

The Transformation of Nanking, 1350–1400

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Nanking, in the period in which we shall examine it, was at once (1) in a general sense heir to all the city-building traditions and skills that Chinese civilization had developed up to that time; (2) a specific site whose importance and historical traditions went back in a continuous line to the first millennium B.C.; and (3) a great new city under construction to serve as the capital of the Chinese empire and the center of the civilized world as the Chinese knew it. Today, the physical remains of the early Ming capital are overshadowed by the transformations that have occurred since the fourteenth century. But in this paper we will try to recreate in our mind's eye the capital built by Chu Yüan-chang, founding emperor (T'ai-tsu) of the Ming dynasty, who reigned from 1368 to 1398. To do that, we must try to see what Nanking represented to him, to his assistants, and to his subjects as a site, a locus of important functions, and the potential great city of a new imperial era.

We must begin by attempting to summarize the city-building skills and the urban traditions that existed in China in the mid-fourteenth century. Next, we must examine Nanking's particular associations, its functions, and its relevance for the life of China as these aspects came to bear on the process of its transformation. Finally, we shall try to describe the transformation of the site into the great capital it became in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. These three tasks determine the form of this paper; the third accounts for most of its length.¹

Some Characteristics of the Traditional Chinese City

Some peculiarly Chinese attitudes about the city. No single great city has either dominated Chinese civilization in the way that Rome and Constantinople dominated phases of Roman history or typified Chinese

civilization in the way that Paris and London typify for us the French and the English civilizations. Rome, Constantinople, Paris, London—each has been the hub and the symbol of the history and cultural achievements of its civilization. Which city was the Chinese Rome or the Chinese Paris? There neither is nor ever has been one.

This can be explained in many ways. For one thing, China has been too vast a cultural and political area for 3,000 years or more to have been dominated by one city. Nor was it ever a congeries of cities or city-states that eventually came under the domination of one “world city” (Rome), or “national city” (Paris), or that failed to do so, as in the case of the Italian city-states in their heyday. In Europe, Lewis Mumford sees the “medieval” multiplication of urban centers ending, and the rise to supremacy of the single great metropolis beginning, as the result of the achievement of political centralization and the creation of despotic national states.² That observation seems to have no analogy in, or significance for, Chinese history; China achieved centralization and political despotism with the founding of the empire, but there was no corresponding influence on the development of the city.

Another line of explanation for the lack of any single great city that symbolizes China for the Chinese or for us involves a rather obvious and often-mentioned fact: Chinese civilization, for many reasons that lie beyond our focus here, has not granted the same importance to typically urban activities that other civilizations have. Thus Chinese values did not sustain a self-identifying and self-perpetuating urban elite as a component of the population. As a result, the Chinese have never felt the impulse to create one great city that would express and embody their urban ideals, nor has the urban sector in the aggregate typified or dominated the tone of Chinese life. Yet a large number of great cities have existed in China throughout the last 2,500 years. We are forced to ask, then, what the distinctive Chinese attitudes were toward the urban component of the cultural environment they had created. The Ming founder in the fourteenth century built a great city at Nanking to serve as the capital of his empire; what were his attitudes toward it and his expectations with regard to its role in the life of his dynasty? Nanking was to be the center of the world, but was it to be the epitome of Chinese culture?

Probably not. The idea that the city represents either a distinct style or, more important, a higher level of civilization than the countryside is a cliché of our Western cultural traditions. It has not been so in traditional China. In early Chou times the *kuo*, which in modern Chinese means “state,” was actually the walled or stockaded town seat of the head of a fief. From the social history of the period we can gain some

awareness of the *kuo* town as an island of civilization surrounded and threatened by a sea of less-civilized and often hostile peasantry. Yet that sharp division into distinct urban and rural civilizations disappeared very early in China, although it remained characteristic of much of the rest of the world until recent times and produced distinct urban attitudes in other civilizations. The conditions allowing such attitudes in China seem to have vanished by the beginning of the imperial era, so long ago that a sense of that kind of urban superiority has not remained.

Chinese civilization may be unique in that its word for “peasant” has not been a term of contempt—even though the Chinese idea of a “rustic” may be that of a humorously unsophisticated person. The disappearance of the urban-rural separateness—in social-psychological terms, though not of course in all the realities of daily living patterns—no doubt is related to the changes in social structure that accompanied the breakup of the classic Chou civilization. In that historical process ancient China achieved in theory and in actual social practice an open society; the Chinese attained the rights to own land freely and to change their place of residence and way of life. Some practical access to both geographical and social mobility — over and above the mere rights to them — was achieved very early in Chinese history. We have no parallel for the long Chinese experience within these particular defining conditions of social life. Whether large numbers actually participated in either kind of mobility is less important than the psychological fact that such mobility was possible. And this fact must be related to the existence of an urban-rural continuum, both as physical and as organizational realities, and as an aspect of Chinese psychology. It must have worked to overcome the earlier (and to our history, the characteristic) psychology of separateness of the urban and the rural sectors. We know from the researches of P. T. Ho,³ for example, that by the second half of the imperial era an intermediate stage of urban residence and urban-based commercial activity was typical of families (or branches of families) on the upward-mobility course or aspiring to it, whereas return to rural-based elite patterns was normally affected by those who succeeded in that upward course. Downward mobility also kept persons moving from the one environment to the other. Even in some open societies, parallel and distinct mobility patterns exist apart from each other within the rural and the urban sectors; in China the two meshed in one pattern that, one must hypothesize, reinforced the organic unity of rural and urban.

When we turn from individual and family histories to the daily patterns of living, we find, too (at least in the last thousand years of Chinese history, for which the evidence is better), that there was frequent—in many cases almost daily—movement of large numbers of people into

and out of cities. And as we shall note when we discuss the physical and organizational aspects of the rural-urban continuum, the people involved in this movement were not aware of crossing any definite boundary; for the one thing that might seem to qualify as a definite demarcation, the city wall, was not in fact a boundary between an urban-within and a rural-without. It could assume the character of a real boundary between protected and unprotected areas in times of real crisis, but most Chinese in most periods had never experienced that. When we think of the attitudes associated with the city in the West, especially prior to the Industrial Revolution, we may think first of the city as the symbol of safety. In China it simply was not the same. There is an old and very common saying, "In times of minor disorders, flee the countryside; in times of major disasters, flee the cities."⁴ This may reflect the fact that, in Chinese history, social turbulence of the kind that could produce rebellions against the authority of the state seems never to have been urban in origin; urban populations were under better control. However, in a war or a major disorder, cities usually became the scenes of pitched battles or the objects of plunder. Thus this saying suggests that the kind of separateness of the safe bastion, the city, from a normally lawless countryside simply did not exist in China. Cities have become the most turbulent and dangerous environments of modern life in the industrial West, and it may be difficult for us to recollect that this is a very recent phenomenon. Yet Lewis Mumford graphically sums up the antagonism between town and country and the sense of safety associated with the city in medieval Europe:

As urban occupations step by step drove out the rural ones that had at first been pursued in the city with almost equal vigor, the antagonism widened between the town and country. The city was an exclusive society; and every townsman was, in relation to the country-folk, something of a snob. . . .

Though the wall existed for military defense and the main ways of the city were usually planned to facilitate rallying to the main gates, the psychological import of the wall must not be forgotten. One was either in or out of the city; one belonged or one did not belong. When the town gates were locked at sundown, and the portcullis was drawn, the city was insulated from the outside world. As in a ship, the wall helped create a feeling of unity between the inhabitants: in a siege or a famine the morality of the shipwreck—share-and-share-alike—developed easily. But the wall also served to build up a fatal sense of insularity: all the more because of the absence of roads and quick means of communication between cities. . . .

The protected economy of the medieval city was capable of being maintained by one fact alone: the superiority of the city over the barbarous, insecure life of the open country.⁵

There is no analogy in imperial China for the situation that these paragraphs describe.

Giovanni Botero, the writer of the famous sixteenth-century treatise *The Greatness of Cities* (1588), knew something of China from Marco Polo's book and other writings. Though suspicious of the credibility of those sources, Botero was greatly impressed by the number and size of China's cities, and by the difference between their functions and those of cities in Renaissance Italy. He concluded a lengthy comparison with an apt simile: "... for that it is not lawful for any of the Chinese to go out of their country without leave or license of the magistrates, so that, the number of persons continually increasing and abiding still at home, it is of necessity that the number of people do become inestimable, and of consequence the cities exceeding great, the towns infinite, and that China itself should rather, in a manner, be but one body and but one city."⁶ "But one body and but one city" seems to indicate that Botero realized China was not an agglomeration of semiautonomous city-states, and that it was not a country in which island-cities were surrounded by seas of rude peasants. Nor does he mean that China was dominated by "but one city"; rather he means that all of China, as it were, constituted one organizational entity as though it were "one city." This strikes me as being a very perceptive observation. Despite the political centralization that was so fully realized in the later centuries of the imperial era, there was no premier city that claimed for itself the prerogatives of the great city of the realm and that drew to itself exclusively such characteristic metropolitan activities as (1) setting fashions, (2) providing the locus for intellectual, artistic, and creative developments, and (3) concentrating the cultural achievements of civilization in the form of libraries and art collections. The dispersion of these activities throughout many urban and rural settings, and the consequent lack of any single great urban center that was both the acme and the microcosm of Chinese civilization, strengthens our awareness of rural China. The rural component of Chinese civilization was more or less uniform, and it extended everywhere that Chinese civilization penetrated. It, and not the cities, defined the Chinese way of life. It was like the net in which the cities and towns of China were suspended. The fabric of this net was the stuff of Chinese civilization, sustaining it and giving it its fundamental character. To extend this metaphor, China's cities were but knots of the same material, of one piece with the net, denser in quality but not foreign bodies resting on it. Whether or not this is precisely what Giovanni Botero meant, his phrase "but one body and but one city" is very appropriate.

Yet in the millennium of late imperial China, there certainly were attitudes and characteristics associated with the city. Peasants were not despised, but they were far less mobile than town dwellers, led simpler lives, had contacts with far fewer people, and were exposed to less varied experiences. They were expected to be more simpleminded and naive than townspeople in an admirable if often humorous fashion. On the one hand, the crafty city dweller (usually a petty merchant) who takes advantage of the simple countryman is a stereotype as well known in China as in most other civilizations; on the other hand, the city represents sophistication and skills in dealing with complex situations. Even a learned gentleman who knew both city and country life well (but probably preferred the latter) might declare himself a mere "country fellow," a "rustic simpleton," as a gesture of conventional humility before the rich and the prominent, or even before his intellectual peers and old neighbors who happened to be in office. It was obvious to the townsman of traditional China that he could enjoy a more varied and exciting life, could know more of the products of faraway places, could find higher levels of craftsmanship in the things he purchased and used, could have more entertainment, and could achieve more direct contact with the administrative arm of the imperial government in the city than in the country. In some large and important ways the city stood for the same things in traditional China as in the West. Thus "urban attitudes" did exist in China; but in their specific content, in their intensity, and in their significance for the whole culture of China, they differed profoundly from those in the West.

Are urban functions uniform across civilizations? Glenn Trewartha, writing in 1952, was one of the first persons in the West to analyze the functions of Chinese cities in order to explain their formation and growth.⁷ Naba Toshisada and Miyazaki Ichisada, writing in Japanese in the 1920's and 1930's, also discussed the significance of city forms in relation to the factors that led to their development.⁸ T. F. Tout's famous piece on "Medieval Town Planning" (1917) is one of the first examples of this kind of analysis of Western cities. As one of the latest, L. Hilberseimer's *The Nature of Cities* (1955) is an impressive book except in its discussion of Chinese cities; the brief comments on the form and functions of Peking (p. 136) are both superficial and bizarre. But all of these writings adopt some version of the distinction between "natural" and "planned" cities (other sets of terms used include "geometric/organic" and "administrative/economic"). Trewartha concludes his evaluation of form in relation to function with this statement: "Probably in no other country has the political influence on city development oper-

ated in such a pure fashion and, at the same time, so strongly and continuously through the centuries as in China.”⁹ With the recognition of the political factor as a determining element in the nature of Chinese cities, a basis exists for comparing Chinese cities with cities in other parts of the world.

The Chinese city usually and quite properly means to us the roughly 1,500 to 2,000 urban concentrations that were designated the seats of administrative arms of the central government, that is, imperial and provincial capitals plus prefectural- and county-level capitals—the *fu*, *chou*, and *hsien* cities. In Chinese they are *ch’eng* (literally “wall”), because their administrative significance gave them the right or the need to be walled. The administrative function contributed much to form: the walls, square or rectangular in shape (sometimes, though less often, curved or round), were oriented to the cardinal points of the compass; the major streets formed a similarly oriented grid whose intersections were right angles; gates were surmounted by gate towers; and a moat usually surrounded the walls. Certain expectations about form were automatically established, therefore, by the presence of a seat of local government. Yet the study of city maps preserved in local gazetteers shows that circumstances of history, topography, location of transportation routes, and the like have injected much individualism into the appearance and layout of Chinese cities.¹⁰

If we are to draw some contrast, it would seem to be between the administrative city and the natural or economic city. The latter in most cases retains some of the characteristic street patterns of the unwalled market town (*chen*). Its shape is irregular, and its streets straggle unevenly along waterways or roadways, around hillocks and important buildings (such as temples) that existed before the town grew up. Even when large towns of this characteristically unplanned pattern were taken over as administrative centers—thereupon to be enclosed within walls and adapted to the needs of government—much of the informality of the original layout would remain. Superficially observed, then, most Chinese cities fall into not two but three main types: the planned, regular city; the unplanned, sprawling large town; and the hybrid created when some degree of planning was superimposed on the natural city, but too late to be thoroughgoing. Generally speaking, the cities of North China are older and therefore further from their presumed origins as natural cities; moreover, they tend to be on land transport routes (or at intersections of land and water routes) that can be made to adjust to city planning needs. Southern cities, with some notable exceptions, are later, closer to their unplanned origins, and often on unalterable

bodies of water that carry transport into them and determine some of their boundaries. The degree of irregularity in form certainly is greater in the South than in the North, and the schematization of “planned,” “natural,” and “hybrid” is useful to help account for obvious differences between the two regions.

