21st Century China: Views from Australia

Edited by

Mary Farquhar

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES

proposed naval build-up partly as a response to China's military rise in the Asia Pacific region to our north and, to a much lesser extent, China's presence in three Antarctic bases to our south.

Whatever the texture of these debates over time, China is indisputably a major trading partner that builds Australian prosperity. Australian resources helped feed the Chinese resurgence from the later twentieth century just as they fed the Japanese resurgence postwar. Our exports to China supported ongoing Australian budget surpluses early this century that now suddenly seem long gone. Without question, any Australian recovery from the global financial crisis that brought economic upheaval worldwide in the closing years of this century's first decade will depend on China's economic recovery. As Kevin Rudd, while Opposition leader, observed at the Brookings Institute in April 2007, China-related issues have become part of Australia's "very lifeblood" in the twenty-first century.[2]

Acknowledgements

As editor, I wish to acknowledge the superb editing work of Maureen Todhunter and the desk-top publishing of Robyn White who prepared this volume for publication, and the financial support of the Griffith Asia Institute. We also thank artist Guan Wei for copyright permission and Julie Ewington of the Queensland Art Gallery for the cover image of Guan's painting Echo (2005) on the dustjacket.

[2] Kevin Michael Rudd, "The Rise of China and the Strategic Implications for U.S.—Australia Relations," address at The Brookings Institution, Washington, 20 April 2007, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2007/0420china.aspx (accessed 15 June 2008).

CHAPTER ONE

BEIJING REORIENTED, AN OLYMPIC UNDERTAKING

GEREMIE R. BARMÉ

The Body of Nezha

It is the mid-1890s. The young Hunan reformist Tan Sitong and a group of his heroic followers arrive on horseback in a cloud of dust at Taoran Ting, the Joyful Pavilion, in the southwest of the Chinese imperial capital. Another reformer, the firebrand Liang Qichao, is already there and the place is crowded with people who have come from all over the city. Tan reports to his bewildered colleague:

> These last few days, people have been saying that something peculiar is happening here. There are reports of roaring from beneath the ground; it is said to sound like the bellowing of bulls.

The unsettling sound was not made by a submerged bull. It was the stirring of a restive dragon, one that had long been hibernating under the city. The beast was not the Napoleonic dragon of China that, once woken, would shake the world. Rather it was a curmudgeonly and grumpy old beast agitated by the feverish goings on above ground. The dragon under Beijing was, literally, being unsettled by untoward events over its head: the increasing corruption of the dynastic Qing court, the incursions of foreign invaders and the harrowing destitution of the common people.

Tan Sitong is surprised to find so many of his friends gathered at Taoran Ting. But they are not there to investigate subterranean rumblings; they are planning their own commotion. They are in the midst of setting up the Society for the Strengthening of Study (*Qiangxue hui*). The group will agitate for the political and economic reform of the moribund Qing

empire.[1] In 1898, their efforts will contribute to the famous Hundred Days Reform, or *Wuxu Bianfa*, an attempt by the Guangxu Emperor to remake the political, educational and social landscape of imperial China. Today it is just 110 years since that movement failed, resulting in the beheading of reformers like Tan Sitong and the slide of the Chinese empire towards its collapse a little over a decade later.

Illustration 1-1: Carving on a Balustrade at North Lake (Bei Hai)
Source: Photograph by the author.

In the early 1500s, the Yongle Emperor, Zhu Di, had the dynastic capital of the Ming dynasty moved to Beijing. To do so he had the old city of the Mongol–Yuan rulers redesigned and expanded. Legend has it that during the creation of the imperial cities of the Ming, the soothsayer Liu Bowen reported to the emperor that he feared dragons lurking in the waters of the city would bring calamity if they were not pacified. The water-hungry creatures that lived throughout the lakes and marshes of the area threatened to steal the precious resource.[2] It is said that one day, while

[1] Yan Gu Laoren, *Xu Niehaihua* (*Flowers on a Sinful Sea Continued*) (Shanghai: Zhonmeishan, 1947), Chs 33, 36, 37.
[2] For a comprehensive study of the stories related to Nezha and Beijing, see Hok-lam Chan, *Legends of the Building of Old Peking* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2008), 87-169. Chan points out that legends related to the "Nezha City" (*Nazha Cheng* or *Nezha Cheng*) can be traced to the Yuan dynasty. Drought was a constant problem for the rulers of both the Ming and the Qing. See Chan, *Legends*, 115, 118-20. My thanks to John Minford for bringing this book to my attention.

absorbed in his thoughts, Liu was visited by the boy-god Nezha. A playful wraith with eight arms, Nezha flew on wind-fire wheels, like roller-blades, and wielded monster-defeating hoops.

Nezha was famed for having killed the son of the Dragon King, thereby curtailing the power of the dragon whose aqueous lust constantly threatened the stability of Beijing and the access of its people to precious water. On this occasion, Nezha said to Liu Bowen that if the new walled city of Beijing was designed using his body for its layout, the dragon in the depths would remain quelled and imperial prosperity would be assured.

According to this legend, Liu Bowen oriented the city so that the gates of Beijing would correspond to Nezha's arms and legs. The front gate, or Qian Men and its enceinte, is Nezha's head, the side gates his ears and the wells just inside it his eyes. The two northern gates of Anding Men and Desheng Men are his feet, while the two temples outside the gates represent the wheels of fire and water on which the playful spirit traversed the heavens.

Illustration 1-2: Nezha and the Design of Beijing
Source: Illustration by Ding Cong, in Jin Shoushen, *Beijing Legends*, Beijing: Panda Books, 1982.

The red colour of the imperial city itself represented Nezha's costume, and the halls and pavilions inside the Forbidden City represent his inner organs. The three lakes of Zhongnan and Bei Hai (literally, "central, south and north seas") were his stomach, and the Dragon King who lorded

it over the area is said to have dwelled here.[3] Keeping the dragon under control was not only about containing reptilian malevolence, however, for each year the subterranean creature was said to lift its head—*long taitou*, "the dragon raises its head"—bringing spring and summer rains, and so replenishing the underground waters that fed the wells of the city.

With the new walled city of Beijing in the form of Nezha's body, the dragon beneath it remained quiescent and in hibernation through to the late nineteenth century. But then it would stir, aware that the spell cast over it by the body of Nezha would soon be broken. It is said that the threat of the unruly dragon would eventually arrive from the north to steal the precious water on which the city survived. Perhaps, then, it is no accident that directly to the north of old Beijing a new dragon has taken shape, with the site of the 2008 Beijing Olympics in its scaly embrace. The tail of this new and imperious serpent—the Dragon Lake of the Olympic Park—curls around the main Olympic stadium (Herzog and de Meuron's National Stadium), known as The Bird's Nest (*Niao chao*).

Illustration 1-3: The National Stadium, or "Bird's Nest"
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

[3] See Jin Shoushen, *Beijing Legends*, trans. Gladys Yang (Beijing: Panda Books, 1982), 10-17, 24-31; L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, reprint edn (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987), 338-39. Chan Hok-lam notes the rise of Nezha legends during the early decades of the Republic of China and argues that the god's popularity was linked to a rising nostalgia for the grand Beijing of the imperial era.

Reorienting Beijing

Regardless of the resurgent dragon in the northern suburbs of Beijing, Nezha has been struggling for a long time. The twentieth century saw the legendary body of Nezha put on the rack time and again by urban planners whose efforts have reflected attempts to remodel, ideologically and physically, the inhabitants of the city and, by extension, China itself. Even during the last years of the Qing dynasty that collapsed in 1911, the celestial geometry of Beijing was being reordered. Warfare during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 saw the first despoliation of walls within the city, and subsequently their grand crenulations were breached for the convenience of modern transportation.[4]

Illustration 1-4: Ming City Wall Ruins Park
Source: Photograph by the author.

