

The Search for a Vanishing *Beijing*

A Guide to China's Capital Through the Ages

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香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong
www.hkupress.org

Text © M. A. Aldrich 2006, 2008
First published in hardback 2006
Reprinted 2007

Paperback edition (with revisions) first published 2008

ISBN 978-962-209-777-3 (*Hardback*)
ISBN 978-962-209-939-5 (*Paperback*)

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Printed and bound by United League Graphic & Printing Co. Ltd. in Hong Kong, China

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NOTES ON USING THIS BOOK

Layout of the Chapters

The first three chapters are a general survey of Peking's urban design, traditional religion and history. I believe that these chapters will help deepen the reader's appreciation of the sights of the city while on the road.

Following Arlington and Lewisohn, the subsequent chapters introduce Old Peking by geographical section in relation to the long-vanished walls of the city. We begin at the heart of the city, Tian An Men Square, and gradually expand our travels from urban to rural Peking. I have not included a chapter on Peking's southern suburbs since this area was traditionally an imperial hunting ground with few buildings of historical importance.

Lastly, I have included chapters that broadly treat the topics of food, drink and Peking opera. Each of these subjects easily merits a book rather than a chapter. However, they are essential for a satisfying visit to the city.

Getting Around

Chapters 4 to 9 are written with the expectation that the reader will cover this ground on foot, with the advisory that these large blocks of territory can be tiring. Chapters 10 to 13 cover more territory than can be comfortably covered on one outing by foot. The reader can divide these sections and tackle them as separate walks. Alternatively, a bicycle would be very useful for seeing more in a shorter period of time. Finally, the sights in Chapters 14 to 21 are best visited by motorcar.

When you are searching for a particularly hard-to-find site, you should make polite inquiries with elderly folks in the neighborhood. The younger generation is unlikely to have the presence of mind to note historically significant places. Old timers are always the best bet for accurate directions.

Getting In

Many of the sights are on standard tourist itineraries. However, I have also included quite a few sights that are not open to the public. Here, you will have to use your ingenuity, sense of humor andchutzpah to get past any caretakers. Sometimes, these caretakers are as pleased as punch to have a visit from a curious foreigner. Other times, a polite request to take a look will provoke a reaction of unparalleled rudeness. Your experiences will simply be the result of the luck of the road. Obviously, Mandarin speakers and foreigners accompanied by Chinese friends might have better luck. In any event, simply be mindful that you are a guest of the country and do your best to convey your respect for Peking history and culture.

Romanization of the Chinese Language

English is not widely spoken in Peking. For this reason, I have endeavored to set out the English translation for each sight and street name along with the original name in Chinese characters and the *pin yin* romanization system officially used by the Chinese government. Where I feel it to be appropriate, I have sometimes included only the name in Chinese characters and *pin yin*.

To an English speaker, no romanization system for the Chinese language is satisfactory simply because the spoken Chinese language includes sounds not represented by the Roman alphabet. The *pin yin* system, which was invented in the 1950s and later made the official romanization method in the 1970s, reflects Russian influence in its use of letters not commonly used in English, such as “x,” “q” and “z.”

Contemporary usage in the mainland sometimes produces a long string of *pin yin* words linked together without spaces. When the string of words includes a jumble of x’s, z’s and q’s, the resulting phrase appears quite unpronounceable, let alone intimidating, to a non-Chinese speaker. I have usually dispensed with official practice and have inserted a space between each word written in *pin yin*.

Here is a list to help readers find the approximate sound of the *pin yin* lettering system. First, here are the unusual consonants

- Q as the “ch” in “chick”
- X an aspirated “sh” sound, between “ss” and “sh”
- Z as the “ts” in “its”
- C as the “ts” in “its” as an initial consonant
- Z as the “ds” in “suds”
- Zh as the “j” in “jiggle”

The rest of the consonants are as follows:

- B as the “b” in “bar”
- Ch as the “ch” in “cherry”
- D as the “d” in “dangle”
- F as the “f” in “fit”
- G as the “g” in “ghost”
- H as the “h” in “hot”
- J as the “j” in “jiggle”
- K as the “k” in “killer”
- L as the “l” in “lummox”
- M as the “m” in “mother”
- N as the “n” in “nun”
- P as the “p” in “pickled”
- R as an unrolled “r” in “rock and roll”
- Sh as the “sh” in “shiftless”
- T as the “t” in “tongue”
- W as the “w” in “wallop”
- Y as the “y” in “yank”

And now on to the vowels:

- A as the “a” in “bar”
- Ai as the “ai” in Ricky Ricardo’s “ai yai yai yai ai”
- Ao as the “ow” in “pow, right on the nose”
- E as the “e” in “her”
- Ei as the “ay” in “bay watch”
- I as the “ee” in “see unless preceded by the consonants c, ch, r, s, shi, z, or zh where it is pronounced like the “e” in “her”
- Ie as the “yeah” in “yeah, yeah, yeah”
- Iu as in saying the letters “e” and “o” real quick
- O as the “or” in “Lordy”
- Ou as the “o” in “So, what’s your story?”
- U as the “oo” in “you fool”
- Ua as the “wah” in “a guitar wah wah pedal”
- Ue as the “way” in “go away”
- Ui as the “way” as in “sway to the music”
- Uo as the “aw” in “aw, shucks, ma’am”

Here is a little riddle for graying hippies or rock fans to see if you have mastered the *pin yin* system

Hei, zhou, wei er yu gou ying we de gun yin you hen?

Hei, zhou, wei er yu gou ying we de gun yin you hen?

Gun ne shu er te mai o lei di bi ke si ai fen de he er we e ne ter man

Hei, zhou, wei er yu gou ying nao?

Hei zhou wei er yu gou ying nao?

Gun ne fen de mai o lei di en shu te er nao.

Hei zhou, wei er yu gou ying we de be lu si te fo ti fo

Hei zhou, wei er you gou ying we de be lu si tel fo ti fo

Gun ne shu er te mai qi ke bi ke si she bin run ning ruan

Hei zhou, wei er you gou ying nao?

Hei zhou, wei er you gou ying nao?

Ai ge si ai gun na gou tu mou xi ko tu bi fo li.

Personal and Dynastic Names

In Chinese names, a person's surname always precedes the personal name. Since I frequently refer to Chinese dynasties, here is a list, with corresponding years from the Gregorian calendar, for ease of reference.

Xia	2205–1766 B.C.
Shang	1766–1027 B.C.
Western Zhou	1027–770 B.C.
Eastern Zhou	770–256 B.C.
Warring States Period	403–221 B.C.
Qin (as a separate state)	473–221 B.C.
Qin (as unifier of China)	221–206 B.C.
Han	206 B.C.–221
Three Kingdoms Period	221–265
Chin	265–420
North – South dynasties	420–589
Sui	589–618
Tang	618–907
Five Dynasties	907–960
Song	960–1278
Liao (in N. China)	907–1120
Jin (in N. China)	1120–1234
Yuan (in N. China)	1234–1278
Yuan (in all China)	1278–1368

Ming	1368–1644
Qing	1644–1911
Republic of China	1911– present (since 1949 limited to the province of Taiwan)
People’s Republic of China	1949– present

I have used traditional romanization systems for proper names which are more commonly known, like Sun Yat Sen, Chiang Kai Shek and Tsingtao beer.

1

THE PLAN OF OLD PEKING

THE URBAN DESIGN OF OLD PEKING is based on ancient Chinese theories of cosmology. When the Ming emperor Yong Le (永乐) chose Peking as his capital in the early 1400s, he ordered the city to be rebuilt according to the principles of the *Zhou Li* (周礼), an ancient Confucian text that propounded universal principles for the construction of homes and villages. The *Zhou Li* is one of the earliest essays on *feng shui* (风水 or literally, wind and water), a cosmological architectural theory that explained how to construct buildings so that they do not conflict with supernatural forces. Some aspects of *feng shui* are simply common sense notions for ventilation, water supply and solar heating. Other principles emphasize symmetry, proportion, and balance.