Yet in fact all Chinese cities (*ch'eng*) are in some sense “hybrid,” for all are multifunctional, and have been throughout imperial times. The two most clearly identifiable functions are those mentioned above: the economic and the administrative (or “dynastic,” or “political-military”). But either of these functions demands the support of the other at a certain stage of development. In late imperial times the exceptions to this last statement were so rare that the four prominent, very large market towns which failed to be designated seats of local government were bulked together and referred to as the “four great towns,” or *ssu ta-chen*.¹¹ They were spoken of as curiosities, because despite their size and importance they did not acquire political functions and remained mere “towns” instead of county-seat walled cities. Yet they, too, were at least minimally multifunctional, for in addition to their impressive marketing roles they had to have government tax collection offices; and they served educational, cultural, and religious functions in the same way that all other large urban concentrations did. Even more were the proper *ch'eng*, the walled cities with offices of government, multifunctional cities. They contained offices of military and civil government as well as official and private educational institutions. That they were almost invariably the chief market towns of their regions can be assumed; and other economic functions included both official ones (taxes, tariffs, management of granaries) and private ones, the latter enhanced by the presence of a corps of government employees. Thus we clearly cannot say of premodern China what Hauser says of premodern Europe:

The European city which survived the Dark Ages as a fortress developed various functions. Each tended to have a special function, political or economic. Medieval cities may be classified either as “towns with predominantly political or intellectual functions” or as having “a predominantly economic function.” The multifunction city is seen as a recent phenomenon associated with modern industrialization, technology, transport, and administration. The multifunction city may be traced to the relationship between advancing technology and diversification of functions.¹²

The phrases in quotation marks in this passage are quoted from an article by Bert Hoselitz, and both writers are seeking some guidance on “the overall conditions and processes of economic development” from

the study of Europe's past. Perhaps they have succeeded, but analogies between European and non-Western cities should not be extended without examining overall conditions of comparability. And those conditions do not appear to me to have existed in the case of China.

Such unjustified extension of general statements to include cases not adequately understood is best seen in the work of Gideon Sjoberg. His references to China consistently display faults of fact and of judgment, all in the interest of making broadly comparative statements and sweeping interpretations. He believes that urban forms were disseminated from the Fertile Crescent to all other parts of the world except Mesoamerica, and that empires were their effective disseminators. The intermediary empires that accomplished this diffusion for China are not named. And he sees the modern industrial city arising first in England because "England's social structure lacked the rigidity that characterized most of Europe and the rest of the civilized world."¹³ He apparently knows nothing of Chinese social structure and assumes that a closed class system prevailed there, making the class structure of China's urban masses comparable to that of the rest of the premodern world's city dwellers. In short, it would seem safe to conclude that the knowledge available in English of the Chinese city, and of traditional China in general, is too limited to sustain the flights of overambitious synthesizers.

The cities of medieval and early modern Europe and the cities of late imperial China were alike in the sense of being historical contemporaries and the urban forms of civilizations at comparable levels of economic and technological development. This makes comparison interesting and potentially fruitful, but it does not imply general similarity. The medieval European city developed within the varying patterns of European feudalism; and Europe's many postfeudal societies, and many of their special characteristics, derived directly from the highly particular conditions that fact implies. Those conditions have few if any significant parallels in traditional China. The general levels of economic and technological development in China and Western Europe continued to be roughly comparable well into Europe's postfeudal, early modern age. Yet even when postfeudal Europe became somewhat more like China in having more highly centralized states, a more fluid social order, greater uniformity of cultural forms throughout larger areas, and the like, the careful student of history must still be dissatisfied with easy analogies. If Hauser sees the multifunctional city (not just *certain* multifunctional cities) as "a recent phenomenon associated with modern industrialization, technology, transport, and administration," we must either accept his statement for China also, or point out how it is inapplicable. An

analysis of the functions of the traditional Chinese city may help us do the latter.

Chinese cities, of course, have served some of the same basic functions that cities everywhere have. Pirenne says that trade created cities in medieval Europe, and Mumford, disagreeing, says that cities made trade. This same chicken-or-egg question existed so far back in Chinese antiquity that we can assume a long-standing inseparability of cities and trade there, too. Already in prehistoric times, there is good reason to believe that China's cities were places where grain surpluses could be collected, stored, and protected, and where such highly specialized crafts as ceramics and metalworking were concentrated. Local trade has always centered in towns, and regional trade activities have been associated with the more important cities. In the imperial period—especially in T'ang and later times, when domestic commerce grew increasingly important—the movement and exchange of goods and money strongly influenced the location and growth of cities; in its way, the city of imperial China was also *entrepôt*, factory, bourse, and bazaar. In the broad view, the economic activities of Chinese and Western cities look very similar; it is only when we examine the manner in which the entrepreneurial functions were exercised, for instance, and look into the social and cultural consequences of those functions (as the late Etienne Balazs has done in some of his highly perceptive writings¹⁴), that we begin to see how sharply the Chinese situation differed from the apparently comparable situation in premodern Europe. So the functions of Chinese cities, surely embodied to some degree in their forms, were many and varied. The administrative and the economic functions were only the most obvious ones; those of the military, of transport and communication, of religion, of cultural life, of intellectual activities, and of education were also part of the Chinese urban scene. Yet these all existed within the particular dynamics of Chinese society, were ordered by Chinese government, and expressed Chinese cultural values.

Comparative study of urbanism is of course essential, and when adequately informed about the Chinese case, it will be fruitful. Abstracting the seemingly comparable elements to construct broad generalizations, however, must be done with considerable understanding of peculiarly Chinese conditions. This is the comparativist's dilemma: he can neither ignore China nor deal with it adequately at this stage in our knowledge of traditional Chinese civilization.

The element of conscious design in Chinese cities. We have suggested that once urban concentrations developed to the point of being designated *ch'eng*, the hand of government came to interfere directly with

aspects of their form. There are also examples where peculiar political or strategic considerations gave rise to planned cities built virtually from nothing. Thus we must postulate the existence of a highly developed capacity to design cities in traditional Chinese civilization. Since this element of conscious design was so highly developed, the following questions arise: (1) who did the planning; (2) what were the sources of design ideas or models; and (3) what writings were the repositories of the design concepts? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered with any certainty.

Chinese history abounds with legends about magical elements entering into the planning and building of capitals. As an example, Arlington and Lewisohn in *In Search of Old Peking* (p. 28) say that around 1400 the astrologer (*sic*) Liu Po-wen gave the plan for the city of Peking to the emperor. This plan provided that the city be laid out with its central features corresponding to the parts of the human body. "Liu Po-wen" is actually the eminent statesman and thinker Liu Chi (1311–75), who is often confused in popular history with Liu Ping-chung (1216–74), an earlier figure who served several early Yüan emperors, and Yao Kuang-hsiao (1335–1418), a later personage who was indeed a chief minister to the Yung-lo emperor at the time of the building of Peking in the early fifteenth century. But Liu Chi never saw Peking. He may indeed have played an important advisory role in the designing of Nanking in the decade from about 1365 to 1375, but his collected works contain nothing that dwells on principles of city design. Liu Ping-chung is indelibly associated in legend with the design of Khubilai Khan's capital built in the 1260's and 1270's on the site of modern Peking, but again no precise or full documentation for this connection exists.¹⁵ And if Yao Kuang-hsiao manipulated the symbolic aspects of the design of Peking, again we have no way of knowing what in fact he contributed, what his sources of symbolic knowledge might have been, or what exactly the symbolic elements of the design were.¹⁶ To my knowledge there are no thirteenth- or fourteenth-century writings discussing the practical, the cosmological, or the symbolic aspects of city design *per se*.¹⁷ This is not to ignore many general works on geomancy, some of which are apocryphally attributed to Liu Chi and other eminent scholars associated with city design.

A work that does purport to explain the explicitly symbolic aspects of Ch'in and Han city and palace design is the anonymous *San-fu huang-t'u*,¹⁸ a book usually attributed to the Han period but now generally considered by scholars to date from the fourth or fifth centuries. It was a well-known and perhaps influential work in Sung, Yüan, and Ming times.

Throughout its interesting description of Han cities, especially the capitals and their palaces, sentences such as this one occur repeatedly: "The south gate of the city wall symbolizes (*hsiang*) the emperor's position facing to the south and assuming his imperial office." But even here no systematic presentation of the symbolism is offered, nor is it justified in terms of any body of thought or writing.

Modern Chinese writings on the history of Chinese architecture also refer to the element of conscious design, but again fail to present systematically and fully the sources of the concepts involved. Liang Ssu-ch'eng, the best-known modern authority in the field, touches on the problem in passing in his *Chung-kuo chien-chu shih* (History of Chinese Architecture). He discusses the "four characteristics of Chinese architecture." First, it neither seeks permanence nor values the use of materials assuring permanence. Second, all architectural activity is conditioned by ethical concepts (in theory this should have restricted size and splendor, but of course it did not eliminate imperial ostentation). Third, layout and ground plan are of great significance. As the influence of Confucian thought grew in the late Chou and Western Han periods, government increasingly stressed ritualized behavior and deportment; this can be seen in regulations governing layouts and arrangements of buildings, in whose descriptions much importance is attached to names and placement. For later periods, discussions of buildings usually are found in those treatises (*chih*) in the dynastic histories on the "Five Elements" or on "Rites and Deportment." Interestingly, the descriptions always stress ground plan and layout, whereas they ignore details of elevation, of appearance, and of construction. Fourth, and most important, the architectural arts were transmitted from craftsmen to apprentices; books and written records were unimportant in this process. Architectural skills were associated with workmen, not with the literati. Hence there is very little in the written record about architecture and city planning. Only two dynasties seem to have compiled official works on these subjects; these are the Sung *Ying-tiao fa-shih* of 1163 and the Ch'ing *Kung-pu kung-ch'eng tso-fa tse-li* of 1734.¹⁹

The Yüan capital at the site of modern Peking, called Ta-tu and built in the 1260's and 1270's, has been described as having been "[designed according to] a unitary planned conceptualization, in imitation of the Han system whereby 'the ancestral shrine is on the left, the altars of the state on the right, the imperial court to the front, and the markets at the rear,' and built up upon a flat plain,"²⁰ permitting full realization of the ideal plan. And another recent work on Chinese architecture claims that "the Yüan city of Ta-tu is the only city [in all Chinese his-

tory?] built in accordance with the chapter *K'ao kung chi* in the *Institutes of Chou* [*Chou li*].”²¹ These comments hold a measure of truth, but we must not take them literally. In any event, very little city building was done in the Yüan period other than the rebuilding of Peking. The Ming period, on the other hand, was the great period of city building, and especially of city-wall building, in Chinese history. Earlier, virtually all city walls, including those of imperial capitals, had been built of pounded earth (*hang t'u*); the Ming, starting with Nanking, began building new walls of stone and brick or refacing earlier pounded earth walls with such materials. Yet it is unlikely that the Yüan example of systematically utilizing the *Chou li* in conceiving a city plan had much influence on the Ming builders. The Mongol period tended to be discredited, and the Mongol capital in particular was held up as an example of inordinate extravagance. The form of Ta-tu was changed during the first Ming reign; and when the city was thoroughly rebuilt in the third Ming reign to serve as the new capital, Nanking was ostensibly its model, particularly in the construction of the magnificent palace city, known in both Nanking and Peking as the Forbidden City (*Tzu-chin ch'eng*).

Where, then, did the plan for Nanking—the greatest of city-building projects of the fourteenth century and, indeed, of any later century—come from? For despite indications of some uncertainty regarding specific elements of design and some shifting of plan during the course of the building,²² there is no lack of evidence of a fully worked out conceptualization of what a capital city should be, how its parts should relate to each other, and what symbolic or functional significance those parts should have. Moreover, the builders of Nanking utilized recently developed engineering techniques and incorporated the latest features of defense in the face of the rapidly changing military technology of the times.²³ Yet none of the many books and writings on Nanking known to me says anything about the sources of the ideological, practical, and technical knowledge employed by the planners and builders, or about who they were and how they worked. The capital city in China was not fixed permanently for all time but could shift, like the Mandate of Heaven, without losing any legitimacy. Existing or previous models, like Loyang,²⁴ no doubt were part of the consciousness of the learned elite; and the entire cumulative experience of the civilization was at hand to be drawn upon, in very general ways, as new cities were built. Nanking, like the Southern Sung capital at Hangchow, was a site peculiarly influenced by topography. But within the limitations imposed by this fact, a great capital incorporating both essentials from the whole tra-

dition going back to Han and T'ang times as well as elements of recent technological advances was quickly put together in a manner satisfactory to the despot who had just founded the new dynasty. Yet in the most record-conscious of civilizations, the need to record the particulars of this planning and building activity did not seem to exist. This anomalous fact forces us to accept tentative and incomplete answers about what the sources of Chinese city design were and how the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to city building was preserved and transmitted.

The physical and the organizational components of the traditional Chinese city. Hilberseimer, writing of the medieval European city, says that "cities were much like villages at first, but they soon began to show the characteristics of urban development, industrial, political and architectural. Cities had to protect themselves with fortifications. They had to have a city hall, a place of assembly where citizens could exercise their political rights. There had to be a church also, eventually perhaps a cathedral, a place of worship dominating the city both spiritually and architecturally."²⁵ Almost nothing in this passage holds true for the Chinese city. It is particularly striking that the organizational (and psychological) separateness of the medieval and premodern European city from the surrounding countryside was attested in physical monuments that dominated the city. The Chinese city had no "civic monuments"; further, it had no "citizens," and it possessed no corporate identity, no government distinct from that of the surrounding countryside. It had no need of a town hall as "a place of assembly where citizens could exercise their political rights." It did not defend itself; its defenses were built by authority of the central government, to which all alike were subservient, and as part of its nationwide defense system.

