

THE SETTING OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY AND ITS PROTECTION

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In response to the requirement of the 15th conference of ICOMOS, this paper aims to define culture heritage setting and to elaborate on the protection policy. The scope of this discussion is confined to the historical city.

In China, the architect, Mr. Liang Sicheng, and the expert in city-planning, Mr. Chen Zhanxiang, proposed the following ideas in 1950: "Beijing was both a capital for many dynasties and a famous historical city; hence, many buildings from the old times have become monumental landmarks. Not only are they beautiful in design, thus requiring protection from damage, but excellent in terms of layout and the entire cultural heritage setting. These are exactly the characteristics of this renowned city, which must be listed for protection..."¹ This is the earliest proposal concerning the protection of the city's cultural heritage setting raised by Chinese scholars in the process of city planning. However, this correct proposal was not accepted 50 years ago. Today, we are able to provide a full representation of the definition of the historical heritage setting, its connotations and the protection policy to be implemented. This paper is a case study of the setting and protection of Beijing's Forbidden City.

Formation of the historical setting of the Forbidden City

Beijing's Forbidden City built during the Ming and Qing dynasties was the core of Beijing's construction during the two dynasties; the layout of palaces, sacrificial venues, central government buildings, internal affairs offices, storehouses, temples, residential areas and the markets are the manifestation of the city planning of ancient capital in China and political and economic system of the ancient feudal and agricultural regime. At the same time, the city development reached the optimum level of utilizing the natural resources in the Beijing area. Various elements of the

landscape and townscape have contributed to the unique aesthetic characteristics of Beijing. The various historical, cultural and natural elements that characterized Beijing during the Ming and Qing dynasties constitute the historical setting of the Forbidden City.

The development of the historical setting of the Forbidden City was the result of the long period of accumulation over 8 centuries. The construction of the Beijing region as the capital city began in the middle of the 12th century. In the third year of the Tiande reign during the Jin dynasty (1151), Jin's Emperor Wanyan Liang decided to relocate the capital from Huining of Shangjing to Yanjing (today's Beijing). Prior to that, Yanjing had been the southern capital of Liao, a kingdom conquered by the Jin. In the first year of the Zhenyuan reign (1153), the expansion of Yanjing was completed, and Jin's capital was officially relocated to Yanjing, which was renamed "Zhongdu" (the central capital). Emperor Wanyan Liang admired the culture of China's central areas, hence the building of Zhongdu was modeled on the capital of the Northern Song dynasty, with the imperial palace in the center surrounded by the palace wall with a perimeter of roughly 4.5 kilometers. The central palace was encircled by the outer imperial city. The outermost part is the Zhongdu city wall measured roughly 17.6 kilometers. In the suburban area of Zhongdu, temporary palaces and imperial gardens were built for the emperor's stay outside the capital. In the 19th year of Emperor Dading's reign (1179), Daning Palace was built in the lake area northeast to the city; it was later renamed Wanning Palace. It was on a grand scale and of breath-taking beauty and served as an important temporary palace for the emperor's travels.²

In the third year of the Zhenyou reign of the Jin dynasty (1215), Mongolian troops conquered Zhongdu and destroyed the palaces there. In the first year of the Zhongtong reign (1260), Kublai Khan was inaugurated as the Emperor of the "Grand Mongolian Empire" in Shangdu. In the first year of the Zhiyuan reign (1264), the Qionghua Island was

¹ Liang Sicheng, Chen Zhanxiang: "The Suggestions on the Location of Central Administrative Region for the Central Government", 1950. See Vol.5 in *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng*, p.61.

² Cf. Yu Jie, Yu Guangdu: *Zhongdu in the Jin Dynasty*, 1989, Beijing Publishing House. 1 li = 500 meters, 1 zhang = 10 chi = 3.333 meters

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developed, covering part of the Wanning Palace of the Jin dynasty. In the third year of the Zhiyuan reign (1266), a new palace was built in the vicinity of the Qionghua Island. In the fourth year of the Zhiyuan reign (1267), the large scale of building project of the Yuan capital began. In the eighth year of the Zhiyuan reign (1271), Kublai Khan decided to rename the country Da Yuan (the Great Yuan); the capital city was renamed Dadu (the Great Capital) in the 9th year of the Zhiyuan reign. In the 11th year of the Zhiyuan reign (1274), the founding emperor of the Yuan dynasty received felicitations from his officials in his new palace. In the 13th year of the Zhiyuan reign (1276), the building of the Dadu city was completed. By the 20th year of the Zhiyuan reign (1283), the internal buildings of the city were completed on the basic scale. The building of Dadu was carried out with the lake area near the Qionghua Island as the center, taking the central axis that ran across the central outer city gate as the reference to determine the axis for the "inner imperial city." Dadu during the Yuan dynasty also took the structure of the triple-section layout. The capital city is square-shaped. Each side measures 60 *li* (approx. 30 kilometers), accessed through 11 gates. The perimeter of the city walls is 28.6 kilometers. The perimeter of the inner imperial city measures 9 *li* plus 30 *bu* (roughly 5 kilometers), measuring 480 *bu* (pace, around 180 cm) along the east-west dimension, and 615 *bu* along the south-north dimension. The inner city is accessed through three gates in the south, and one gate each in the east, west and north. The inner imperial city borders the Taiye Pond on the west. Further west are the Grand Prosperity Palace in the south and Blessing Palace in the north. A brick wall was built to protect the inner imperial city, the Taiye Pond, Grand Prosperity Palace and Blessing Palace. The wall is known as Xiaoqiang Wall, or outer perimeter wall. The former capital city of the Jin dynasty coexisted with Dadu of the Yuan dynasty for a long time, with the former known as the southern city.³