After the fall of the Qing, the world of the abdicated Xuantong Emperor Puyi would literally be turned on its head, as was the north–south axis of the imperial capital itself. No longer would the Son of Heaven leave the Forbidden City through its imposing southern gates at Wu Men, Duan Men and Tiananmen. These southern precincts of the palace were now entirely off-limits to the court, occupied by the new republican government and a preparatory Palace Museum (initially called the Gallery

[4] See my essay "Zhu Qiqian's Silver Shovel," in Features, *China Heritage Quarterly*, 14 (June 2008), at: http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/.

of Antiquities). Henceforth, the emperor had to use Shenwu Men, the northern entrance of the palace, to make his exit.

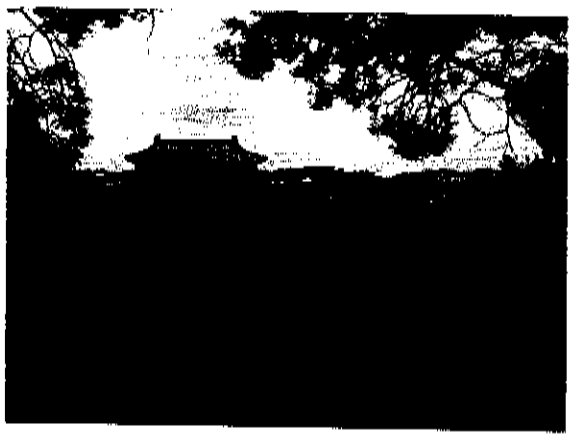


Illustration 1-5: Shenwu Men, or the Gate of Divine Prowess, Seen from Prospect Hill (Jing Shan)
Source: Photograph by the author.

Meanwhile, the seat of political power was relocated to the Lake Palaces of Zhongnan Hai. They had been a favourite residence of the Empress Dowager Cixi, the effective ruler of China, in her later years. Both she and the Guangxu emperor died in the Palaces' pavilions 100 years ago. In the early Republican era of the 1910s, these palaces would be used as the seat of government for Yuan Shikai,[5] a president who would be emperor. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council still rule the nation from the Lake Palaces today.

Under Yuan the physical reorientation of Beijing began in earnest, with the walls of the imperial city (*Huang cheng*) dismantled. Today only a small, broken remnant of these can be seen at the Imperial City Wall Park that extends along the eastern flank of the Forbidden City from Chang'an Boulevard to Heping Boulevard in the north. Meanwhile, a Chinoiserie main entrance was created for the government. It was named *Xinhua Men*, or New China Gate. As Yuan made his imperial gambit, he

[5] A significant Chinese political figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Yuan was a highly ranked military official of the Qing Dynasty who turned against it, succeeded Sun Yat-sen as the first president of the Chinese Republic, and attempted to found a new dynasty.

even declared that the Lake Palaces be renamed the Palace of New China (*Xinhua Gong*).

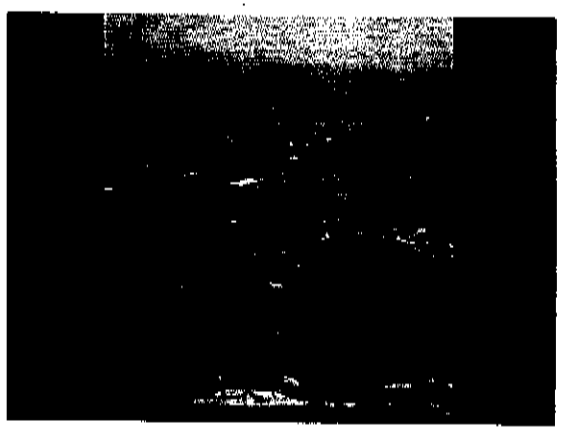


Illustration 1-6: Aerial View of Zhongnan Hai, with New China Gate (Xinhua Men) *Visible at the Bottom of the Image*
Source: Zhong Nan Hai, Beijing—Political Centre of a Country of One Billion, Beijing: China Pictorial, 1981.

Illustration 1-7: New China Gate (Xinhua Men)
Source: Zhong Nan Hai.

The lavish gate was to serve as a podium from which the military ruler could review his troops, their serried ranks marching along an east–west

axis in front of it. This new axis broke significantly with the imperial north–south geometry of Beijing, marking a basic realignment of the design of the city that would continue unabated for the next 70 years. This axial route would eventually become Chang'an Boulevard, the multi-laned highway that cuts a swath through the centre of the modern city.

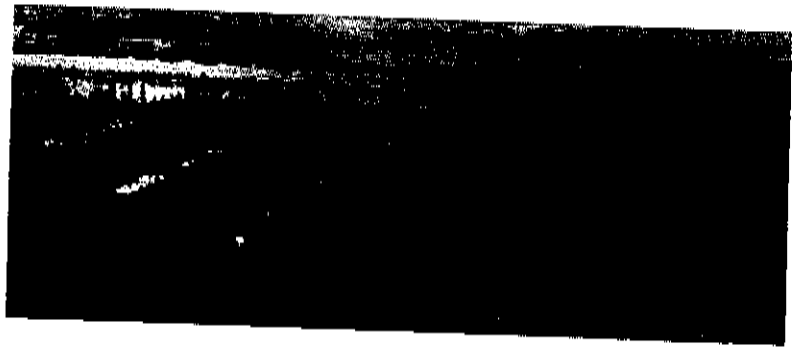


Illustration 1-8: Tiananmen Square and Chang'an Boulevard, 1999 Reconstruction
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

The People's Liberation Army led by the Communist Party occupied the ancient city in 1948 and, in 1949, the new Communist Party government declared Beijing the capital of the People's Republic of China. The architects and urban planners Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang presented to the new party leaders what they called the "49 Scheme", a city plan that proposed a new municipal centre to the west of the old, walled city of Beijing. This plan would locate the socialist government of the Communist Party in the area where the Japanese military had established headquarters during its occupation of the city (1937-1945). Under this plan, the old city could be preserved in its entirety, and an ambulatory garden would be built on the 500-year-old city walls.

In 1952, the central government vetoed the plan, but arguments over the design of the new city continued. In July 1953, Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, declared that majority opinion now favoured demolishing the city walls. It was felt that retaining the Forbidden City would preserve more than enough of old Beijing. Party Central and the people's government would expand into new buildings to be constructed around an enlarged Tiananmen Square. Eventually, it was hoped, the Forbidden City would be surrounded by six to eight storey high-rise offices. An avenue of

equally impressive buildings would line both sides of Chang'an Boulevard; the heroic structures of the new socialist China would overshadow, both literally and figuratively, the squat and disfiguring remnants of the feudal past. For, despite the dutiful discussions with experts, consultations with the labouring masses and the consideration of the city's cultural heritage, Peng Zhen had learnt that "Chairman Mao doesn't like old Beijing; he wants to see it torn down and rebuilt". The only thing that held the government back from enacting the drastic proposals drawn up in the 1950s was a lack of money.[6]

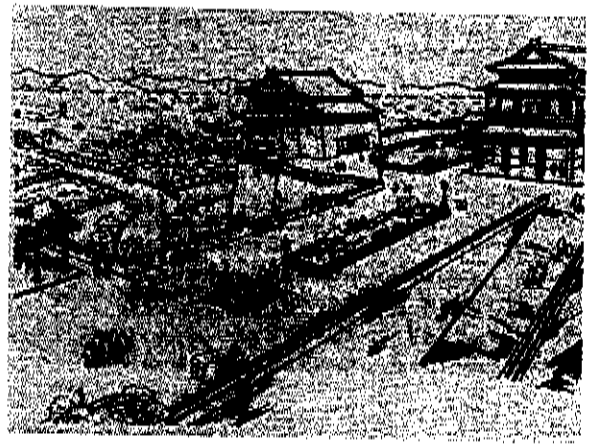


Illustration 1-9: A View of the Beijing City Wall Park as Envisaged in the Early 1950s
Source: "Liang Sichengde Beijing chengqiang gongyuan shexiang tu" (Plan for the Beijing City Wall Park by Liang Sicheng), from *Liang Sicheng wenji* (*The Collected Writings of Liang Sicheng*) 1986, reproduced in Wang Jun, *Cheng ji* (*Recording the City*), Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003.