Nor were there physical symbols of the religious element of Chinese life comparable to those in the West. On the one hand, China had no sacred cities or holy public shrines. The state cult was the private business of the emperor; its important physical monuments were the Temple of the Imperial Ancestors and the Altar of Land and Grain (both in the palace precincts), the Altars of Heaven and Earth in the suburbs of the capital, and the tombs of the imperial ancestors, which were invariably located in rural and often quite remote settings. On the other hand, Chinese public religion was simply not comparable to Western religion in terms of its organization, its financing, or its links with the city as the place where its monuments might attest to its role in society. Both Buddhist and Taoist churches had merely nominal and rudimentary administrative hierarchies imposed by the state; neither church had a

hierarchy generated from within to fulfill its own organizational needs; in fact, both religions existed in atomized structure, and each temple was an independent unit. There were no bishops or archbishops, no diocesan or synodal structures of authority, no cathedrals or chapter houses. It is true that every city and town had its important temples, many patronized by the government and its officials. Those called the Confucian temples or temples of literature were in fact state offices, important chiefly for their secular functions. The Buddhist and Taoist temples were licensed by the state, which was normally rather unsympathetic toward them and at times suppressive. They could be closed or required to move by secular authority. Although city temples were often wealthy, ornate, and not infrequently the tallest buildings on the low and sprawling profile of the Chinese city, they did not dominate it spiritually or architecturally. And temples in rural settings were often larger, richer, and more ornate than city ones. With relatively few exceptions, the great European church buildings are identified with city life. The great and enduring centers of Chinese religions, on the other hand, are not marked by permanent architectural monuments of stone and glass, and most of them are in remote rural, often mountain, settings. Most important of all in this comparison, however, is the fact that the cities of China were not keystones in an important religious institutional structure—a state within the state as in Europe, or an arm of the state as in ancient Egypt and the Classical and Islamic worlds. This deprived the Chinese city of one of the elements that contributed most conspicuously to the importance of cities elsewhere.

Religion's organizational forms and physical monuments offer us one striking point of contrast between the Chinese city and the premodern city in the West. Perhaps other characteristics of the Chinese city will suggest still further links between its physical components and the organizational basis of Chinese life. The architectural peculiarities of the Chinese city are suggestive. Chinese urban houses, business structures, temples, and government buildings remained essentially one-story structures or combination one- and two-story parts forming single units.²⁶ The profile of the Chinese city thus is flat. Moreover, the parts of a single unit, be it small house or large official building, are arranged to enclose, and to include the use of, open ground. Exposure to air and sun is essential to the design of buildings. In these essentials of design, in materials used, and in style and ornamentation, Chinese urban structures were indistinguishable from rural structures. There is in traditional Chinese architecture no such thing as a "town house" style, a "country church" style, or a "city office" style. The Chinese city did not

force structures up into the air like the four- and six-story burghers' houses in old European cities or the tenements of ancient Rome. Nor did the pressure on space gradually remove from the city its courtyards and gardens as it tended to in Renaissance and modern Europe. The Chinese city did not totally lack public squares and public gardens, but it had less need of them because its citizens had, and probably preferred, their small, private, but open and sunny courtyards.

The continuum from city to suburbs to open countryside thus was embodied in the uniformity of building styles and layout and in the use of ground space. Neither the city wall nor the actual limits of the suburban concentration marked the city off from the countryside in architectural terms. Nor did styles of dress, patterns of eating and drinking, means of transportation, or any other obvious aspect of daily life display characteristic dichotomies between urban and rural.

Another point of contrast between the premodern cities of China and those of Europe emerges from the following observations by Mumford:

Cities are products of time. They are the molds in which men's lifetimes have cooled and congealed, giving lasting shape, by way of art, to moments that would otherwise vanish with the living and leave no means of renewal or wider participation behind them. In the city, time becomes visible: buildings and monuments and public ways, more open than the written record, more subject to the gaze of many men than the scattered artifacts of the countryside, leave an imprint upon the minds even of the ignorant or the indifferent. Through the material fact of preservation, time challenges time, time clashes with time: habits and values carry over beyond the living group, streaking with different strata of time the character of any single generation. Layer upon layer, past times preserve themselves in the city until life itself is finally threatened with suffocation: then, in sheer defense, modern man invents the museum.

By the diversity of its time-structures, the city in part escapes the tyranny of a single present, or the monotony of a future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past.²⁷

Much of what Mumford has so effectively observed here is true of Chinese cities and perhaps of all cities; that is, the urban concentration of physical monuments undoubtedly does leave its imprint on the viewer and helps to make him aware of his society and his cultural traditions. But in one striking way the Chinese city again is an exception to the most important point of the passage: the Chinese city did not possess visible "diversity of its time-structures." Time did not challenge time in the eyes of a wanderer in a city street in traditional China. In China there was no danger of the past not preserving itself; but neither did the

architectural monuments remind one of the past, because architecturally the present was never strikingly new or different. No Chinese building was obviously datable in terms of period styles. No traditional Chinese city ever had a Romanesque or a Gothic past to be overlaid in a burst of classical renaissance, of a Victorian nightmare to be scorned in an age of aggressive functionalism. In that sense, the Chinese city did not escape “the tyranny of a single present,” but neither did it consider “a future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past” to be monotonous. Here, though, from a description of the physical appearance of the city we have digressed to note a continuum in time, whereas the rural-urban continuum in space is more pertinent to this discussion.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate urban-rural uniformities, to be sure. Yet the cultural life of Chinese civilization, in particular from Sung times onward, did not fall into two widely divergent spheres that we can label the urban and the rural. In part this was because of the rural ideals of the upper classes, the permeation of those ideals throughout the whole society, and the tendency of the upper classes to alternate between living in town and living in the country. It is easy to concentrate on the life of the educated upper classes because it is so difficult to learn much about the masses of the people. Nonetheless, it is significant to observe that the lives and cultural activities of the elite were not confined to the cities. Among the lower ranks of society there probably were much more clearly identifiable urbanites and ruralites, and no doubt the distinction between city and country must have had greater meaning in their daily lives. As I said earlier, Chinese cities were not beleaguered islands in a sea of barbarism, and the continuity of cultural tone throughout Chinese society must reflect some aspects of its organization.

The concentration of people and wealth, and the possibilities for division of labor and specialization, enabled cities to support some cultural activities that were not possible in the countryside. Some of the arts and crafts and protosciences depended on shops and markets, goods and craftsmen, and the patronage of densely concentrated populations. This point is obvious, and it fits our expectations about the roles of cities in cultural history. Once again, however, it is the qualifications on analogies drawn with other times and places that are important. For example, Chinese schools were in cities in the case of government institutions (the exceptions being a few famous private *shu-yüan* [academies] that became recipients of government subsidies and thereafter functioned as semiofficial schools). But many of the *shu-yüan*,

which in Sung and later imperial history often functioned as centers of intellectual activity, were located in villages or out-of-the-way rural settings, especially in the centuries of Sung through Ming. (Tilemann Grimm elsewhere in this book notes a mid-Ch'ing and later trend toward urban locations.) Publishing activities frequently were not in the major cities; some of the most important publishing was done at the village properties of scholar-officials. Government offices and government schools usually had small libraries, and these were located in walled cities. But the great libraries (except for those belonging to the imperial court) were private, and they were located as often as not in the rural-village or small-town properties of their gentry owners. Private art collections, too, were frequently housed in the rural villas of the rich. Scholars, poets, thinkers, writers, and artists customarily were in public service for a portion of their lives, and hence for some time necessarily resident in cities far from their native places. But their productive years were often the years of their private life, when they were widely dispersed and very apt to be residing in rural places.

These features of Chinese cultural life probably did not exist in any equivalent fashion in the cultural life of Europe or the Classical world. Perhaps we can formulate the concept of a culturally "open" situation in China. That is, Chinese cultural activities involved both the cities and the countryside, they were indistinguishably "urban" and "rural," and they reflected attitudes toward city and country that were perhaps distinct from those in premodern Europe, where a few great cities tended to monopolize a more "confined" cultural life.

Similarly, it may be that the concept of the "provincial" as opposed to the "metropolitan" did not exist in China (especially from T'ang times onward) as it did in the cultural life of Europe. True, careers in the capital were different in character and prestige from those in the provinces. But in the cultural life of the empire there was no corresponding gulf between the capital and the provinces. Some of the Chinese provinces were culturally inferior, especially those more distant or more recently sinicized, such as Kweichow and Yunnan. But the cultural life of some of the Yangtze Valley provinces was recognized as being superior to that of the capital and the provinces adjacent to it. In the Yüan period, the cultural life of China continued to center in the Lower Yangtze area even though the political capital was at Ta-tu, modern Peking. And through the Ming and Ch'ing periods, even though the dynastic capital created at Nanking in 1368 was moved to Peking after 1420, the provinces of the Yangtze area continued to rival the northern capital as centers of culture and exceeded it in overall richness of cultural life. Thus not all the provinces were provincial in a cultural sense.

Were we to examine the organization of economic life, we would find that in some ways it paralleled the dispersion of cultural activities. For example, many of the most flourishing market areas and commercial concentrations were outside city walls, though adjacent to major cities. Some beginnings of “national markets,” such as the Wu-hu rice market, were not located in major cities. And economic centers as such seem to have been widely dispersed.

Our case for an urban-rural continuum in traditional China thus rests upon evidence from the physical form of cities, from styles in architecture and dress, from evidence about urban and rural attitudes in elite (and perhaps in popular) psychology, from the structure and character of cultural activities, and even from some glimpses into the pattern of economic life. It suggests that cities, important concentrations of Chinese life, related to the whole of China’s national existence in ways that differ from our expectations about the premodern city elsewhere. As we examine the transformation of Nanking in the fourteenth century, these distinctive features of Chinese civilization must be kept in mind.

Nanking: The Site and Its Historical Associations

The earliest historical notice concerning the general location of Nanking dates from the end of the Shang dynasty. A granduncle of the future King Wu of Chou, by name T’ai-po, fled the Shang state to the region of the Ching barbarians (*Ching man*), introduced himself and was accepted as their ruler, and is credited with having brought the refining elements of Chinese civilization to them. The Chou rulers, who succeeded the Shang, acknowledged T’ai-po’s presence in the region, associated the name of Wu with his state, and confirmed the descendants of his brother Chung-yung in their tenure as regional princes. Their city of Wu is said to have been located some forty miles southwest of modern Nanking. And though cities as such are physically impermanent things in Chinese history, this set of imperishable historical associations is regarded as the beginning of Nanking’s history. The “Historical Outline” sections of all the successive gazetteers of Nanking have commenced with this story. This legend reveals that the Lower Yangtze was then only on the fringes of Chinese civilization, still a barbarian area well after the first flowering of classical Chinese civilization in the Yellow River valley.

The traditions of a legitimate state of Wu in the Lower Yangtze valley, a state that gradually became involved in the politics of Chou China, are continuous if initially scanty from that time onward. Only in the fifth century B.C. do they become specific and give evidence that the region was maturing culturally and politically. The most venerable

of Nanking's many names, Chin-ling ("gold tumulus"), dates from this era; early legends explaining the name have been accepted as historical though they clearly are not readily verifiable. Around 220 B.C., the victorious First Ch'in Emperor, touring the newly absorbed parts of his great empire, visited the site of Nanking and is said to have noticed its auspicious attributes. His astrologers told him that five hundred years later a mighty ruler would arise here. To break up that threat to his descendants, he had part of a mountain (a "sleeping dragon") cut away and diverted the Ch'in-huai River through the place. Of course this failed; true to the prediction, a ruler making strong claims to become emperor of all China did occupy the site five hundred years later. (That is, the Eastern Chin rulers made Nanking their capital about five hundred years later; if one's computations are adjusted slightly to a more conservative reckoning, Sun Ch'üan, ruler of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu also could be considered the prophecy's subject.)

The Ch'in emperor also ordered the auspicious name Chin-ling changed to the much more humble-sounding Mo-ling ("hay mound"). Nonetheless he retained it as one of the county seats of the new centrally administered empire, and throughout the centuries of Ch'in and Han it remained always at least that, administered under the commandery of Yangchow. That ancient city, some 50 miles away across the Yangtze to the northeast, and Soochow, almost 200 miles downriver near the coast, were the great cities of the area. As seats of provincial-level administration they dominated the Lower Yangtze region, and as centers of superior agricultural areas they were also far richer and more important than Nanking.

It was not until the end of Han that Nanking became an important political center, and that came about as regional warlords sought bases from which to challenge the authority of the crumbling Han empire and each other. One of these warlords, Sun Ts'e, began to build independent military power in the Lower Yangtze area in A.D. 195. At first he chose as his base Chen-chiang, a city on the south bank of the Yangtze opposite Yangchow; it seemed to be a strategic location from which to challenge Yangchow and move on northward while utilizing the security offered by the great river. But when he died in 200, his younger brother Sun Ch'üan succeeded him and chose as his base Nanking, the future capital of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu. Under the names Chien-yeh and Chien-k'ang, the site we call Nanking served several successors of Sun Ch'üan until 317. In that year the emperors of the state of Chin, the major power in China in this period of disunion, were defeated by invaders in the North; they fled to Nanking and made it their capital.

It was thereafter continuously the capital of the “Southern Dynasties”—the Eastern Chin, the Sung, the Ch’i, the Liang, and the Ch’en—until in 589 the Sui dynasty again united all of China under one rule and, like the Han dynasty before it, made its capitals at ancient sites on the Yellow River.

The variegated history of the place is too rich in detail—stirring detail to the Chinese audiences of marketplace storytellers and opera performances. It probably would stir the contemporary Western reader less, and we must forgo most of it. But one or two large issues of importance to us emerge from this colorful era in Nanking’s history.

What was it about the site of Nanking that enabled the city to become a political and military base dominating the Lower Yangtze and threatening the whole of North China? Was it really the “royal air” that successive rulers of the Southern Dynasties kept discovering there, confirming them in their imperial pretensions, that made it an appropriate site for the capital of an empire? Did accumulated legend become a major factor in realpolitik? The Sui conqueror, fearing the city as a symbol of southern power, ordered that it be destroyed, that plows overturn the earth within its former walls, and that a new, smaller administrative city be built slightly to one side of the old site. This was partially a symbolic act, for it was designed both to destroy physically the symbol about which resistance to the Sui might form and to weaken the site’s geomantic features. However, the answer to the question about Nanking’s importance in history probably does not lie in geomancy, despite the consistency with which the historical accounts refer to that factor. Lao Kan, a modern historian noted for his critical acumen and his knowledge of the early imperial period, provides another kind of answer. It merits summarizing:

Throughout the Han period, Soochow and Yangchow with their canal locations, being central to agricultural regions of high productivity, embodying conjunctions of political and transport significance, far outweighed Nanking in importance.