During the Ming Dynasty, the rulers renovated and utilized remaining portions of Yuan Dadu. In the first year of Emperor Hongwu's reign (1368), General Xu Da took the city of Dadu, and then ordered Hua Yunlong, one of his commanders, to push the northern city wall 5 *li* (roughly 2.5 kilometers) to the south. The newly-set northern city wall was 4 *zhang* (each *zhang* is equal to 3.3 meters) high and 5

zhang wide on top. It is 1 *zhang* higher and 3 *zhang* wider than the city wall on the other three sides⁴ From the 4th year to the 12th year of the Hongwu reign (1371 - 1379), the government made use of the old inner palaces of the Yuan dynasty to build Prince Yan's Mansion (the residence for Prince of Yan).⁵ After Emperor Yongle secured his throne, he changed Beiping to Beijing, and started to cultivate the agricultural areas near Beijing. In the 4th year of the Yongle reign (1406), the Emperor declared in Nanjing that he would begin construction of Beijing the next May. He sent his ministers to Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Fujian and Shanxi provinces to get timber necessary for the construction. In May of the 7th year of the Yongle reign (1409), the Emperor decided to build a mausoleum at Changping near Beijing. In August of the 14th year of the Yongle reign (1416), the Emperor ordered construction of the West Palace in Beijing. He then immediately went south to Nanjing. In November, he gathered his ministers to plan the building project. In the 15th year of the Yongle reign (1417), the construction of Beijing was well underway. The Duke of Pingjiang, Chen Xuan, was in charge of canal transportation; the Marquis of Taining, Chen Gui, was in charge of Beijing's construction. In May, the Emperor returned to Beijing.⁶ In November of the 17th year of the Yongle reign (1419), the southern city wall of Beijing was expanded, from today's Chang'an Street to Zhengyang Gate in the south.⁷ In the autumn of the 18th year of the Yongle reign (1420), the Emperor summoned the crown prince to Beijing, declaring that as of the following year, the former capital would be renamed Nanjing, and that Beijing would be the new capital. In November, the emperor issued an imperial edict to order the move to the new capital. In December, the palaces in the suburban areas of Beijing together with the inner city, the sacrificial venues as well as some other buildings were completed: the Temple of Heaven;

³ Cf. Chen Gaohua: *Dadu in the Yuan Dynasty*, 1982, Beijing Publishing House. Yang Kuan: *Studies on System History of Chinese Ancient Capitals*, 1993, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House. In the article, the fact that the construction in the capital had been almost completed up to the twentieth year of the Yuan Dynasty is quoted from *Dadu in Yuan Dynasty*.

⁴ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 38, quoted from *Recorded History of Emperor Taizu's Reign in the Ming Dynasty*, General History of the Entire Land, Map and Annotations of Beijing during Emperor Hongwu's Reign. Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 604-605.

⁵ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 33. Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 604-605.

⁶ See *History of Ming Dynasty (History of Emperor Taizu, 1; Geography, 1; Biography of Chen Gui; Biography of Shi Kui; Biography of Gu Pu; Biography of Yu Qian; Biography of Liu Guan; Biography of Song Li; Biography of Jin Chun; Biography of Chai Che*.

⁷ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 38, quoted from *Recorded History of Emperor Chengzu's Reign in the Ming Dynasty*, Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 606

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the Sacrificial Hall of the Altar of Harvest; the Altar of Mountains and Rivers; the Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Imperial Grandson's Palace in the southeast, and the Mansions for Ten Princes outside the Gate of Eastern Peace.⁸ However, the city's defensive structures were not completed. From the first year to the 4th year of Emperor Zhongtong's reign (1436-1439), construction projects for the inner city wall's towers, moat, and bridge gates were gradually completed.⁹ In the 32nd year of Emperor Jiajing's reign (1553), the outer city was built to the south of the inner city.¹⁰ Hence the remnants of the city wall of Jin's Zhongdu were demolished. In the first year of Emperor Shunzhi's reign (1644), the ruler of Qing entered Beijing and continued the policy of the Ming dynasty in terms of city and palace construction; therefore, the basic layout of the city remained unchanged.

Beijing during the Ming and Qing dynasties also adopted the system of triple sections, namely the arrangement proceeding from the inner part to the outer part: the imperial palace, the imperial city, and the inner city. There was also an outer city to the south of the inner city, with a common north-south running central axis shared by all the three sections. Archaeological studies and excavations prove that the Ming and Qing dynasties continued and developed Beijing's central axis of the Yuan Dadu, and also continued and developed the streets and *hutong* (bystreets) system and the residential scheme. The positions of the eastern and western city walls of the Forbidden City overlapped those of the southern part of the eastern and western city walls of the Yuan imperial city of Dadu. The eastern and western city walls of the inner city of Beijing overlapped those of Yuan Dadu.¹¹

Formative factors for the setting of the Forbidden City

⁸ Recorded History of Emperor Taizu's Reign in the Ming Dynasty, December of the 18th year of Emperor Yongle's reign.