Old Peking was built on the basis of an imaginary central axis running from the south to the north of the city. This axis passed through the major southern gate Yong Ding Men (永定门) along Qian Men Nei Avenue (前门内大街), through Zheng Yang Gate (正阳门) and across Tian An Men Square (天安门广场) on its way north through the Forbidden City. The emperor's throne in the Hall of Supreme Harmony (太和殿) sat astride the central axis, which carried on through the Gate of Military Prowess (神武门), the central pavilion in Coal Hill and on out through the Gate of Earthly Peace (地安门) and to the Drum and Bell Towers beyond. Perhaps for both meteorological and historical reasons, the north was symbolically the source of bad fortune. For this reason, an artificial hill was built behind the Forbidden City with soil dredged from the imperial moats and lakes. There was no northern gate along the central axis since it would give harmful forces access to the emperor. When sitting upon his throne, the emperor faced south and accordingly the courtyards as well as Tian An Men Square were situated to the south of imperial buildings.

The *Zhou Li* also advocated the architectural principle of symmetrically placing boxes within boxes. In the precise center of Peking were the walls enclosing the rectangular-shaped Forbidden City, which functioned as the office and residence of the Son of Heaven and a graphic demonstration of the power and prestige of the empire. The Forbidden City itself was divided between the southern half, where official ceremonies were conducted, and the northern half, which was the personal home of the emperor and his retinue.

Around the Forbidden City, there was another wall, imperfectly rectangular in shape enclosing the Imperial City. Here lived the imperial attendants as well as officials, both civil and military, required for the day-to-day running of the Forbidden City. The Imperial City also was the location for a vast number of storehouses for the supplies of the Forbidden City. The current names of certain streets recall their former use, such as the Wax Storehouse Alley or the Pen and Paper Alley. A portion of the southern wall of the Imperial City still survives immediately to the west of the Grand Hotel on Chang An East Avenue.

Around the Imperial City was constructed yet another wall for the Northern City, which was the area for princely mansions and prestigious temples. Nearby are the beautiful imperial lakes that were nearly always used for the exclusive pleasure of the emperor.

In 1645, the Qing court, motivated by concerns of security, issued a decree ordering all Han Chinese residents to leave the Northern City and resettle in the Southern City, which, in those days, was a large portion of land enclosed by a rectangular shaped wall adjacent to the Northern City. Originally meant as a residence for commoners and merchants, the Southern City was redeveloped as wealthy or important Chinese citizens were forced to locate new homes there.

Under the principles of the *Zhou Li*, the outer city also ought to have enclosed the Northern City in a concentric pattern. One Peking legend maintains eunuchs or corrupt officials misappropriated the funds allocated for the construction of such a wall. Hence, the wall was never properly completed but simply finished off by connecting to the southern most walls of the Northern City. In actual fact, Yong Le never intended to create another outer wall for Peking. As the city grew, merchants and others spilled out from the main walls. In the 1550s, Mongol depredations forced the Ming court to wall off the southern flank. The eastern, northern and southern suburbs were too sparsely populated to be worth the expense.

From the 19th century, foreigners referred to the Northern City as the “Tartar City.” “Tartar” is one of those maddeningly inaccurate terms that are applied helter skelter to nomadic groups east of the Urals. The word comes from *da dan* (鞑靼), a Han Chinese term for a subgroup of Mongols. Eight groups of Manchu

bannermen were posted in the neighborhoods of the Tartar City, each given the name of a color designed to offset the security risk posed by the other groups according to Taoist alchemy. The Southern City became the Chinese City, and one of the more lively areas in the old capital for entertainment and commerce since an imperial decree prohibited the construction of theatres and other establishments in the Tartar City that would lead the bannermen into soft living. By the end of the Qing, this racial segregation had fallen into disuse, though the terminology still stuck.

In keeping with the rites of the Zhou Li, the “right hand side facing the emperor” (namely, the east since the emperor always faced to the south during official functions) was an honored location while the “left hand side” was less respected. Given the Confucian emphasis upon rational persuasion over the rule of force, civilian officials used the honored eastern gates to enter the Forbidden City and stood in reverence to the emperor on the eastern side of courtyards. The less exalted western side was preserved for the military officials, which, in the views of Confucians, were a necessary but untutored evil.



The main courtyard in the Forbidden City

Before the 1980s, Old Peking was a capital city without a skyline. Chinese architecture did not favor tall buildings lest they interfere with the passage of spirits. Buildings in the Forbidden City and other royal mansions occasionally rose

to two stories, as did pagodas erected with careful verification of their *feng shui* impact. Foreign residents, who were first granted the right to take the air from the city walls during the 1860s, remarked that from that vantage, the entire city looked like a forest since all courtyard and roadside trees were taller than the buildings. Only the yellow tiles of the Forbidden City, a white Tibetan pagoda and the blue tiles at the Temple for the Annual Harvest rose above the trees. You can catch a vague glimpse of Peking's disappeared forest canopy by looking at the Chao Yang (朝阳) diplomatic district from one of the office buildings in the area. Here you can see a small patch of greenery rising over the embassies, certainly the only place near Old Peking that rekindles memories of this former view.

In their day, the city walls encircled the city, thirty feet thick and about forty feet tall with crenellated borders and magnificent gates. Photographs provide only the slightest glimpse of what must have been a majestic sight. At the end of each day, the gates were closed with considerable ceremony. Both Chinese and foreign residents of the city commented on the sense of security that came about once the gates were closed for the evening.

The emperors constructed altars dedicated for ceremonies to revere the elements of nature. These altars were positioned in relation to the central axis and symmetrically with the Forbidden City at the center. In the eastern suburbs was the Altar of the Sun, while its counterpart, the Altar of the Moon stood outside the western wall. To the north was the Altar of the Earth, while the most magnificent of all, the Altar of Heaven was to be found in the south of the city. Directly to the east of Tian An Men Gate was the official temple for sacrifices to imperial ancestors. To the west was the Altar of Grains and directly to its south in the Chinese City was the Altar of Agriculture. No other Chinese city contained such monuments in honor of the constituent components of Heaven. A trip taken across Old Peking immediately brought to mind mankind's place in relation to the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars and the earth.

Because Chinese architecture enshrines symmetry, Peking's main avenues ran north to south on each side of the central axis. Memorial arches or *pai lou* (牌楼) graced these avenues and gave them their names. A *pai lou* is a wooden or stone arch built over a street as a memorial to a noble citizen. Some arches were built in honor of nearby temples or altars. Others venerated "chaste widows" who refused to remarry and continued to perform rituals in memory of their husbands. Other arches were simply built as decoration, providing an elegant sense of location for people going about the city.

On the main thoroughfare to the east of the central axis was the Dong Dan (东单 or East Single Arch) and, slightly to the north of it, Dong Si (东四 or the East Four Arches). To the west and in perfect symmetry were, of course, Xi Dan

(西单 or West Single Arch) and Xi Si (西四 or the West Four Arches). Alas, these lovely structures could not accommodate the intrusion of modern traffic and disappeared in the 1950s, though their names linger indefinitely at their former sites.

In addition to the lakes of the imperial parks, moats surrounded the Forbidden City and the outer walls of the Chinese City. Within the city, sources of fresh water were important. Peking's water was traditionally brackish. Until the construction of the Mi Yun Reservoir in the 1950s, peddlers of sweet water roamed through the city streets hawking their precious wares. Neighborhoods developed around various fresh water springs, which might have been the origin of one of Peking's most distinctive landmarks. Peking's alleyways are called *hu tong* (胡同), a word possibly of Mongolian origin referring to a residential neighborhood centered around a well. Its precise origins are lost to us. The great British translator, Arthur Waley, tersely commented in a letter to his friend Osbert Sitwell: "Hu-t'ung is the transcription of a Mongol word, and has been in use in North Chinese since the fourteenth century. That is all that is known about it."¹

To the casual visitor to Peking on a four-day package, smog-choked six lane thoroughfares and traffic jams will be the predominant memory of trips about the city. Such an oversight is lamentable and can only be compared to going to London without stopping off in a pub. Or, even worse, spending a weekend in Macao without dining at Fernando's. The congested, confusing *hu tong* are the heart of Old Peking, where you can glimpse the entrance to gray courtyard homes with richly carved door ways, see old men taking out their birds (in cages or anchored to sticks) for an airing, watch a late night peddler wave a fan over coals roasting a spiced lamb kebab, or simply enjoy the pleasure of walking down a street that has graced the maps of Peking for more than a thousand years.

The city of Peking is almost alone in the honor of having *hu tong*. (They exist in Tianjin and Kai Feng as well.) Unfortunately, if municipal planners and real property developers have their way, the *hu tong* are likely to go the way of the *pai lou*, or the covered bridges of Vermont for that matter. Thousands of hectares have already been torn down and replaced with uninspiring chrome and glass behemoths that belittle the city's heritage.