Although Nanking was not in the center of an important agricultural area, it was central to the relations among several important agricultural zones. And although it derived no significance from a canal location, it commanded one of the strategic locations on the Yangtze, a still more important transportation artery. During the four hundred years of Han, the Kiangnan (Lower Yangtze) area steadily advanced in economic development and in transportation facilities. Water transportation in particular became ever more important. A need was recognized for additional urban centers in the area, and this naturally tended to enhance the growth and economic importance of

Ching-k'ou (modern Chen-chiang), and of Nanking. But beyond this, Nanking possessed an additional and quite important factor—its military position.

The importance of Nanking is qualitatively different from that of Soochow and Yangchow. The latter represent locations at which water transport is more important than land; in the case of Nanking, both are important. From the beginning of history China's cultural hub had been within the "Yellow River Triangle," and the center of wealth also was there. The important urban centers there were Han-tan, Yeh, Ch'ü-fu, and so on, as well as nearby cities such as Loyang, Lin-tzu and P'eng-ch'eng. In terms of population density and level of commerce, these places all were superior to Soochow and Yangchow at least through the Han and Wei periods. If we speak of water transport to the North to serve these cities, Yangchow was situated where it could draw traffic from the Yangtze and pass it on via the Huai River, this giving Yangchow an adequate basis for prosperity. But when we turn to land transport from the Lower Yangtze to the important centers of the North, then Nanking, not Yangchow, lay across the shortest and most direct route. In terms of transport costs for commercial goods, it was more economical to go via Yangchow and the water route. But if one intended to draw on the grain surpluses of the Lake T'ai region and create a military base from which to move northward, then there was more at stake than mere transport costs. The time factor would demand the use of a more direct route as a primary concern. Second, the case of moving northward would demand avoiding low-lying swampy and water-channel crisscrossed areas through which to march armies. Yangchow in this light becomes an inferior choice of base; Nanking offered far greater ease of moving armies once the Yangtze had been crossed.

This point is not one that was immediately recognized; Sun Ch'üan, the first person to establish a capital at Nanking, initially selected Chen-chiang as his capital because of its location on the south bank of the Yangtze across from Yangchow. Later on he became aware of Nanking's superior qualifications and moved his capital there.

After destroying the Nanking of the Southern Dynasties, the Sui left a small administrative city and military garrison on the single most important fortified hill, and intended that the city remain insignificant. But by a century and a half later, in mid-T'ang times, it had recovered its former importance and again flourished. The great wealth and resources of Kiangnan caused its recovery, and maintained its steady growth onward from that time to the present. Note, for example, how quickly Nanking overcame the destruction suffered when it was the Taiping capital in the 1860's.²⁸

Lao Kan analyzes factors of strategic importance in relation to the wealth of the Lower Yangtze region and the political and military centers of the North. These conditions were enhanced by the continued economic growth of China, but they reflect essentially unchanging relationships within its economic and political structure. In the second

half of the fourteenth century, when the Ming founder sought a base at which to build a military and political movement, advisers learned in history used the “royal air” argument and other auspicious signs in support of Nanking. Such arguments also had public value in social-psychological terms. But the real reason his advisers urged him to seize and utilize Nanking was probably that they were aware of the strategic factors Lao Kan describes. Nonetheless, the historical record enlarges on Nanking’s “royal air” and related favorable auspices and somewhat suppresses the strategic factors involved in the decision.

China’s leaders have been as hardheaded about geopolitical factors as those in any civilization, but by the fourteenth century the rich layers of accumulated historical associations also were a “real” component of the site we call Nanking. A number of elaborate tombs of the Ch’i and Liang dynasties, some stone remnants of old fortifications, terraces on which palaces had stood—these were virtually all that had endured of the physical city that had been the capital of the Southern Dynasties. But the site was also endowed with the elements of a mystique that had the power to command the minds and the attention of the people. History had given Nanking claims to importance in other, but no less real, spheres than the geopolitical.

We must consider the scope and the depth of these claims. In the fourth through sixth centuries, Nanking was the capital of the small territory held by a succession of dynasties that considered themselves quite self-consciously the repository of Chinese cultural values in a time when aliens had invaded the old heartland in the North. The zeal with which the Chinese of the Southern Dynasties carried the transforming influences of their civilization into the frontier regions of the South was heightened by their feeling that the T’o-pa and other alien invaders in the North seemed to be threatening the very existence of their cultural values. (In fact, the hindsight of history shows that it was the other way around; civilization was threatening the very existence of the T’o-pa.) The heroic figures of the centuries of disunion—men like the imperturbable Prime Minister to the Chin, Hsieh An, and the recluse poet, T’ao Ch’ien—are among the great heroes of Chinese civilization, their significance not at all limited to this period and region.²⁹

Nanking and the Southern Dynasties also were of particular importance in the history of Buddhism. Though Neo-Taoism had flourished in the fourth century, especially in the South and at the court in Nanking, it was a short-lived movement in intellectual history and was rapidly displaced by Buddhism in the same intellectual environment. It is fair to say that Buddhism made its first great strides toward complete

sinicization in the fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries, and did so most notably under the patronage of the southern court and the southern elite. In the early sixth century Nanking had dozens of famous temples; a T'ang dynasty source states that in the entire territory controlled by the Liang dynasty at that time there were 2,846 temples and 82,700 monks, the numbers of both having grown fantastically during the preceding century.³⁰ In popular legend some rulers and eminent Buddhist figures of the southern court were bodhisattvas, and Nanking became a revered place in vulgarized religious traditions.

In literary history, too, Nanking acquired a status that later ages revered. The great monuments of Six Dynasties literary theory are associated with Nanking; the golden age of T'ang poetry looked directly to antecedents in the Southern Dynasties; and most T'ang poets who visited Nanking wrote nostalgic verse recalling the rich associations of the place. Some of these poems were among the best known of the T'ang period, and in later ages were very widely known and were recited even by illiterate commoners. Few places in China could surpass Nanking in the depth of its literary associations, and no other kind of associations contributed more to the fame and glory of a place in the Chinese mind.

These associations all endured the physical destruction of the city in 589; in fact, that event assumed little significance in the subsequent tellings of local history, for recovery was rapid. Nanking was a flourishing city by late T'ang, and naturally again became a regional warlord base at the end of the T'ang in the tenth century. Throughout the Five Dynasties period it was the capital of the regional dynasty called the Southern T'ang, which, though not of major political importance, achieved imperishable fame in literary history. Its three emperors were literary figures, and the last, by name Li Yü, was in particular one of the great *tz'u* poets of history. After the Sung dynasty was founded in 960, the Southern T'ang lingered on for another fifteen years before the Sung emperor somewhat reluctantly decided to use force against it. The Sung troops captured the poet-emperor Li Yü but brought little destruction to city or population,³¹ and throughout the Northern Sung period (960–1126), Nanking remained an important city, even though reduced in status again to a seat of provincial administration.

When the Chin Tartars conquered the Sung capital at Kaifeng in 1126, the Sung court sought safety in flight to the South, at first designating Nanking the "temporary capital"; then it was decided that Hangchow offered impressive qualifications as a city and still greater safety from Chin attacks along the Yangtze. Nonetheless, Nanking was re-

garded as one of the key bastions in the Southern Sung defense system, and was a major post in the administrative structure. So throughout the Sung and on into the Yüan period, Nanking remained one of the three or four most eminent places in China both in psychological terms, with its historical associations, and in geopolitical terms, as a regional center of great strategic significance. If some qualitatively new factors were added in the Sung-Yüan period, they were ones that were transforming all of China's cities—especially those of the rich southeast. These factors were economic growth, commerce, and technological advances in agriculture and industry; they combined to present new and greatly enlarged possibilities for the size, power, and wealth of cities.

Katō Shigeshi's study of urbanism in the Sung period has established a high point in our knowledge of the city in traditional China. He has provided a wealth of information and interpretation concerning the form, size, functions, organization, and life of cities in that age. He also offers some very meaningful comparisons with the city in the preceding T'ang era, revealing trends of development in the whole civilization that are clearly mirrored in the urban scene. Anyone attempting to examine Chinese urbanism in the post-Sung era would do well to commence with a careful reading of Katō's work. In his famous 1931 monograph, "The Development of Cities During the Sung Dynasty," he discusses (1) city walls and city moats; (2) the city ward system (*fang*) and its collapse; (3) the urban subprefectural organization (*hsiang*); (4) the collapse of the controlled market system (*shih-chih*); (5) the new urban entertainment places called *wa-tzu*; and (6) taverns (*chiu-lou*). He concludes the study with the following brief summary of his findings:

The materials presented in the foregoing sections all represent principal components of the more significant phenomena making their appearance in the cities of the Sung period. Among these, some emerged for the first time only in the Sung. Examples are the collapse of the city ward system; private houses having entrances opening directly onto the main streets; the market system progressively sinking into complete collapse; shops and businesses being able to set up any place within or without the city wall and to be opened directly onto the main streets; the establishment of *wa-tzu* as places of recreation and entertainment marked by concentrations of theaters; and taverns (or wine houses) rising to two and three stories and dominating main streets. From all of these we can see that many kinds of restrictions imposed by the [previous] forms of urban organization had now been thrown off, that the life of residents had become very free and uninhibited, and that they passed lives in pursuit of pleasure. It goes without saying that these changes were the consequence of increases in the urban population, the flourishing of urban commerce and

of communications, the increase in the wealth in cities, and the reinforcement of the urban dwellers' many desires and demands. However, the reasons for all of this still must be carefully studied. Moreover, the relationships of these changes with government, military affairs, literature, art, and the like must all be investigated. These questions all await some future study; for the time being one can merely describe the phenomena of change, and with that rest his pen.³²

Fortunately, Katō Shigeshi's pen was not to rest permanently for another fifteen years, and he eventually added much further knowledge on the questions of cause that he had left unexplored in his 1931 study. His contemporary in China, Li Chien-nung, also explored many of the same economic and social issues in the history of the Sung, Yüan, and Ming periods. In discussing markets in their urban settings, he drew on many of the same materials Katō had used; and from his somewhat different point of view, he corroborated many of Katō's findings.³³

To my knowledge, there exist no studies of these phenomena attendant upon economic growth and social change that focus specifically on Nanking in the Sung and Yüan periods. Moreover, there are no very obvious materials from that time from which to make a detailed study. There are extant a Nanking Yüan-period gazetteer of 1344 and portions of still earlier ones from Sung times, and there are informal notes and sketches of Yüan-period residents of the region. But it is not possible at this time to attempt a detailed reconstruction of the life of Nanking in the fourteenth century prior to the city's fall in 1356 to the band of rebels who a dozen years later founded there the Ming dynasty. We can only assume that this ancient city, with its particular circumstances of site, its strategic significance, and its rich accumulation of legend and historical associations, shared in the changing character of the Chinese city in that age.

From Rebel Base to Imperial Capital

The logic of the site as the Ming capital. The mid-fourteenth century was a time of breakdown for the Chinese state, foreshadowing the imminent end of the rule over China by the descendants of Chinggis and Khubilai. In some places the common people still could be coerced by fragments of the sinicized Mongol state's once all-powerful military machine. And many in the higher ranks of society, particularly the legitimists among the Confucian literati, were restrained from repudiating the collapsing regime by their sense of propriety and the demands of loyalty. But in its public aspects, society was breaking up.

In the winter of 1354-55, an ambitious young military leader named

Chu Yüan-chang, nominally in the service of a senior rebel warlord but actually planning an independent rebellion of his own, observed the crumbling of Mongol rule throughout China from a small county capital he had captured during the late summer of 1354 near the north bank of the Yangtze River. Then, as now, it was called Ch'u or Ch'u-hsien. Chu Yüan-chang saw rebel bases springing up all about him in the Lower Yangtze basin during that winter, isolating pockets of the highly fragmented Mongol military power. A shrewd observer, he realized that he would need a better base than Ch'u-hsien from which to compete in the struggle ahead, for he recognized that the town did not qualify as a "central place" for even his current modest insurrection. The *Veritable Records* (*T'ai-tsu shih-lu*), a day-by-day account of his political acts, quotes him on the subject: "Ch'u is a hill town. Boats cannot reach it. Merchants and peddlers do not gather in it. It has no topographical advantages as a military bastion. It is not adequate to serve as our base."³⁴ So the following summer, after crossing the Yangtze just west of Nanking, he sought advice from an old Confucian literatus. In reply to the question "What about taking Nanking?"* he got the following typical scholar-official advice. "Nanking has been the capital of emperors and kings past; there 'the dragon coils and the tiger crouches.' It is bounded by the natural barrier of the Yangtze. Take it and hold it. Utilize its setting, from which to send out armies and extend yourself on all four sides. Then where shall you turn that you shall not conquer?"³⁵

The subsequent Nanking of Ming imperial grandeur, the city built to match those geomantic features and historical associations, could scarcely have been in the mind of the future Ming founder when he was planning his attack on the stronghold then guarding the site. During the remainder of 1355, Chu Yüan-chang moved his small but growing army close to Nanking, capturing county capitals on all sides. He also reflected on Nanking itself: "Nanking's walls and moats are [half] encircled by the Great River on the right, and on the left rest on imposing hills.† On three sides it leans against the river. The hills serve it as walls [beyond its walls], and the river as moat [beyond its moats]. The lay of the land, thus offering natural defenses and barriers, gives no advantages to an attacker employing ground forces."³⁶ The *Veritable Records* goes on to discuss what stratagems had been employed on three earlier occasions when imperial rule over southern parts of China had been

* The original text says "Chin-ling"; Nanking is used throughout this paper in translating whatever names may have been used for the city in Chinese texts.

† Nanking is located east and south of a wide bend in the Yangtze (the river is flowing north at this point). See Map 1.

ended by the capture of Nanking. For the military conquest of Nanking by the Western Chin in A.D. 280, by the Sui in 589, and by the Sung in 975 had in each case reduced a southern power and permitted dynastic consolidation by a state based in the North.