⁹ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 38, quoted from *Recorded History of Emperor Yingzong's Reign in the Ming Dynasty*, Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 607.

¹⁰ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 38, quoted from *Recorded History of Emperor Shizong's Reign in the Ming Dynasty*, Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p. 609.

¹¹ Cf. Xu Pingfang: "Beijing City Planning in Ancient Time", speech manuscript in April 1980, published in Vol.1 of *Studies on Environment Changes*, 1984, Marine Publishing House.

First, the overall structure and form of Beijing during the Ming and Qing dynasties is the backbone framework of the Forbidden City's setting. Beijing was built with excellent planning; the fact is that "the construction of Beijing was a comprehensive arrangement shows the great traditional approaches of Chinese architecture and great intelligence and courage in planning the capital".¹² The imperial city served as the center of Beijing, while the center of the imperial city was the Forbidden City; west and north of the city were West Garden and Prospect Hill. In the south, the Imperial Ancestral Temple and Altar to the Gods of Earth and Grain were located. Within the area covering 7 square kilometers, almost all of the important building complexes clustered together. Around the imperial city, using the chessboard design with right angles, streets separated the vast area of the inner city into rectangular smaller areas with residential quarters and commercial blocks along the main traffic routes. This kind of spatial utilization preserved China's ancient rules for feudal capital cities and reflected a focus on the traditional lifestyle in urban areas of the ancient agricultural society with a history of over two thousand years.

The important buildings in Beijing were basically arranged along the central axis, which ran through the city for 7.5 kilometers. The Forbidden City was located in the middle of this central axis. This section of the axis housed the principal buildings in the city, with the most magnificent designs and the greatest and most impressive scale. These buildings dominated the layout of the entire city. As to the height of the buildings, those along the central axis moving from south to north were: city tower of the Gate of Eternal Stability, 26 meters; arrow tower of Zhengyang Gate, 38 meters; city tower of Zhengyang Gate, 42 meters; city tower of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, 34.14 meters; the Hall of Supreme Harmony, 35.05 meters; Ten Thousand Spring Pavilion of Prospect Hill, 62 meters; Drum Tower, 45.14 meters; Clock Tower, 46.96 meters. To the east and west of the central axis, the highest buildings included the Hall of Praying for Harvest in the Temple of Heaven, 42.16 meters; White Stupa in Beihai, 67 meters; White Stupa at Miaoying Temple, 52.37 meters.¹³ However, the streets and the buildings off the central axis were built in strict accordance with the overall scheme, spread out in units of courtyards,

¹² Liang Sicheng: "Beijing: Unprecedented Masterpiece of Capital Planning", see Vol.5 of *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng*, p.101.

¹³ Cf. Dong Guangqi: "Thinking on Beijing Planning Strategy", 1988. Cited from Wang Jun: *City Records*, Joint Publishing Company, 2003, p.146.

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with most of the buildings not higher than 8 meters. Therefore, against the city background featuring uniformity, width, symmetry and clarity, the Forbidden City was foremost as the core. These are the spatial characteristics of the setting of the Forbidden City.

Second, although the streets, lanes, *hutongs* and quadrangle dwellings in Beijing contrasted sharply with the Forbidden City, all of them reflected order and harmony under the feudal system. Therefore, these are also formative factors for the setting of the Forbidden City. The streets, lanes, *hutongs* and quadrangle dwellings in Beijing were laid out according to the plan established during the construction of Dadu during the Yuan dynasty and hence are of historical value. In the Yuan capital, Dadu, the main traffic routes were linked to city gates, and the areas between these routes were divided into rectangular areas with *hutongs* along parallel east-west lines with equal distance between units. Residential areas were located in these units. Archaeological studies and excavations show that there had been 22 *hutong* units from Dongzhi Gate to Chaoyang Gate (namely from Chongren Gate to Qihua Gate). "From this we can see that the streets in the inner city of Beijing, namely those to the north of East and West Chang'an Street, had basically inherited the tradition of streets of Yuan Dadu... The distance between *hutongs* was 50 paces, roughly 77 meters, equal to the size of the triple-section courtyard of quadrangle dwelling."¹⁴ After the completion of the basic construction of Dadu during the Yuan dynasty, Emperor Shizu promulgated the rules for city dwellings in the old Jin capital city area: "In February of the 22nd year of the Zhiyuan reign, for those who move to the capital from the old city, wealthy people and officials shall be given the priority, observing the rule that eight *mu*'s equals one *fen*. For those who possess an estate larger than eight *mu* or unable to build houses, they shall not continue to occupy the estate, which shall be distributed to other people as dwellings."¹⁵ During the Yuan dynasty, residents chose the quadrangle form for their houses. This form was well adapted to the natural environment of the Beijing area, backed up against the northern wind and facing the warm sunshine to achieve comfort and serenity. The city road and residential system from the Yuan dynasty to the Qing dynasty "showed definite divisions in terms of location and size... As a result, the major traffic naturally converged to the main routes, without

heading toward the narrow *hutongs* so people there could enjoy serenity in their living quarters."¹⁶ Although from the Yuan dynasty to the Qing dynasty, the residences and the owners suffered the vicissitudes of life, the dwellings were preserved as the model of city planning and residential architecture. They also recorded numerous historical figures, events and anecdotes with rich implications.