Nonetheless, the new rulers of the conquered city still achieved a radical re-engineering of the place: the feminized, supine, inward looking site of Manchu–Qing betrayal and decadence, a city of *gonzige'r, kuotai,*

[6] For details of plans for Beijing and the former imperial palace during the early decades of the People's Republic of China, see Chs 1 and 7 of my *The Forbidden City* (London: Profile Books & Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-24; 143-69, and the online notes to these chapters at: www.chinaheritageproject.org/theforbiddencity.

mingshi and *xianggong*, a place of unique culture and refinement, was transformed into an heroic city of party stalwarts, workers, micro-factories, industrial plants and, above all, robust, progressive, polluting production. Paradoxically, the survival of the old city of Beijing, and the remnants of its imperial north–south orientation, was the result of the two most radical revolutionary movements, or rather calamities, of recent Chinese history.

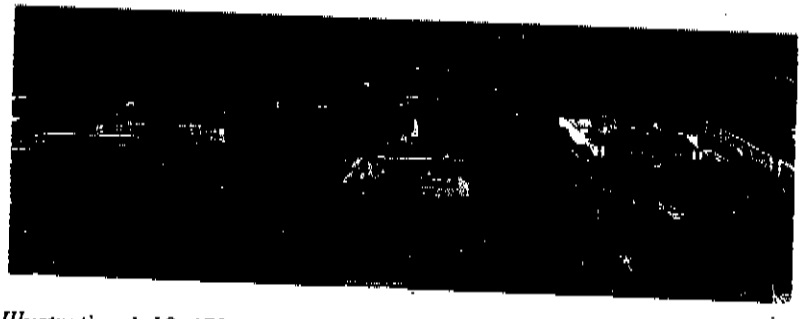


Illustration 1-10: 'Plan for Tiananmen Square 8' (1954).
Source: Dong Guangqi, *Gudu Beijing: Wushi nian yanbian lu* (*A Record of Fifty Years of Change*), Nanjing: Dongnan chubanshe, 2006.

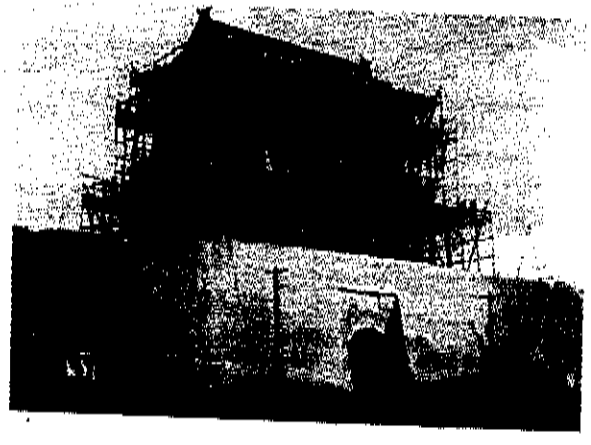


Illustration 1-11: The Late-1960s Demolition of Anding Men
Source: Photograph by Luo Zhewen, in Wang Jun, *Cheng ji.*

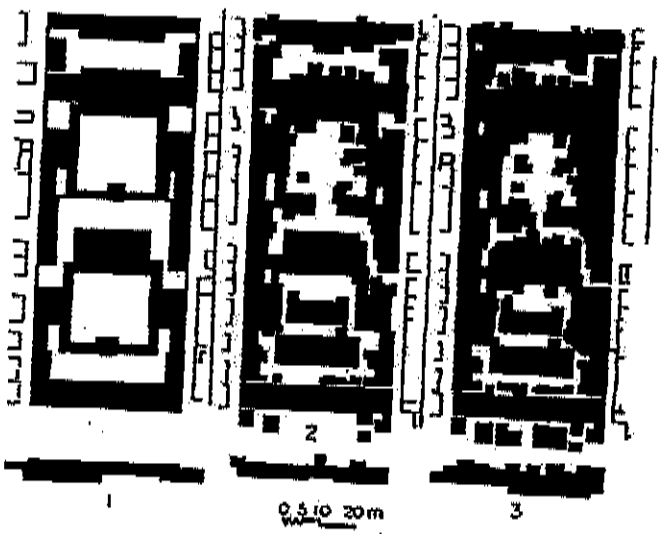
The economic dislocation and political in-fighting resulting first from the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s, and then from the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, frustrated the plans drawn up for the razing of parts of the Forbidden City. They put paid to the design to build a Chairman's Office in the centre of Tiananmen Square, and they sidelined hopes to construct a multi-lane highway in front of Wu Men, the formal entrance to the Palace Museum. Nonetheless, the demolition of the old city walls, and the creation of, for the moment, car-less freeways continued well into the Cultural Revolution era (c. 1964-1978).

China/*Chai ne*

Bewailing the fate of an old Beijing that was itself merely a remnant of an older Beijing, lamenting the destructive forces of change wrought by political fiat, economic necessity or foreign influence is hardly something new in the city's history. Following the burning of the palaces of the Garden of Perfect Brightness (*Yuanming Yuan*) in 1860, Wang Yunkai had written a lament for the loss; the May Fourth writer Bing Xin regretted the death of Beiping, the city as lover, at the time of the Japanese invasion in the 1930s; and Simon Leys (Pierre Ryckmans) wrote an impassioned *cri de coeur* for the city in his early 1970s book *Chinese Shadows*. Then there are the plaintive essays by the Beijing-based writer Zhu Rong in the 1990s, which mark the rise of the contemporary wave of nostalgic writing, filming and song-writing for the death of "Old Peking".

But in many respects the history of Beijing over the past 150 years, like that of so many cities, is one of repeated demolitions and diminutions. This history is often told in the form of multiple and multiplying regrets for things past. In the 1980s, the concrete reality of the living conditions of many people in the now increasingly sought-after courtyard houses gives us an indication of how little of the heavily romanticized old Beijing was then habitable. The "three ages" of courtyard house occupancy give some hint of the reality of the living space behind the low, grey walls of the city's alleyways or *hutong*:

1. the early 1950s: a traditional courtyard house (*sihe yuan*) with some 2,440.5 square metres of living space;
2. the late 1970s: the "tenement courtyard" (*da zayuan*) in which there was a 131 per cent increase in living space and diminution of courtyard area; and,
3. after 1987, the "tenement house without courtyard" (*za er wuyuan*) has appeared with a living space of 155 per cent of the original courtyard house.



(1) 1950 年初，四合院完整，共有建筑面积 2440.5 平方米；
(2) 1970 年后期，已经成为大杂院，建筑面积增至 3196.5 平方米，为 50 年年代初的 131%；
(3) 1987 年后居住面积增至 3786.5 平方米，为 50 年代初的 155%，几乎是"杂院无院"。

Illustration 1-12: Three Ages of a Courtyard House
Source: *Beijing jiucheng ershiwu pian lishi wenhua baohuqu baohu guihua (Plan for the Preservation of the Twenty-five Cultural Protected Areas of the Old City of Beijing)*, Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 2002.

While many people were anxious to escape from the courtyard slums, the comic novelist and famous Beijing wise guy Wang Shuo reflected the sense of inevitability as rampant urban renewal cut swathes through the city. With typical brevity and mordant wit he asked: Why do you think they call it "China"? Because everything's *chai ne* 拆呢 (being torn down)!