Amidst the *hu tong* you will find the traditional homes of Old Peking, called courtyard houses (四合院 or *si he yuan*). Ideally a courtyard house was built on a north-south axis, if this could be accommodated by the location of the land. A main door (with an ever-present doorman in the more well-to-do homes) admits residents and visitors to a courtyard with a hall facing the gate. (Like the Forbidden City, the proper place for a courtyard to receive guests is to the south of the main hall.) The main hall usually is the main living quarters if the courtyard house is

a modest one. To the east and west are other rooms used for cooking, storage or bedrooms. The grander the courtyard house, the greater the number of courtyards. On each side of the first hall, there are passages (sometimes moon-shaped) that lead to another courtyard with a hall in front and side rooms to the east and west. Again, a third, a fourth or even a fifth courtyard might be found further back in the case of wealthy families.

In the courtyards grow local trees such as cypresses, willows, poplars, persimmons, oleanders and pomegranates. Glorious lilac bushes scent the air around man-made rockeries and grottoes, which were designed to achieve the highest aesthetic appeal by looking simply natural.

The Tartar City was the location for princely mansions (王府 or *wang fu*) for Manchu nobles. These mansions are built on the same principle as courtyard houses but on a grander scale, with artificial ponds, bridges, gardens, and pavilions. The main entrances are enormous red gates with brass door studs and wooden pillars, which can still be seen in some parts of Old Peking. The court allocated and confiscated these mansions as the fortunes of the resident officials ebbed and flowed.

In the 1950s and 1960s, courtyard houses and princely mansions were each parceled out among one or two dozen families who built new partitioned brick dwellings in the courtyards. Some have been turned over to research institutes or governmental agencies. Others are open to the public as museums. The most interesting are those that are private homes. Admittedly, it does take some pluck to sally forth into the backyards of unsuspecting Peking citizens. It is worth the effort to view the carvings of flowers, lions, false windows, clay pots containing fermenting cabbage or rice wine, auspicious signs on the walls amidst the jumble of bicycles, bird cages, flower pots, gate guardian pictures and tiled roofs. Some folks will respond with traditional Old Peking hospitality and offer you a cup of tea. Others might be, well, let's just say less charitable. Nevertheless it is always worth the gamble.

Buddhist (and Taoist) temples share a similar architectural design as the courtyard houses. Facing to the south, the temples will have a spirit screen to keep away malevolent spirits. (The retiring and dark nature of ghosts precluded them from making sudden sly turns. A screen to the south of the temple gate, usually an ornate work of art, prevents them from floating into the temple and causing mischief). A pair of stone lions guards the entrance way and two large poles flank the lions from which banners and lanterns were hung during festivals. The entrance usually leads to a hall with an effigy of the Maitreya Buddha, who, according to Mahayana tradition, represented the fifth and final incarnation of the Buddha, destined to arrive within the next 5,000 years. Guan Gong Di (关公

帝), represented in a mail outfit of the Han dynasty, stands guard in the first hall of a Taoist Temple. In the next courtyard, two square pavilions house a bronze bell and a wooden drum.

Next is the main hall, where the most significant images for the temple are kept. In Buddhist temples, it is the Sakyamuni Buddha in the center, and flanked on each side by Ananda and Kasyapa, his favorite disciples. Sometimes, in the sides of the main hall are statues of the 18 *lo han* (罗汉) or disciples of the Buddha. In Taoist temples, the main hall might house the Jade Emperor, a historical Taoist sage or another of the Taoist pantheon.

Beyond this main hall there is sometimes another courtyard dedicated to Guan Yin in the case of Buddhist temples, or other sages for a Taoist temple. Along the sides are additional shrines, libraries and study rooms. The courtyards contain enormous incense burners and the occasional rockery. If the temple also serves as a monastery, off to the back are the monk's quarters.

Unlike many residential buildings and shops, the temples were built with the intention that they would last for centuries and become local landmarks. The abbots of the temples hosted temple fairs, held every couple of weeks, in and around their temples, which became an integral part of Chinese life as merchants, entertainers and farmers congregated to sell their wares and swap gossip. Alas, this charming aspect of Old Peking lost ground after 1949 entirely, though you can catch a glimpse of the past at certain fairs held during the Chinese new year holidays.

Though far fewer than before 1949, Peking is a home for Buddhist pagodas (塔 or *ta*). These structures were not indigenous to China, but came from India with the sutras and the dharma. A pagoda generally served as a reliquary spot to mark the site of burial for a holy man. Most pagodas usually consist of five to seven stories while those erected under imperial decree have up to thirteen stories. Most are circular or octagonal in shape while some are built in the bottle shaped style of Tibet.

Another legend held that the city was based upon a schematic diagram of the legendary character No Cha (哪吒). He is a frequently mentioned hero in the annals of Chinese myths. Reputedly the son of Li Tian Wang (李天王), the so-called "pagoda-bearer" and one of the heavenly four gods of Taoism, No Cha was born with a large gold ring clutched in his right fist. He used the ring to right his enemies, such as the Dragon King when he was intent upon flooding. He also had magical powers to increase the size of his magical spear, which produced a set of fiery wheels, enabling him to travel far distances.



Pagoda in the Western Hills.

It is said that one of Yong Le's astrologers, a fellow named Liu Bai Wen (刘伯温), prepared a design for the construction of Old Peking on the basis of No Cha's body. The main entrance gate of Old Peking corresponded to No Cha's head while his feet were depicted by two gates along the northern wall of the Tartar City. The other gates, imperial residences and lakes represented other parts of No Cha's body.

The urban design of Peking lasted until the 1950s. For a while, a debate raged among city planners over the future appearance of the city. Liang Si Cheng (梁思成), son of the Qing reformer Liang Qi Chao (梁启超) and an architect who studied at the University of Pennsylvania, strongly argued that a separate city should be built near the Western Hills as the capital of New China. He tirelessly advocated that Peking should be left as an open-air architectural museum. He lost that fight.

The city authorities began by transforming Chang An Avenue into a highway ramming its way from the east to the west in an obvious rejection of traditional Chinese urban theory. Pagodas, *pai lou*, and grand ginkgoes gave way for a thoroughfare for political demonstrations.

Population growth also altered the face of Old Peking. In 1920, the population of Peking was about one million. Today, the city is home to 20 million people



The elegance of the past and the contrived modernity of the present.

and has grown to the size of Belgium. Fearful of American bomb attacks on Chinese factories, Mao ordered the decentralization of China's industry, resulting in factories springing up in Peking's residential districts. The spring dust, an age-old problem, was compounded by the constant presence of coal grit in the air. The beautiful azure skies of Peking's autumn were replaced by the yellow smog of the Shou Gang Steel Factory. The Western Hills, always a constant companion seen from the city, became a reclusive celebrity, only occasionally sighted by people downtown. City walls and gates were torn down in homage to the new feudalism of socialist modernity and the combustion engine.

In the 1980s, capitalist modernity made its way on the scene along with an intensified urbanization program. Gradually, golden arches moved into the vacuum left by memorial arches. The Dong An Market became Oriental Plaza, a sight more aptly called Occidental Hazard in light of its soul-less (but clean!) malls where the masses do their civic duty by being good consumers. Even such a reactionary as the Colonel from Kentucky stands guard before his many restaurants. Though the State's official histories venerate the memory of the Boxers, I think that they would be outraged about Peking becoming a citadel for a new breed of *er mao zi* and *san mao zi*² and probably disoriented by the disregard shown by the city's planners for age-old cosmological principles.

Be that as it may, we can spy some vestiges of the city's elegant past. If you know where to look.