Third, the ancestors' sustained development and utilization of the landscape in the Beijing area provided the foundation for the setting of the Forbidden City and the survival of the capital and its people. The conservation and development of water resources in Beijing also contributed to the unique city gardens, which became the basis for the beautiful environment of the area northwest to the Forbidden City. In the Jin dynasty, water from the Gaoliang River sustained the water resources in the downstream lake to make possible the waterside scenery of the Daning Palace. In the Yuan dynasty, water from Jade Spring Hill was conducted to the Taiye Pond to form the imperial water system. This special water channel was called the River of Golden Water. At the same time, water was conducted from Baifu Spring over 30 kilometers to the northwest of Dadu and other springs at the foot of Western Hills into the Wengshan Lake to be taken into Dadu from the north of Heyi Gate. After this hydraulic engineering was completed, the canal transport ships could sail to Jishuitan Lake inside Dadu. The Ming Dynasty rulers combined the Wengshan Lake and the Northwestern springs together, and used them to set up a 52-meter-wide perimeter city moat around the Forbidden City. They further expanded the Xiyuan (western garden) and opened Nanhai (South Lake). The inner Gold Water River conducted to the Forbidden City played an important role in protecting the Forbidden City. "This river is not meant for landscaping with fish and water plants, nor for gardening design to waste material. The real purpose was to protect the city against accidents, so the water in the moat is reliable. In the fourth year of the Tianqi reign, the central government offices caught fire, and in the sixth year of the Tianqi reign, the west wing of the Hall of Military Glory also caught fire due to the paint, yet the fires on both occasions were extinguished with water from the moat. When imperial halls were being built, the water needed to mix mortar was also taken from the moat ... Another example occurred in the Tianqi reign, the Huiluan Palace and the No. 1 Hall caught fire twice and could not have been

¹⁴ Xu Pingfang: "Beijing City Planning in Ancient Time", speech manuscript in April 1980, published in Vol.1 of *Studies on Environmental Changes*, 1984, Marine Publishing House.

¹⁵ Vol. 13 of *History of Yuan Dynasty: Recorded History of Emperor Shizu*.

¹⁶ Liang Sicheng: "Beijing: Unprecedented Masterpiece of Capital Planning", see Vol.5 of *Complete Works of Liang Sicheng*, p.108.

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saved with only water from wells"¹⁷. During the Ming dynasty, orders were given to build a hill to the north of the Forbidden City on the site of the Pavilion of Extending Spring, part of the Rear Palace during the Yuan dynasty. The artificial hill was named Wansui (Longevity) Hill. The five peaks of the hill were covered with vegetation and were home to cranes and deer. The construction work to the north of the hill was centered on North Orchard around Shouhuang Hall with abundant peonies. During the Qing dynasty, priority was given to the construction of gardens and western suburbs. In the 15th year of the Qianlong reign (1750), Wengshan Lake was developed and expanded toward the east and west; "its perimeter and depth became twice those of the old one"¹⁸. It was renamed Kunming Lake--the earliest artificial reservoir in Beijing, which further guaranteed the water supply for Beijing and the Forbidden City and made possible the scenic environment for waterside gardens in the Western Garden of the Forbidden City.¹⁹

Fourth, the numerous cultural and historical relics in Beijing are additional key factors for the setting of the Forbidden City; they together with the Forbidden City are the principal co-transmitters of Chinese imperial culture. These include the following examples: the Taiye Pond in the West Garden; the Taihu Rocks of Genyue brought north by the Jin during the Southern Song dynasty; the Yingzhou Island (Round City) first built during the Yuan dynasty; the White Stupa of Dashengshou Wan'an Temple in the western inner city; the Confucius Temple and Imperial Academy in the northern inner city, etc. These buildings are historical relics from the Jin and Yuan dynasties, and bear direct

witness to the long history of Beijing as the imperial capital. Other examples include the Imperial Ancestral Temple and the Altar to the Gods of Earth and Grain to the east and west respectively of the southern Forbidden City inside the imperial city; the Temple of Heaven and Temple of Agriculture in the south of inner city; the Temple of Earth in the north and the Temple of the Sun in the east as well as Temple of Moon in the west. Altars of the Heavenly Gods are arranged around the Forbidden City in accordance with tradition: The Seasons Palace in the northwest (offering sacrifice to the Rain God), Xuanren Temple in the northeast (offering sacrifice to the Wind God), Ninghe Temple in the east (offering sacrifice to the Cloud God) and Zhaoxian Temple in the west (offering sacrifice to the Thunder God) etc. They are direct reflections of the ritual system and sacrificial activities promulgated by the feudal dynasties. Residences of princes, dukes, Mandarin officials and their sons located in the inner city and Beijing were shown in 38 locations in the city map made during Qianlong's reign. The owners of these official residences were all kin of the royal family. Even when located in the civilian areas, these residences still adhered to the ritual and hierarchical requirements of the royal court, with spaces for reception, rest, sacrifice and dwelling. They formed the intermediate level between the Forbidden City and the residences of the common people. Distributed in both inner and outer Beijing were storehouses and workshops built during the Ming dynasty. Although the original sites changed purposes, they still exist in the names of streets and lanes, such as Sea Transport Storehouse, Southern New Storehouse, Rice Storehouse, which were relics of canal transport dating back to the Ming and even the Yuan dynasty. Building materials were stored and produced during the early Ming dynasty at Glazed Tile Workshop, Black Kiln Factory, Square Brick Workshop, Large Wood Storehouse, etc. They had witnessed the greatness of the engineering scale and the closely-knit implementation of the building plan for the Forbidden City during the Ming dynasty.