Other wags noticed the orthographic similarity between the Chinese character "*chai*" 拆 (to demolish, or tear down) which, from the early 1990s, has been emblazoned throughout the city, marking the rows of buildings and walls up for the wreckers, and the equally ubiquitous character "*zhe*" 折 (discount). This is a word most often featured on store

windows to advertise the state of permanent (and desperate) "sale" in which the urban consumer economy seems to be mired. As Peter Neville-Hadley writes in the *Frommer's Guide to Beijing*:

> Once the ancient buildings come down to be replaced by shiny shops, the *chai* character seems to reappear. But one little brush stroke is missing from the new version in shop windows—a *dian*, the smallest of all strokes, and little more than a dot. This tiny difference is enough to change the character's sound to *zhe*, and its meaning is changed to something more constructive.[7]

And so it is, these two words *chai* and *zhe* capture neatly the cycle of urban renewal in Beijing: The old is destroyed to make way for the new; the new is then discounted to be sold off cheaply. A simulacrum of the old—the retro-fitted *hutong*—is built in its place and then sold at a premium. The process was accelerated with the ongoing economic boom in the city, by the looming Olympics and by the heritage plans drawn up in the last decade. In 1999, 25 protected cultural and historical sites were promulgated, and work on the radical, often destructive, "protection" of them has accelerated since the Olympic announcement in 2001.[8]

Some sense of how these areas are being "protected", however, can be gained from considering Qian Men and Dashala, formerly the city's most famous shopping and theatre district. Demolition of swathes of buildings in the area, except for a handful of previously listed late-Qing and Republican structures, began in earnest in late 2006. Yet the company that won the contract for this bold heritage makeover soon withdrew from the project claiming financial problems. The option for this development was then taken up by Pan Shiyi, known for the SoHo buildings at the new CBD (called *Xibi di* in Chinese, an expression with a particularly salacious undertow) at Jianguo Menwai in what was formerly the socialist-era foreigners' district. Facing rubble and a schedule that demanded a new Qian Men by the time of the Olympics, construction on a jerry-built Qing-themed shopping mall progressed rapidly.

This kind of "*chai ne*" is not so new. Heritage fakery was first successfully essayed in Beijing in 1980 when today's champions of old Beijing—people like Wu Liangyong of Tsinghua University—enacted their plans for the rebuilding of Liuli Chang south of Heping Men. The book-vendors and specialists in art, seals and stone-rubbings were cleared

[7] See www.frommers.com/destinations/beijing/0201010012.html.
[8] See my essay "Downward Spiral: From Palace to Mansion to Temple to Museum," in *China Heritage Quarterly*, 12 (December 2007), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/.

and the old Ming and Qing era curio shops were all demolished to create a Liuli Chang tourism zone with its gaudy Qing façades and ample tourist parking. The "façodomy" of that era was now to be visited upon the city as a whole.

Illustration 1-13: A Courtyard House Marked for Demolition ("chai")
Source: *Wang Jun,* Cheng ji.

Illustration 1-14: Pudu Si Temple and Surrounds
Source: Photograph by the author at the Pudu Si Temple exhibition.

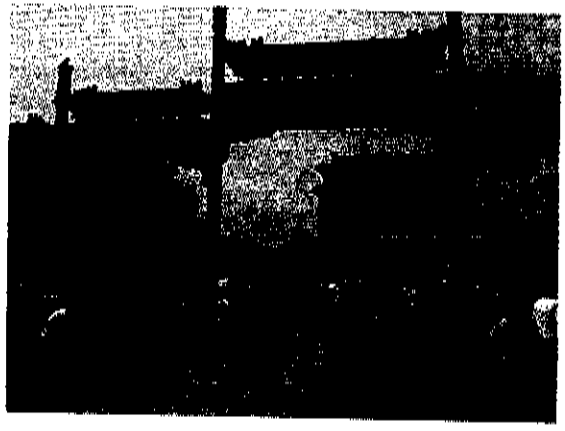


Illustration 1-15: Qian Men Rebuilt, August 2008
Source: Photograph by the author.

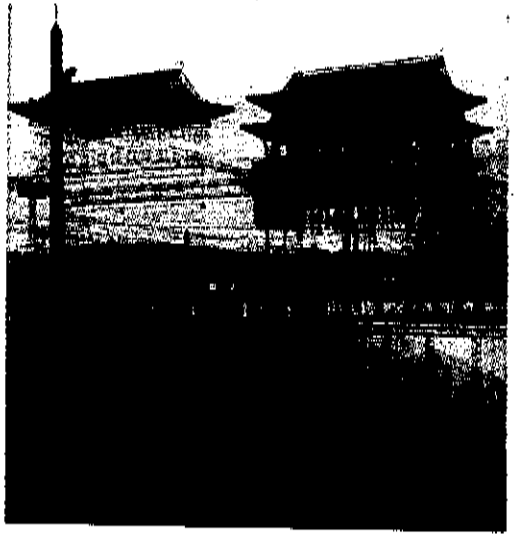


Illustration 1-16: A Digital Reconstruction of Yongding Men
Source: Wang Jun, *Cheng ji.*

Others have decided that the best way to preserve the past is virtually. In the 1990s, the Beijing Crystal Digital Company created a series of images of the old city walls and gates in spectral relief over the highways

and junctions that have replaced them. Old Beijing is already featured in theme places like the back lot of Beijing Film Studio, at the "First City Under Heaven" (*Tianxia Diyi Cheng*) park at Anping county in Hebei Province and at the massive to-scale Forbidden City at Hengdian in Zhejiang. Perhaps, some day soon, the city will appear in all of its imagined glory on Second Life.

Time and Space Remade

In the new city plans drawn up since the 1990s, Beijing has experienced another orientation. Under the former Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin (1989-2003), a third axis was added to the city. Until then there were two axes: the old imperial north–south fulcrum through the Forbidden City, and the east–west Republican-era and socialist axis along Chang'an Boulevard. Although poles apart, they did intersect at Tiananmen Square. However, since 4 June 1989, Tiananmen has been a place where public celebration has frequently mixed with political caution.[9] And so a new north–south axis was created with the building of the Millennium Altar just west of the Military Museum. Paradoxically, the new axis is in the part of town where some half a century earlier Liang Sicheng had advocated the construction of a government centre for new Beijing.

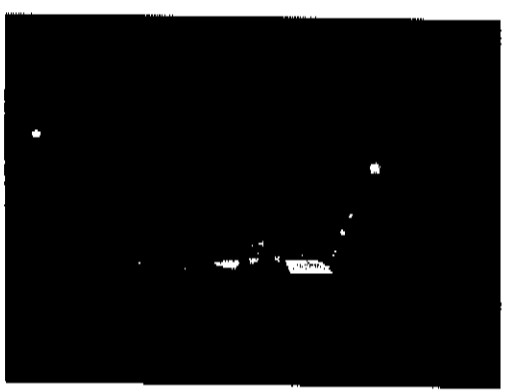


Illustration 1-17: The Millennium Altar (Shiji Tan)
Source: Photograph by the author.

[9] Regardless of this, major state celebrations were held in Tiananmen on 1 October 1999 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic, on 13 July 2001 to mark the awarding of the Olympics to Beijing, and on 8 August 2007 to mark the one-year countdown to the 2008 Olympics.

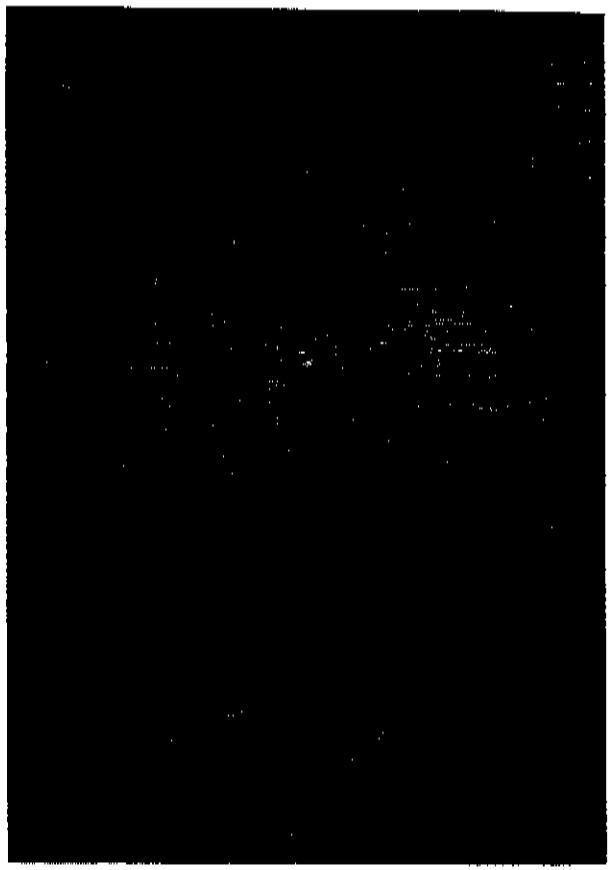


Illustration 1-18: Plan for Great Shanghai
Source: By Doon Dayou et al., in Deke, *Yangpu, Where History Lives On*, Hong Kong: Old China Hands Press, 2005.

