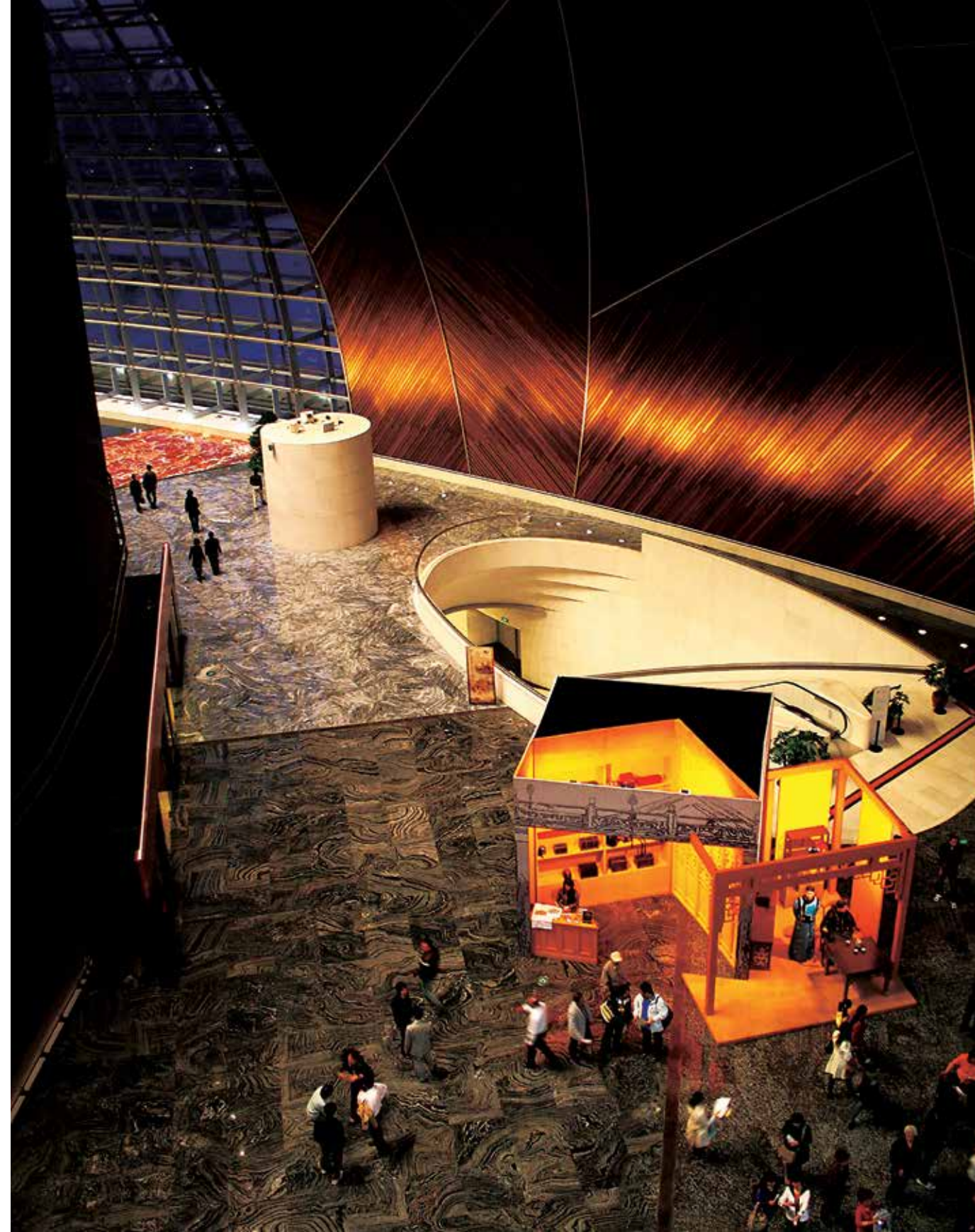
Designed by French architect Paul Andreu, the interior is as extravagant and richly appointed as the exterior is futuristically exotic. Clear arching spans seem to reach to point of vision, lush woods and glossy natural stone surfaces lend a slick but organic element to the otherwise starship-like glass and steel frame.



The Opera Hall section, also used for ballets and dance performances, seats 2,416, while the Music Hall and the Theater Hall seat 2,017 and 1,040, respectively.

Tickets prices are kept at a rate affordable to average citizens, thanks to operational financial supplementation provided by Beijing Municipal Government and China's Central Government.

*Beyond the Shell –
The National Center for the Performing Arts
("the Egg"). This extravagant \$400-million
venue is accessible to average Beijingers and
visitors. Government subsidize operations to
keep ticket prices affordable.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett*



*Culture and Congress –
The spaceship-like National Center for the
Performing Arts was completed in December
2007, in advance of the Beijing 2008 Olympic
Games. Just beyond is the Great Hall of the
People, a venue for legislative government
since 1959.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*



House of Opera

One of the world's oldest and most colorful forms of theatrical arts, Peking Opera came to be a distinctly and officially recognized Chinese form in 1790. That year the original style branched from Anhui opera when the four leading Anhui opera troupes came to Peking to perform on occasion of Emperor Qianlong's birthday. Originally deemed an entertainment exclusively reserved for royalty, it would be decades before the average Chinese subject might take in a show. And it would be 1845 before the integration of the Hubei variation was complete and the form Peking Opera was realized in full and present-day form.

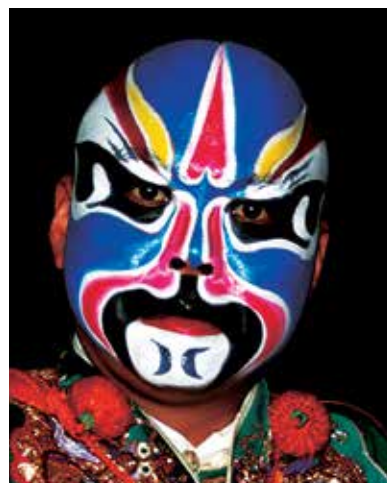
Since it opened to the public in 2007, worldwide there may be no better place to enjoy Peking Opera than the Mei Lanfang Grand Theater. Named in honor of perhaps the all-time greatest practitioner of the form, Mei Lanfang, the theater is at the north end of the economically powerful Financial Street, in Beijing's ever-more modernized Xicheng District. The fan-shaped glass and steel structure with its interior of massive royal-like red columns, golden hues and cathedral ceilings reflects heavily its Chinese heritage and the elements of this particular form of classic performance art.

Unlike the humble exterior venues of the past, when performers relied on primitive acoustics to project their voices, the Mei Lanfang Grand Theater employs state-of-the-art sound systems backed by modern staging apparatus and lighting. In the lobby is a 1.5-meter-tall, 2.5-meter-wide bronze statue of the man and legend for whom the theater was named. The statue smiles with benevolence and good nature, and his bronzed hand is held in manner typical to a feminine gesture. There is a good reason for this.

History: The Masterly Life of Mei Lanfang

Known to this date as the preeminent practitioner of Peking Opera, a legend in the performance art, Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) was more than a pretty face and a powerful voice. A defining moment in his life occurred soon after the July 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident and Beijing's subsequent occupation by the Japanese army. The Japanese commander ordered Mei to perform for his officers and as encouragement offered Mei an official high-ranking position and comfortable living conditions. But Mei refused. In fact, he abstained from his art for the duration of the war, giving up privilege and comfort to live a life of poverty until the Japanese withdrew with the end of the war in 1945.

By the time Mei took that courageous, principled and potentially dangerous stand, he was already a legend in China and known to multitudes around the world. Born into the art in 1894 in Taizhou, Jiangsu Province, at 8 years



A Master's Memorial - At the Mei Lanfang Grand Theater, a bronze of the man for whom the theater was named. For 60 years Mei Lanfang was a master of the Peking Opera form known as the Dan, the female role. He was also known for resisting the Japanese occupation of Beijing, refusing to perform for the occupiers and rejecting the offered privilege, status and comfort. - Photo by Lowell Bennett

Opera Faces - Peking Opera performers backstage at Mei Lanfang Grand Theater. The theater was named in honor of Peking Opera legend, Mei Lanfang (1894-1961). - Photos by Lowell Bennett

of age Mei began studying with his Peking Opera family. At 10 he first took to the stage at Beijing's Guanghe Theater and by the 1910s he was a major star. For 60 years he specialized in performing female roles, known as the "Dan".

Notably, he crossed over to the "Qingyi", a dignified and refined female from the spirited young female character, the "Huadan". The Qingyi character moves across the stage in a rigid, self-conscious and prideful manner, while the Huadan is perky and vivacious of movement and voice. Mei Lanfang mastered both character forms, setting the Dan standard for generations of Peking Opera performers.

Mei created and performed in more than 200 plays, portraying more than 100 characters. His distinctive and innovative styles of performance techniques, movement, voice and makeup came to be known as the "Mei School". For decades he reigned as China's greatest performer in the theatrical arts.

Importantly, Mei was one of the first of China's artists to tour the world, and the first to take Peking Opera to foreign lands, including to the US, Japan, Russia and throughout Europe. During a 1930 US tour, he struck up associations and friendships with leading Hollywood stars like Charlie Chaplin, Douglass Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. Five years later, Mei Lanfang performed and was hailed in Russia, praised by major figures like Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.

After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, Mei served as Director of China Beijing Opera Theater, Director of the Chinese Opera Research Institute, and Vice Chairman of China Federation of Literary and Art Circles.

Two years before his death in 1961, Mei took on another character, the dynamic, strong-willed and charismatic female general in *Mu Guiying Takes Command*.

In 2000 the documentary *The Worlds of Mei Lanfang* honored the master and in 2008 the film biography *Forever Enthralled* was produced by the renowned director, Chen Kaige.

Mei Lanfang retains his place in history as one of China's greatest performing legends, and his mark on China's arts and the city of Beijing remains indelible, thus the edifice venue that bears his name, the Mei Lanfang Grand Theater.



Structural Drama – China National Film Museum is the world’s largest film museum, opened in 2007. The arches (the writer is guessing) represent the frames of film. Others explain them as being inspired by clipboards, commonly associated with the process of filmmaking.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett

Film as History

Opened in 2007 on 65 acres in northeast Beijing with a floor space of 38,000 square meters, China National Film Museum is the world’s largest film museum. And the exhibits within represent a century of Chinese cinema.

The museum comprises 20 exhibition halls and the visual content from more than 1,500 films. Also part of the presentation are more than 4,300 still photographs and the preserved heritage of more than 450 of China’s top filmmakers.