Changes of setting for the Forbidden City

Since the Qing Dynasty was overthrown in 1911, Beijing has experienced tremendous changes. The setting for the Forbidden City has also changed greatly.

First, the population of Beijing has greatly increased; this has led to heavy pressure for land use. The population of Beijing in ancient times was always relatively stable. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the population decreased, and during the period of Republic of China, it increased again but it was just little more than the population of Dadu during

¹⁷ Vol. 17 of *Zhuo Zhong Zhi*, written by Liu Ruoyu (Ming dynasty). Photocopy edition in the series by Haishanxianguan (Celestial Hall of Mountain and Sea) Press, p.417.

¹⁸ Studies on Old Anecdotes, 38, quoted from Recorded History of Wanshou Hill and Kunming Lake Built under Imperial Orders. Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p.1392.

¹⁹ Exploring water resources in Beijing during the Jin and Yuan dynasties, cf. Hou Renzhi: "Two Important Affairs that Laboring People Have Changed Geographic Environment in Beijing for Eight Hundred Years", "The Earliest Reservoir - Kunming Lake" in *Collection of Fragrant Steps*, 1981, Beijing Publishing House. Hou Renzhi: "Water Resources Problem during the Beijing's Development", *Theory and Practice of Historical Geography*. Shanghai People's Publication House, 1979. Xu Pingfang: "Exploration and Excavation of Yuan's Dadu", *Theses on Historical Archeology in China*. Taipei: Asian Culture Company, 1995.

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the Yuan dynasty. In the seventh year of Emperor Taihe's reign during the Jin dynasty (1207), the population in the urban area of Zhongdu was 400,000 and the population density on average was 18,000 per square kilometer. In the fourth year of Emperor Taiding's reign during the Yuan dynasty (1327), the population was 389,000 in the old city of the capital and 547,000 in the new city; population density was 18,000 per square kilometer in the old city and 10,900 in the new city. In the sixth year of Emperor Wanli's reign during the Ming Dynasty (1578), the population was 550,000 in the inner city of Beijing and 290,000 in the outer city; population density was 15,000 per square kilometer in the inner city and 11,400 in the outer city. In the eighth year of Emperor Guangxu's reign (1882), the population was 452,000 in the inner city and 287,000 in the outer city; population density was 12,300 per square kilometer in the inner city and 11,300 in the outer city. In 1935, there were 693,000 people in the inner city of Beijing and 422,000 in the outer city; population density was 18,900 per square kilometer in the inner city and 16,600 in the outer city.²⁰ People in ancient times lacked a high standard of living, so land in the city was ample. At the beginning of Emperor Hongwu's reign during the Ming dynasty, the northern area of the Yuan Dadu was restricted in order to guard against remnant military forces of the Yuan, but the residents in the north area were few anyway. The Inner yards of the Ming dynasty occupied a great deal of land. For instance, to the east of the middle part of the Eastern Imperial City Root Street is today's Liangguochang Hutong, which during the Ming dynasty used to be the fruit preservation yard for fruits produced from trees on the grounds of the imperial mausoleums. "One eunuch official in charge of guarding the Tianshou Mountain was responsible for the maintenance of 12 mausoleums and paid annual tribute with goldthread, tea, walnuts, hazelnuts, and chestnuts, etc. Fruits produced from each mausoleum area were preserved in Beijing"²¹. During the reign of Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing dynasty, the space was still available for fruit preservation until being designated for other use as shown on the map made in the 15th year of the Qianlong reign.²² The People's Republic

of China designated Beijing as the capital, and the population of Beijing increased rapidly--by three times in 1956 compared with that in 1949; in 2001, the population density in urbanized areas of Beijing reached 14,694 people per square kilometer.²³ The population in the old city area (inner and outer city of the Ming and Qing dynasties) reached 1.75 million by 1990.²⁴ Thus, the problem of insufficient urban land is apparent.