The Chinese obsession with history was thus reflected even in this scarcely literate peasant upstart as he considered a base for rebellion. In the spring of 1356, after having studied the situation over the recent months, Chu Yüan-chang besieged and quickly took Nanking. This done, he took steps that gave evidence of the importance he attached to his conquest. He changed the city's name from then current Chi-ch'ing³⁷ to Ying-t'ien, meaning "in response to Heaven"—a name that announced a claim on the Mandate of Heaven. He also took for himself the title "Duke of the State of Wu," indicating that (for the time being) the Mandate was being claimed for someone else, i.e., his nominal overlord in the rebellion to which he still proclaimed his allegiance. But by establishing the offices of the rebellion's central and provincial military and civil government in Nanking—again in his overlord's name—where he could keep watch over them, Chu Yüan-chang made certain that he would be the master of the rebellion's central command post in any event. And he began to look about the city he had seized, to see what it offered and what it needed in order to serve his ambitions.

Chu Yüan-chang had no personal connections with Nanking or any of the other great cities along the Lower Yangtze, and there is a fortuitous element in his selection of Nanking as a base. To be sure, the geographic range in which his small military force had freedom of action was quite restricted, yet within that area Nanking was not the easiest city to seize. It was garrisoned and valiantly defended, of course; but in overcoming the garrison and conquering this particular place, Chu Yüan-chang had accomplished much more than the mere taking of a stoutly defended city. He had vastly propelled the rebellion of which he was a part and had achieved personal eminence for the first time. Ch'u-hsien had been a relatively meaningless site; Nanking, though, was of another order of magnitude. The small mountain city he had felt forced to abandon in his search for a base still looked in this century—perhaps still looks today—much as it looked to the fourteenth-century rebel's eyes. But Nanking, under his vast energy and ambition, was soon transformed again into one of the world's great cities, far outstripping in physical size and splendor all of its previous existences.

The Ming founder was never quite sure that he had settled on the perfect site. In 1368 he made the city the first capital of a united China ever to be located south of the Yangtze and far from the old heartland

of Chinese history. All of the historical precedents for a center of political power in the South were inauspicious from a dynastic founder's point of view, suggesting division, weakness, and short duration. The urge to "return" to the North was very strong, even for this founder whose regional identity was Lower Yangtze; he had been born nearby and his family origins were to be traced to Chü-jung, one of the counties traditionally administered from the provincial seat at Nanking. Throughout the first two decades of his reign, Chu Yüan-chang asked his advisers to investigate and report on Loyang, Sian (ancient Ch'ang-an), and other northern sites, and he sent his son and heir to again consider a move to the North that would identify his Ming dynasty more directly with the past traditions of the Chinese empire. But eventually he decided that the vast new city he was building at Nanking would serve. He continued to build it, he had his own tomb erected beyond its walls, and he expected it to remain the principal political center of his dynasty; only metahistorians can solve the problem of whether the pull of the Great Wall frontier upon the politico-military center of the Chinese state is irresistible and has made inevitable the transfers of the central government to Peking in 1421, in 1912, and in 1949. In Chu Yüan-chang's lifetime, in any event, the choice of Nanking seemed reasonable and appeared to be permanent.

The Ming founder had gained by accident the opportunity to capture Nanking, but once he possessed it, its virtues as a center of empire were obvious. He was aware of the strategic significance of its location, for he had defeated major rivals based downriver at Soochow and upriver at Hankow, as well as the Mongols themselves with their military and administrative center at Peking. He had captured Hangchow and Nanchang, other important regional bases in the center of China. Thus he knew the geopolitical factors that gave advantages to Nanking, for his rise to power had benefited directly from them. Also, he learned about the site's traditions as a political center and about its fame in legend and history. From beginnings of the most humble kind and a childhood of destitution and cultural deprivation, Chu Yüan-chang became one of the most avid and accomplished adult learners in all history.³⁸ Though it is true that his chief advisers in political and cultural matters were all men of the region, they were more devoted to the traditions of Chinese history than to any region, and their support of the Ming founder in his creation of a new capital for China in this region cannot be ascribed to parochialism.

In fact, Nanking was so clearly in the cultural and economic heartland of China at the time that it would have been impossible to govern the

country without drawing predominantly on the human and material resources of this region; the Yung-lo emperor also found this to be true after 1401 and throughout his preparations for moving the capital to Peking in 1421. Moreover, when the administrative center was moved to Peking, Nanking did not revert to the status of "secondary capitals" of earlier history. In Han and T'ang times, the secondary capitals had been important symbols but relatively unimportant administrative centers. They retained nothing more than a special garrison and offices of local administration designated by somewhat more grandiose titles than otherwise would have been the case. But Nanking, even after 1421, had an unprecedented range of significant political and administrative functions for a second capital. The late Ming writer Ku Ch'i-yüan has argued this perceptively after brushing aside an official's criticisms about the limited functions, and hence superfluous nature, of the duplicate Six Ministries in Nanking:

Alas, this [writer] fails to display awareness of the dynasty's profound calculation and far-ranging considerations! For there are palaces and imperial tombs located here. There are the affairs of the armies and the defense garrisons. This is the place where there are treasuries and where the nation's land registers and taxation records are stored. This is the hub of all the wealth and resources of the southeast. Though there have been established here the Six Ministries to carry on their separate management of all these affairs, yet one might fear that still would not be adequate. How can one slightly refer to them as superfluous offices!

Ablly stated indeed are the views of the late Ch'iu [Chün 1420-95], who observed: the wealth of the realm is all produced in the southeast and Nanking is its center; garrisoning and military affairs assume great proportions in the northwest and Peking is its key. Establishing two capitals is to dwell amidst [each] and provide for good order; food is thereby sufficient and soldiers are thereby sufficient; it is based on the strategic features of the situation and it accomplishes mastery on all sides.

Ah, that says it well!

...

The secondary capital's offices and bureaus were not changed [i.e., abolished when the new capital was established at Peking], thereby to maintain everlasting [domestic] security, and strength into the farthest reaches; how can the [systems of] former dynasties and previous states be considered comparable!⁸⁹

As Ku Ch'i-yüan saw so clearly, the two-capital system in Ming China was different from that of previous dynasties; the overall level of China's governmental functions was higher, and thus the supplementary activ-

ities maintained at the secondary capital were now essential and not just of formal and ritual significance. Nanking's continuing role is witness to the increased importance both of the South in the economy of the empire and of the government's hand in controlling and maintaining its managerial interests. The logic of Chu Yüan-chang's choice of capital was further evident in the new form the two-capital system achieved in the century following his death.⁴⁰

Building the new city walls. The city that Chu Yüan-chang captured in 1356 is described in the Nanking gazetteer of 1344.⁴¹ The walls, and the layout of the streets and markets, were those of the Southern T'ang city (the Southern T'ang had taken over the city, which had been built anew in 920 by their immediate predecessors in the Five Dynasties period, and had improved it throughout the next half century). The city walls were more or less square, roughly two miles on a side, and had eight gates. Originally, the walls were said to have been 25 feet wide at the top, 35 feet wide at the base, and 25 feet high.⁴² The Southern T'ang court perhaps further heightened the walls a few feet, and certainly built massive gate towers of immense blocks of stone and added moats and outer works. Sung writers still spoke of these fortifications as some of the most formidable in the empire, unusual in their use of stone and in their imposing appearance.⁴³

The inner walled area (*tzu-ch'eng*) had served as the palace city of the Southern T'ang until 975. When the Sung dynasty conquered the Southern T'ang and reduced the city to the status of a provincial capital, the former palace city continued to house the appropriate government offices. At the time of the Chin conquest of the northern part of Sung China in 1126, the Sung emperor lingered at Nanking for a time in his flight to the South and considered designating it his temporary capital. And although he ultimately selected Hangchow as a safer site, the former palace city again was called by that name and remained a "detached palace" (*hsing-kung*) throughout the Southern Sung. That meant that its buildings were kept up and even enlarged and improved; a number of Southern Sung emperors stayed there temporarily from time to time.

During the Yüan period, a number of important regional administrative offices were assigned to Nanking briefly, only to be moved to Yangchow or Hangchow. Beyond the prefectural administration, the main administrative organ of Yüan government to be located at Nanking more or less throughout the dynasty was the Southern Censorate, one of three main divisions of the Yüan Censorate (the others being the central government Censorate offices and the Northwest Censorate,

whose regional offices were at Sian). The chief censor, with rank 1b, was the highest official resident there, and he headed a censorate staff of about 100 civil service appointees plus several times that number of subofficials. The prefectural administrative office (*tsung-kuan-fu*), responsible for the civil government of the prefecture (*lu*), was staffed by a Mongol chief prefect of rank 3a, a Chinese assistant prefect of rank 4a, and about 40 other officials. Five counties, two of them with seats within the walls and three with seats at other cities lying south as well as east (Chü-jung, Li-yang, and Li-shui), were administered under this prefecture. The garrison command (*wan-hu fu*) was headed by a Mongol military officer with rank 3a and was staffed with about 100 other military officers. Each of the two county governments located within the walls had its own compound with attached educational, taxation, and other offices; was headed by magistrates with rank 7a; and was staffed by seven or eight other officials, plus subofficials and clerks.⁴⁴ Such was the official community of the Yüan city in normal times; in late Yüan, though, times were not normal, and incomplete staffing of offices probably existed, giving evidence of the deterioration of Mongol rule.

We cannot be sure about the population within the walls in the 1350's. Such figures normally are not preserved since they are bulked with those for the county to which the area belongs. In this case, two counties shared the population within and lying beyond the city to the east and south to a distance of some 25 miles away from the river. Disappointingly, the gazetteer of 1344 simply repeats the generally reliable census of 1297, perhaps indicating that no proper census had been carried out in this area after that date. But those figures do include a separate figure for the population "within the walls," a rare item. That figure is 95,000, while the population of the two-county area (including those 95,000) is 300,000, and that of the five counties making up the prefecture (and again including the 300,000 given above) is 1,250,000. When the Ming founder captured the city and the prefecture in 1356, he reportedly "gained a total military and civilian population there in excess of 500,000."⁴⁵ Though these figures are difficult to interpret, we can gain some sense of the size of the city that the Ming founder made his base in 1356 and that became the new imperial capital soon thereafter. In 1356, it probably was a city of about 100,000; within two decades it was to expand tenfold.

At first Chu Yüan-chang is said to have used the home of a rich citizen both for a residence and for offices, but within a year he moved into the *tzu-ch'eng*, the former palace city, which in Yüan times had been

used for various administrative offices.⁴⁶ During the next five or six years, he was too occupied with building a military and political movement and fighting off nearby rivals to devote much time or energy to city building. In the year 1360, though, the walls were slightly enlarged and repaired to permit the addition of fortifications along the river sides. Some offices of government were built, and most temples and other semi-public buildings were “borrowed,” in whole or in part, to help house the expanding administrative staff. In the mid-1360’s Chu Yüan-chang began to give outward evidence of his imperial ambitions. He had thrown off his allegiance to his former overlords and increasingly was building his own model of an imperial government, directly challenging the Mongols in Peking as the other regional warlords about him fell to his armies in the field. In 1365 he changed the prefectural Confucian Academy into an Imperial University, and in 1366 he began work on vastly enlarged city walls and a new inner palace city. The ancestral shrines, the altars of the state, and other shrines necessary to an imperial government were also laid out in appropriate relationship to the new imperial city.

In 1367, after defeating his last major enemy in the central part of China and launching the final attack on the Mongols in Peking, he decided to proclaim his new dynasty as of the first day of the first lunar month in the new year corresponding to 1368.

Undoubtedly certain advisers throughout these years were entrusted with the task of formulating plans for transforming the small Yüan prefectural city into a vast imperial capital. A great army of builders must have been employed to complete the Altars of Heaven and Earth by the eighth month of 1367, the Temple of the Imperial Ancestors in the ninth month, and the three main audience halls of the new palace city later in that same month. But except for notices in the *Veritable Records* announcing that this or that project was commenced (usually with some ritual act and following consultation with some adviser) or completed, we know almost nothing of the actual process of building. We do know that stone quarries were opened and that brick and tile factories were established, and we know that thousands of households of artisans and builders were moved into the city from other prefectures, but we have no descriptions of the building work or technical reports on plans, engineering, materials, or other features. These details did not command the interest of the Chinese responsible for creating the historical record.

According to most sources, the building of Nanking’s new city wall was begun in the eighth lunar month of 1366, although apparently it was not conceived as one unitary project. Other accounts say that it

was begun only in 1369, but most agree that the work was fundamentally concluded in the eighth month of 1373. The initial intent probably was to add a large bulge to the east of the old Southern T'ang city as it existed in 1356; this bulge would enclose the new palace city and make a "new city" side by side with, and two-thirds the size of, the old city, which was to remain substantially unchanged.⁴⁷ This plan also envisaged an extension of the city to the north and west of the tenth-century north wall. The drum tower (*ku-lou*) as we know it, lying well within the present city, was to have been the north gate of the city wall, a little to the west of the center of a new straight north wall (see Map 1). But in the course of the building a new plan was developed. A decision was made to extend the walls about three miles farther to the northwest to enclose Lion Hill (*Shih-tzu shan*), a strategic height near the river. This added another large, irregular bulge northwest of the intended new city wall, and the area was used primarily to house military units.⁴⁸ The result is probably the most irregular shape of any major Chinese city, the largest space enclosed by a city wall, and the highest, longest, widest, firmest, and most impressive city wall in China. Unlike most previous walls, it was built on a foundation of large stone blocks, was from the first faced entirely either with specially fired bricks of immense size or with cut stone, was paved on the top with further immense slabs of stone, and was topped with brick crenellations. This was the *lo-ch'eng* or main city wall of Nanking. Inside it was the new inner enclosure called the *huang-ch'eng* or imperial city wall; outside it was the *wai-kuo*, an outer line of barriers and gates set in a wall of less substantial construction but of twice the *lo-ch'eng*'s length.