12

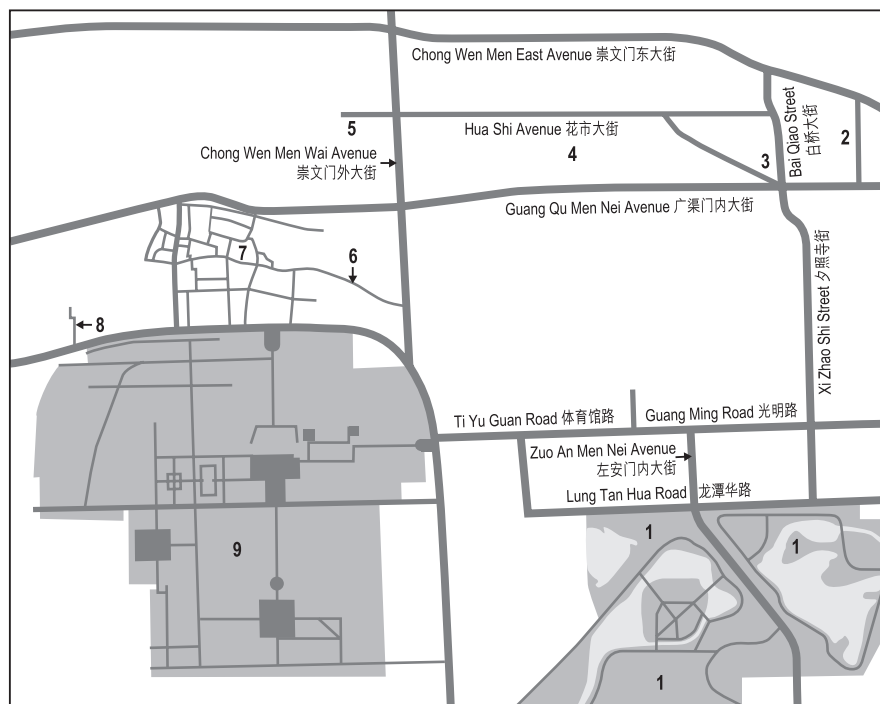
THE EASTERN CHINESE CITY

LET'S START THIS TOUR BY going to Dragon Pool Park (龙潭公园 or *long tan gong yuan*) in the southeast corner of the former Eastern Chinese city. Here you will find a beautifully landscaped park where the Peking authorities have revived lunar New Year temple fairs. In the middle of the park stands a single rectangular brick structure. This is all that remains of a memorial to Commander Yuan Chong Huan (袁崇焕) of the Ming dynasty. Commander Yuan fought the Manchus in the early 17th century but was eventually sabotaged through a combination of court intrigue and misinformation spread about him. In 1630, the Ming emperor Chong Zheng sentenced him to death by a 1,000 cuts on account of reports that he was on the verge of defecting to the enemy. Qian Long posthumously exonerated Yuan's name and had this temple built in his honor. On one side of the temple is a stele erected on Confucius' birthday in 1887. We will visit Commander Yuan's grave in a little while at a separate location in this part of the city.

From here, you turn to the north to Bai Qiao Nan Li (百桥南里) for the remains of the Temple of Prosperous Peace (隆安寺 or *long an si*), a Buddhist temple first built in 1454. The temple was once a thriving center of worship and a landmark for the surrounding neighborhoods. Now it functions as a school and the location of the Peking Youth Training School. It is well kept, though nowhere near possessing its former importance to the neighborhood.

By traveling to the west from the temple, you will come to No. 59 Middle School on Wo Fo Si Street (卧佛寺街). In the southeast corner of the schoolyard you will find the final resting spot of Commander Yuan. After Yuan had been torn to pieces, one of his footmen, a soldier named She, collected his commander's head from the execution grounds and secretly buried it in the courtyard of his

Eastern Chinese City



1. Dragon Pool Park (龙潭公园)
2. Temple of Prosperous Peace (隆安寺)
3. Memorial to Yuan Chong Huan (袁崇焕祠)
4. Former Location of Bamboo Wattle Street
5. Xi Hua Shi Mosque (西花市清真寺)
6. East Dawn Market Street (东晓市街)
7. Golden Terrace Study (金台书店)
8. Alley of True Loyalty (清忠胡同)
9. Altar of Heaven Park (天坛公园)

home. If She had been caught, he could only expect the same treatment as that doled out to Yuan. She vowed that he would protect the general's resting place and declared that all of his descendants would do likewise.

Interestingly enough, She's descendants *did* continue to guard the commander's grave from the late Ming to the present day. Qian Long issued a posthumous pardon and later, Chairman Mao declared the tomb to be a historic site. Descendants of She continue to look after the memorial, which underwent renovation in the summer of 2002.

Turning to East Flower Street (东花市大街 or *dong hua shi da jie*) and heading west, you will come to a neighborhood that once boasted of an interesting side street called the Bamboo Wattle Lane (竹篱笆 or *zhu li ba*). In imperial times, the people on this street raised pigeons but not as pets as Peking folks do these days. By artificially expanding the pigeon's crops, the residents of this street trained the birds to steal rice from the Imperial Granaries. It worked like this. When the pigeons were released from their cages in the early morning hours, they flew to the granaries and gorged themselves, usually on the best quality rice in storage. When they returned to their homes, their owners forced them to drink a solution that caused the birds to cough out the rice, which the owners then sold on a retail basis. It was said that with a flock of 100 pigeons, an entrepreneur could rake in about 50 pounds of high quality rice per day. Typically, the owners starved their pigeons during the night to ensure a good haul the following morning.

The owners were always concerned about the welfare of their unpaid workers. To make sure that the neighborhood cats could not get at their little gray money making machines, the pigeons were locked up in bamboo wattle cages, which in turn gave the street its name. Alas, the street has been erased from the face of Peking's maps, but it is a marvelous story to think about while looking at these nondescript modern monstrosities.

Just a little to the west of East Flower Street, there is a marvelous Ming Chinese style mosque (花市清真寺 or *hua shi qing zhen si*). The entrance is through a gate with two stylized minarets while the courtyards are built in traditional Chinese themes and decorated with Arabic quotations. The mosque is supposed to hold plaques given by Kang Xi and Qian Long, the latter praising Islam with the phrase "With Islam first, there is no second" (真一无二 or *zhen yi wu er*). I have encountered occasional reluctance of the gate keepers here in letting non-Muslims in for a look. At the very least, you might be able to get to the main courtyard for a quick glance.

The immediate vicinity of the Mosque has been utterly razed. I am afraid that in these environs there will be nothing more than charmless high risers bearing such stomach churning names as "Wealthy Estates." Billboard advertisements for these luxury homes usually depict very fashionable Chinese or Westerners embracing a life of high-end consumerism. It makes you wonder how these clowns stole *their* rice.

From here, you can head to the East Dawn Market Street (东晓市街 or *dong xiao shi jie*), a delightfully medieval part of the city that is worth a morning in directionless wandering. On the north side of the street you will come to the Golden Terrace Study (金台书院 or *jin tai shu yuan*), currently an elementary school but formerly a school for students from the capital and the provinces to

learn how to conduct imperial ceremonies. The current structure dates from 1750 and was renovated several times during Dao Guang's reign.

The Alley of True Loyalty (清忠胡同 or *qing zhong hu tong*) recalls to mind a temple that stood here in honor of the Song patriot Yue Fei, whom we have already tripped over in our travels in the Back Lakes district. Many shrines were built to his memory and the one down this lane, called the Temple of True Loyalty, was especially important in that it was both a patriotic and religious site as well as a meeting place for Peking's many guildhalls.

In the days before commercial hotels, travelers from the provinces stayed in regional guildhalls that were operated along the lines of the hostels in Dong Jiao Min Xiang for tribute missions. The guildhalls were set up on the basis of regional loyalties as a place in the capital where people up from the same province could speak their own dialect, eat their own cuisine and commiserate about the difficulties of life in Peking. The guildhalls tended to be fully occupied at the time of the Metropolitan Examinations when thousands of candidates took up residence before working their hearts out on the exam. Once these candidates left the city, a regional guildhall carried on its function as a gathering point for the merchants from their home province. In a parallel with the past, China's provincial governments these days build hotels that cater to their fellow locals.

In pre-1949 Peking, another kind of guildhall was built for merchants engaged in the same industry. These professional guilds set market prices and quality standards, produced a code of rules for transactions and supplied a forum for the resolution of professional disputes. These types of guilds ranged from lantern makers to coffin bearers to grain and oil salesmen. Some had their own halls, but a great many rented the facilities at the Temple of True Loyalty for seasonal meetings and banquets. Here they would also retain a Peking Opera troupe to put on a performance for their patron saint.