Not only about the past, the museum also focuses on contemporary film and technology. A state-of-the-art IMAX cinema plus three 35mm film venues are part of the presentation. Sound systems, too, are top-of-the-line tech.

The 403-seat, 70-milimeter IMAX Theater boasts a screen 27 meters wide and 21 meters high, and the visual presentation is backed up by a multi-track super high-fidelity surround sound system. Besides the IMAX, the 323-seat Digital Theater features panorama-format films, also with surround sound. And the 35mm projection theaters, replete with elegance and plush comfort, screen the best in domestic and international films, while also serving as lecture venues.

The exterior of the building, too, is visually striking. The series of sharp arches fronting the structure are both solidly imposing and whimsically abstract, suggesting longevity and cutting-edge avant-garde creativity. The four contrasting hues – yellow, green, blue and red –are meant to reflect the four delineated functions of the museum: Services, Exhibition, Expo and Theater.

The museum interior is both grand and lighthearted, with the IMAX setting off the modernity, while just around the corner history awaits.

A Century of Film and Performance – Historical exhibits at China National Film Museum. Housed here are 20 exhibition halls, more than 1,500 films, 4,300 still photographs and the documentary heritage of the nation’s leading filmmakers.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett

Exhibits both educate and entertain. Included are: Invention of Film; Birth of Chinese Film and Its Early Development; Chinese Film during the Revolutionary War Period; Development of Cinema in New China; Chinese Cinema in the Age of Reform and Opening Up, and much more.



Maximum Museum

The five-story, 60,000-square-meter design of Beijing's Capital Museum, its directors say, is "based on cultural heritages" while underlining the "harmonious integration of history and modernism, art and nature." Perhaps, but one thing is for sure: The cavernous ultramodern interior with its enormous urn-like structural centerpiece is awesome in scope and architectural impact.

The design conception was approved by Beijing Municipal Government in 1999. Construction commenced in December 2001. Remarkably, just four years later the world-class showstopper of art, history, culture, priceless stone pieces and rare relics opened its doors.

Undoubtedly a thing of modernity and urban beauty, traditional elements are part of both structure and design in the Capital Museum. The great



A regular exhibit at Capital Museum, "Ancient Capital - History and Culture of Beijing".

Clay figurines depict a traditional wedding procession at Capital Museum.

reaching ceiling reflects traditional Chinese architecture; the expansive stone partitioning wall represents the city walls of ancient China; patterns within the interior plaza harken to the styles of dais of ancient times; and a decorative archway from the Ming Dynasty is set in the hall. Most dominant is the urn-like Bronze Exhibition Hall casing reaching from the bottom floor to the top of the structure. Its shape is meant to reflect container vessels of ancient times.

The great quantities of stone incorporated into the floors and the north square were brought in from Fangshan, since ancient times a source of stone for the construction of Beijing. The steel canopy roof and glass walls, likely unintentionally, are somewhat reminiscent of Beijing Capital Airport's ultramodern Terminal 3.

The museum is divided into three primary exhibit areas. Those are: the Rectangular Exhibition Hall, the Oval Exhibition Hall and the Quadrate Office & Scientific Research Building. They are linked by the central hall and bamboo courtyard. The overall effect is that of natural materials and environment, international modernistic architectural design and classic Chinese elements.

Contributing to the assembly of exhibitions were the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Peking University, and Beijing Academy of Social Sciences etc. Regular exhibits include: Ancient Capital Beijing - History and Culture, Ancient Capital Beijing - Urban Construction, and Old Beijing Folk Customs.

Fine art ancient collections include chinaware, bronze art, calligraphy, paintings, jade ware, Buddha statues and gadgets of studies.

Classic Modernity - Inside the five-story tall Capital Museum. The open-space interior is dominated by the urn-like Bronze Exhibition Hall. Its shape is meant to reflect container vessels of ancient times. - Photo by Lowell Bennett

While nearly 6,000 precious and historic pieces are exhibited, the museum also features exhibits based on digital technology. The Digital Museum Project enhances the cultural exhibits, while providing stand-alone multimedia elements such as multi-screen displays, illusory imaging, visual reality images and digital films.

Capital Museum's environment-friendly systems include soft skin solar power panels and energy-saving lighting. All surface and decorative materials are classified as "green", certified as meeting national ecological standards.



*Gem Room –
One of the more popular attractions at Capital
Museum is the Jade Room.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

*Finely crafted antique Peking Opera costumes
on display at Capital Museum*

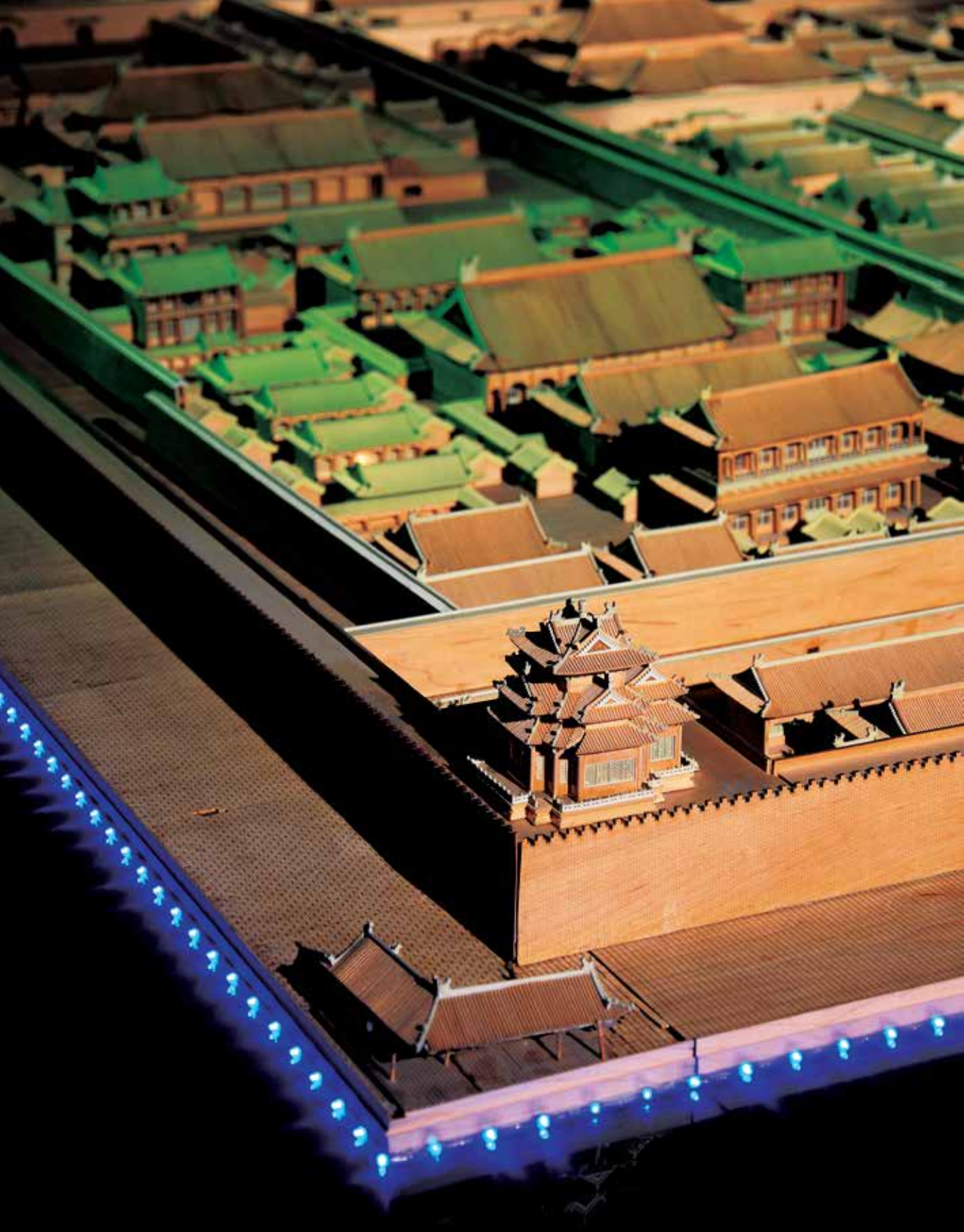
History: And Then There Was Dadu

Before the Jin Dynasty was expunged by Genghis Khan's Mongols in 1215, the presiding Jurchen had doubled the size of the walled city of Zhongdu (Beijing). Despite the greater size, the fortified walls and the 13 gates, the Mongols inflicted a heavy beating on the city as they evicted the prior tenants. And Zhongdu became Yanjing.

By the time the somewhat more peaceable Kublai Khan rode into Beijing in 1261, the city was in near ruins. The capital had seen a succession of occupations by the Khitan, Jurchen, and finally Khan's own Mongols. Despite his family name and its eternal association with his grandfather, the notorious Genghis, Kublai was more inclined to harmonious and cosmopolitan ways of governance. So after four years battling it out with other Mongols and prevailing, he directed that a new capital be built in Yanjing. Prophetically, Khan saw the place as a centralized gateway for political power and trade. And so in 1271 he decreed the founding of the Yuan Dynasty and Yanjing became Dadu (Grand Capital).

Golden Buddha statue at Capital Museum





In 1267 the building of Dadu commenced and the alignment of the “Grand Capital” was adjusted to the northeast to ensconce Taining Palace on Qionghua Island in the Gaoliang River. This was the inception of the city’s north-south central axis, a pivotal city planning feature of today’s Beijing. Notably, this was when *hutong* were first popularized. About six to seven meters in width, the narrow alleys were laid out in grids and winding patterns. It was during the construction of Dadu, too, when sewer systems were channeled beneath the broad main avenues.

Dadu would eventually be larger than all preceding cities, with solid and thick earthen walls and 11 city gates. The walls, portions of which still stand today, were later bolstered with brick during the Ming Dynasty. At the center of Dadu would be constructed the Bell and Drum towers. Centuries later the towers stand today, a popular stop for tourists.

It was during the Dadu period when Beijing’s most strategic lakes were formed from the waters of the Gaoliang River. Today the most famous of those lakes is Houhai, and the general and very active area is often referred to simply as “Houhai Lake” (Back Lake). There are actually six lakes. Today on Qionghua Island, the island central to Beihai Park, foreign and domestic visitors still gaze up to the 40-meter-high White Dagoba, the construction of which was ordered by Kublai Khan in 1271.

The Gaoliang River thus delivered greater quantities of water to Dadu, and an additional channel running from Yuquan Hill added to the supply. The Grand Canal allowed for the import of great quantities of grains from southern China, and Dadu flourished.