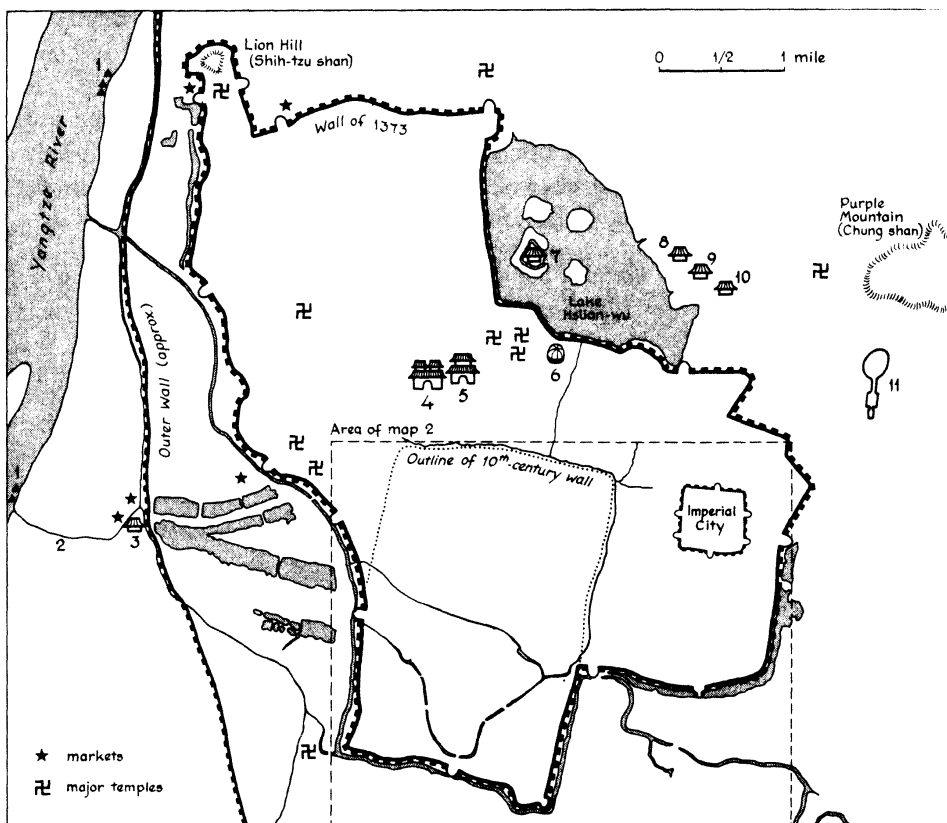
How long is the main city wall of Nanking? As it stands today it is essentially the fourteenth-century wall built by the Ming founder. There should be no ambiguity about its size, but the historical records and even the modern descriptions all differ on this point. The modern *Capital Gazetteer* (*Shou-tu chih*), compiled in 1935 by a distinguished group of historians under the supervision of the Nationalist government, quotes one modern study:

Of old it has been stated that the walls of Nanking are 96 *li* in length; in fact they are only 61 *li* in length. But that length still makes them number one in the world. The walls are more than 60 feet high in places, at their lowest spot 20 feet high, and average more than 40 feet in height. The width of the top of the wall, except for one very short section, is 25 feet. At its broadest it reaches a width of 40 feet. Moreover, this has been paved with stone to make a roadway. The wall is built on a foundation of stone from the Hua-kang

quarries, and the walls are made of huge bricks. The exterior surface has been additionally hardened by covering it with plaster and rice glue. So wherever you scratch off the surface and examine it, it is still pure white in color, and that is why this imposing wall has stood there so boldly for several hundred years, still solid and unchanged today.

But the same gazetteer adds the following, citing a different source: "The wall length is 57 *li* and five-tenths; it is topped by 13,616 crenellations and has 200 guard shelters."⁴⁹

Ninety-six *li* would be approximately 32 miles; 61 *li* would be about 20 miles. A very recent semiofficial publication from mainland China



MAP 1. MING NANKING, ca. 1390. For details within dashed rectangle, see Map 2.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Docks and shipyards | 7. Warehouses for tax and census records |
| 2. New channel opened in the 1370's | 8. Censorate |
| 3. Commercial tax office | 9. Ministry of Justice |
| 4. Bell tower | 10. Grand Court of Revision |
| 5. Drum tower | 11. Ming founder's tomb (<i>Ming Hsiao-ling</i>) |
| 6. Imperial University | |

on the history of Chinese architecture describes Nanking's walls as follows:

Nanking's walls reach a length of 96 *li*, the base is between ten and eighteen meters broad, and the height is between fifteen and eighteen meters. It winds and turns according to the variations in the topography. Its top is level and flat, seven to twelve meters in width. There is a foundation of immense slabs of stone on top of which the wall is built of pounded earth, the exterior encased in huge bricks. Lime is used for the bonding mortar—or it may be that the walls are covered in a material composed of quicklime mixed with glutinous rice paste to form a grout—and the top of the wall is covered with a material composed of earth mixed with tung oil. The engineering of the extra gate-encircling walls (*weng-ch'eng*) outside the city gates makes them particularly firm and remarkable; at the T'ung-chi Gate these consist of as many as four separate barriers, making the gate doubly difficult to breach. The scale of this brick and stone city wall makes it the greatest Chinese city wall in existence; it is also the largest brick and stone city wall in the world. Outside this city wall there is a further outer wall encircling it, 180 *li* in length. We can observe the vastness of the scale of these building works.⁵⁰

This passage repeats the figure for length given in the old accounts and disputed in the 1935 *Capital Gazetteer*. It describes Nanking's walls as the longest Chinese city walls in existence, but not necessarily as the longest that ever were built in China. It repeats the often-made claim that they are the largest in the world today. These figures, if not these comparisons, probably are in error. The United States Army Map Service map of Nanking, corrected with aerial survey photographs taken in 1945, is of a scale and accuracy to permit careful measurement. Such measurement shows the walls of Nanking to be 39,500 yards in length, or about 23.2 miles (roughly 70 *li*). Measurement from a similar map of Peking shows that its walls (including both the added South City and the early-fifteenth-century "Tartar City" walls) total 36,500 yards, or roughly 21 miles.⁵¹ The discrepancies for both cities between these figures and the figures cited in Chinese sources are difficult to explain, and the matter must be considered unresolved. But it tends to leave some doubt about all traditional measurements, even when corroborated in very recent studies. Regardless of the ultimate outcome of such issues, the walls of Nanking built by the Ming founder are an overwhelming engineering and building achievement. The sight of them has awed countless millions of Chinese and foreigners and continues to do so, even though the walls are in disrepair, their former gate towers have been destroyed, and modern concrete and steel buildings compete with them now for dominance of the skyline.

One may well ask why the Ming capital needed such walls, and what purposes they were expected to serve. We might keep in mind that the early Ming rulers, after repeated campaigns into the Mongolian steppe to defeat the prime enemy of the age on his own ground, also completely rebuilt the Great Wall using huge bricks and stone, and lined it with garrisons, communications posts, and strategic stockpiles of war matériel. In addition, most of the county capitals in China have walls that were rebuilt of firmer materials and in more imposing design during the Ming dynasty. In fact, this was the great age of Chinese wall building. All of this would seem to indicate a national, or at least dynastic, obsession with defense. That, however, is probably not the correct explanation.

The Great Wall of Ming China was not very effective in purely military terms; the dynasty relied much more on offensive operations to break the back of Mongol power on the steppe, or on diplomatic and trade activities to keep the Mongol enemy divided, complacent, and unwilling or unable to fight. The Great Wall itself had little tactical significance; rather, was its true significance not that of its psychological effect on the enemy, and conversely on the Chinese defender? It marked in truly awesome form the Chinese presence at the boundaries of Chinese government, at the limits of the Chinese way of life. These limits had been breached repeatedly in the alien invasions of the preceding centuries, but the Ming rulers at last had recovered the Chinese stance along the cultural dividing line between steppe and peasant village. They reaffirmed China's ancient position there by ostentatiously rebuilding the Great Wall, but they defended themselves by other means.

Perhaps in a larger sense the walls of Nanking and of other cities rebuilt in Ming times served the primarily psychological function of reaffirming the presence of the Chinese state rather than the purely physical function of making cities and their inhabitants secure against possible sources of danger. Walled cities were not in fact more secure than nonwalled ones insofar as the day-to-day life of the people and government officials was concerned, for the Chinese countryside was secure. The walls around administrative cities did not divide off a zone of guaranteed safety from the rest of the population. The high walls and broad moats of Nanking did not protect the shrines of Heaven and of Earth, the tombs of the imperial ancestors, or even the major government entrepôts and factories, for all of these were outside them. They did not protect a large number of the government's highest civil and military officials, who resided in government-built housing outside them. They certainly did not divide the urban concentration from the open

countryside. They did not protect a large number of the most important markets or other palaces where basic economic and fiscal activities were centered. Finally, they did not divide an urban subculture from a rural one. What they did, though, above all, was to mark the presence of the government. They dignified cities; they did not bound them.

That is not to deny entirely their military function. They were reminders of military power, and they could become bastions of defense, able if necessary to withstand protracted siege and the most ingenious weaponry of assault. (But how often in Ming history was that necessary?) The Ming founder certainly had some purely military functions in mind when he decided to include readily fortifiable points within the enlarged walls of Nanking, and when he had the multiple gates built to withstand any attack. But the builder of these massive fortifications was not primarily a military man, nor was his government a military government. Despite the fact that his revenues were largely employed to maintain the expensive military component of government, he ruled primarily by civilian means, and these means included above all the ritual ordering of society and government and the reliance on a mystique of legitimacy expressed in the Mandate of Heaven. The city walls of Nanking were, like other acts of government, designed to reinforce that mystique and maintain the awesome sense of the government's presence. That, I would hypothesize, is their primary significance in Chinese cultural history and in the study of the city in traditional China.

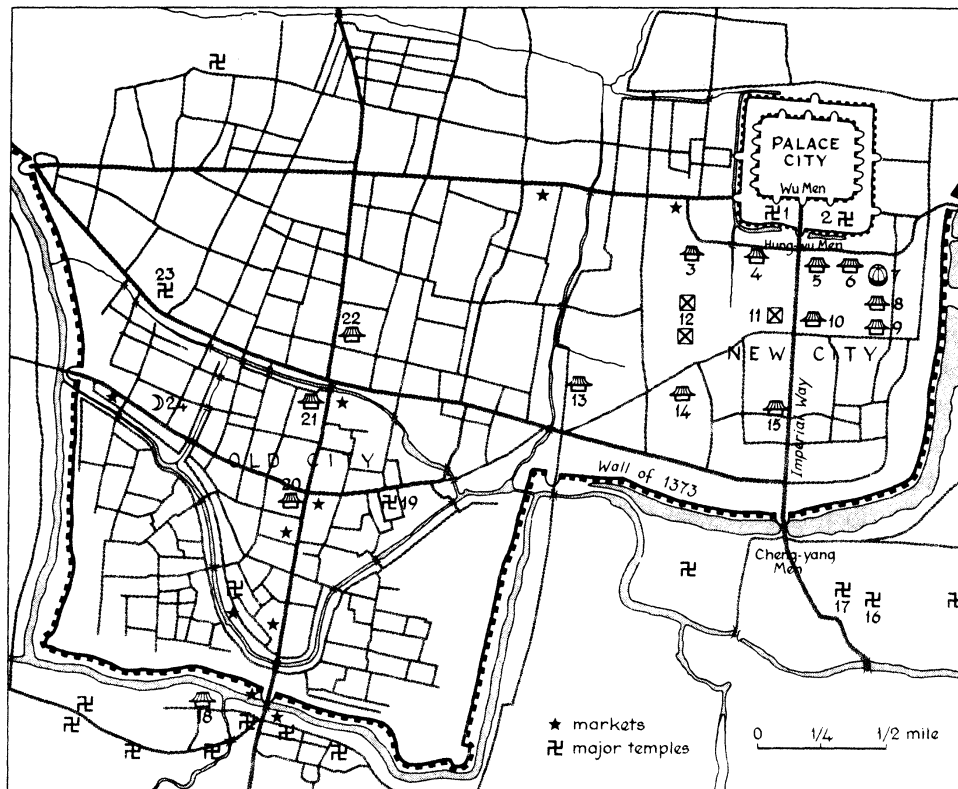
Other physical components of the new capital. The new capital built in the Hung-wu reign period (1368–98) is described in many gazetteers and other writings, some of them dating from the Hung-wu period itself. Surprise at the accomplishment is not reflected in them, although appreciation of it is. The power of the Chinese state, and above all the effective organization that characterized Chu Yüan-chang's government, was apparent in the city's great transformation. Within two decades of the proclamation of the new dynasty late in 1367, the city grew from perhaps one hundred thousand to about one million inhabitants, most of them directly related to the new official community making up the central government of the Chinese world. The degree of change worked upon Nanking when the Ming founder declared it his capital, and the rapidity with which that change was accomplished, have perhaps no ready parallels in Western historical experience. We, at least, must be amazed.

A great and ever-evolving system of centralized government, one observing models and precedents well established throughout the pre-

vious millennium, had collapsed under Mongol mismanagement, leaving its battered parts scattered across the landscape; under new dynastic leadership the system was rebuilt with amazing rapidity, like a jigsaw puzzle being reassembled by persons who have done it before and recognize all the pieces. This new government, however, was being brought together at a new site, and occupying a new physical structure built to match, in functional utility as well as in ideological and cosmological significance, all the parts of the political and social order that simultaneously was being reconstituted. Despite the facts that all government posts had to be created out of nothing, that all the housing and physical requirements of government had to be built from scratch, and that all procedures and operational regulations had to be formulated and established anew, this new government was from the outset conceptually complete in the minds of the men creating it. They had viable models in ideal form and in very recent experience. Moreover, potential bureaucrats were at hand, possessing ideological group coherence and technical training, educated for official careers if not always experienced. They could be assigned immediately to roles they understood and whose demands they could meet.