The most interesting guild to hold its meetings on these grounds was the Blind Men Guild, which consisted of sight-challenged entertainers. A foreign observer described a convention of blind people arriving at the temple, wielding their bamboo canes and hollering across the hall to find old friends. The guild boasted a management council of 48 positions, ranging from general manager to judge to inspector to witness to doorkeeper. The guild worshipped the San Guan (三官), or the Emperor of Heaven, the Emperor of Earth and the Emperor of Sea as their patron saints. Each year, the guild sent an annual report to the patron saints by burning a memorial before the altar. Punishments were meted out to those who broke the rules in the form of a prohibition against performing for a certain number of days.

These days, the alley is a scruffy scene without any tangible remains of the old temple. However, it still has the deep feeling of an unvarnished slice of Peking life.

Crossing the street to the south, you will next arrive at the northern entrance of the Altar of Heaven (天坛 or *tian tan*), which, in the view of many scholars, writers and travelers, excels all other temples in Peking. From the north to south exits is a walk of 6.5 kilometers. The grounds were built in 1420 with the southern border shaped like a square and the northern border curving to symbolize the meeting of heaven (the circle) and earth (the square). Surrounding the outer parameters are many delightful groves of cypress trees.

Heading south from the north entrance, you will first come across the Hall of Imperial Heaven (皇乾殿 or *huang qian dian*) where the tablets of Heaven and the Imperial Ancestors were enshrined. Before us, the entrance leads to a marble causeway linking the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest (祈年殿 or *qin nian dian*), the Imperial Heavenly Vault (皇穹宇 or *huang qiong yu*) and the three-terraced white marble Altar of Heaven (天坛 or *tian tan*).

The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest is a triple roofed circular building covered with exquisite blue tiles. It is built upon a white foundation with three terraces, the number which alludes to the Son of Heaven. On the very top of the Hall is a ball in fine gold leaf. Because of its majestic appearance, this hall is often mistakenly referred to as the Temple of Heaven. In imperial times, the building was actually less significant as it had nothing to do with the imperial ceremonies for Heaven. Rather the emperor came here in the spring to beseech Heaven to make sure that the emperor's subjects toiled diligently during the growing season.

The story goes that in 1889 a presumptuous centipede irritated Heaven by climbing up on the gold ball on the very top of the roof. In response to this pique, Heaven threw down a thunderbolt that incinerated the hall. (It was rebuilt over a period of ten years with Oregon pine, which was the closest wood that approximated the durable timbers first used in Yong Le's era). The accident was also interpreted to mean that Heaven was not likely to bless emperor Guang Xu, who had taken over the reigns of government that year.

Inside the Hall, there are four main central columns (symbolizing the four seasons) and twenty-four supporting pillars (representing the twelve months and the twelve hours of the traditional Chinese clock). The Hall has become a symbol of Peking as well as the entire country, and of no less significance, the registered trademark for Tsingtao beer.

Off to the east are a number of buildings used for the preparation of sacrifices. There are seven large stones here that are called meteorites and which gave occasion for the emperor to come here to pray for rain during droughts. Actually,

they are nothing more exotic than building materials left over from the original construction in 1420.

I came to this section of the park on a bitterly cold Christmas morning ten years ago. There was a group of elderly men, bundled up in bulky cotton blue clothing but otherwise energetic and in good spirits. Three gentlemen in the group were playing traditional string and percussion instruments. One by one, each of the old fellows took a turn singing an aria from Peking Opera. This select group of connoisseurs became animated with appreciation as each new singer delivered a song with an ever-increasing panache during the impromptu performance. The early morning winter light gave a vivid azure hue to the scene.

By retracing your steps to the marble causeway, you will arrive at the Hall of the Imperial Vault, a smaller circular temple with blue tiles. The hall was built in 1520 and restored in 1752. It is said that the circular wall produces an unusual acoustic effect: if you speak to the wall, someone on the other side of the courtyard can hear you as if he were standing next to you. I have no idea if this is true. On each trip here, I find that there are always too many rubes hollering at the wall and creating such a ruckus that I cannot hear my own thoughts, let alone the muttering of someone on the other side of the hall. You will notice a black circle running around the wall, exactly at the height of the average Peking citizen. I wonder if the purveyors of Vitalis have considered the potential of the China market.

Leaving the profane for the sacred, you return to the causeway and move further south. Here you come to the Altar of Heaven, the holy structure where each year, just before sunrise on the winter solstice, the emperor would pray to heaven. The altar, built in 1530, is made in three terraces of white marble representing heaven, earth and man. The circular balustrades are carved with cloud design and surround each of the terraces.

One day before the Winter Solstice, the emperor came to the altar from the Forbidden City in an imperial carriage pulled by an elephant. His route led him through the Gate of Heavenly Peace and then through the Front Gate and onto Qian Men Wai Avenue. For this occasion, all commoners were ordered to remain indoors on the pain of death, and the roadway was sprinkled with yellow dirt. Accompanying the emperor were over two thousand civilian and military officials. The emperor entered the compound through the northern-most of the western gates and went straight to the inner enclosure. He then withdrew to the Hall of Abstinence (斋宫 or *zhai gong*) located to the west of the altar and spent the night in fasting and meditation. Within the hall was a bronze statue of a Ming eunuch who, according to legend, had transformed his earthly form into a spirit so as to implore Heaven for blessings. The right index finger of the bronze statue

was placed in front of its mouth to symbolize the need for silence and concentration on the part of the emperor.

At one hour and forty-five minutes before sunrise, the emperor donned a robe of imperial purple with a black satin hat and satin boots. He then rode in a chariot to the southern stairway of the altar. After resting for several moments in a yellow tent, the emperor then took hold of a blue gem symbolizing Heaven, faced the north and walked to the middle terrace. Two officials, one who directed the proceedings and the other who called out the next step in the ceremony, preceded the emperor. The spirit tablet of the Supreme Lord (上帝 or *shang di*) and the deceased emperors were placed on the top tier of the altar. Food offerings such as beef, pork, mutton, venison, rabbit, rice, sorghum, chestnuts, beetroots, celery, bamboo shoots and cakes were placed behind the tablets. Upon two tables sat carcasses of bullocks, cleaned and dressed for the ceremony. Enormous braziers and lanterns lit up the scene in the darkness of the frosty morning.

The ceremony consisted of nine stages. At the beginning, the emperor respectfully invited the souls of the Supreme Lord and the deceased emperors to enter the spirit tablets and observe the ceremony. Once the spirits were installed in their tablet thrones, the emperor offered them samples of the highest quality silk and jade. Next he offered one of the bullocks.

At that point, eight groups of dancers with halberds and shields came forward to perform a martial dance. After that, the emperor prostrated himself in the center of the altar while his prayer was read out:

“The reigning Son of Heaven, subject (followed by Emperor’s own name, which was taboo even to his nearest relatives), ventures to lift up the following prayer”¹

The prayer consisted of a request for blessings along with a report on the state of the empire. Upon the conclusion of the prayer, dancers holding long feathers and flutes performed the “dance of the blessings of civil administration.” The emperor then offered the second bullock and the martial dance was repeated. At that point, the emperor ate a portion of the meat and drank some of the wine offered to the shades. Then, the Supreme Lord and the spirits of the deceased emperors were invited to return to the spirit world.

The last step consisted of the emperor supervising the burning of the offerings in the ovens built outside the altar. As the fires consumed the offerings, the spirits of these gifts were released to the realm of the Supreme Lord and the ancestors.

This ceremony, which traces its origins back to the Western Zhou, was performed for the very last time in 1899. The Boxer Rebellion and subsequent political instability prevented any subsequent ceremonies during the twilight years

of the Qing. In 1914, Yuan Shi Kai, in his attempt to create a dynasty, performed an abbreviated version of the ritual, though it was regarded as a paltry affair when compared to the pageantry of past ceremonies.

The Chinese were not the only nation to have an Altar of Heaven. Since Confucianism hugely influenced Vietnamese and Korean culture, the kings of these two countries constructed circular altars for Heaven in Hue and Seoul.

In his memoirs, John Blofeld describes a wintertime visit to the altar in the 1930s. His Chinese friends made a special effort to come to the altar before going on to a banquet south of the Zheng Yang Gate. While Blofeld had visited the altar many times before, he was surprised on this trip:

No imaginable effect of sunshine or storm could mar or enhance its perfection. Cloudless skies could not add to its mirror-like tranquility, nor gold-rimmed black and purple storm clouds vie with its awesome majesty. But snow! This feathery edifice of spotless white rising from a wide expanse of hard smooth snow, and framed by the tracery of snow-laden branches in the surrounding forest, seemed lost — pure whiteness lost in white purity!