In 1279 the Mongols finished off the last of the Song resistance in southern China, and Dadu for the first time became the capital of a unified nation. Also for the first time in its history, the city became an international metropolis. Marco Polo famously remained as part of Kublai Khan’s court for years, and other foreign visitors and dignitaries came to call. The city was also renowned for its population of learned philosophers, writers and other foreign and domestic intellectuals. And so it is today.

The Old City of Beijing, fine wood carving at Beijing Planning Exhibition Hall.



Tech Zone

*Life - The sculpture and well-known landmark
in Zhongguancun District.*

In the past decade the city's GDP advance averaged about 11 percent annually. This remarkable growth was achieved while the city phased out traditional manufacturing and polluting plants and phased in clean industries, focusing on hi-tech service and production.

In 2010 Beijing's GDP topped 1.37 trillion yuan, about 78,000 yuan per capita. That's a 10.1 percent increase over 2009 (1.19 trillion yuan or \$174 billion). In the past decade the city's GDP advance averaged about 11 percent annually. This remarkable growth was achieved while the city phased out traditional manufacturing and polluting plants and phased in clean industries, focusing on hi-tech service and production.

Enter the Z Zone

At the time of this writing the latest major development within Beijing's Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone was made complete in May of 2011, when Microsoft opened the doors to a brand new \$280-million, 150,000-square-meter multi-building IT facility. It was the largest investment in the company's history outside of the US. Indeed, a major coup for the directors and managers of Zhongguancun, but only the most recent in a dynamic decades-long expansion.

What is known in full as the Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone is actually comprised of 10 subzones or "science parks". Those are: Haidian Park, Fengtai Park, Changping Park, Electronic Town, Yizhuang Park, Desheng Park, Yonghe Park, Shijingshan Park, Tongzhou Park and Daxing CBP.

Commercial constructs along Zhongguancun Street



The longest established of the subzones, Haidian Science Park might be described as the prototype parent zone, with more than 10,000 firms there. The entire Zhongguancun zone holds more than 20,000 primarily hi-tech enterprises. They are engaged in fields such as science, R&D, information technology, tech hardware, mobile Internet, bio-pharmaceuticals, satellite navigation and new energy development. Many have become leaders in the global market. So much so that Beijing has assumed a preeminent position as China's leading tech city, in recent years having surpassed Shanghai in the realm of innovation enterprise, as indexed by Annual Report on Regional Innovation Capacity of China.

The Haidian Park was officially established in 1988 with official approval as granted by the Central Government. At 100 square kilometers in geographic scope, the area would become commonly referred to as "China's Silicon Valley", or simply as Zhongguancun. Enterprises here enjoy tax breaks and myriad other financial incentives and government backing. The goal is to nurture the incubation of highly-viable startups and further advance established profit-proven tech brands.

Employed in the 10 science parks are about 750,000 engineers, technicians and other tech and science workers. More than 180 of the zone's firms are publicly listed, with 80 listed abroad and 100-plus traded on domestic exchanges. The numbers are steadily rising. In 2009 23 firms went to IPO; in 2010 the number of new listings was 39. More than 1,300 Zhongguancun firms boast annual sales revenue of more than 100 million yuan.

In the first quarter of 2011, Zhongguancun companies generated gross revenues of 380 million yuan (\$69 million), up 12 percent on a year-on-year basis.

Some of China's most powerful tech firms are based here, including Baidu, Founder Group, Lenovo, Sohu.com and the Stone Group. Overseas giants with China HQs include AMD, French Telecom, Hitachi R&D, Intel, Japanese Telecom, Motorola, Oracle Corporation, Sony Ericsson, Tencent QQ and WYSE Technology.



*Microsoft's Asia-Pacific R&D Group HQ,
Zhongguancun Hi-tech District.*

Microsoft Moves In

Perhaps no development better represents the international drawing power of Zhongguancun than the May 25, 2011 opening of Microsoft's Asia-Pacific R&D Group Headquarters. Under development for three years, and representing the company's largest R&D investment outside of the US, the \$280-million facility comprises two high-rise buildings and 150,000 square meters of space. Employee capacity is expected to reach 5,000 in number. At the time of its opening, already at work were 3,000 researchers, associates and engineers. Their multi-divisional areas of occupation include Microsoft Research Asia (MSR Asia), Advanced Technology Center (ATC), Server and Tools Business (STB) China, Microsoft Asia Center for Hardware (MACH) and other product and R&D organizations.

Microsoft's Zhongguancun campus includes two top-floor laboratories housing more than 10,000 servers in what Microsoft calls its "Green Data Center". According to the company, these apply the latest technologies to form an environmentally efficient and technologically advanced structure.



High-rises and busy traffic are all a part of Zhongguancun.

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Z-Zoned

Zhongguancun's inception in the late 1980s is largely credited to Chen Chunxian, a storied R&D engineer who developed China's first tokamak. (Important in producing controlled thermonuclear fusion power, the tokamak is not easily explained in few words, but what it does at a basic level is to create a magnetic field to form and hold plasma in a doughnut-shaped pattern.)

During an official China-US exchange and a visit to the US, Chen was inspired by the enterprise clustering dynamics of Silicon Valley. Foreseeing a need for a similar centralized hub for technological advancement and enterprise incubation, he returned to China to found the Advanced Technology Service Association. His determined advocacy prompted official concurrence and in 1988 the Central Government officially recognized and delineated the "Beijing Hi-Tech Industry Development Experimental Zone".

That lengthy label was later made somewhat more concise and "Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone" was made permanent, although many consumers and technicians still collectively refer to the hardware and software markets there as "Electronics Street".

The high concentration of universities linked into the arterial enterprise physics of Zhongguancun and Beijing include the prestigious Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Peking University and Tsinghua University. The schools not only provide China's greatest number of (and arguably most talented) graduates in technical fields, the institutions are quite literally a part of Zhongguancun's most advanced and powerful tech firms. The CAS, a research institute, is behind China Science Group Corporation; Software Research Institute of CAS backs R.F. Software Corporation; Tsinghua University

*Auto R&D -
At Tsinghua University, research and
development into eco-efficient vehicles and
auto safety.
- Photos by Lowell Bennett*



is linked with Tsinghua Tongfang Corporation; and Peking University is the force behind Founder Group.

But perhaps the best-known of Zhongguancun's academic / corporate power-houses is the association of CAS' Computer Technology Institute and what was first known as the Legend Group. Later this dynamic entity of technology and business became Lenovo Corporation and today the firm remains one of Zhongguancun's most storied and most successful enterprise residents.

Beijing Born

In the early 1980s, after more than a decade serving as a researcher with CAS' Computer Technology Institute, Liu Chuanzhi conceived the plan to form a for-China in-China PC manufacturing company. CAS provided Liu with startup capital of about \$20,000 and by the mid-1980s what became known as Legend Group was importing and distributing various components. It was a humble but eventually successful startup and in 1990 Legend manufactured its first PC. Four years later the one-millionth unit rolled off the assembly line. In 2003 Legend Computer Co. Ltd. became Lenovo Group Limited, and in 2005 Lenovo acquired IBM's personal computer division for \$1.75 billion.

Today Lenovo remains the largest company based within the Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone.

Foreign Future Tech

Today the directors of Zhongguancun Science & Technology Zone continue to offer special incentives for overseas R&D ventures and individuals. Such consideration may include permanent residency permits, medical care and insurance and tax incentives. And new programs are on the way. The State Council has approved the new "Zhongguancun National Innovation Demonstration Zone" for development from 2011 to 2020. Encouraging startups and the incubation of new innovation firms, the goal is to boost Zhongguancun commercial revenues from the last posted of 1.55 trillion yuan to 10 trillion yuan (\$1.8 trillion) in 2020.

Clearly, the overall global forefront tech position of Silicon Valley is not one of lasting comfort and assuredness.

History: From Routes of Rebellion, the Manchu

After over 200 years at the seat of power in Beijing, in the early 17th Century the Ming court was in hard decline. The descent was due largely to a string of ineffectual emperors who had little interest in the nuts-and-bolts of governing and even less regard for the welfare of their people. By 1627, when Emperor Chongzhen took the reigns of state, the Ming was a dynastic chariot fast en route to the edge of a steep cliff. The paranoid and suspicious Chongzhen accelerated that terminal course with the execution of the highly respected and very popular Yuan Chonghuan, the general who in 1630 masterfully beat back Manchu aggression from the north.

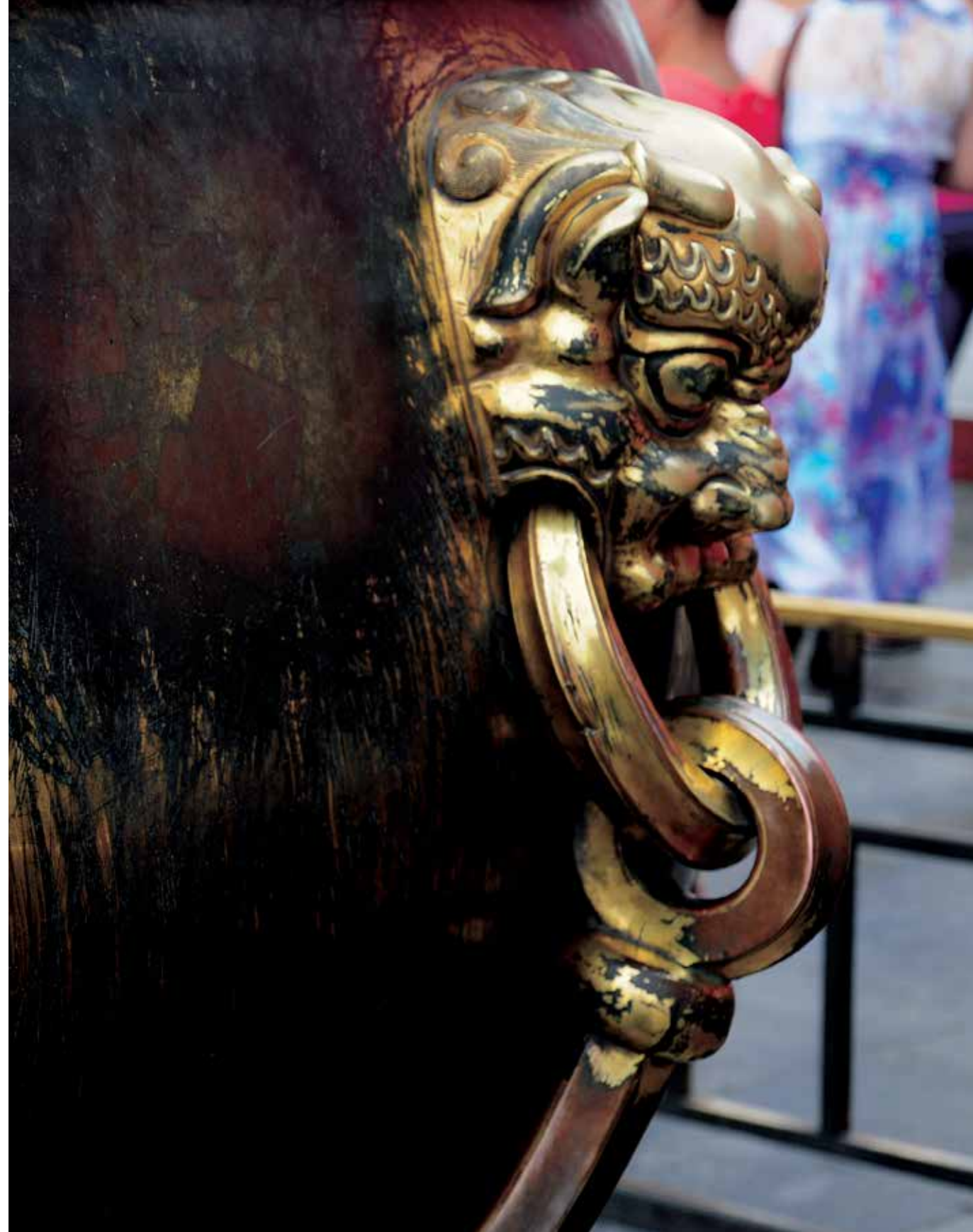
Other prior and ongoing administrative malfunctions included the pillaging and waste of the nation's treasury and general fiscal, ethical and moral decline. Lesser officials were essentially running the affairs of the nation – and those affairs were not in good order. The best and most fertile land was essentially appropriated by well connected bribe-paying landlords, and hundreds of thousands of peasants were largely left without livelihood and viable forms of sustenance. The system of taxation pushing against the lower classes was onerous and a season of natural calamities followed by noted inaction on the part of their rulers pushed the peasantry to the breaking point.