Of all the altars in Beijing—and there are many: the Altar of the Earth and Grains (*Sheji tan*), as well as altars to the sun, moon, earth and heaven (*Ri tan, Yue tan, Di tan* and *Tian tan*)—the Millennium Altar (*Shiji Tan*), is the only one that does not lie flat open to nature and to the elements. Instead, it is built with a trajectory all of its own. To mark its imaginary, forward-moving "momentum", a pinnacle, a shooting lance or launching pad has been installed. The Millennium Altar is also a concrete version of the old marble sundials, or *rigui*, found outside the main audience halls of

the Forbidden City. The *rigui* symbolized the unified time of the empire (one of these featured in the opening moments of the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony on 8 August 2008). The new north–south axis leads from the Millennium Altar to the Beijing West Train Station, which is itself topped by a faux-imperial gate. This latest reorientation of the city—where celebrations for both the new millennium and the official party for the Olympic announcement in 2001 were held—means Beijing now has two north–south axes and one major east–west corridor or, as the planners call it, "two axes and one line" (*liang zhongzhou, yixian*).

Creating iconic new city centres with stratospheric symbolism is not something particularly new in China. In the 1930s, during an earlier moment of national renewal under the government of the Republic of China, ambitious plans were drawn up for many Chinese cities, in particular the Nationalist capital of Nanjing, and the mercantile centre of Shanghai. In Shanghai the authorities decided to build an alternate, entirely Chinese centre for civic administration at Yangpu. Great Shanghai was to be constructed to the northeast of the foreign-controlled concessions of the city proper, far from alien influence and control.

Illustration 1-19: The Aviation Association of China
Source: Photograph by Deke, in Deke, *Yangpu*.

The main design for the new Central District of Great Shanghai was devised by a team working under Dong Dayou (Doon Dayu, 1899-1973), a graduate of Columbia University. If seen from the sky, the new city would appear to be a place anxious to be airborne itself. Its main functional structures featured a marriage of modern western building techniques with the Chinese-style roofs or "big hats" (*da maozi*) favoured in the early Republic (and then again under Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong in

the early 1990s). Other fabrications appeared fanciful, like ambitious follies. One in particular, a building designed for the Aviation Association of China, combined the celestial symbolism of Beijing's Temple of Heaven with the modern obsession with air travel.

Making a Spectacle of the Olympics

We have all been witness to the international media frisson resulting from the relaunching of Beijing itself in recent years. That city is now a celebrated metropole of the East; its veiled politics and conflicting histories are nothing compared to the hype-driven commercial possibilities of a rising China.

Beijing is witness to the stand-alone office monument, the edifice as advertisement. The signature structures of recent hyper-development distract from the vast new gated communities, the battery housing estates and the faceless sprawl of post-rural conurbation. While these places and their own communities tell complex stories about the modern Chinese city and its inhabitants, it is the new monuments of socialist capitalism that mark Beijing's latest orientation.

Illustration 1-20: The National Centre for the Performing Arts
Source: Photograph by the author.

On Chang'an Boulevard, next to the 1950s Great Hall of the People, is Paul Andreu's National Centre for the Performing Arts, or the "great

stinking egg shell" (*da choudan ke'r*) as some call it. The Harvard University-based Rem Koolhaas, the celebrated CultStuds architect of displacement, is also a creative collaborator in the Beijing brand. Koolhaas disavows traditional academic architecture, and problematizes it through his theoretical pontifications. Yet he shows how playful the take of the po-mo architectural artist can be by having accepted, for example, a commission from Prada. More pertinent to my observations, however, is his design with Ole Scheeren for the new headquarters of Chinese Central TV at Jianguo Menwai.

OMA's Koolhaas & Co. have worked in China for many years. They are known for a totalizing view that regards the only human activity left to us to be shopping. Koolhaas himself has written of the contemporary city reality in terms of "junkspace". Junkspace depicts an environment that is "constantly new, beginning to rot, always politely under construction".[10] Ironically, it is supposed to be a space that is non-monumental, vast and urban; a space that encompasses the entire built realm and its scissures. One is supposed to appreciate the piquancy of Koolhaas' work designed for the "throat and tongue" (*houshe*) of the Party. After all, the Communist Party is a political force that constantly extols the fact that it rules over a territory under permanent construction. Koolhaus's angular CCTV pretzel creates a teetering tower that defies itself.

Forgotten in the recent built ebullience, however, is the history of the spectacles of Beijing, stories in which power and politics lurk behind the built, as well as the bought. Some Beijing residents have voiced their disgust at the makeover of their city in recent years and what they see as the blight of architectural monuments marking its landscape. Jealous of the wealthy and powerful of the new age, but wary of the Communist leaders and their neo-liberal economic policies, they blame the disfigurement of their city on what they call the "traitors" (*Hanjian*) in power. One Beijing taxi driver interviewed recently by the oral historian Sang Ye expressed his proletarian contempt for the international metropolis of Beijing:

> With all their re-planning, Beijing has become nothing less than a bird [*niao*, a Beijing dialect word that also means "crap" or "damned"]. That off-kilter pair of legs they built for CCTV on the East Third Ring Road is how it walks. Its head is over in the west, the damn gaping maw of the Millennium Monument. Of course, a bird needs a nest, doesn't it? Well, the nest has been plonked down on the North Fourth Ring Road [the National Stadium, or "Bird's Nest"]. On the radio they even boast that it's the biggest in the world. Fuck me dead! What the hell is so impressive about piling some disused steel beams up like that?

[10] J. Macgregor Wise, "Cultural Studies and Rem Koohaas' Project on the City," in Gary Hall and Clare Birchall, eds, *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 247.

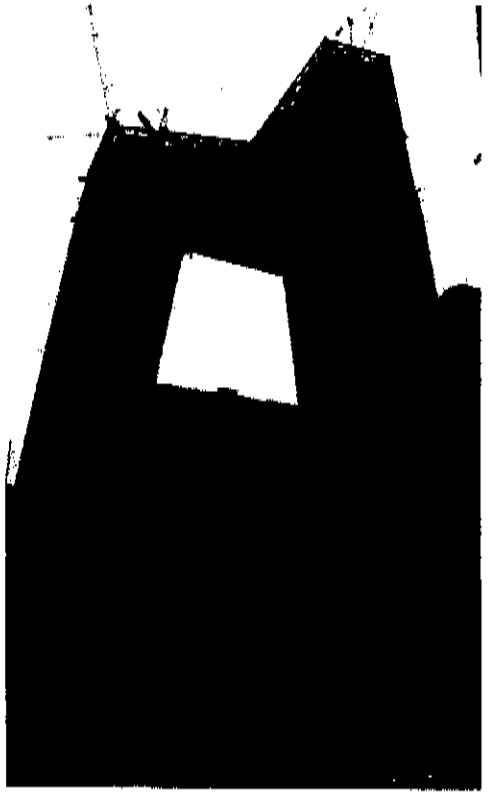


Illustration 1-21: CCTV Headquarters
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

> Of course, a bird needs more than a nest. You have to feed it something. So they built it a birdbath, you know, the thing they call the "Water Cube" [the National Aquatics Centre]. And, already the bird's laid an egg, right there on Chang'an Boulevard in Central Beijing. Yeah, the bastard's laid that titanium blob they call the National Centre for the Performing Arts. It's for the birds, and they're all built by a pack of traitors... On the radio I heard that the foreign devil who designed the egg claimed he wanted to cut

> China off from its traditional culture so that it could be able to create new things... Take a look at the Olympic Mascots: creatures designed by traitors to encourage mindless compliance...
>
> If these bastards really could turn Beijing into a bird, one that could take off and fly, one that travelled the world taking whatever it wanted, I wouldn't be complaining. Just look at the Americans: they have an eagle on their national emblem. But these bastards of Beijing don't have the guts, or the ability.[11]

In April 2006, it was announced that Zhang Yimou, the internationally popular Chinese film director, would lead the group designing the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. By then, Zhang had quite a portfolio of extravagant screen and stage triumphs to his name. One that is particularly relevant here is the 1998 Beijing production of Puccini's opera *Turandot*, which he designed. It was staged in the once-sacred courtyard of the Ancestral Temple (*Tai Miao*), the symbolic graveyard in the heart of the imperial city.