I turned towards my friends, expecting their faces to reflect my disappointment. Instead, they were like men entranced. Motionless, oblivious now of the cold, they gazed in silence until at last the spell was broken by excited exclamations

"I do not understand. Why are you all so moved. I love the altar as you do, but today it is lost, swallowed in a white brilliance equal to its own."

"That," he answered, "is what we came to admire. Do you not see? Artists struggle all their lives to capture the infinite in works either great or small. At other times, the Altar reflects the infinite perfection, except that it cannot suggest the concept of infinite space. Now, void rising from void, it has become a true mirror of the universe's real form." [Turning to another of the group who did not share these Taoist conceptions], I asked him if he shared his friends' delight.

"Of course," was his unexpected answer. "It is superb. Last time I came here, the marble was solid. Now it has liquefied and overflows the park."

As for myself, I have two fond memories of my own of the altar. One year, on the morning of the Winter Solstice, I trundled to the Altar of Heaven before sunrise. As the sun slowly peeked over the horizon, the white marble reflected the pink and yellow rays cast from the eastern sky and the ink black to light blue hues from the west. On another visit during the full moon, the altar appeared to float in the air because of the reflections of the moonbeams.

19

THE MING TOMBS

THE MING TOMBS, OR THE Thirteen Tombs (十三陵 or *shi san ling*) as they are called in Chinese, lie about 50 kilometers to the north of Peking, off the highway that leads to the Great Wall at Badaling and the Ju Yong Pass. The Ming Tombs and the Great Wall are commonly shoehorned into a single trip for tour groups. This is a big mistake as the grandeur of both sights merits more time.

In the past, the Ming Tombs accommodated independent travelers who wished to linger around the more obscure tombs and reflect on the impermanence of imperial grandeur and political glory. These days, a new imperial edict has been issued. Aside from three of the tombs, apparatchiks have locked the other tumuli behind iron gates and wooden doors. If you happen upon a tomb that has not been locked, someone will quickly scurry forward and slam the gate in your face unless you can make it inside before them.

It is said that the villagers near each tomb are the descendants of people who were hired to care for the final resting places of the Ming imperial line. Perhaps this imbues a sense of inherited nobility that results in the villagers arrogantly waving away the curious or even blowing smoke from their foot long pipes at a stray visitor lacking the power of a Hino bus behind him. Once, poetic romantics could camp overnight next to the tombs. Now unannounced visitors have to apply for permits from the unnamed Kafkaesque “relevant authorities.”

Each imperial tomb of the Ming and Qing era were built on a similar design. A typical tomb consists of two portions: a front square-shaped courtyard symbolic of the earth, and a circular shaped tomb mound, representing heaven. The front courtyards contain above ground buildings used for the veneration of the emperor as well as the storage of various utensils and clothes for such ceremonies. The tomb mounds usually have a stele in the foreground and are surrounded by a

crenellated wall. A wall like a spirit screen marks the formal entranceway into the underground chambers that lead to three vaults. Many of the outer two vaults are carved with Buddhist motifs. The burial vault contains the coffins of the emperor and an empress or two. The tombs were constructed to replicate some of the structures from the Forbidden City as a symbolic bridge between life and death.

The founder of the Ming dynasty, Hong Wu, was buried in his capital, Nanjing. No one knows the final resting place of the second emperor, who was dethroned by his uncle Yong Le. Yong Le, of course, selected the site of his imperial tomb during the construction of the capital. As discussed in the chapter on the Western Suburbs, the unfortunate Jing Tai was buried in a forgotten and undistinguished vault designed in the style for nobles rather than emperors. In the valley containing the Ming Tombs, there are altogether the tombs of thirteen emperors as well as various empresses, concubines and their offspring.

Three Ming tombs are open to the public. These are Chang Ling (长陵), the resting place of Yong Le as well as the first tomb constructed in the valley; Ding Ling (定陵), the tomb of the emperor of Wan Li which has been excavated; and Zhao Ling (昭陵), the final resting place of emperor Long Qing, which has undergone extensive renovations. The other tombs are behind lock and key and dismissive puffs of smoke.

On the way to the Ming Tombs, you sample another bit of historical irony. Sitting amidst the car fumes of the super highway is a statute of Li Zi Cheng on horseback. Li was the one-eyed “bandit emperor” who invaded Peking and brought about the collapse of the House of Ming. His own Shun dynasty lasted for only 100 days before he had to retreat from the Qing army and residual Ming forces who allied themselves with their northern neighbors. The Communist orthodoxy had declared Li to be the leader of a people’s rebellion since some farmers flocked to his standard in the revolt against Ming corruption and inefficiency. As if deliberately flaunting the cause for the collapse of the Ming, Peking’s city planners have put his enormous statue next to the off ramp for the Ming Tombs.

Once you have left the highway, you come to a marble *pai lou* built in 1540, which can be seen from some distance away. The marble has been carved to replicate timber roofing, and the columns are decorated with three dimensional lions and serpents. Further behind is the Great Red Gate (大红门 or *da hong men*), which is the official entrance into the necropolis. The valley has been beautifully landscaped in contrast to early 20th century photographs showing a dust-laden barren valley. The central gate was reserved for the processions carrying deceased emperors while living emperors entered through the right-hand side. All officials had to dismount at this gate and carry on by foot, which surely intensified the sense of power and grandeur of the deceased emperors.

Next, you come to the stele pavilion, with two roofs and four doors. The stele is inscribed with Yong Le's name and was built in 1425, but not erected until 1436. On the back is a poem written by Qian Long, describing each of the tombs in the valley. The pavilion is flanked on four sides by *hua biao* similar to those next to the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Tian An Men Square. These and other similarities were intentional so as to produce comparison between the locus of the ruling imperial power and the glory of the deceased emperors.

Further on, you will come across the famous spirit road lined with carved stone figures. At the beginning of the spirit way is a stone column (望柱 or *wang zhu*) which is an architectural innovation of the Song dynasty. In order of progress, you come across, in double pairs of kneeling and standing figures: lions, *xie zhi* (獬豸) (an animal with a lion's head and a horse's body), camels, horses, elephants and *qilin* (麒麟). Next, there are statues of four military officials, four civil officials and four imperial councilors, whose robes were embroidered with symbols of office and who wear flat hats representative of their ministerial status. The civilian officials each hold an ivory tablet (笏), which was used for ensuring that, in the presence of the emperor, their less pure spiritual substance, *viz.*, breath, was deflected from the emperor's presence.

Each sculpture was carved to reflect the ideal of each creature present rather than an actual animal. Some Western writers were sharply critical of the supposed lifelessness of the statues. The criticisms miss the point. As they served to represent symbolic spirits, each official and animal statue were designed to approximate the Confucian ideal of perfection for each creature.

Beyond the Spirit Way is the Dragon and Phoenix Gate (龙凤门 or *long feng men*) which leads you into the tombs proper. In the Qing Tombs, each separate tomb has its own Dragon and Phoenix Gate whereas there is only one here for all the Ming Tombs.

Our next stop should be the first tomb in the valley, Chang Ling (长陵), the final resting place of Yong Le, who was buried here in 1424. You pass through a triple entrance gate and pass under another gate and enter the courtyard in front of the Hall of Imperial Favor (稜恩殿 or *ling'en dian*). The Hall and its courtyard are modeled on the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City. Off to the left and right ends of the courtyard are yellow porcelain paper burners where paper "gold and silver" ingots were burned as gifts to the deceased emperor.

In the Hall of Imperial Favor, the living emperors performed rites for Yong Le and sought his blessings. In establishing a new capital, Yong Le sought to make his tomb an impressive statement of imperial power and built triple terraces in marble, like those in the Forbidden City and the Altar of Heaven. The emperor walk way is carved with dragons and phoenixes. Inside the hall are 60 *nan mu* (南

木) wood columns each nearly 13 meters tall. All beams, brackets and window frames were made of precious *nan mu* wood.

Behind the hall is the Gate of the Lattice Star (灵星门 or *ling xing men*), consisting of a wooden gate with marble columns. Passing through, you arrive at a courtyard in front of a single stele tower, a square gray stone fortification bearing a red walled pavilion containing the memorial stele to Yong Le. Beneath the tower is a stone altar with replica of the five precious objects for use in funerary rites: a pair of candlesticks, a pair of vases and an incense burner.