Enter Li Zicheng.

Born in 1606 in Mizhi, Shaanxi Province, the very disciplined Li Zicheng rose from laborer to become a respected village leader. An accomplished horseman and archer, in 1630 he joined a large scale peasant uprising then led by Gao Yingxiang. He excelled as a soldier and leader. Upon Gao's death his now organized forces were split into two divisions. One would be led by a commander named Zhang Xianzhong and the other – with then unknown awesome historic implications for China and the city of Beijing – would be led by Li Zicheng. Li inherited Gao's honored military moniker "Dashing King".

Li was a formidable and respected commander. Abiding by slogans such as "Divide land equally and abolish the grain tax payment system", Li's socialist leanings brought him to strip corrupt landlords of their property and divide it among the people. Military discipline was paramount and officers and troops were held to a strict code of honor. Any deemed guilty of corruption or abuse of the people were subject to severe punishment and stripping of rank and privilege. Li's popularity grew, as did his army. By some accounts his followers eventually numbered into the hundreds of thousands. They controlled vast tracts of northern China and they were on the march to Beijing.

Ancient copper vat at Imperial Palace





Looking from inside a room at Imperial Palace, until the day dynasties ended in 1911, the seat of power and the site of countless historic events over the centuries.

Within Forbidden City, Emperor Chongzhen was finally at the edge of his metaphorical cliff. He lacked strong and dedicated military leaders (having executed his best general for supposed disloyalty) and his army was a specter of its former strength. This while being pressed hard by the Manchus in the north and Li Zicheng's highly motivated peasant army in the south. He would soon take his final fateful step and with him would go the Ming Dynasty, which had ruled since 1368.

In 1644 Li Zicheng led his forces into Beijing. Realizing his dynasty and himself to be doomed, Emperor Chongzhen first put to death by sword several members of his court and family, including all but one daughter – who reportedly was not so anxious to capitulate her fate and escaped with a severed arm. Then he strode from Forbidden City to nearby Jingshan Hill. There, reportedly still attired in his royal garments, he hung himself.

Thus was ended the Ming Dynasty and Li Zicheng promptly declared himself emperor of his newly founded Shun Dynasty. But it would be a short-lived reign.

To the north was a wily and adverse strategist known as Prince Regent Dorgon. The son of the great Jurchen chieftain, Nurhaci, Dorgon effectively led a force of united Manchu tribes controlling a large swath of the north. Watching, waiting and biding his time, he allowed Li Zicheng to take Beijing, declare victory, proclaim the founding of the Shun Dynasty – and drop his guard.

Allowed to enter through the Great Wall and then supported by former enemy Ming forces led by General Wu Sangui, the Manchu and their Han cohorts struck hard and fast. Piercing Beijing's natural geographic defenses and battlements at Shanhai Pass, Dorgon's forces easily routed the peasant army, driving them from Beijing.

Li Zicheng was forced to mount up and ride for his life. Accounts differ as to what eventually became of him. Some say he hung himself from a lotus tree; some say he became a monk. Others have it that he was killed soon after fleeing Beijing in a follow-up battle at Mount Jiugong in what is today Hubei Province. In any case, he was gone from the pages of history; no longer a player upon the great stage of China war and politics.

In 1644, after evicting Li's forces, establishing firm control of Beijing and taking occupancy of Forbidden City, Dorgon immediately placed his 6-year-old Manchu royal nephew (for whom he acted as regent) on the throne as Emperor Shunzi. Thus was the Manchu Qing Dynasty founded. By 1683, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi, they eventually pacified and controlled all of China. The Manchu minority would rule the nation and the Qing Dynasty would endure to ever-lessening degrees of success from 1644 to 1912.



Cultivating The Business of Technology

*A City in Transit -
Zhongguancun, just one of Beijing's many
booming commercial corridors.*

Beijing is home to nearly 400,000 scientists and engineers with about 100 key laboratories at the state level and more than 30 national engineering laboratories. Many of Beijing's tech sector projects lead the nation in racking up top national awards for natural sciences and technological advancement and thus dominate in their respective fields.

Beijing now leads the nation of China in what might be referred to as the tech sector. That's not surprising.

Consider the year 2010: Beijing Municipality invested 75.8 billion yuan in technical research and development; 302 million yuan of value was added to the IT industry, science and high technology. Collectively, those delivered 9 percent of the capital's GDP in 2010.

Consider the resources: Beijing is home to nearly 400,000 scientists and engineers with about 100 key laboratories at the state level and more than 30 national engineering laboratories. Many of Beijing's tech sector projects lead the nation in racking up top national awards for natural sciences and technological advancement and thus dominate in their respective fields.

And in the search for innovative and advancing fields of technology Beijing is not stopping at the border. Foreign-driven hi-tech players are being drawn to the city with highly preferential programs.

According to the Beijing Municipal Science & Technology Commission:

- Existing foreign-funded enterprises within the Encouraged Category or Restricted Category B, foreign-funded R&D centers and technologically advanced or export-oriented foreign-funded enterprises that undergo technical revamp may be exempt from import duties and import VAT if they, within the original scope of approved activities, import for self-use any equipment that cannot be manufactured domestically or does not meet performance requirements and auxiliary technologies, components and spare parts.
- Foreign-funded enterprises may be exempt from import duties and import VAT if they import for self-use any equipment for the purpose of producing products included in the Catalogue of Hi-Tech Products and the technologies, components and spare parts accompanying the equipment under the contract.
- Foreign-funded enterprises that import advanced technologies included in the Catalogue of Hi-Tech Products are exempt from customs duties and import VAT on the software fee they pay to overseas parties pursuant to the contract.
- Foreign-funded R&D centers may be exempt from customs duties and import VAT if they, within the total investment, import for self-use any equipment that cannot be manufactured domestically or does not meet performance requirements and auxiliary technologies, components and spare parts.
- With regard to products included in the Catalogue of Hi-Tech Products, if the export rebate rate is below the standard tax rate, tax paid may be refunded at the standard tax rate pursuant to tax refunding rules then in force upon approval of the State Administration of Taxation after products are exported.
- Where foreign-funded enterprises within the Encouraged Category or Restricted Category B procure home-made equipment, which if imported would be exempt from import duties and taxes, may be entitled to full refunding of VAT paid on home-made equipment. Foreign-funded enterprises that carry out technical revamps pursuant to relevant industry policies or manufacture hi-tech products are exempt from corporate income tax.
- Business taxes are exempted on the income of foreign-funded enterprises, foreign-funded R&D centers and foreign businesses or individuals from technology transfer, technology development services and related technical consultation or technical services.
- Where foreign-funded enterprises' spending on technology development increases by 10 percent or higher from a year ago, 50 percent of their actual spending on technology development may be offset against the income tax payable that year upon approval of tax authorities.
- Where foreign-funded enterprises and foreign enterprises fund research and development of non-affiliated research institutes or higher education institutions, the donated funds may be fully offset against their income tax payable in accordance with China's Income Tax Law for Enterprises with Foreign Investment and Foreign Enterprises.

In Beijing and the nation, doors are open to innovative foreign firms in particular fields. According to the Provisional Guide to Foreign Investments and the Foreign Investment Industry Catalogue delineation of guidelines are in four classes: Encouraged; Permitted; Restricted; and Prohibited.

In particular, foreign investment is sought in: new agricultural technology, integrated agricultural development, energy, hi-tech; export-oriented projects, resource control and renewable resources and pollution mitigation.

Prohibited enterprises would include those which may cause environmental degradation and pollution, damage natural resources or negatively impact human health.

IT is aigo

A homegrown company which develops and builds its own hi-tech products 100-percent in China leads in the domestic market and is fast on the march internationally. Aigo, like Lenovo and other tech industry leaders, is a success thanks to its entrepreneurial founder, Feng Jun.

Feng got it rolling in 1993 with two employees and 200 yuan (about \$25). Not surprisingly, the company started small, marketing low-profit inexpensive computer keyboards. Today Beijing Huaqi Information Digital Technology Company, the corporation behind the trade name aigo (meaning: patriotism) is a leader in the design and manufacturer of portable media players. The company is also well known as a major manufacturer of storage devices, especially notable for unique designs in flash drives and mobile hard drives.

But perhaps the most notable aspect of aigo's product line is its diversity, innovation and even fanciful nature of the devices. There is the aigopad, the company's entry in the tablet PC market, setup for entertainment and e-book reading, miniature projectors, digital cameras (the only Chinese manufacturer), digital camcorders which double as projectors, and MP5 media players, the first to directly play RMVB files. In 2007 aigo launched the aigopen, a data reader audio player which served as the official guide system for the International Olympic Museum's Travelling Exhibition. These are 100 percent made in China.