Within the decade from 1360 to 1370, Nanking was transformed from a rebel base that had been a small branch station of a malfunctioning government to the center of a tightly organized bureaucracy, the largest and most complex then existing and indeed that had ever existed. From being the seat of a civil service staff of about 200 officials, Nanking almost overnight became the seat of an imperial bureaucracy staffed by 10,000 civil and 12,000 military officials and by perhaps 50,000 sub-officials not ranked in the civil service. Of these, most were on rotating assignment in the provinces; but still there could have been no fewer than 5,000 of the ranked civil and military officials and 10,000 of the subofficials resident and on duty in and around the capital by the end of the fourteenth century. Military garrisons (*wei*) stationed at the capital were reported to include 200,000 men in 1391.⁵² Also, there were in the Imperial University (the *Kuo-tzu-chien*, in that period a kind of massive talent pool where young men who hoped to become officials engaged in study between periods of ad hoc assignment to special tasks) between 8,000 and 9,000 students, all on government stipend.

The buildings housing government were built mostly within the imperial city and in the “new city” surrounding it (see Map 2). The walls of the imperial city (*huang-ch'eng*), with their moats, bridges, and gates, followed the style of the main city walls although on a smaller scale and with more elaborate decoration and finer materials. It was about one and



MAP 2. MING NANKING, ca. 1390, showing major built-up areas.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Altar of Land and Grain (<i>She-chi t'an</i>) | 12. Imperial Palace Guard units (<i>Chin-i wei</i>) |
| 2. Temple of the Imperial Ancestors (<i>T'ai miao</i>) | 13. Metropolitan tax offices |
| 3. Office of Transmission | 14. Bureau of Astronomy (Chinese) |
| 4. Hui-t'ung Kuan (hostel for embassies) | 15. Court of Sacrificial Worship |
| 5. Imperial Clan Office (<i>Tsung-jen fu</i>) | 16. Altars of Heaven and Earth (<i>T'ien-ti t'an</i>) |
| 6. Bureau of Court Ceremonial (<i>I-li ssu</i>) | 17. Altar to Mountains and Rivers (<i>Shan-ch'uan t'an</i>) |
| 7. Hanlin Academy | 18. Commercial tax office |
| 8. Offices of the Heir Apparent | 19. Prefectural Confucian school-temple |
| 9. Imperial Medical Bureau | 20. Chiang-ning county yamen |
| 10. Ministries of Civil Office, Revenue, Rites, War, and Works | 21. Ying-t'ien prefectural yamen |
| 11. Five Military Commands | 22. Shang-yüan county yamen |
| | 23. Ch'ao T'ien kung (main Taoist shrine) |
| | 24. Mosque |

one-half miles on a side, roughly square, oriented with its main gate to the south. Within it the court was convened, and from it emanated the ultimate authority and decision-making in government. It also contained the residence of the emperor and his household, his family shrines, and certain altars of the state. Some principle of avoidance was observed in

locating any symbol of imperial power; it was not desirable simply to rebuild a site formerly occupied by the emperors of an earlier dynasty. Therefore the move to the east of the old city had some ritual significance. First, geomancers were consulted, and then a lake was filled in to make a flat terrace on which to locate the palace city; its location to the east of the old city put the highest mountain in the region, the Purple Mountain (*chung shan*), auspiciously to the rear of the whole complex. The imperial city suffered severe destruction at the close of the Taiping wars in 1864, and was almost totally obliterated at the time of the Revolution of 1911. In a generally accurate way, though, we can visualize the Nanking complex of palace city within imperial city from its approximate replica in Peking, built in the early fifteenth century on the new Nanking model, if somewhat more ostentatious than it in scale and design. Most of the names of gates and palaces and other parts duplicate those of counterparts in Nanking.

As pictured in the old gazetteers, a broad avenue called the Imperial Way led from Cheng-yang Men, the chief gate in the southern wall of the “new city,” directly north to Hung-wu Men, the south gate of the imperial city, and on to Wu Men, the main south gate of the palace city. This avenue, like a number of other major streets in the government section of the city, was lined with raised covered walkways so that officials and clerks could move along protected from rain, wind, and sun. Along the Imperial Way were ranged five of the Six Ministries, the Five Military Commands (on the west side of the avenue, opposite the ministries), the Imperial Clan Office, the Court of Sacrificial Worship, and other major offices. But the government was not confined to this area. The sixth of the ministries, the Ministry of Justice, was located symbolically outside the city wall to the north of the palace city; north was the direction of winter, the season of punishments and death. The execution ground was adjacent. The Censorate also was located nearby. The Imperial University at first occupied the grounds of the former prefectural Confucian Academy in the old city, but vast new quarters for it were built in 1381 in the new north section of the city, approximately on the site later occupied in republican times by the National Central University. Many other offices of government were scattered throughout the city.

The scale of these buildings was large; most were situated within grounds that preserved open space, and most included gardens. The architecture was not distinctively “early Ming” in any specific sense; it was “imperial grand” in a traditional sense, marked by the Ming founder’s preference for austerity and dignity. There may have been some

West Asian influences on early Ming architecture but only in quite superficial ways. The Mongols had brought Persians and Arabs and other West Asian craftsmen, engineers, and builders to China. Nanking's mosques, serving the Moslem fifth of its population, were West Asian in their interiors and in elements of decoration. Some historians have noted similarities to the Mogul arch in the thin line of decorative embellishment on the archways of the founder's tomb (*Ming Hsiao-ling*), built by Ming T'ai-tsu in the 1390's beyond the northeast corner of the city wall. But even in Khubilai's Ta-tu—built by a Mongol emperor with much aid from non-Chinese assistants—the influence of other cultures in the architecture and city planning was minimal; we must assume also that Nanking's great new buildings were undistinguished by architectural or engineering features that reflect period, region, or any particular school of architectural design.

All of the palaces, gates, avenues, and shrines not only were adapted ingeniously to their sites but also were located in ways that symbolized the imperial role and the proper order among men. But they were not mere blind copyings of precedents; and Nanking did acquire a highly individual character, if not in originality of architectural design, then in layout of the total ground space. It is a city of rolling ground and a few hills, with some waterways running through it; of large open spaces, some of which have always been devoted to intensive commercial gardening; and of many temples with groves and gardens. The change from provincial town to imperial capital not only vastly expanded the size of the government installations, it also created the need for hundreds of new streets, dozens of markets, parks, pleasure quarters, private residences for officials, barracks, factories, and warehouses. Nonetheless, the city remained a very open kind of urban concentration that included many activities and uses of space that we do not ordinarily associate with large cities in the premodern West. The ex-commoner founder issued a command limiting the size of gardens surrounding the city residences of officials so that space would not be denied to the common people.⁵³ But all of Nanking's residents, rich and commoner alike, lived on the ground floors of houses that at best boasted a main hall with a higher ceiling, or that perhaps had a partial second-floor section. Otherwise, buildings were of one story, and virtually all had some open courtyard and garden space.

The old city, the "South City" of modern Nanking, was also largely rebuilt, not by plan but just in the normal course of urban renewal under the influences of expansion, of increase in wealth, and of stimulus to change in the flourishing period of the new dynasty. The main streets,

the waterways, and the locations of bridges and gates are much the same there as they have been since the old city was built in the early tenth century, but though many of the bricks and stones probably have been repeatedly reused, no building there claims to be as old as the early Ming. The physical shell of the Chinese city must be constantly renewed; enduring material elements of it have little to do with its continuity as a locus of history. Ming Nanking was suddenly new, but not novel; modern Nanking occupies the shell of an ancient city, but its awareness of that fact is not derived from omnipresent architectural reminders of its past (except for the walls), nor is it denied by recent physical changes.

Population and administrative subdivisions. The forms of administrative organization imposed at the basic level by governments in successive dynasties tended to change in fact more than in name. The term *fang* or “city ward” meant something quite specific in T’ang times,⁵⁴ but although it continued to be used on into the Ming, by then it carried quite different implications about the degree of organization and control among the urban population. The urban and suburban populations of early Ming Nanking, like those of other cities, were organized into three types of administrative units coexisting at the basic level of formal organization, in combination implying a spatial structuring of the metropolitan area. Each unit apparently maintained separate registries for census purposes and probably for corvée and taxation and mutual-security organization as well. The late Ming writer Ku Ch’i-yüan describes these as follows:

At the beginning of the dynasty persons and households from Chekiang and [Southern] Chihli (i.e. Kiangsu-Anhwei) Provinces were moved in to fill out the population of the capital. In all cases when they were located within the capital’s walls they were [organized into units] called “*fang*.” Those outside the city walls in the suburbs were called “*hsiang*.” And those [units] originally registering the local population in the suburbs were called “*shiang*” [spelled here to make an arbitrary orthographic distinction from the preceding term, a homonym]. *Fang* and *hsiang* subdivisions had their own registry-charts (*t’u*); *shiang* also were divided into their subsidiary *li*.⁵⁵

The next item in the same source states that the two counties making up the area including the capital and its environs and having their seats within the city walls, i.e. Shang-yüan and Chiang-ning, had the following populations: Shang-yüan, 38,900 households or 253,200 individuals; Chiang-ning, 27,000 households or 220,000 individuals. These apparently are the figures from the census of 1391. The ratio of individuals to households is somewhat suspicious. Also, the figures do not include military

units and their families (as mentioned above, garrison troops were said to have numbered 200,000 in 1390) or officials and their families. But they do suggest that what was regarded as the permanent civilian resident population on the local government's registries numbered close to half a million. These half a million were divided into 24 *fang*, or urban wards for new residents; 24 *hsiang*, or suburban subdivisions for new population; and 39 *shiang*, or suburban and rural subdivisions for the original inhabitants. This would average about 5,400 individuals, or about 1,000 households, per organizational unit listed.⁵⁶

There is a question about the original inhabitants residing within the city. Apparently, moving population from other areas to "fill out the population of the capital" was done not merely to effect a net increase but also to replace the original residents, who were forcibly moved out. Ku Ch'i-yüan wrote that the founder feared opposition on the part of the original residents of Nanking and moved them all to distant Yunnan to prevent trouble:

When the Emperor Kao [i.e. the founder, referred to by a posthumous title] established the center of his realm at Nanking, he expelled the former residents and had them located in Yunnan. Also, beginning in 1381 and thereafter he got more than 45,000 wealthy households (*shang-hu*) from Soochow, Chekiang, and such places and had them brought to fill out the population of the capital. The adult males (*ting*) were assigned to various factories and offices to serve as craftsmen; the rest were registered in commoner households. They were located within and without the city walls in [units] called *fang* and *hsiang*.⁵⁷

The removal of population mentioned above probably refers to the dispatching of expeditionary forces, said in the *Veritable Records* to have numbered 300,000 men, to occupy and administer Yunnan in the years 1381–89 as that province was added to the Chinese empire. Those armies were made up principally from units formed in the capital area, and most of the military personnel and their households remained in Yunnan. Some sources on Yunnan history state that the province gained tens of thousands of households from Nanking at the time. These figures probably are used loosely, and they do not in themselves account for the total lack of Nanking urban wards whose populations are described as being made up of original residents. But they suggest at least a major factor in the probable solution of the problem.

The households moved into Nanking during the reign of the founder are variously described and appear not to have been of one character. The *Capital Gazetteer* cites three items from fourteenth-century sources bearing on the forced recruitment of population for the city. First, some

45,000 “wealthy households” from the richer regions to the east—around Soochow, Hu-chou, and those prefectures that had adhered to the rebel leader Chang Shih-ch’eng—were moved to Nanking in 1381 “to fill out the population” and to punish them for having resisted the founder in supporting a rival. The adult males were assigned as laborers and craftsmen in various government work projects. Using a factor of five and one-half, about standard for the population at large but perhaps too small for “wealthy households,” we get a possible total of 247,500 persons drawn into the city by this single move. Moving dissident wealthy households into the capital to keep them under surveillance may seem inconsistent with sending away the total original population, whose capacity to revolt against the government was feared. But rich urbanites assigned to punitive labor may have been docile, generally speaking, and more susceptible to intimidation by the new imperial regime than the original mixed population of the city, who had known Chu Yüan-chang and his cohorts ever since they had entered the city as a ragged rebel band 25 years before. Second, another 14,000 households of “the wealthy of the realm” were conscripted to become the well-to-do of the city, to be listed on the population registries as *fu-hu* (wealthy households). Wealthy households in the early Ming system were needed to assume certain basic-level administrative functions, such as heading the *fang-hsiang* units and supervising tax collections and corvée works; they were an element of the population that was necessary to government. Third, another record refers to 20,000 craftsmen households (or about 100,000 people) moved from Chekiang to fill specialized labor and building jobs.⁵⁸

These figures and the phenomena they represent are very difficult to interpret. There are hints in other sources that upper-class households forced to migrate as punishment often found methods of buying their way out of the labor to which they were assigned by paying for alternates and of eventually returning to their home regions, where they had in the meantime retained ownership of property and other interests. But even if many evaded forced migration, the demographic makeup of a capital city, especially at the time of the founding of an era, was subject to influences that were not typical of other cities. When the Yung-lo emperor decided to make Peking the principal capital, for example, he took 27,000 households of skilled craftsmen from Nanking to Peking to assist in its rebuilding.⁵⁹

Fang and *hsiang* as names for organizations of new population (as opposed to *shiang*) are themselves one item of evidence that different parts of the city had different characters. They became names for quar-

ters of the city, and each quarter acquired the special flavor of the dialect backgrounds, professional specializations, and other characteristics of its residents. These features of Nanking's demography were still apparent in late Ming times and were commented on even in the nineteenth century. Some population units merely have numbers as names, e.g. "Twelfth Fang," "Thirteenth Fang," and "Eighteenth Fang," but there is no complete sequence of numbers and the explanation of these names is difficult to reconstruct. Other *fang* names are more revealing, for in some cases they suggest groupings by occupation. There was a "Brocade Fang," a "Carpenters' Fang," a "Singers' and Artists' Fang," a "First Craftsmen's Fang," a "Second Craftsmen's Fang" (on up to Fifth), and a "Poor People's Fang." Some had names such as "Due West Former First Fang," where the word "former" may mean that this *fang* and others with similar names were in fact for old carry-over population; but it could also mean simply that they had replaced former *fang*. In general, the *fang* names that reveal anything are descriptive of the population. The *hsiang*, on the other hand, all either have names suggestive of geographic location ("Southeast Corner Hsiang," "Purple Mountain Hsiang") or have auspicious names like "Virtue and Benevolence Hsiang." The *shiang* names are likewise descriptive neither of occupations nor of class status; they all seem to have centered on the rural villages about Nanking.