The tower before the tumulus is built in the same manner as a city gate tower. On either side stand the crenellated ramparts that protect the grave area with its underground chamber and the coffin of the deceased emperor. By taking a tunnel in the center of the tower, you ascend stairs on the east or west sides to the top of the tower and view a memorial stele to Yong Le placed in the red pavilion. The top of the stele is carved with two dragons among clouds and two characters: Great Ming (大明 or *da ming*). The inscription on the body of the stele identifies the tomb as being the resting place of Yong Le by using the emperor's posthumous name.

In keeping with the symbol for heaven, the tumulus is perfectly round. It is richly planted with oaks and grass with the walkway along the wall providing grand views of the valley and mountains. Beneath the mound lies the body of Yong Le, who presumably has never been disturbed by vandals or thieves.

Back towards the Spirit Way is Ding Ling, the final resting place of Wan Li whose reign spanned 47 years of neglect and corruption. He died in 1620. Ding Ling is the only excavated tomb in the valley and tends to be thronged with tourists.

The archeological project for the excavation of Ding Ling owes much to sheer luck.

In keeping with imperial custom, the remains of Wan Li's empress were already buried in the tomb since she predeceased the emperor. Detailed instructions were needed on how to reopen the tomb for Wan Li's burial. These instructions were carved on a marble stele that was apparently left in the drainage tunnel by mistake rather than being kept under lock and key. In 1956, the tomb was undergoing routine maintenance repairs when several engineers discovered a hidden tunnel near one of the tomb's drains and found the tablet and hence the secret for reopening the tomb. (I can imagine some poor Ming official going through countless sleepless nights of worry on account of his misplacing this stone.)

An archeologist friend of mine once told me that upon opening of the main chamber, the sudden rush of oxygen and dampness supposedly caused the

disintegration of frescoes, silks and other fragile artwork. If this story is true, it explains why the Chinese have been reticent in excavating other sites. Indeed, should the PRC government choose to do so, there could be a constant flow of exhibitions of dazzling ancient artifacts uncovered each year.

The general layout of the tomb is consistent with Chang Ling. When you descend into the burial hall, you will come across three chambers. At the entrance of the first chamber is a triangular shaped gate that leads to the throne chamber in the central vault. Here are three marble thrones for Wan Li and the two empresses buried with him. In the rear vault are three coffins set inside 26 lacquered wooden chests filled with yellow clay (to simulate gold) and jade. In a separate exhibition hall are various artifacts found inside the tomb.

The next tomb open to the public is Zhao Ling, the burial site of the emperor Long Qing, who reigned from 1566 to 1572, and his three empresses. You pass through a triple bridge beyond the tortoise stele and come to the tombs that had been in ruins until a restoration project gave the site a squeaky clean brand new appearance that is not to everyone's taste. However, few people come here and it is a restful place for meditation and reflection, especially after a snowfall when the bare trees and temples wear a crystal coat of ice. The troops of Li Zi Cheng destroyed Long Qing's memorial stele in 1644. In keeping with his committed renovation efforts, Qian Long ordered its reconstruction in 1787. A fine pine and cypress grove is thriving on the top of the tumulus. The dragon and phoenix marble slab in front of the Hall of Heaven's Favor is one of the most exquisite carvings of its type in any imperial tomb.

Your chances of gaining entry to the other imperial tombs will depend upon the luck of the road. Little villages, taking their names from the nearby tomb, have sprung up all throughout the valley. These are interesting farming villages where the people live in traditional courtyard houses made from tamped mud bricks. However, the villagers appear jaded from the tourist trade and resolutely block access to many of the tombs. If you are able to arrive here on a bicycle, you might be able to discreetly come across a tomb where someone has forgotten to bolt the gate. It is quite a shame since these other tombs, often in ill repair and shrouded in natural forest growth, are more pleasing than the ones that are officially open.

To the east of Chang Ling are three tombs. The furthest to the east is De Ling (德陵), which is the resting place of the emperor Tian Qi who died in 1627, and his empress Zhang, who was strangled on the orders of the last Ming emperor as Li Zi Cheng's troops breached the Peking city walls. Yong Ling (永陵) is the burial site for Jia Jing, who died in 1567 and his three empresses. Jia Qing's reign



Repository for expired achievements.

marked one of the low points of “Ming despotism” with 17 high-ranking officials slowly beaten to death. Perhaps Heaven showed its displeasure by using the elements to destroy the ceremonial hall in Yong Ling. Jing Ling (景陵) is the tomb of emperor Xuan Zong and his empress Sun. A village now surrounds his memorial stele.

On the road to the north of Chang Ling, there are six tombs. You first come to Xian Ling (献陵) the resting place for Yong Le’s successor and sickly son Ren Zhong, who lasted on the throne for only nine months. It is one of the simplest tombs in the valley and has an unusual feature of a small hill intruding between the sacrificial hall and the tumulus.

Qing Ling (庆陵) is the tomb of the emperor Tai Chang, who ruled for less than a month in 1620. It is said that he was poisoned. Since Tai Chang did not have time to plan his burial grounds, his remains were placed in the vault originally intended for the emperor Jing Tai who was dethroned after his brother Zheng Tong, was released from captivity in Mongolia.

Yu Ling (裕陵) is Zheng Tong’s resting spot. The hall over the memorial stele and the ceremonial hall collapsed long ago. Further north is Mao Ling (茂陵), which houses the remains of the indolent and passive emperor Cheng Hua who ruled from 1464 to 1487. The next tomb on this route is Kang Ling (康陵), the resting place of the emperor Zheng De (deceased 1521) and his empress. It is said

the Zheng De was a wastrel who spent his years watching horse races and cock fights. Aside from the hall for the memorial stele, all other above ground structures have collapsed. This tomb provides lovely views of the valley and the surrounding persimmon orchards. Finally, off the main road you will find Tai Ling (泰陵).

Far off to the southwest side of the valley is Si Ling (思陵), the tomb of the emperor who was the end of the Ming line. The Qing regent Dorgon ordered that the remains of Chong Zhen and his empress be buried in one of the unfinished concubine tombs in the valley. Dorgon also made a bow in the direction of the eunuch constituency in the Forbidden City by burying Chong Zhen's loyal eunuch Wang Zhen En near his master. All that survives is the tumulus, the marble altar with its urn, candlestick holders and vases as well as a memorial stele. It is my favorite on account of its dilapidated and forlorn appearance that testifies to the impermanence of this world's vanities.

25

EPILOGUE

NO MOSAIC OF OLD PEKING is complete. Least of all, this one.

The Italian diplomat Daniele Vare struggled with the dilemma of cultural relativism during his postings in Peking. Vare wrote novels set during the Qing and Republican eras. One day, he dreamed up a dramatic incident.

A Qing official remonstrates against the emperor's willingness to issue a decree for reform. The official submits a memorial protesting the contents of the decree. He is ignored. To persuade the Son of Heaven of the sincerity of his protest, the official mortally stabs himself in the courtyard of the Hall of Supreme Harmony.

Vare showed the chapter to his language teacher, an old-school Manchu, who sadly shook his head. "No Chinese would ever believe this." Vare, who already spent quite a few years in China, was taken aback. "Why not?"

His teacher said that no official would be so presumptuous as to commit suicide in the grounds of the Forbidden City. Only emperors and, by extension, his empresses and concubines, could do so. The traditional place for a protesting official to commit suicide would be at the foot of the Western Hills. Everyone also knew that an emperor would not pay the slightest attention to a memorial drafted by an official so lacking in a sense of propriety. And practically speaking, the imperial guards would not have let anyone with a dagger get close to the throne.

Stumped by his teacher's response, Vare asked him to think up a believable scenario. The old scholar agreed to do so. One week later, Vare's teacher trundled over to the Italian legation with the draft of a thoroughly understandable story — through a Chinese perspective.

The Chinese version was subtle. A Qing official is granted the privilege of visiting a highly positioned prince. During each visit, the prince offers sugared turnips as a symbol of his high regard for the official. One week, the prince receives

the official but the turnips are nowhere to be seen. Taking this as a sign of his disgrace, the official goes off and hangs himself from a tree in the Western Hills. "A story such as this would be believable by all Chinese," said the teacher to a perplexed Vare.

After a moment or two, Vare protested. "If I wrote that story, no one in the West would believe it." "And no Chinese can believe your story," countered Vare's teacher.