Today Aigo Digital Technology Co. Ltd boasts an employee roster of nearly 2,000 working in 17 international offices. Overseas offices, R&D and manufacturing facilities are maintained in the US, France, Singapore and Hong Kong. With Aigo Digital Technology Co. Ltd at its core, aigo has developed into an IT enterprise dedicated to R&D and brand promotion. aigo's portable memory device product line has led the domestic market for nine years, and the company's MP4 players are also number 1.

Founder in Frame - Feng Jun (left), founder of aigo. He started the company in 1993 with two employees and 200 yuan (about \$25). Today aigo is a leading manufacturer of portable media players, a major maker of portable memory devices, a major producer of digital cameras and an increasingly important player on the international consumer electronics scene.

- Photo by Lowell Bennett

Small Is Big - A sampling of aigo products. The company primarily develops, manufactures and markets consumer electronics. On September 25, 2008, China's Shenzhou 7 lifted off from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center and aigo recording and memory devices were in use as part of the nation's first spacewalk mission.

- Photo by Lowell Bennett



In the lead up to China's first space walk, on September 25, 2008, China's Shenzhou 7 lifted off from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. Aigo recording and memory devices were a part of the mission. The aigo logo appears on the side of some of the world's fastest cars as part of the company's participation in and sponsorship with Vodafone McLaren-Mercedes Formula One, and the company is officially a global partner with famed British sporting organization, Manchester United Football Club.

The entity that is today aigo would not have come to be without its inceptive and current driving force, Feng Jun. The young founder and current CEO of Aigo Information Digital Technology Co. Ltd. was born in Jiangsu in 1969. In 1992 he graduated from the School of Architecture of Tsinghua University and in 2004 he graduated from EMBA of Guanghua School of Management, Peking University. In 2002 Feng was named as one of the Top 10 Chinese Technological New Talents, and in 2003 he was awarded at the 6th session of "Outstanding Award of China Youth Technological Innovation".

Perspective: Making Like Marco

It occurs to me that I am like Marco Polo. No, I am not a particularly adventurous traveler. Ten hours on the direct from SFO to PEK pretty much maxes out my capacity for confinement in a vehicle. Polo once spent two years on a boat (all but a handful of the other passengers died). For me, a couple of days on the road in Tibet doing the run to and from Lhasa and Mt. Qomolangma was a bit of an adventure. But that was accomplished via a Range Rover. Polo would sign on to years-long caravans, traversing the remote Silk Road hinterlands of China on the backs of camels and on foot. Polo was also a master linguist and a man of great learning... I'm an average American.

So why do I make the claim that I am like Polo? Bear with me as below I excerpt from earlier sections of this writing.

Marco Polo:

To the city also are brought articles of greater cost and rarity, and in greater abundance of all kinds, than to any other city in the world. For people of every description, from every region bring things (including all the costly wares of India, as well as the fine and precious goods of Cathay itself), some for the sovereign, some for the court, some for the city which is so great, some for the crowds of barons and knights, some for the great hosts of the emperor which are quartered round about; and thus between court and city the quantity brought in is endless.

As a sample, I tell you, no day in the year passes that there do not enter the city 1,000 carts of silk alone, from which are made quantities of cloth of silk and gold, and of other goods.

Me:

Consider the year 2010: Beijing Municipality invested 75.8 billion yuan in technical research and development; 302 million yuan of value was added to the IT industry, science and high technology. Collectively, those delivered 9 percent of the capital's GDP in 2010.

... In 2010 Beijing's 72 tech sector projects took the nation's top awards for natural sciences and technological advancement, thus dominating in the fields in China.

And in the search for innovative and advancing fields of technology Beijing is not stopping at the border. Foreign-driven hi-tech players are being drawn to the city with highly preferential programs.

Marco Polo, on Kublai Khan's payroll, was the first foreign PR operative to ply his craft as a byproduct of his travels in Asia and expat experience in Beijing – or as he called the place, "Cambaluc". I am but one of the less adventurous many to follow his long-ago lead.





Green Gain

Maidenhair trees lace many of the city's parks and greenbelts.

Whereas in the past Beijing's green spaces were primarily limited to areas around temples and historic sites, today virtually every resident of the city can depart his or her home and reach a green space within 500 meters.

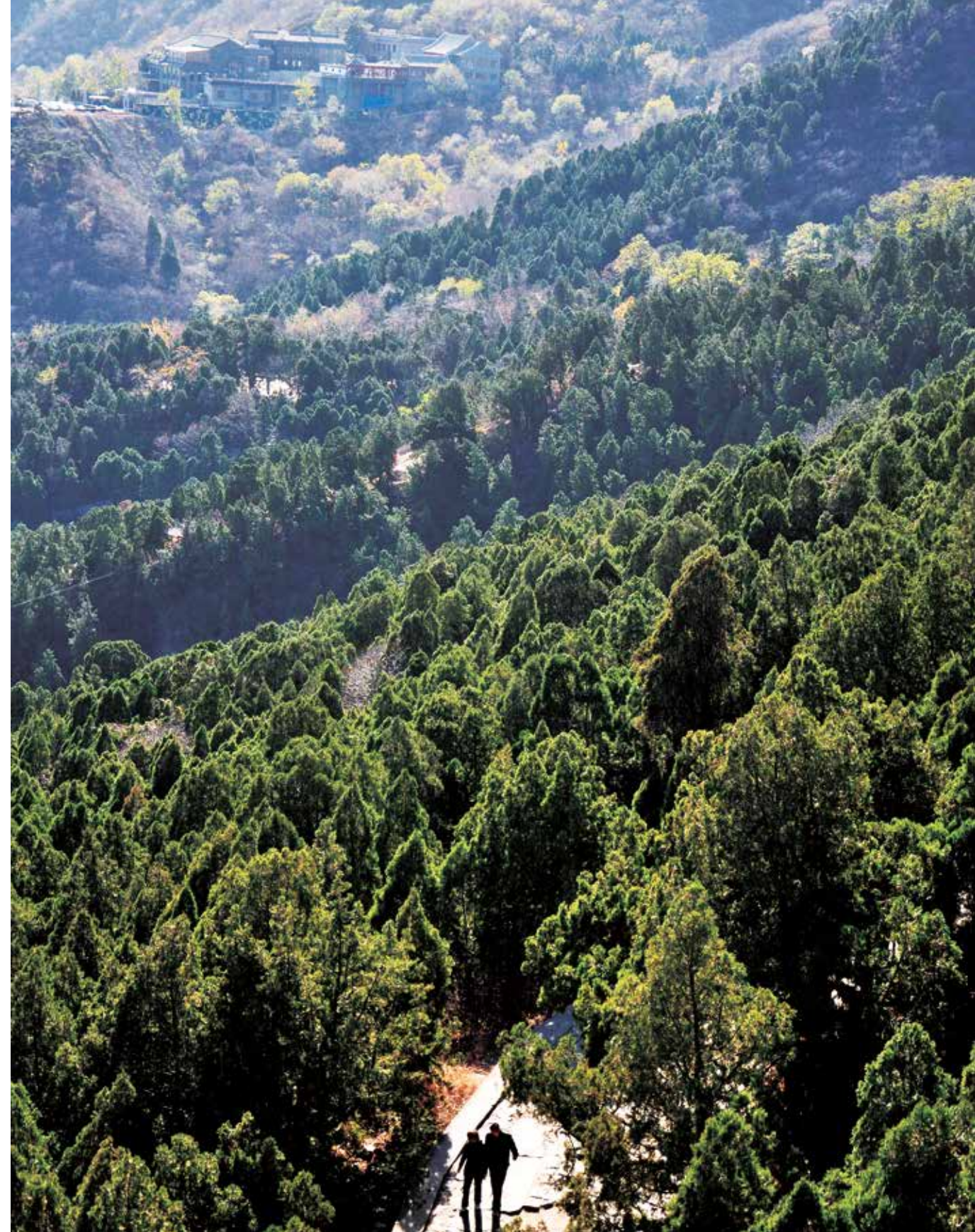
The greening of Beijing may have peaked just in advance of the 2008 Olympics, but momentum and movement continues. Indeed, since the Games, the coverage of trees, cultivated shrubs and flowers has dramatically increased and continues to spread across the vast metropolis and its suburbs.

At the founding of New China, long before the urban area sprawled and the high-rises reached for the sky, the city's forest coverage stood at 1.3 percent. By 2008 coverage was at 35.5 percent. Astonishingly, in a city spanning 16,800 square kilometers (10,400 square miles), just two years later, in the era of soaring city skylines, ring roads and expanding suburbs, forest coverage was at 37 percent and rising.

And the greening goes far beyond the forest areas. The overall vegetation coverage is at 53 percent, and urban greenery projects have reached 45 percent. Per-capita green area now stands at 50 square meters and per-capita acreage of parks and public green spaces rose to more than 15 square meters.

The geography and climate of Beijing is by nature arid and in the past, due to the barren hills, the land was subject to flooding. Surprisingly, as far back as 1953 the government moved to remedy the problem, assigning to the People's Liberation Army the task of planting trees, in particular in the western hills. In the city proper, parks and public green spaces were installed, while in the suburbs previously sterile hills and barren areas were newly afforested and ancient trees and wetlands were protected.

The forested Beijing suburbs.



Along with the reform and opening up initiated in 1978, Beijing has accelerated its drive to reforestation and the planting of new forests. In the early 1980s volunteers planted thousands of trees, shrubs and flowers. The movement was not only about esthetics. At the city's perimeter areas the trees and plants were vital to holding back the spread of desert sands and dust storms.

But it was in 2001 that the green push to beautify and protect Beijing went into hyper-drive. On July 13 of that year Beijing was designated as the host city for the 2008 Olympic Games. In time for the event, three green belt barriers were constructed, including through the city proper, the plains and the hills. More than 150 reforestation projects were completed and Beijing was newly laced with trees, shrubs and flowers.

Whereas in the past Beijing's green spaces were primarily limited to areas around temples and historic sites, today virtually every resident of the city can depart his or her home and reach a green space within 500 meters. More than 100 major parks span the cityscape, and these areas provide residents and visitors with places of leisure and relaxation.

Even major roadways have begun to resemble park thoroughfares, with expansive greenbelts at both sides and a seemingly unbroken lacing of flower pots affixed to the side rails. These necklace the city with a complete green



City greenbelts continue to expand.

belt of 12,600 hectares, and in some districts the green places are forest-like in their lushness. In coming years more than 100 additional parks will be constructed in the suburbs ringing the city.