Illustration 1-22: Tai Miao, the Ancestral Temple, during the January 1976 Obsequies for Premier Zhou Enlai
Source: *China Pictorial*, 1976: 2 (supplement).

[11] Sang Ye, a member of my Australian Research Council and ANU-funded project "Beijing as Spectacle" undertook a series of oral history interviews in relation to the Olympic year. See also my essay "Olympic Art and Artifice, Inside the 'Imagineering' of the Beijing Olympics," *The American Interest* III, no. 6 (July/August 2008): 72-78, http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=441&MId=20.

Apart from the occasional avant-garde art show, the main temple at Tai Miao has seen little action since its last official role in January 1976, when it was used for the official viewing of the body of the deceased premier Zhou Enlai. Zhang Yimou's production of *Turandot* was grandiose, a confection that was totally in keeping with the brash and mass style of contemporary Chinese culture. Over the years other artists elsewhere have designed *Turandot* sets. Here I recall only one of their number: Adolf Hitler.

During his early years as a struggling artist, Hitler had an oriental vision of his own. It was a stage design for *Turandot*. Although the opera was never produced according to Hitler's design, the Führer did collaborate on a far more exaggerated show on the German national stage: the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The set for that extravaganza was designed by Hitler's architect of choice, Albert Speer.

Illustration 1-23: Sketch of a Stage Design for Turandot *by Adolf Hitler*
Source: Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, London: Pimlico, 2003.

Although one Chinese athlete competed in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games—Liu Changchun, described in the official Games' report as "the lone representative of four hundred million people"[12]—the 1936

[12] See Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 42-43.

Berlin Olympics was the first of the modern games to which the Republic of China made a major commitment. The Chinese national team consisted of 69 athletes, along with 39 observers and 150 journalists. They also travelled with nine practitioners of martial arts (*wushu*), who put on displays of their talents. However, a games during which race was such a contentious issue was a disaster for China. As the geopolitical historian Zhang Junjun remarked, "our delegation presented the world with what can only be described as 'total annihilation'".[13] In a book inspired by the episode, Zhang blamed the outcome on the inferior quality (*suzhi*) of the Chinese nation, its racial weakness and the lack of northern martial spirit. For its part, the Chinese delegation wrote in its report on their ignominious results that, "We were ridiculed for having brought back nothing but a *duck's egg*" [emphasis in original].[14]

Hitler and Speer would go on from the Berlin Olympic spectacle to formulate ever-grander plans for Berlin. Together they created a monumental design for a refashioned city to be called Germania, the new capital of what they presumed would be a victorious German Reich. While the Second World War left Berlin a ruin and the plans for Germania unrealized, Albert Speer's son, Speer Jnr would over half a century later propose his own grand scheme to China's urban planners. Journalists would mock it as Speer's plan for a "Super Beijing". And today, in the revived central axis of the Chinese capital, which stretches from a rebuilt Yongding Men in the south of the city to the dragon lake of the Olympic park far to the north, perhaps some would detect vestiges of the Speer-family vision.[15]

Susan Bronwell, a US scholar who has written on the history of Chinese sport, points to a moment earlier than the 1936 Berlin Olympics when discussing comparisons with the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She sees a particular connection between the US and China through Olympic Games, and significantly identifies the 1904 St Louis Olympic Games as a key moment.

[13] Zhang Junjun, *Huazu suzhi zhi jiantao* (*An Investigation into the Quality of the Chinese Race*) (Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1944), 5-6; quoted in Sun Longji (Lung-kee Sun), *Lishixuejiade jingxian—lishi xinli wenji* (*The Adventures of an Historian: Essays on Historical Psychology*) (Hong Kong: Huaqianshu chuban youxian gongsi, 2005), 135.

[14] Christopher Hilton, *Hitler's Olympics: The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 183.

[15] This is a point also made by Deyan Sudjic in his fascinating work, *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 12-48; 92-127.

> The third modern Olympic Games were held in St. Louis in 1904 alongside the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (world's fair), and while China did not take part in the sports (it would send its first Olympic athlete to the 1932 Los Angeles Games), the Qing dynasty sent the first official delegation that it had ever sent to an international exposition... The 1904 Olympics were apparently the first Olympics to be reported in the press back in China.
>
> The world's fair was America's coming-out party as a world power. It had just acquired the former Spanish colonies of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam as a result of the Spanish–American war in 1898. At the fair, it presented itself as an expanding power, with an extremely large display devoted to the Philippines. Another large section of the exposition grounds was devoted to displays intended to demonstrate that the government was succeeding in civilizing American Indians.

Bronwell goes on to describe how the European powers were unimpressed by many elements of the US games. The International Olympic Committee President Pierre de Coubertin, for instance, declared that awarding the Games to St Louis had been a "misfortune". Moreover, Anthropology Days, "in which natives who had been brought to the fair for the ethnic displays competed in some track and field events and pole-climbing" were "embarrassing".

In talking of the 2008 Beijing Games, Chinese commentators often pointed out that calls were made in China for that country to host a future Games exactly a century ago. C. H. Robertson, the director of the Tianjin YMCA observed:

> Since 1907 a campaign had been carried on to inspire patriotism in China by asking three questions:
>
> 1. When will China be able to send a winning athlete to the Olympic contests?
> 2. When will China be able to send a winning team to the Olympic contests?
> 3. When will China be able to invite all the world to come to Peking [Beijing] for an International Olympic contest, alternating with those at Athens?

Further on in her study, Bronwell offers a rather benign comparison between the 1904 US games and the 2008 Chinese games:

> As the U.S. did over a century ago, China will try to display the success of its civilizing mission among its frontier minorities. It will try to display its wealth through monumental architecture and exhibitions of economic wares. In 1904, train stations were one of the major ways of displaying

wealth—the St. Louis Union Station completed in 1902 was one of the largest and most opulent train stations in the world. In 2008, sports stadiums have replaced train stations, and China will have its Bird's Nest Stadium. The St. Louis world's fair was the biggest of all time, just as the Beijing Games may well be the biggest Olympics of all time. When a superpower holds a coming-out party, it is a hard act to follow.[16]

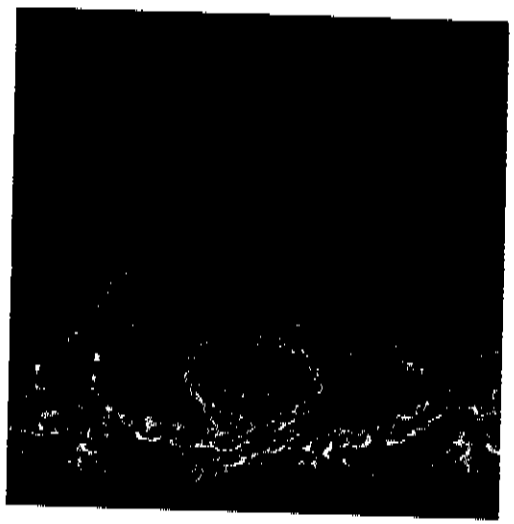


Illustration 1-24: From the Opening Scene of the 1964 Film Version of The East is Red
Source: Long Bow Archive.