There you have it, the great divide. As Stanley Karnow once quipped to fellow foreign devil Dick Hughes, "the Far East is a university in which no degree is ever granted." At that proposition, I am sure that the ghosts of Arlington and Lewisohn each lift a pint and say "Amen."

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Osbert Sitwell, *Escape with Me*, p.182.
2. These were the terms used by the Boxers to describe Chinese Christians and Chinese purveyors of Western goods, respectively.

CHAPTER 2

1. It is also said that red symbolizes the blossom of the peach tree, which has been believed to have beneficial properties since time memorial. Sprigs of peach blossoms and canes made from peach wood are useful for warding off bad luck.
2. Quoted in Susan Naquin, *Peking: City Life and Temples 1400–1900*, p. 46.
3. An ancient remnant of this belief is to be found in 21st century Hong Kong. The “Lover’s Rock” off Bowen Road is actually the continuation of worship of a fertility spirit that resides in a phallic-shaped (and thus *yang*-based) rock.
4. In keeping with traditional Sinologists, I use the traditional romanization of this Chinese word. It is pronounced “dowism.”

CHAPTER 3

1. The Mongol word “Khitan” is the basis for the Russian word for China: “Kitai.” In Western Europe Kitai metamorphosed into “Cathay.”
2. Marco Polo, *Travels of Marco Polo — the Yule-Cordier Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 375.
3. Starting from the Ming, emperors used, confusingly, three different names. There was a personal name, given at birth and whose use became taboo once the emperor assumed the throne. Thereafter, the emperor was known by his reign name. Finally, there was a posthumous name that court ritual required in subsequent references to the deceased emperor. With a few exceptions, I will use the reign names of the emperors.

4. In written documents, it was customary to refer to Peking as [our] Capital City (京师 or *jīng shī*). Beijing was only used infrequently until its rise in popular usage during the 20th century.
5. These Eight Great Sights of Peking were 太液秋风 (the rippling waves in fine weather on the three imperial lakes), 玉泉趵突 (the reflection of the rainbow in the Jade Springs at the Jade Fountain), 西山晴雪 (clear snow on the Western Hills), 金台夕照 (the reflection of the evening sun on the Golden Terrace, now no longer in existence but its name is preserved by a school nearby), 居庸选翠 (the green ranges of Chu Yung, which is the Qing Long Qiao to the plains), 蓟门烟树 (the density of trees surrounding the Gate of the Reed, no longer in existence), 琼岛春阳 (the spring warmth on Qing Dao on Hortensia Island in the Bei Hai Park), and 卢沟晓月 (the reflection of the moon at dawn at the Marco Polo Bridge).
6. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Emperor of China: Self Portrait of Kang Xi*, p. 97.
7. In Chinese, her title was Ci Xi Tai Hou (慈禧太后).
8. Much ink has been used on speculations about the true Yeholona. Daniel Vare presented a more sympathetic account in *The Last Empress*. Sterling Seagrave's *Dragon Lady* takes the unconventional (and controversial) view that the memory of the Empress Dowager was intentionally blackened by anti-Qing Chinese and foreign accomplices. Like so many other people in Chinese political history, we are unlikely to ever have an accurate portrait of the Empress Dowager and her life.
9. Guang Xu's ascension to the throne caused tremendous controversy as Manchu custom did not permit an emperor's cousin to be his successor.
10. Peter Quennell, *A Superficial Journey Through Tokyo and Peking*, pp. 183–184.
11. Karl Eskelund, *My Chinese Wife*, p. 25.
12. David Kidd, *Peking Story*, pp. 195–196.

CHAPTER 4

1. Jack Kerowc, *Desolation Angels*, pp. 284–285.
2. Simon Leys, *Chinese Shadows*, pp. 53–54.
3. Sidney Rittenberg, *The Man Who Stayed Behind*, pp. 245–246.
4. Lei Feng was a model worker famous for the statement that he wanted to be a screw in the great machinery of socialism. Indeed. He is said to have ceaselessly sought to serve the Party as well as the common people by doing good deeds like secretly washing his colleagues socks at night. Lei died at the age of 23 in 1962 and became an icon during the Cultural Revolution. However, evidence has arisen to show that the people's hero may have had feet of clay. A photograph in Fu Shun shows Lei wearing a wrist watch, a showy piece of extravagance that was officially denied to people of his rank. Maybe the old boy had some feudal notions of face. At any rate, the newly released photograph is just a storm in a tea cup as no one really cares about Lei Feng any more.
5. David S. G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices*, p. 95.

CHAPTER 5

1. Reginald Johnston, *Lion and Dragon in North China*, pp. 125–126.

CHAPTER 6

1. Daniel Vare, *The Laughing Diplomat*, p. 92.
2. George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman and the Dragon*, p. 224.
3. Ai Xin Jue Ruo Pu Yi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, p. 121.
4. Quoted in Stanley Charles Nott, *Chinese Jade*, p. 1.
5. Elizabeth Crump Enders, *Swinging Lanterns*, pp. 189–190.

CHAPTER 7

1. Derk Bodde, *Peking Diary*, p. 115.
2. Juliet Bredon, *Peking*, p. 179.

CHAPTER 8

1. Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo: The Yule - Cordier Edition*, Vol. 1, pp. 364–365.
2. Derk Bodde, *Peking Diary*, p. 147.
3. Mrs. Archibald Little, *Round About My Peking Garden*, pp. 208–209.
4. Mrs. Archibald Little, *Round About My Peking Garden*, pp. 10–11.

CHAPTER 9

1. I will discuss this further in the next chapter.
2. These clauses were the great diplomatic folly of the Qing court in the 19th century as they entitled each foreign signatory the same privileges granted to other foreign countries.
3. The exceptions to this observation are Russia and Japan, both of whom had territorial ambitions in Manchuria that could be furthered by retaining troops in Peking.
4. Quoted in *Spy Book: The Encyclopedia of Espionage* by Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, pp. 110 to 11.
5. Harold Acton, *Peonies and Ponies*, p. 2.
6. Jenny Lu's is the name of a franchise established in Peking by a woman from the deep country in He Bei Province. She specializes in providing the highest quality produce for the expat community. Her employees, who are of the same rustic origins as Jenny, studiously learn the English equivalent of their inventory. A friend who was searching for a bottle of fennel seeds was astonished to see an elderly employee recognize the English words and hurried back, all smiles, with fennel in hand.

CHAPTER 10

1. Father Ricci designed the first map of the world in China. By referring to the Western Hemisphere, Yang and others would have been aware of the reach of these two global superpowers.
2. Paul Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, pp. 16–17.
3. W.A.P. Martin, *The Chinese*, p. 89.
4. H.G. Creel, *Chinese Thought From Confucius to Mao*, p. 210.

CHAPTER 11

1. John Blofeld, *City of Lingering Splendour*, p. 185.
2. John Blofeld, *City of Lingering Splendour*, p. 238.
3. Huthessing, *Window on China*, p. 56.
4. David Rennie, *Peking and the Pekingese* Vol, pp. 44–45.
5. “For You — ” Ling Bing, quoted in David S. G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices*, pp. 122.

CHAPTER 12

1. Taken from Juliet Bredon and Igor Mitrophanow, *The Moon Year* pp. 55–56.

CHAPTER 13

1. Quoted in Naquin *Peking: Temples and City Life*, p. 631.
2. Juliet Bredon, *Peking*, p. 219.

CHAPTER 14

1. David Rennie, *Peking and the Pekingese*, Vol. II, p. 21.
2. Quoted in Alan Samagalski; Robert Strauss, Michael Buckley, *China: A Travel Survival Kit*, p.

CHAPTER 15

1. David Rennie, *The Peking and the Pekingese*, pp. 94–95.

CHAPTER 16

1. Dun Li Chien, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, p. 78.
2. Dun Li Chen, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, p. 17
3. Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco-Polo: The Complete Yule-Cordier Edition*, Vol. II, pp. 3–4.

CHAPTER 17

1. David Kidd, *Peking Story*, p. 75.

CHAPTER 20

1. Boswell, *A Life of Johnston*, p. 929.

CHAPTER 21

1. Paul Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, p. 5.

CHAPTER 23

1. The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by Nicholas Smith and Jon Eichelberger during the research for this chapter.
2. H.Y. Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, Vol II p. 50.

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