In the more outlying areas of the massive city reforestation and newly planting the plains is a mission beyond simply creating an environment that is pleasant and pleasing to the senses. The trees and shrubs of the plains serve as a protective barrier, holding back the spread of desert sands and lessening the severity of dust storms.

Among the many foresting projects a notable success was the Three-north Forest Shelter Belt, launched in 1979. Along the five rivers and 10 roads, the forests succeeded in greatly decreasing sand intrusion and the impact of high winds and dust. Along with forest belt projects like the Three-north Forest Shelter Belt, towns and villages, highways and rivers are greened with trees, plants and flowers.

At the time of this writing green coverage in the plain areas exceeded 23 percent and was expanding – a major achievement considering the landscape is barren and dry by nature.

The highly successful Three-north Forest Shelter Belt program is augmented by other key forestry projects. One of those is the Green Corridor Project, launched in 2001. Spanning a length of 1,090 kilometers, 15 green belts were constructed along eight highways, two railways and five rivers linking Beijing with other municipalities and provinces. Total green space is expected to span more than 25,000 hectares. In 2003, the plains saw a second green belt project undertaken, the overall goal being to construct and purpose areas designated for eco-friendly tourism, ecological conservation and green industry.

And beyond the plains are the mountains. Rimming Beijing in the west, north and the north-east, spread across seven counties and districts, Beijing's mountainous regions comprise 62 percent of the city's real estate. Crucial to water and soil conservation, as well as limiting the impact of desert-borne dust and sand storms, the protection of the mountains and their forest is a serious concern for city managers. In recent decades conservation and reforestation efforts have accelerated. And today 95 percent of Beijing's mountainous areas have been replanted with trees and other vegetation.

More than 100 major parks dot the cityscape of Beijing.



Beijing wetlands, home to fowl, fish and other forms.

Wetlands

Perhaps few would associate the arid city of Beijing with wetlands, but within its borders are indeed substantial stretches of such grass, water and trees. In recent years the protection and administrative policies with respect to these domains of plant life and water have been greatly strengthened and the wildlife has prospered.

Important to regulating the climate and a vital habitat for indigenous species, more than 50,000 hectares of wetlands are within the borders of Beijing. That includes six wetland reserves and state-level wetland parks. Notably these include Yeyahu (Wild Duck Lake), Hanshiqiao, Cuihu Lake and the jewel in the necklace of wetlands, Yeyahu Natural Wetland Preservation Zone. At 6,873-hectares, Yeyahu is a lush natural refuge in the west of Yanqing County. The water area here spans 3,939 hectares of the greater preservation zone. Yeyahu is the largest natural wetland preservation zone in Beijing, and the first wetland preservation area for birds within the city.



*Yeyahu, the largest natural wetland preservation zone in Beijing.
- Boat photo by Lowell Bennett*

Yeyahu Wetland, now preserved and protected.



An ancillary benefit to these growing concerns, tourism in forested areas is now an important industry. There are 24 forest parks and 27 nature-oriented scenic attractions. The mountain ranges and their deep green forests are a major draw for foreign visitors and expats, as well as Beijingers.

In the Wind

About 100 kilometers from downtown Beijing, not far from Wild Duck Lake and its natural wetlands area, is another example of Beijing's green drive. The Lumingshan Guanting Wind Power Station, an installation of energy-producing wind turbines financed by Beijing Energy Investment Holding Co. Ltd., stretches along Guanting Reservoir.

Arrayed in four stages, the installation produces 49.5 megawatts, 17.5 MW, 49.5 MW and 36 MW, respectively. The power is generated by 100 1.5 MW-magnetic direct-drive wind turbines, along with a 2.5 MW test model generator. The hi-tech windmills were manufactured by Xinjiang Goldwind Sci & Tech Co. Ltd.

The station's total capacity is 152.5 MW. At optimal levels of operation, each year the station provides about 300 million kilowatts of clean-source electricity to Beijing.

*In Sync and Silent -
Among peach blossoms and farmland,
Lumingshan Guanting Wind Power Station,
with a capacity of 152.5 MW. At optimal
levels of operation, each year the turbines
provide 300 million kilowatts of clean-source
electricity to Beijing.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*





The people of Beijing treasure their more than 40,000 ancient trees. The venerable and venerated beings of trunk, branch and leaf are considered to be cultural relics, important historically, socially and ecologically. Both the municipal government and Beijing's citizens care and tend to the trees, protecting them from threats naturally occurring and manmade.

Culture of Trees

The people of Beijing treasure their more than 40,000 ancient trees. The venerable and venerated beings of trunk, branch and leaf are considered to be cultural relics, important historically, socially and ecologically. Both the municipal government and Beijing's citizens care and tend to the trees, protecting them from threats naturally occurring and manmade.

Beijing has in place a number of laws and regulations to protect the more historically prized trees. These include the Interim Measures on the Protection and Management of Ancient and Precious Trees, the Regulations on the Protection and Management of Ancient and Precious Trees, the Standards for the Evaluation of Ancient and Precious Trees, and the Technical Rules on the Protection and Rejuvenation of Ancient and Precious Trees.

And so today the citizens of the city can enjoy the shade of a towering healthy tree, just as their ancestors did, beneath that same tree, centuries before.

With their huge canopies, these venerated beings of trunk, branch and leaf are considered to be cultural relics.



*Beijing Blossoms -
In Beijing's hilly suburbs, peach blossoms are in bloom. The span of fruit trees in the city now exceeds 165,000 hectares, and annual output of fruit exceeds 900 million kilograms. Fruit-farming family annual revenues average more than 10,000 yuan.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

A small part of the ever-growing flower industry of Beijing.

Many Beijingers enjoy picking fruit in the suburbs as a holiday excursion.

*The Great Earth -
In some ways the agricultural life of suburban Beijing has not changed much from the days of dynasty. What has changed is that farming communities are generating income as tourist destinations.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Growing Industry

Part and parcel of Beijing's greening is the ever-expanding green industry sector. Besides new technology such as that in the development of clean energy, there is the traditionally wholesome and clean enterprise of growing and harvesting. Fruit trees, flowers, seedlings and forest tourism is a large part of the economy in rural areas, and thousand of suburban residents depend on the industries for employment and enterprise.

The span of fruit trees exceeds 165,000 hectares, and annual output is more than 900 million kilograms. Fruit-farming family annual revenues average more than 10,000 yuan. The flower industry, too, is on the move, with acreage exceeding 4,500 hectares. More than 5,000 businesses are active in growing, harvesting and marketing flowers, and the annual industry output is valued at 1.2 billion yuan. Beijing is home to more than 1,500 flower shops, 28 large-scale flower markets, and the annual trading volume is 7 billion yuan. In 2009 Shunyi exhibition zone hosted the Seventh China Flower Expo.



Where before there was virtually no such industry, today beekeeping is big business in Beijing. More than 10,000 households now keep about 250,000 hives, and the annual honey output is valued at more than 150 million yuan. Industry output value totals about 800 million yuan, with foreign export sales of about \$9 million.

An ancillary benefit to these growing concerns, tourism in forested areas is now an important industry. There are 24 forest parks and 27 nature-oriented scenic attractions. The mountain ranges and their deep green forests are a major draw for foreign visitors and expats, as well as Beijingers. In turn, farming communities in the suburban areas are finding new livelihood as tourist destinations.

Suburban Enterprise

About 60 kilometers from Beijing's downtown is a highly craft-intensive industry typically associated with Europe. Pinggu District is now known as a violin production base. The area is home to several large-scale violin manufacturing enterprises employing more than 3,000 workers, craftspeople and management personnel. The annual output of more than 300,000 violins comprises nearly 1/3 of the total number manufactured globally.

Beijing Huadong Musical Instrument Co. Ltd., located in Donggaocun Town, Pinggu District, manufactures more than 30 types of string instruments in 10 categories. Included are the cello, violin, electric cello, electric violin, bass, brass-wind, *erhu*, guitar, and varying types of instrument cases and bags. The company has expanded its markets to more than 40 nations and regions, including those of Europe, Asia, America and Australia. The annual output of violins has reached 200,000 pieces, and the business is perhaps the most productive violin manufacturer in China. About 90 percent of the company's products are sold to the US, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.



Melodic Manufacturing - Factory floor at Beijing Huadong Musical Instrument Co., Ltd. The company's annual output of violins reaches 200,000 pieces, making it the most productive violin manufacturer in China. About 90 percent of the products go to the US, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. - Photo by Lowell Bennett

Carefully crafting a violin at the Huadong Musical Instrument Company in the Beijing suburbs.

Finished - A product of Beijing Huadong Musical Instrument Co. Ltd. The company manufactures more than 30 types of instruments for sale in more than 40 nations and regions. - Photos by Lowell Bennett





Of Brutality, Beauty and Building: The Mark of Zhu Di

*An antique structure seems suited to
a fresh blanket of soft snow.*

In July of 1402 at the age of 42, Zhu Di assumed the Ming throne, becoming its third emperor, Yongle. Reportedly, because he viewed Nanjing as being geographically vulnerable to military assaults, and perhaps for other strategic and personal reasons, he relocated the capital to his established domain, Beijing.



In July 1402, Zhu Di, at 42, assumed the Ming throne and became the dynasty's third emperor, Emperor Yongle. He would become renown for his enlightened social outlook, love of culture, international vision and sadistically murderous ways.

In the course of its extraordinarily long history as a militarily important installation and dynastic capital, many conquerors, occupiers and emperors would leave indelible marks on the city of Beijing. But perhaps none more so than Zhu Di, the assertive and wily prince who later became Emperor Yongle, the third Ming emperor. The man who ordered the building of Forbidden City, he is responsible for that fantastical palace and many of his other remarkable edifices of civic construction and engineering remain standing today. His enlightened social outlook, love of culture, international vision and sadistically murderous ways remain a part of Beijing's wildly dramatic and long-unfolding story.

In his teens Zhu Di was named Prince of Yan and Beijing became his capital city. Thus, at an early age he was confronted by and overcame Mongol advances at his northern frontier. He became known as a strong leader, a pragmatic tactician and a brilliant strategist. He was respected by his generals and appreciated by his troops – especially when it came bonus time. He was the natural choice to succeed his father as the second emperor of the Ming Dynasty, then seated in the southerly capital of Nanjing, but his far less capable older brother was in line for that job.

Succession

In 1392, that brother, Crown Prince Zhu Biao, suddenly died. His father, founder of the Ming Dynasty and its first emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, Emperor Hongwu, was pressed to designate his new successor. He could select his teenage grandson, Zhu Yunwen, by blood and Confucian principles the proper

choice, or he could choose his own far more capable and proven second son, Zhu Di, then 32.