Second, fundamental changes in society and the nature of city itself has transformed the city order. The Qing dynasty inherited architectural achievements of Beijing from the Ming dynasty. However, when the Manchus entered the Shanhai pass of the Great Wall, the Qing dynasty implemented an ethnic discrimination policy relocating Han people from the inner to the outer city and Manchus taking over the inner city. But the Inner Imperial City changed its "forbidden" characteristic. "It was forbidden for ordinary people to enter the Inner Imperial City during the Ming dynasty. But in the Qing dynasty, the areas among the Gate of Eastern Peace, the Gate of Western Peace and the Gate of Earthly Peace, with the exception of the Forbidden City, were open to vehicles and citizens. This practice accorded with the principle 'the court in the front and the market in the back'"²⁵. After the feudal system was overthrown, Beijing became a national political center for the time being, but no large-scale construction was undertaken. The presidential residence and the state council of the Beiyang Government occupied the prince regent's residence and Jilingyou to the west of Zhongnanhai and the Pavilion of Purple Light. The Forbidden City, gardens and temples were protected. New China chose Beijing as the capital and decided on constructing a political center in the old city. However, in fact, both the central government and Beijing municipal government adopted a scattered layout. At first, large houses of good quality and with low occupancy were used to handle official business and for official residences. The central government was expanded in the old location of Zhongnanhai. Most of the princes' residences, offices and grand-scale temples and quadrangle-dwellings were

²⁰Han Guanghui: "On Continuity and Difference of Geographic Distribution of Population During Historical Periods – Taking Beijing Area in the Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties and Period of Republic of China as Examples" in Vol. 4 of *Studies on Environment Changes*, 1993.

²¹ Zhu Yixin (Qing dynasty). *History of Neighborhood and Lanes in the Capital* (Volume 1), quoted from *Wu Shi*, Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p.79.

²² Hou Renzhi: Beijing City Map in the Ming and Qing Dynasties from "Beijing City Map during the Period of Emperor

Yongzheng's Reign in the Qing Dynasty' Housed in Britain National Library": Adding and Correcting "Collection of Beijing Historical Maps" in History and Geography Committee of Chinese Geography Association, Vol.9 of *Historical Geography*.

²³ Cf. Wang Jun, *History of Cities*, Joint Publishing Company, p.213, p.12.

²⁴ Cf. Overall City Planning in Beijing from 1991 to 2010.

²⁵ *Studies on Old Anecdotes*, 39. Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p.612.

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occupied and transformed.²⁶ In order to improve transportation flow in the inner city, imperial walls were continuously dismantled from 1911 to 1927.²⁷ Due to very complicated causes, inner and outer walls and city wall towers in Beijing built in the Ming and Qing dynasties were dismantled from 1950s to 1969 except four city wall towers and arrow towers, such as Zhengyang Gate, Desheng Gate and southeast corner of outer city.²⁸ The layout of the historical and cultural environment was no longer complete and lacked many its old symbols.

Third, Western architectural forms and new architectural materials were used to replace the Chinese traditional architectural forms and materials. Concrete building was a more effective method to resolve limited space for conducting official business and providing residences; so, the concept of developing height completely replaced the traditional courtyard layout. Height and dimension became the new aesthetic trend, and high-risers rapidly sprang up throughout Beijing. The open-space characteristics of Beijing were only preserved in the Ming and Qing imperial areas. .

Fourth, social advances and economic development promoted the city's prosperity and brought great changes for the way of life in Beijing. The capital of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties has become a great consumer city and commercial center. The characteristic of the city's old economy was development through gathering national commodities and was centered on imperial service, creating special handicraft industries of Beijing characterized by such crafts as cloisonné, jade, stone and ivory carving, palace food and cloth-making for feudal government officials.²⁹ The commercial areas center on such blocks as "gathering areas of the capital's trading were limited to Zhengyang Gate street, Di'an Gate Street, the streets outside the Gates of Eastern and Western Peace, Dongsì and Xisi Pailou, Dongdan and Xidan Pailou, vegetable market and flower market in outer city"³⁰. Traditional industry and commercial industry were not of great scale but were labor intensive, and many of them adopted the operation of "the workshop being

just behind the store". Residents worked and lived in the city blocks. However, the development of new logistics and industry and commerce promoted rapid growth of a great commercial center. The financial center and expectations of rapid development of the overall economy have reinforced super-high and super-huge buildings in the old city, the number and scale being unprecedented. The separation of working and living areas has rendered city facilities serving the new economic development insufficient. The buildings, wide and straight roads and advanced infrastructures have devoured traditional courtyards and *hutongs*. In addition, cars proliferating without restriction now block streets and lanes so that it's difficult to drive, which in turn causes the building of ever more roads. Standing on the third platform of the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City, the view is of high buildings constituting the skyline of the Forbidden City.

With the rapid economic development since the reform and opening drive in China, it's heartbreaking to see the great changes in the setting of the Forbidden City.

Protection of the setting of the Forbidden City

Looking back on the protection effort for the setting of the Forbidden City, it has a tortuous course for over 70 years, during which the awareness of protecting Chinese culture heritage has been formed, developed and deepened, and gradually accepted by the Chinese people.