China's "coming-out party" (to use the tired cliché of the international media) has, however, been increasingly fraught. In the enterprise of designing the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Zhang Yimou was for a while joined by a consortium of non-Chinese "imagineers". All of them have created successful public entertainments in recent years. While some of their number, like Stephen Spielberg, have pulled out due to a certain stench surrounding China's policies in Africa, there is little doubt that Hollywood continued to be

[16] For all of these quotations, see Susan Brownell, "Beijing Olympic FAQ#3: Which Olympic Games is most useful for understanding the Beijing Olympic Games?," posted on China Beat, 3 May 2008, http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/2008/05/beijing-olympic-faq3-which-olympic.html. Also see Brownell's *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China* (Boulder, Co.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

Beijing's greatest inspiration. Indeed, China and its Communist Party rulers have been enmeshed with Hollywood and its culture of spectacle for decades. Anyone who has seen the 1964 Maoist song and dance extravaganza *The East is Red*, for example, will be aware that communist choreographers had carefully studied the best the West could offer.

It is also timely to recall that, 50 years ago, Tiananmen Square was purpose built for grandiose (and, given the ugly politics of the day, chilling) displays of upwards of a million participants. A recent example of such self-congratulatory socialist pageantry was the big parade of 1 October 1999 that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic. Every province and interest group had a float and a group of marchers in the show.

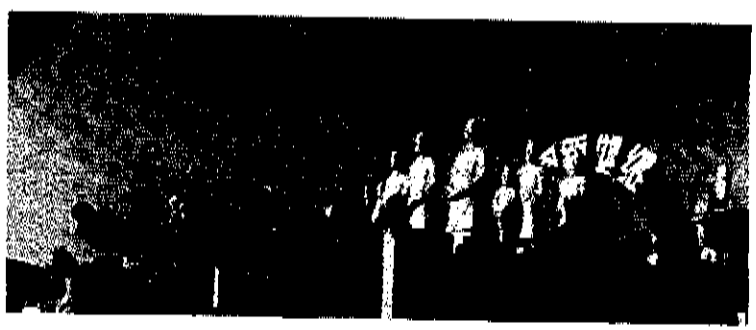


Illustration 1-25: Shaanxi Provincial Float in Tiananmen Square Following the 1 October 1999 National Day Parade
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

In 2005, a scaled-down celebration was held in Lhasa to mark the fortieth anniversary of the imposed Tibetan Autonomous Region. The new Potala Square in which the parade was held features a lugubrious "Peaceful Liberation Plinth", lakes festooned with swirling swastikas, and a parade ground embedded with sunken fountains and lights that, when they leap to life, spray and shimmer in time to party (Communist Party, that is) show tunes. It is little wonder that local artists I met when travelling there called the once holy city *Lasa Weijiasi*: Lhasa-Vegas. It is a playful appellation that perhaps few in Tibetan China would find appealing following the murderous events of March-April 2008.[17]

[17] See Robert Barnett, "Thunder from Tibet," *The New York Review of Books* 55, no. 9, 29 May 2008, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21391. It is perhaps significant that the old 1959 Beijing–Tibetan Opera *Princess Wencheng*

Despite mass demonstrations, the debacle of the Olympic Torch Relay internationally, and the extreme security measures imposed on Beijing, the 2008 Olympics will provide a unique opportunity for China to show the world a vision of itself, and what it has to offer as a nascent global power.

Illustration 1-26: A Tableau Representing the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tiananmen Square, 2006 National Day Celebrations
Source: Photograph by the author.

There is no doubt that the "imagineers", both Chinese and foreign, who have contributed to the Opening Ceremony of 8 August 2008, will wend a sprightly way through a lot of history and culture that is pretty much unpalatable. Those once-hallowed ancient customs of concubinage, foot binding for young girls, and the castration of boys being sent into imperial service lack a modern feel-good factor, but inevitably there will be a phalanx or two of entombed warriors from the Qin dynasty.

Zhang Yimou has already declared he is determined to showcase recherché elements of regional culture in his show. So inevitably, once-subjugated peoples—those who some Han Chinese derisively call the "singing and dancing minorities"—that is, Mongols, Tibetans, Uyghurs,

(Wencheng gongzhu), created as a cultural symbol of harmony following the violent repression of the Tibetan Uprising and revived again for the 2005 anniversary, was brought back to Beijing during the last week of the 2008 Olympics and staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts.

Dai, Zhuang, to name but a few, will be prevailed upon to add exotic colour, and a sense of rhythm, to the proceedings.[18]

Take-off

And so it is that Beijing has been reoriented, physically as well as ideologically, a number of times since the late Qing dynasty. From a city in its refined, impoverished imperial twilight, a city of consumption, and for some, of decadence, it would become a centre of production, not only for factory goods, but also for the manufacture and exhibition of the state symbols of a new China. The city was, quite literally, turned on its axis in the process. Since then, local enterprise and international business have combined by one-party power to create a much-altered urban landscape.

Today, once more Beijing is a city of consumption; it is also the symbolic centre of the latest version of the Chinese new order, one in which global capital and a heavily policed, harmonious society prevail. Given this radical public make-over, it is all too easy to forget the other reorientations that have taken place in Beijing and by extension in China in recent years.

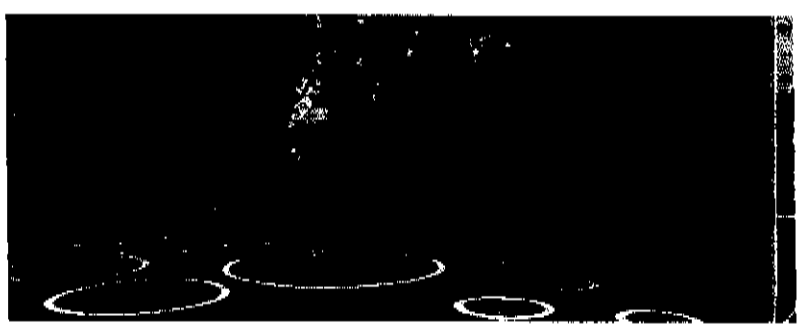


Illustration 1-27: The Adidas Office in Beijing
Note: Adidas was an official sponsor of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

[18] In the event, the Qin warriors were cut from the 8 August 2008 Olympics opening and included in the closing ceremony. The "singing and dancing minorities" were reduced to a troupe of Han-Chinese children dressed in ethnic costume who featured in the opening moments of the 8 August ceremony. See also my "China's Flat Earth, 8 August 2008", *The China Quarterly*, 197, March 2009, pp.64–86.

In considering Beijing's reorientations, we could consider, too, of the century-long debate about geography, race and the national character that has seen north pitted against south, and Beijing in repeated contestation with Shanghai. In this context I would also mention other new orientations, such as the one whereby the developed east of China is contrasted with the backward west, or that in which *suzhi* or quality is about place, people, behaviour and class. I would speak of the work of Andre Gunder Frank and the analysis of Chinese Studies in the West by Wang Hui. I would consider the major new state project to produce a National History of the Qing dynasty; I would talk, too, of how the vocabulary and ideas of China's "new left" thinkers work their way into mainstream discourse as a kind of academically re-branded Marxism–Leninism, as well as the tireless attempts by displaced intellectuals to return to the centre stage of national life by promoting New Confucianism. And, in the context of 2008, I would discuss hypernationalism and what have been called China's "online Red Guards".[19]

In the exuberance of consumerism, the jouissance of product placement and the architectural makeover of the nation's cities, it is easy to turn a blind eye to the masking of historical ruptures and unsettling anniversaries. I will mention again the fact that 2008 marks 110 years since the fateful months of the Hundred Day Reform attempts to modernize the Chinese empire. It is also the centenary of the passing of both the Empress Dowager Cixi, and the emperor Guangxu, who initiated those reforms I touched on in my opening comments.

More importantly for students of contemporary China, it is 30 years since the Third Plenum of the Communist Party's Eighth Party Congress, a momentous meeting in Beijing that formally launched the country on its present course of the "open door and reform". In the shadow of that congress—and of the celebrations already marking it—lurks the spectre of the Beijing Spring and the Democracy Wall at Xidan, the *Xidan minzhuqiang*. That was a place where popular will found expression through posters expressing grievance and hope, as well as some calling for greater rights and freedoms. The most famous, and still resonant, of these was Wei Jingsheng's call for a Fifth Modernization, a modernization of China's political life and the introduction of democracy. I would suggest there will be no official celebration of the Beijing Spring anniversary this year.