Legend has it that as a test the emperor wrote the first line of a poem: "Wind blows the horse's tail into a thousand strands of thread." He left it to the two candidates, his grandson and his son, to conceive the next line. His teenage grandson wrote: "Rain beats the sheep's wool into a flat piece of felt." Zhu Di's answer was far more complex and lyrical. He wrote: "Sun reflects off the dragon's scales into ten thousand bits of gold."

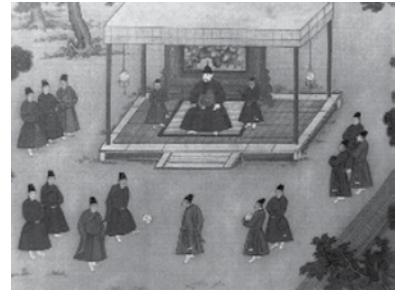
But while Zhu Di may have been the better poet, the better military commander and the better overall leader, in the end the emperor decided he could not break tradition and risk civil unrest. The first born son of the deceased crown prince would be emperor. Zhu Yunwen was officially and finally designated as the crown prince and in 1398, with the death of Emperor Hongwu, he became the second Ming emperor, Emperor Jianwen.

Almost immediately, viewing their respective and potentially collective forces as a threat to his reign, Emperor Jianwen worked to undermine the position of the feudal lords, including that of his uncles. Reportedly abiding by his grandfather's instructions, he prohibited his uncles from bringing their legions as escort to their father's funeral. That perhaps prudent move was followed by a more drastic stripping of power and property from the lords and uncles.

Pushback

But one of those uncles – a master strategist and formidable military leader backed by a battle-hardened army accustomed to slugging it out with the toughest of Mongol fighters on the northern frontier – was not to be subjugated. Zhu Di resisted and in 1399 he executed two of Emperor Jianwen's emissaries. In return the emperor dispatched a large force to assault Zhu Di's capital city, Beijing. (Historical estimates of the number of imperial troops tasked with the assault and siege on Beijing range widely, from a high of 500,000 to the more conservative 130,000.) Nearly too late informed by his spies of the pending assault, Zhu Di was able to rush his armies back from his northern frontier in time to turn back the invading forces. (Some historical reports have it that the women of Beijing held back the invaders long enough for their men and army to return by hurling whatever was at hand, including dishware and kitchen utensils.)

Soon after the emperor's perhaps ill-conceived assault, Zhu Di mustered forces and was on the march to Nanjing. He out maneuvered and outfought the imperial troops advanced to turn him back and in January of 1402 his counter assault was complete; the imperial palace in Nanjing was in flames and the charred bodies of Emperor Jianwen and his family were presumed



Depiction of Emperor Yongle watching as his eunuchs engage in sport for his amusement.

discovered among the ruins. It is said the fire began before Zhu Di's forces arrived at the castle, and speculation remained that the emperor escaped in advance. No matter. The defeated emperor was dead from the pages of history.

Capital Conversion

In July of 1402 at the age of 42, Zhu Di assumed the Ming throne, becoming its third emperor, Yongle. Reportedly, because he viewed Nanjing as being geographically vulnerable to military assaults, and perhaps for other strategic and personal reasons, he relocated the capital to his established domain, Beijing.

Perhaps, too, Emperor Yongle knew he, and thus his capital, must remain at what was essentially the northern front, always ready to personally lead his defensive forces against the ever-aggressive Mongols and their regular assaults. And he would do so, many times.

Among countless other good and impressive works, Emperor Yongle repaired, widened and deepened the Grand Canal and established riverine cargo and passenger transit between Beijing and southern China; he massively expanded the navy and dispatched the famed explorer Zheng He on peaceful expeditions reaching as far as Africa; he saw completed enormous literary projects of academic and cultural worth; he carried out many political and social reforms which benefitted the people of China and the city of Beijing; he allowed and even encouraged the practice and following of competing philosophies differing from his own Confucianism, including Daoism and Buddhism; he established peaceful and mutually beneficial ties with Tibet; he successfully held back the Mongols, personally leading his troops in numerous campaigns; and in 1406 he commenced the construction of Forbidden City, for 500 years standing as the seat of dynastic power in China, and still today the city's international cultural icon.

The Downside

Some historians say much of his good work was an effort to purge his reputation; to cleanse his record of past deeds of death and destruction. Emperor Yongle was responsible for the early violent demise of thousands of real and often perceived enemies. Included in the extermination were innocent family members and associates of "suspect" scholars and other powerless individuals. The stripping of property, imprisonment, torture and executions extended to students, distant cousins and perceived acquaintances of any who he or his advisors suspected might have even an ill thought as to his reign.

It is reported that in 1420 the emperor had nearly 3,000 concubines and eunuchs executed by slow slicing, also known as "death by a thousand cuts". It is not clear why, though two causes are put forth in historical writings.

Those are: 1) He suspected that his favorite concubine had been poisoned by another; or 2) He discovered two concubines in sexual congress with a eunuch (it is not reported by what method) and became enraged beyond control. The latter cause, if true, could be attributable to his reported impotence in later years. Finally, in preparation for his own demise, he ordered that a number of beautiful young maidens be hung to death and buried with him (accounts range in number from 16 to 30).

And so it was. In 1424, after 22 years of dynastic rule, Emperor Yongle died. Today his remains, as well of those of his wife, his unfortunate consorts in death and the bones of 12 other emperors, their families and selected associates are forever encased in the Ming Tombs, 50 kilometers north of Beijing proper.

History: The Non-emperor

China's highest concentration of personal wealth is in Beijing. More than 150,000 citizens in the capital each possess more than US\$1.46 million in assets, and nearly 100,000 hold more than \$15 million in personal assets. In China as a whole there are more than 1.1 million millionaires. In terms of nations with households valued at more than \$100 million, as of 2011 China ranked eighth with about 400.

They can thank Deng Xiaoping.

In the late 1970s Deng Xiaoping, one of the most pragmatic of China's official and de facto leaders, finally threw open the doors to global gain. And China and the city of Beijing were forever changed.



Foreign Meddling – Most, possibly even all, of the kids in this series may never have heard the name Deng Xiaoping. But without his pragmatic dedication to bettering the lives of China's people and the nation's standing in the world, it is very likely they would not be enjoying the level of prosperity and privilege today. Very likely these foreign students would never have seen China, much less studied and played alongside Beijing kids. And this young expat would never have the chance to pester her Chinese classmate. – Photo by Lowell Bennett



*Common Goal: Goofing Around –
At a Beijing school, international buddies
enjoy a break from class.
– Photo by Lowell Bennett*

Two of the most famous lines ever spoken by a Chinese leader are attributed to Deng. The first, 100 percent confirmed as being his, he uttered in 1961 while at a conference in Guangzhou. It was: “I don’t care if it’s a white cat or a black cat. It’s a good cat as long as it catches mice.” The meaning, it was widely assumed, is that a system must adapt to whatever means of production is required to survive and prosper. During the years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which soon followed, that statement would be used to discredit Deng. But, though suffering political and personal setbacks, including a four-year enforced stint laboring at Xinjian County Tractor Factory in Jiangxi Province, he maintained his principles and put the good of his country before personal power and material gain.

Not that he was stringently adverse to the idea of material gain. Another quote widely attributed to Deng is “To get rich is glorious.” Whether he actually said it or not, the phrase stuck and millions of Chinese took the operative slogan to heart. At the close of the 1970s Deng’s geopolitical openness and market reforms took hold. Beijing and the nation of China were set on a path which would lead to hundreds of millions being lifted from poverty and a still near mind-boggling rate of economic and social advancement.

China’s current enormous holding of assets, including a massive sum of US Treasury bonds, the rocketing levels of personal wealth, Beijing’s CBD and Financial Street, the chic nightclubs, the world-class restaurants, the sci-fi skylines, the five-star hotels, the elite spas, KFC, McDonald’s, Burger King, Starbucks... That’s Deng.

It might have happened sooner or later. Or a less enlightened regime or blindly idealistic leader may have taken another route. Perhaps of the isolationist sort that hobbled and regressed the country to such extremes in the past. In any case, today’s wealthy Chinese and the rising middle class can thank Deng and those leaders of government and industry who followed his lead for making that wealth and their gain possible sooner, rather than later. He remained true to his beliefs and lived to see his reforms reverse decades of social and economic stagnation.

Deng’s “reform and opening up” centered on the “Four Modernizations”, previously pioneered to some extent by Premier Zhou Enlai. The aim was to focus the energy and resources of the nation and the people to advancing and modernizing science and technology, industry, the military and agriculture. And it was during this inceptive phase when the term “socialism with Chinese characteristics” came into use. In simple terms: The idea was to remain a socialist society, just do it better; less rigidly adhering to ideology when it comes to those “Four Modernizations”.

Perhaps next to the two quotes above, the words most commonly associated with Deng Xiaoping were: “We must not fear to adopt the advanced management methods applied in capitalist countries ... The very essence of socialism is the liberation and development of the productive systems ... Socialism and market economy are not incompatible ... Socialism is not poverty.”



Author Addendum — Being in Beijing: A Visitor Primer

*In Motion -
At an international school in Beijing,
these young ladies will return to class to
study with multi-cultural students from
around the world.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

In a single generation Beijing has transformed like no other city in history. Today the ancient gates and fortified battlements fronting the 3,000-year-old capital's precious cultural sites are unlocked and open, and foreign visitors are being wined and dined like never before.

The rocketing prosperity and increasingly cosmopolitan culture of the city now offer international visitors a range of diversions unique on the planet. Traditional excursions to remarkably historic sites dating back thousands of years, sure; but what about blasting around town via Beijing's vast fleet of newer-model (and very inexpensive) taxis for some fast-breaking world-class shopping, modern art collecting, and international-scale fine wining and dining.

History and Heritage

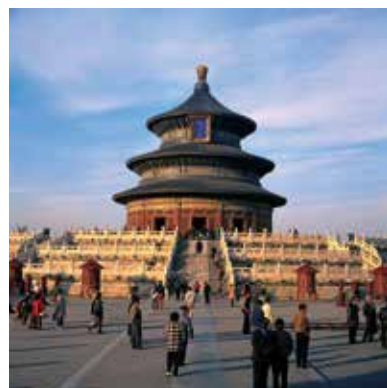
Prominent among Beijing's countless places of historic interest are the six major edifices designated by UNESCO as World Cultural Heritage sites. They are the Forbidden City, former abode to emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911); Zhoukoudian, former cave dwelling of the long extinct Peking Man; the Summer Palace, regal place of respite for past royals; the Temple of Heaven, where emperors paid homage to higher beings; the Ming Tombs, resting place of sovereigns; and of course, the Great Wall.