The first academic group doing research on Chinese ancient architecture was the Chinese Construction Society, founded in 1929. They conducted the first modern protection effort for ancient architecture on a corner tower of the Forbidden City. The idea of protecting historic sites was approved by the government. In 1935, the government founded the Committee of Cultural Relics Renovation in the Old Capital, renovating a group of ancient buildings in Beijing. On January 16th, 1949, before the army of CCP attacked Beijing, the military commission of the CCP issued an instructive telegram on protecting cultural sites in ancient Beijing: "For this attack, we must make a precise plan, striving not to destroy the Forbidden City, universities or other famous cultural and historic sites of great value."³¹ Since 1961, China has issued and modified the Law of Cultural Relics Protection twice and ancient architecture is given great protection. Therefore, the Forbidden City and

²⁶ Cf. Wang Jun, *History of Cities*, p.125, p.184.

²⁷ Chen Zongfan. *Studies on Yan's Capital*. Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, 1991, p.30.

²⁸ Cf. Wang Jun, *History of Cities*, p.314 – 316.

²⁹ Cf. Wang Ling. "On Several Features of Ancient Economy in Beijing", *History of Beijing* (Vol. 1), p.221.

³⁰ Zhenjun (Qing dynasty). *Accidental Encounters in the Wild World* (Vol. 10), Punctuated editions by Beijing Ancient Books Publishing House, p.216.

³¹ Quoted from Beijing Municipal Planning Committee's website: Important Events in City Planning and Development in Beijing.

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other ancient buildings and gardens constituting its setting have been protected.

It is more difficult to protect the general city aspects of the setting for the Forbidden City. Chinese scholars represented by Liang Sicheng put forward a complete plan of protecting Beijing, but his protection idea and plan was not approved by most people and not adopted by the government. “The Key Points of the Planning Draft on Renovating and Expanding Beijing” brought forward by the Beijing government in 1953 and “The Primary Scheme of Overall Construction Planning for Beijing” in 1957 prescribed transforming the “consumption” city into a “production” city, breaking the limitations and restrictions of old situation and completely reforming the planning frame in the old city.³² At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of 1980s, with the end of the Culture Revolution and the implementation of a policy centering on economic construction, China grasped the opportunity for development, and aroused the awareness of the need to protect the city heritage. In 1982, the State Council declared that Beijing was one of the first famous cities with a brilliant history and culture and gave support in advocating the protection of the city’s cultural heritage. Protecting the famous historical and cultural city became an important issue. “The Overall City Plan of Beijing” developed in 1993 includes the protection and development of famous historical and cultural sites and proposed “protecting and developing the layout, style and features of the ancient city,” designating 25 areas, such as South and North Long Streets and the Street of Imperial College, as historical and cultural protection areas. (Now they have been expanded to 40 areas.) “The Overall City Plan of Beijing 2004-2020” revised in 2004 was approved by the State Council in January 2005; its seventh chapter deals with the protection of famous historical and cultural sites. The following is an excerpt from the document:

“Article 60. The principle for the protection of the famous historical and cultural city:

Beijing is a famous ancient capital and historical and cultural city in the world. We should be fully aware of the historic and international significance of protecting the famous historical and cultural city. We should attach importance to the protection of precious cultural and historical relics during every historical period, excellent buildings in contemporary and modern history, historical and cultural protection areas, the entirety of old city, traditional style, scenic spots and their environments in

Beijing, inheriting and developing outstanding historical and cultural tradition of Beijing.

(1) Persisting in carrying on and fulfilling the principle of scientific development outlook, correctly deal with the relation between protection and development and strengthen the importance of the famous historical and cultural city.

(2) Adhering to the principle of overall protection, perfecting the protection system of historical and cultural resources and natural landscape resources in urban areas of the old city and attaching importance to the old city and persisting in its overall protection.

(3) Adhering to the human-oriented principle, actively exploring the organically updating method of gradual advance in a way of small scale. ... Dispersing the residents to avoid potential dangers for security. Planning the protection of historical and cultural resources as a whole to reshape the elegant spacious order of the old city.

(4) Adhering to the principle of active protection. Adjusting rationally the function of the old city, preventing one-sided pursuit of the target of economic development, strengthening cultural function and actively developing cultural factors and cultural tourism industry to enhance developing vigor, promoting cultural renaissance and sustaining development of the old city.

(5) Adhering to the principle of continuous improvement and innovation of protection mechanisms. Accelerating legal progress of protection of famous historical and cultural sites, adjusting and perfecting the mechanism and system of the protection and administration of the famous historical and cultural city.”

Article 61 prescribes key factors of implementing the overall protection of the old city in detail, including traditional styles and features along the 7.8 km-long axis; unique city layout constituted by four-section city outlines; overall protection of the Imperial City, developing protection and renovation in accordance with “The Protection Planning of Imperial City of Beijing”; historical waters of river and lake; the skeleton of chessboard-like road network and layout of streets, lanes and *hutongs*; traditional architecture of *hutong*-- quadrangle-dwellings; restricting the height of buildings to maintain pleasant and wide spacious forms; important scenic lines and symmetric scenes of road; traditional architectural color and structure characteristics; *hutongs* and yards with ancient and famous trees.

³² Cf. Wang Jun, *History of Cities*, p.118, p.230.

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“Article 62. The protection and renovation of the old city

(1) Planning the protection of the old city, adjustment and optimization of the central city and the development of the new city as a whole, rationally confirming function and capacity of the old city, eliminating city functions and industries not suitable to develop in the old city, encouraging to develop cultural causes and cultural tourism suitable for traditional spacious characteristics in the old city.