In conclusion, allow me to return to the departure point for my discussion: the dragon that once lurked under Beijing. Today, apart from

[19] See my "Torching the Relay," 4 May 2008, http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/2008/05/torching-relay.html.

the Dragon Lake of the Olympic Village, yet another dragon-shaped icon has taken shape in the northeast of the city. The splayed form of Beijing Capital International Airport Terminal 3, designed by the British architectural firm Norman Foster + Partners, actually houses the fourth airport that has serviced the Chinese capital in four decades.

While this latest dragon of Beijing is in constant terrestrial flight, it has opened in time for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which have seen the depleted water resources of the city become a point of contention once more. The Olympics, like the greedy dragon that the boy-god Nezha was said to have quelled, feed off the limited water resources of the city. According to specialists on Beijing's water, the Games are feeding off the dwindling subterranean reservoirs of a city that has been long benighted by drought.[20] Nor should we forget the fact that Beijing today remains, after all, the capital of a regnant Communist Party. It is a city that is the careful creation of revolutionary destruction, and constant reconstruction.

Illustration 1-28: An Artists Impression of the Norman Foster + Partners-designed Terminal 3 of Beijing Capital International Airport
Source: Xing Ruan, *New China Architecture*, Hong Kong: Periplus, 2006.

The slogan for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, "One World, One Dream" echoes the utopian promise of the socialist past, of a world united.

[20] See Dai Qing, "Thirsty Dragon at the Olympics," *The New York Review of Books* 54, no. 19, 6 December 2007, trans. Geremie Barmé, www.nybooks.com/articles/20850. Official Chinese sources strenuously denied such claims. See *China Daily*, 14 August 2008.

However, when considering this vaunted hope for unity today we should be mindful of the fact that the Olympic slogan imagines a shared amity, but one that can be achieved only if we are willing first to go to sleep. World consensus on the basis of a shared vision is a chimera that to this day enjoys a physical purchase in the heart of Beijing. It can be seen in the large socialist-era slogan that continues to festoon Tiananmen Gate: "Long live the great unity of the peoples of the world!".

Slogans decorate the gate, and they bracket the looming portrait of Mao Zedong that hangs over the central portal to the Forbidden City. Mao's legacy, too, is not far away. He was the man who, following the "peaceful liberation" of Beiping in 1948,[21] thereafter declared war on a city that represented the feudal past, a war from the ruins of which the Beijing of New China would emerge. It is a process that continues to this day.

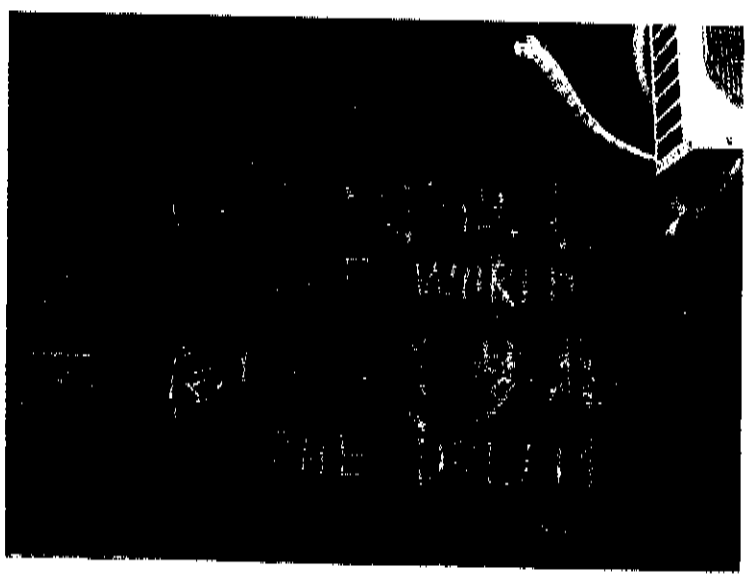


Illustration 1-29: The Beijing Olympics Slogan
Source: Photograph by the author.

[21] See Dai Qing, "1948: How Peaceful was the Liberation of Beiping?," The Sixty-eighth Morrison Lecture, 5 September 2007, The Australian National University, trans. Geremie Barmé and John Minford, http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/features.php?searchterm=014_daiqing.inc&issue=014.

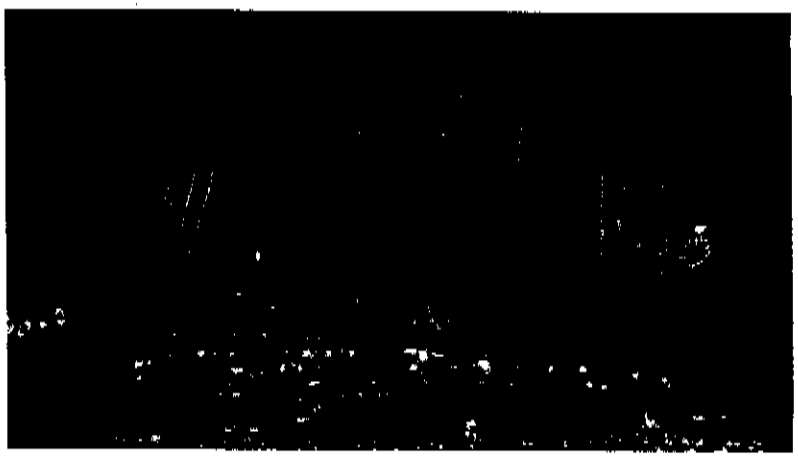


Illustration 1-30: The "Bird's Nest" during the Closing Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics
Source: Photograph by Lois Conner.

Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this essay was written as the opening address for the biennial conference of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia, Brisbane, 27 June 2007. I am grateful to Mary Farquhar and Sue Trevaskes for inviting me to address the association on that occasion. My remarks have been revised and updated for publication. My thanks also to Maureen Todhunter for her thoughtful editorial suggestions.

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Michael Dutton is Research Professor of Political Cultures at the Griffith Asia Institute and Professor of Politics at Goldsmiths, University of London. He was the founding co-editor of the journal *Postcolonial Studies* and has written extensively in journals such as *Public Culture*, *Social Text* and *positions*. His books include *Policing and Punishment in China: From Patriarchy to the People* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Streetlife China* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), and *Policing Chinese Politics: A History* (Duke University Press, 2005). The last of these books won the American Asian Studies Association Levenson Prize for the best book on contemporary China 2007. His most recent book is co-authored. Called *Beijing Time*, it was published by Harvard University Press in 2008.

David S. G. Goodman is Professor and Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Sydney. He was educated at the University of Manchester, Peking University, and the London School of Oriental and African Studies. His research is concerned with social and political change in China. Recent publications include *China's Campaign to 'Open Up the West'* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives* (Routledge, 2008). He is currently engaged in projects to examine the social basis of local politics in contemporary China (with Dr Beatriz Carrillo Garcia and Dr Chen Minglu); and the social history of Germans in China, 1870-1937 (with Dr Yixu Lu).

Guan Wei was born in China in 1957 and began painting in 1978. In 1986, he graduated from the department of Fine Arts of Beijing Capital University. Guan has lived and worked in Sydney since the 1990s, gaining a national reputation as one of Australia's foremost Australian-Chinese artists. He was also a keynote speaker at the 2007 Chinese Studies Association of Australia conference, which is the basis of this edited volume. According to the Queensland Art Gallery, the dustjacket painting, Echo (2005), documents his style and interests: in history, the environment and cross-cultural migrations. "Here, Guan Wei has appropriated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century images of European exploration in the Pacific Ocean—including Captain Cook's landing in Australia—from early books and later historical paintings. He reconstructs and grafts these images onto the famous Chinese landscape painting *J i u Ri Shi Cheng Tu Juan* by Wang Yuanqi (1641–1715), a great scholar and artist of the early Qing dynasty. Despite quoting from these historical works, *Echo* 2005 is a contemporary history painting about some of the most complex and troubling issues of the present day—migration, conquest, reconciliation, and even Australia's status as a place of refuge".