Standing high up on the Badaling section of the Great Wall, about 70 kilometers northwest of Beijing's center, looking out over its length, snaking across the rolling green hills and over the horizon, you get a sense of the staggering task that was its construction. And you might also sense a little irony – that a fortification erected to keep the Mongol hordes at bay now serves to attract foreign hordes of a different sort.

Back in the geographic heart of the city is a non-vertical but also very historic work of stone. Originally constructed in 1651, Tiananmen is the world's largest public square. At center stage is the Monument to the People's Heroes, and looking across that vast plane of stone you have an unobstructed view of the Great Hall of the People, the National Museum, and the Chairman Mao Zedong Memorial Hall. It can be a little intimidating, standing on this vast hard place, surrounded by these imposing structures and revered institutions – but all are actually quite welcoming, accepting visitors, foreign and domestic.



Imperial Palace



Temple of Heaven



Summer Palace



Ming Tombs

Perspective: Ways of the Word

There are varied ways you might pronounce “Sanlitun”, the name of Beijing's very active and very cosmopolitan dining and bar district. Most veteran Western expats will say something close to “Saan-lee-teun”. Some may use more like a “sun-lee-ton”. Then there are the Beijing-dialect taxi drivers. For a lot of them, if you use variations like the preceding, you'll get the blank stare. If that happens, try something like “sun-leeee-tuor”. If you're lucky, the driver will confirm his understanding of your destination by raising his cupped hand to his mouth – gesturing as if drinking from a glass.

Need a break from the hard stuff of structure and government? Just north of Tiananmen Square and to the left of the Gate of Heavenly Peace is a more demure portal offering a softly elegant escape, and once inside the sounds of the city fall away. During the Liao Dynasty (907–1125), what is today Zhongshan Park was the site of Xingguosi (Temple of National Revival), a place where royalty honored their gods of land and grain.

Over the centuries, among the ornate gazebos and gardens, beneath the now ancient cypress trees, those privileged by blood, circumstance and political maneuvering strolled, courted, meditated, prayed and plotted. Respite or ruminations complete, they would follow the garden's carefully tended paths back home to their place next door, the Forbidden City (aka The Imperial Palace).

Wrapped around 8,700 rooms comprising 150,000 square meters of interior space is a walled compound of 720,000 square meters (250 acres). In 1401, the construction of the Forbidden City was ordered by Zhu Di, the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty. In just two short decades (a slow blink, by Chinese standards) the job was done. The heavily fortified palace served as home and office to 24 emperors.

Culture and Consumption

Another concentrated blast of history awaits in the city's museums. Comprising 60,000 square meters of floor space spanning seven levels, the Capital Museum holds a vast array of exhibits evoking this age-old city's extraordinary history – from village settlement through the dynasties to modern day Beijing. As part of a guided group or wandering the modern \$147-million venue, you'll look over remarkable collections of ancient stone, bronze, porcelain, calligraphy, paintings, jade, coins, Buddha images and sculptures. Also here are presentations of long-lived folk customs – which you can contrast with the museum's hi-tech multimedia hall, high-definition photo exhibits, and state-of-the-art digital theater. Across town at the National Art Museum is a collection of 60,000 pieces ranging from ancient to modern, including calligraphies, water colors and sculptures. And over at

the Minzu University of China is the Ethnic Museum, with more than 20,000 unique cultural relics created by China's 56 remarkably diverse ethnic groups.

About sunset, after you get your fill of history, culture and art, drop by the open-air Donghuamen Night Snack Market in the bustling Wangfujing Commercial District. From the block-long lineup of very well presented food stalls, hundreds of cold, roasted and grilled traditional foods are ready for sampling. Delicacies include barbecued mutton kabobs, Sino-style grilled squid, chicken and prawns, wok-fired noodles, wan-ton soup, fried glutinous rice cakes and hundreds of other items – including some far more exotic. (Fried scorpions, anyone?)

A retail experience of a definitively Chinese sort awaits at three of Beijing's most robust shopping environments: Panjiayuan Flea Market, Silk Alley, and Yashow Market. Great bargains can be had, like tailor-made suits (for less than \$100), antiques, stones, traditional paintings, original calligraphy, sculptures, woodworks and fascinating cultural artifacts – including those now quaint and colorful books, posters and medals conceived during the Cultural Revolution.

Divine Dining

Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) was renowned for her beauty, grace, political cunning ... and for her love of food. Hundreds of exotic dishes were conceived to suit her particular palate, and many of those precisely preserved recipes are today served up at the place she would visit after strolling and boating in her royal gardens, the Fangshan Restaurant.

On Qionghua Island, at the center of the lush scene now known as Beihai Park, in the shadow of the centuries-old White Pagoda, are the elegant and exquisitely maintained dining rooms of Fangshan. Beneath the antique chandeliers, surrounded by plush imperial-style décor, catered to by attractive hostesses garbed as royal concubines, you can sample dishes along the lines of Camel's Paw in Chinese Scallion Sauce and Braised Sea Cucumber with Sharkskin. But the hundreds of menu items include far less exotic cuisine, with options starting at 198 yuan. And if your entourage is ready to really go royal, Fangshan's famous Manchu-Han Imperial-style Banquet comprises a feast of 108 rarefied dishes for the price of 1,680 yuan.

*Isle of Vision –
At the foot of the landmark White Pagoda on
Qionghua Island in Beihai Lake is Fangshan
Restaurant. Here, tended by attractive
hostesses garbed as royal concubines, you
can sample dishes along the lines of Camel's
Paw in Chinese Scallion Sauce; and Braised
Sea Cucumber with Sharkskin.
– Photos by Lowell Bennett*





*Bar Scene -
It used to be that the Sanlitun consulate area
was the only district where a Westerner might
feel at home in a bar or nightclub. No more.
No matter what area of Beijing, you are never
far from a cold beer, a well-made cocktail and
company.
- Photo by Lowell Bennett*

After authentic Chinese cuisine or sustenance consumed at the ample supply of more Western-inclined dining establishments, sample Beijing's nightlife – fast catching up with international standards. In the Sanlitun Bar Street in Chaoyang District, stylish clubs like Chinadoll, Babyface, Suzie Wong's and Mix keep busy with foreigners and locals mingling and dancing. For less bass-heavy conviviality, a game of pool, a pint and a Western-style late-night snack, plenty of good expat pubs are on hand. Notable among these are the 24-hour Goose and Duck and Durty Nellie's.

Besides Sanlitun, the highest concentration of walkable leisure spots and people watching is along the shoreline of Houhai Lake. Beneath the willow trees and lining the pedestrian-friendly lanes, about 70 restaurants, clubs and small bars cast their neon across the waters in welcoming festive fashion.

Being in Beijing: Top Eight Must-Do's

1. Peruse the Peking Opera – The ornate Lao She Teahouse, a regular stop for visiting heads of state and other notables, is the place to take in an enchanting 30-minute performance.
2. Tip some tea – To take part in a traditional tea ceremony, head to larger, better-known and reputable establishments, such as Wuyutai (to avoid overpriced lesser versions).
3. Bargain your best – Battle your way through Beijing's world famous Silk Market and emerge with bagfuls of booty, haggled for from among thousands of items (not just silk).
4. Speak to your spirit – A walk through the holy structure that is the Yonghegong Lama Temple culminates in a view of an 18-meter-tall Buddha carved from a single sandalwood tree.
5. Inspect the NCPA – Pause to consider the exterior aesthetics of Beijing's spaceship-like National Center for the Performing Arts, then enter the dome's extraordinary interior for an opera, concert, or play.
6. Purchase propaganda – The Panjiayuan Flea Market still stocks original posters, books, badges and other paraphernalia conceived during the Cultural Revolution.
7. Walk The Wall – Badaling section.
8. Motivate to Modern – Cruise the 798 Art District, a revamped factory area, and see what Beijing's cutting edge avant-garde artists are up to.

Being in Beijing: Eight Travel Tips

1. Before leaving home, print out the name and location of your hotel in Chinese for your taxi from the airport. And before traveling around town without guidance, have the names and location to which you're headed printed in Chinese, and remember to always keep your hotel's business card with you.
2. Stay on the sidewalk and in crosswalks. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles often move with rapid reckless abandon.
3. Beijing's always expanding subway system can move you around efficiently, but travelers should avoid peak hours in this city of 18 million, especially in the heat of summer.
4. If offered, tips will be declined at many establishments, accepted in a few more Western-inclined places, but (rarely) expected throughout the nation.
5. Always carry cash – preferably in denominations less than a 100-yuan bill. In attempting minor purchases, particularly from vendors and small shops, you may encounter reluctance in accepting “large” notes.
6. Bargain politely but firmly. Many vendors will start at a price 500-1,000 percent higher than what they will be happy to accept.
7. Be cautious when approached by “students” near tourist sites. While seeming very friendly and helpful, if you succumb to their entreaties and follow their lead, you may find yourself being pressured to pay for some very expensive tea or “original” works of art.
8. Depending on where you wander you may hear a lot of “Hellos”, especially as offered by younger citizens in passing. Be ready with your “Ni hǎo” (like *nee-how*). No need to master the language, but good to be able to offer that standard Chinese greeting as well as a thank you, xiè xiè (like *chee-chee*). Many young Chinese men and women will welcome the opportunity to try out their English on you and in return they will be happy to teach you a little Mandarin.

Basic Facts

Geographic Location

Beijing, on the North China Plain, is mostly surrounded by Hebei Province, except where it adjoins Tianjin to the southeast.

Area

Beijing spans 16,410 square kilometers. Of this 1,368 square kilometers comprises the urban area.

Population

Beijing's permanent population is about 20.2 million.

Climate

Hot and occasionally rainy in summer, generally cold and dry in winter.

City Trees

The city is particularly known for its Chinese scholartree and cypress.

City Flowers

Especially honored are the Chinese rose and chrysanthemum.

Useful Phone Numbers and Website

Directory enquiries: 010-114

Police: 010-110

Fire: 010-119

First-aid: 010-120

Traffic emergency: 010-122

Weather report: 010-12121

Mayor's public line:
010-12345, 65128088

Hotline for municipal administration services:
010-12345

Tourist complaint center:
010-65275315

Foreign businesspeople complaint office:
010-65541880

Legal service:
010-63835845, 68313995

Beijing government affairs:
www.beijing.gov.cn



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