The internal organization of the *fang-hsiang-shiang* system in early Ming Nanking merits thorough investigation. However, since the functioning of these lowest levels of government did not directly involve civil-service-ranked officials (unless crises arose), materials from which to study this system are not very plentiful. It may be that fiction of the middle and late Ming will provide us with the best evidence of how the *fang*, *hsiang*, and *shiang* worked. But the urban society of late Ming Nanking clearly was somewhat different from that of early Ming Nanking; moreover, the *fang-hsiang-shiang* system had undergone some structural changes by late Ming times. Ku Ch'i-yüan, our best source for the local history of late Ming Nanking, notes that the transfer of the capital to Peking in 1421 took away so much of the population that afterward the system did not work as originally intended. He also discusses changes in the regulations commencing with the middle of the fifteenth century. At that time a governor of the imperial prefecture noted that the corvée exactions tended to fall heavily on the rural *shiang* units; the urban *fang* and *hsiang* commoners were exempt but paid an annual cash fee. He proposed that the three kinds of units be integrated and the burden rationalized. The details of the service and tax obligations

are not clear to me, but it is obvious that the *fang-hsiang-shiang* system was intended to regulate primarily these service and tax functions. The headship of the *fang* (and *hsiang*) rotated among the heads of rich households, who were called *tsung-fang* (later *fang-chang*, and still later *fang-fu*). The difficulties that arose in the system in later Ming times all had to do with the inequitable apportionment and collection of service obligations and taxes, and with the relations between the *fang* heads and the subofficials of the county offices who oversaw them. Although local responsibility was encouraged or demanded in some matters, no local self-government was incipient in the system. But it is notable that the people could protest and effect improvements when the situation became intolerable.⁶⁰

Other Aspects of Urban Life in Ming Nanking

Economic role. The place of Nanking, the city and the region, in the economic life of fourteenth-century China is a large and complex subject deserving a separate monograph. In the sixteenth century, the change in Ming economy sometimes referred to as the “buds of capitalism” deeply affected urban life in the city, the region, and the whole empire; that, however, is a still more difficult subject to assess at this stage of our knowledge. Some awareness of these economic factors is of course implicit in much of the foregoing. The details cannot be made explicit here, but some highly generalized conclusions may suffice to characterize aspects of Nanking’s economic life in Ming times.

Nanking lies just west of the alluvial plain created by the delta of the Yangtze. Agricultural productivity in Nanking’s immediate hinterland cannot compare with that in the rich prefectures farther downriver to the east and south, of which Su-chou, Sung-chiang, Ch’ang-chou, and Hu-chou are the most notable. The great “rice-bowls” of the Middle and Upper Yangtze also are more favored.⁶¹ Nanking was a grain-shortage prefecture in Southern Sung times,⁶² probably because of the large garrisons stationed there. In short, there are no agricultural surpluses locally. The city for a thousand years has depended entirely on the wealth of the larger region, and it is unusually well situated to command that unless, as in the mid-fourteenth century before Chu Yüan-chang’s successful buildup, there are rival power centers in the richer areas upriver and downriver. Chu Yüan-chang’s success, a triumph over economic odds, was achieved through organization and planning; he gradually attached to his movement districts providing wealth to his nearer rivals, and then he utilized his resources more efficiently than they had done.

The districts immediately adjacent to Nanking lacked the sources of wealth that characterize the Lower Yangtze generally—agriculture, sericulture, fishing, mining, salt. Nanking had some important crafts, especially weaving, but it did not acquire its fame as a center of fine silk and brocade production until later in the Ming period; and even then it was largely dependent on raw materials—silk floss and dyestuffs—produced elsewhere. Despite the word “Nankeen” for the durable brown cotton cloth that was a staple in nineteenth-century trade, Nanking’s textile industry in Ming times was limited to silk; it did not yet share in the great growth of cotton textile production that was making rapid headway in the late fourteenth century at Soochow and Sungchiang. Nor did Nanking play a role in salt production and distribution like that which brought immense wealth to nearby Yangchow. In short, Nanking’s economic position was based on its political and military dominance of a large area extending east and west along the Yangtze and north and south along the Grand Canal, and not on any unusual local productivity.

The same of course can be said of Peking, and of some other great capital cities of Chinese history. Like them, Nanking became a city of great wealth and ease, thanks to the regional and national integration of the economy and the centralizing influence of the political structure. In addition, however, Nanking’s capacity to develop significant economic enterprise to accompany its political life was somewhat greater than that of Peking and some other capitals in the north, for the total environmental factor in the Yangtze basin was much more conducive to entrepreneurship and growth. Nanking’s famous silk factories, developed especially from mid-Ming times on, are the best single illustration of that capacity. They used the raw materials and skilled labor of nearby prefectures, and supplied simultaneously the court and Central Asian markets (via the Grand Canal) and the entire Yangtze basin.⁶³

Cosmopolitan character. Fourteenth-century China was less cosmopolitan than thirteenth-century China, and much less so than T’ang China. The land routes to Asia had been rather effectively diminished in significance between the time Marco Polo went overland to China in the 1270’s and the time he returned, perforce by sea via India, in the 1290’s. The Ming emperors did not associate the origins of their dynasty with Inner Asia or with alliances with non-Chinese people, as had been the case with the T’ang and the Yüan. The Ming was a dynasty of nativist revival; it came to power by expelling Inner Asians and associated its national responsibilities strongly with border defenses.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that strong sentiments of anti-

foreignism marked the tone of life in Ming China, or that the capital of the Chinese world lacked important cosmopolitan elements. Henry Serruys has shown that, although Mongol cultural influences were not valued, the Mongols remaining in China did not suffer from discrimination or persecution and continued to make contributions to political and social life.⁶⁴ Early Ming Nanking probably was not a brilliant international crossroads in the way T'ang Ch'ang-an appears in the lively descriptions of Arthur Wright.⁶⁵ But as the capital of China, it was as cosmopolitan a place as East Asian realities could afford in the late fourteenth century. Embassies came from Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, and some nearby Inner Asian states.

Nanking had a considerable Moslem community, and it probably still had remnants of the Nestorian, Jewish, and Central Asian communities that we know existed there in late Yüan times.⁶⁶ Schools for interpreters employed foreign nationals. The astronomy bureau continued to use Central Asians and the so-called Arab methods. Hostelries for diplomats and for their entourages, which often consisted of merchants with exotic goods, were among the first buildings erected by the new imperial government. The emperor's park had a zoo filled with strange animals brought by these ambassadors, and on some occasions the people of the city could come and look at them.

From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the famous shipyards on the Yangtze just below Nanking began building the fleets that Cheng Ho took to the South Seas, India, and Africa on his six or seven expeditions. Nanking was a seaport as well as a center of inland water transportation. Although the Ming government preferred to establish its control points for the admission of foreigners and foreign goods farther from its capital cities, the water transportation route did bring to the markets of Nanking goods that could not so easily reach all other places.

Entertainment. Nanking acquired elaborate facilities for entertainment in the sixteen great "storied buildings" (*lou*) built by the founder for official entertainment but not limited to that use. Some of these were outside the main gates of the palace city, but most were still farther away, outside the south gates of the city wall in an area of markets, inns, and brothels that since the tenth century had existed there along water transportation routes into the city.⁶⁷ The emperor's new official pleasure halls were combination hostelries, taverns, restaurants, and singsong houses. Theaters and amusement areas featuring jugglers, acrobats, storytellers, and prostitutes abounded, especially in the zone adjacent to the south city wall.

The Ming founder's own temperament kept him somewhat hostile

to persons who displayed too much interest in pleasure, frivolity, and ostentation. But as a very large city thronged with a new official elite, Nanking became a bustling place of commerce and of luxury trade in particular. The emperor's personal austerities and the harsh tone of the court did not obliterate the pleasure-seeking capacities of the residents, and the city's famous pleasure quarters survived even the removal of the capital to Peking in the 1420's to become still more celebrated in late Ming times.

Intellectual life. The tone of the early Ming court was not very encouraging to intellectual and literary activity. The Ming founder was personally suspicious of the highly educated. His chief rival in the period of his rise to power, Chang Shih-ch'eng, had drawn many more of the intellectual and literary figures of the day about him at his Soochow base, and their obvious preference for him and for life in the area controlled by him was one of the factors in the Ming founder's suspicions. His reign was marked by vicious and unpredictable purges in which the literary talents of the age were prominent victims. The usurpation carried out by his fourth son against his grandson and heir, the Chien-wen emperor, was again a ruthless military suppression of a ruler sympathetic to intellectual and literary personages. The Chien-wen emperor had encouraged literary figures and had drawn intellectual leaders to his service; as a group, they represented the culturally advanced southeast region. His displacement was followed again by rigorous suppression both of those who had found his rule encouraging and of the region they represented. Therefore, the reigns of the founder and of the usurper stifled any flowering of intellectual and literary life at the early Ming court. At best, the talent was there but did not find encouragement to express itself.

Nevertheless, the cultural life of China flourished most vigorously during the early Ming in the region around Nanking—in modern Kiangsu, Anhwei, and Chekiang. Nanking came into its own as a great intellectual and literary center only in the middle and late Ming, not during its period as principal capital. Yet though no one city dominated the development of culture or drew all the leading intellectuals to it during the early Ming, that did not dampen the growth of cultural activity. Indeed, as we have seen, Chinese culture has never been dependent on any one metropolitan center for its development or continuing vitality.

Role as secondary capital. When the Yung-lo emperor moved the capital to Peking in 1421, the population of Nanking decreased considerably; most accounts say it was reduced "by one half," which is not a precise expression but a meaningful one. Between that time and the

end of the century, Nanking was a city very much robbed of the major role for which it had been so recently rebuilt

In the sixteenth century great changes occurred in the life of the city. Some of these reflected the profound changes general throughout Chinese life at the time—the increase of population, of agricultural production, of commerce, and of wealth. These forms of growth were especially evident in the Lower Yangtze area, and they brought about urban recovery in Nanking along with urban growth everywhere.

Late Ming writers in Nanking and other cities were quite aware of changes in urban life-styles and social attitudes. They relate some of this change to the reform of the tax system, the “Single Whip System” that was progressively developed and applied throughout several decades.⁶⁸ Some features of the reformed fiscal system, particularly those involving commutation of labor services and special exactions, are said by writers of the time to have been conducive to ostentatious consumption in the cities. Urban commoners who had money were no longer under great pressure to conceal that fact; they could display their wealth in elegantly enlarged houses, gardens now free of restrictions on size, gaudier entertainment. A pleasure-loving elite came to be identified with the city by late Ming times.

These changes were greatly reinforced by a new role the secondary capital came to serve. A type of successful official who wanted position and emolument without the responsibilities and competitive juggling for place that characterized Peking and the court found the trappings of power in Nanking preferable to real power in Peking. It became a more glamorous official environment than it had been, now associated with low-keyed alternative patterns of success in the political sphere and more refined and sybaritic living in the private sphere.

The comparison with Peking. As we have noted, Nanking’s population declined considerably during the century after the capital was moved to Peking. The gazetteer of 1521 makes this clear in a number of specific comparisons. But the 1593 gazetteer shows a great recovery in population and wealth. At the end of the Ming dynasty Nanking had acquired the character of a center of great wealth and ease, famous for concentrations of artists, writers, and rich book collectors. The second capital of the realm gradually came to take on a peculiar role in the intellectual and artistic life of the nation as its official posts became attractive to officials with cultural interests, men who would previously have preferred careers in Peking, close to the actual exercise of power. Nanking, as secondary capital, retained a full lineup of administrative posts at the highest levels that duplicated the structure of government

in Peking. These were posts equal to Peking's in rank and emolument, but with very limited actual responsibility and with power over regional government only, except in fiscal administration and a few other areas (see p. 130). By late in the dynasty these posts, especially those carrying position and rank without demanding duties, came to be actively sought by officials who had no taste for the dogfights of political life. Nanking, close to the region of wealth and refinement that produced most of the nation's intellectuals, became the place where the scholar-official in office could have everything but the guts of political life.

In terms of cultural life, this was an important development in the history of Nanking; and in terms of social dynamics, it held significant potential for Chinese history. The government's ability to hold the most talented men of the nation—keeping them dependent on government service for self-realization—and to keep the needs of government first in its command of human talent, is one of the great achievements of the bureaucratic imperial system from Sung times onward. Nanking, as opposed to Peking, came to represent an attractive alternative course where previously there had existed only a single acceptable course for men of talent and ambition. The rich life of the great city came close to being politically subversive as well as morally scandalous in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The study of how this came about will help us understand the maturing of the city in traditional China.

As a final note of comparison, let us endeavor to reconstruct in our mind's eye the Nanking that existed in Ming times. Chinese architecture's stylistic immutability in time and relative uniformity throughout urban and rural space, and especially the Chinese city's characteristic of physical impermanence, have combined to deprive Nanking today of the physical magnificence we associate with great imperial capitals. Peking is the single great city whose physical presence within the lifetime of living men has been capable of communicating something of the greatness of traditional Chinese capitals to our consciousness. Peking has been the single Chinese imperial capital with all its monumental grandeur still intact in our time. Somewhat ignorantly, therefore, we tend to concentrate superlatives on it. Matteo Ricci, a cultivated traveler who arrived in Nanking in 1595, wrote about it: "In the judgment of the Chinese this city surpasses all other cities in the world in beauty and grandeur, and in this respect there are probably very few others superior or equal to it. It is literally filled with palaces and temples and towers and bridges, and these are scarcely surpassed by similar structures in Europe. In some respects, it surpasses our European cities. . . . This city

was once the capital of the entire realm and the ancient abode of kings through many centuries, and though the king changed his residence to Peking, . . . Nankin lost none of its splendor or its reputation.”⁶⁹ And after seeing Peking in 1600 Ricci wrote: “The size of the city, the planning of its houses, the structure of its public buildings and its fortifications are far inferior to those of Nankin.”⁷⁰ Let those Peking chauvinists who so often think of it as the only city in the world worthy of the ultimate adjectives consider Ricci’s discerning comparison, made in an age when both cities were complete, even though Nanking was no longer at its physical best.