(2) Actively dispersing settlement of residents in the old city. ...

(3) Actively exploring rebuilding houses in danger which are suitable for protection and renovation of the old city, preventing dismantling and building in a great scale. ...

(4) Under the premise of maintaining network and dimension of traditional roads in the old city, making transportation policy and road network planning to construct and perfect a comprehensive transportation system suitable for protection and renovation of the old city.

(5) Under the premise of protecting the entire style and features of the old city and authentic historical relics, making technical standard and implementing methods of city infrastructure construction for the old city to actively explore the modes of city infrastructure construction suitable for protection and renovation of the old city.”³³

This is up to now the most complete statement made by the government on principle, target, guideline, policy and method of protecting famous historical and cultural of Beijing. The discussion lasting for half a century has reached its conclusion, but fulfilling the protection through practice still needs great effort. In July 2005, in the 29th World Heritage Committee of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Beijing government issued a defined buffer area of the Palace Museum—from the City Gate Tower of Zhengyang Gate to the south and the Second Ring Road on the north, totally covering 1,463 hectare. This measure will promote the long-term protection and purification of setting of the Forbidden City.

Definition and protective policies of setting for city cultural heritage

³³ Quoted from Beijing Municipal Planning Committee’s website: Overall City Planning in Beijing.

The examples of forming, changing and protecting the setting for Forbidden City lead us to define the setting for city cultural heritage:

What compose the setting for city cultural heritage are material objects and their historical and cultural connotations, which include landscape, mountains and rivers utilized in the course of city’s construction and buildings created during this course. All of them constitute the “memory” of the local history.

Material objects comprise the setting record and explain the shared culture; cultural heritage is completely the result of being part of the environment, and each factor in the setting is of importance thanks to cultural heritage. Therefore, cultural heritage and the setting depend on each other.

The formation and development of cultural heritage and its environment in the city is a historical course with a heritage of abundant diversity and historical continuity.

The city cultural heritage and its setting compose harmonious scenery in a specific area, namely, an aesthetic characteristic of a famous historical and cultural city. They make the scenery in this area distinctively different compared with other areas thanks to humanistic charms. Changing the scenery will eliminate the integrity of the cultural heritage and deprive the humanistic significance of cultural heritage of its material manifestation..

The risks for the city cultural heritage and its environment come from natural and artificial changes:

The Beijing district is likely to suffer earthquakes. Since its construction to the present, the Forbidden City has experienced 22 earthquakes, among which serious earthquakes occurred seven times, including twice in the Ming dynasty, four in the Qing dynasty and once in 1976.³⁴ Beijing district is short of water. In order to solve the problem of exhausted water resources, new water resources have been introduced many times since the founding of new China. The efforts made to struggle with natural disasters and the sustainable exploration of natural resources have given vitality to the city and changed the heritage and its setting to some extent. The most frequent changes come from artificial factors. The resources in the city are all

³⁴Jiang Boguang. “Earthquake Situation Experienced in Ancient Buildings of the Palace Museum and Countermeasures”, *Palace Museum Journal*, 1993, Issue 4.

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precious. Excessive development on the city's cultural heritage and its setting result in vying for limited space with historical achievements and lead to denial and crucial destruction of historical achievements.

We should adopt the following measures to protect the city's cultural heritage and its environment:

First, emphasize that the protection is a duty of the government, and a mechanism based on the government protection should be constructed.

Second, we should educate people from generation to generation about the importance of the city's cultural heritage and its environment through various means of law, regulation, publicity and training. They are witnesses of history, records of culture, achievements of our ancestors and the pride of our citizens. They can also exert unique function in modern society, which is likely to influence local or wider areas and even be of international significance.

Third, we should first evaluate the protective measure to confirm their protective effectiveness. The protected areas can be confirmed through the dependent relation between protected object and cultural heritage. The protective measures can be confirmed according to the characteristics of the protected object.

Fourth, we should adopt a sustainable development strategy and carry on "revival of the old city" under the premise of protection; seek paths to improve living conditions and to allow residents to live and work in peace and contentment in the city area composing cultural heritage and environment; and deny the wrong guideline of "rebuilding of the old city".

Finally, we should select proper measures and techniques to realize the target of protecting the setting. In the city area composing cultural heritage and setting, we should maintain reasonable population density; adjust industrial and economic structures; configure special city infrastructures; perfect city planning to maintain the traditional aesthetic characteristics indigenous to the city.

Abstract

From the mid 12th century, the capitals of the Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties were built on the same site as today's Beijing. For over 580 years, the increasing population in Beijing, on the one hand, thrives upon its historical achievements, but on the other causes continuous threats to the Capital's heritage and other significant historical features in the surrounding region.

In the Ming dynasty, the development of the Forbidden City and the Capital went in parallel at the same time. The palaces, altars, offices, storages, temples, houses and markets reflect the key political contents of feudal China. The cultural landscape and townscape of Beijing is the larger setting of the Forbidden City.

This paper argues that while the capital faces surmounting pressure in its development, the protection of the Forbidden City's setting should include the sustainable development of Beijing's cultural landscape, including the exploration of its cultural implications and maintenance of its architectural aesthetics and significance.