

## Cultural Heritage Preservation in Modern China: Problems, Perspectives, and Potentials

Lisa Bixenstine Safford

**Abstract:** Beijing, motivated by the 2008 Olympics, has impressively modernized in the past decade, replacing crumbling infrastructure and architecture, missing street lights, grey dirt, and weeds with wide boulevards crowded with late model cars, ultra-modern bridges, subways, and skyscrapers. Yet, experts say, everything in China is a trade-off. My focus is on one form of trade-off, the degradation of historic China. Traveling in China exactly ten years after my first visit gave me opportunities to meet with representatives from media, education, and government, and ask: how well has China maintained its cultural heritage in the face of rapid modernization? And how important is it for citizens and government to do so? Today's China, where "everything new is better," must be rendered "livable" for growing numbers of citizens who are part of an ongoing mass internal migration involving relocation from rural areas to rapidly burgeoning cities, increasing pressures to repurpose spaces occupied by old structures. This paper presents current problems relating to historic preservation, and some perspectives for the future.

**Keywords** China; Cultural Heritage; Modernization; Preservation

### CHANGING SPACES

If it is possible for a city to remake itself in ten short years, Beijing, motivated by its international coming-of-age event, the 2008 Olympics, has impressively done so.<sup>1</sup> Beijing's old airport, which in 2000 resembled 1940s Casablanca, has now been replaced by a soaring, airy, and immense modern structure (fig. 1), the biggest construction site in the world in 2007, employing 50,000 workers (Heathcote 2007). Where once there was crumbling infrastructure, infrequently-encountered and rundown twenty- or thirty-year old vehicles, drab tumble-down architecture, absent street lights (making a night stroll on crowded urban streets a decade ago eerily dark), and grey dirt and weeds are now wide boulevards swarming with late model cars, ultra-modern bridges and subways, glass and neon-faced skyscrapers, and grassy lawns bounded by neatly trimmed hedges—all at a cost of over 40 billion dollars (Gross 2010). Yet, experts say, everything in China is a trade-off, which is immediately evident when one approaches the airport runway. The city is shrouded by so much smog that little can be seen even a half mile off—no buildings, vistas, or sun. While the environmental impact is of crucial importance, my focus in this paper is upon another form of trade-off: the degradation of historic China.<sup>2</sup> The new China is a marvel to behold, but is the cost of modernization to be the forsaking of China's traditional culture?

Recent travel in China a dozen years after my first visit in 1998 gave me opportunities to meet with representatives from media, education, and government and ask: how well has China maintained its cultural heritage in the face of rapid modernization?<sup>3</sup> And how important is it for citizens and government to do so? These questions additionally raise thornier questions, beyond the scope of this paper, concerning the nature of cultural heritage: how should it be defined, and what should be preserved?<sup>4</sup> Who should decide—govern-

**Lisa Bixenstine Safford** is in her twenty-sixth year of teaching art history and is Art Department chair and Director of the new Center for Global Interaction at Hiram College. While her expertise is in Western art, Renaissance and Modern, she has received numerous grants from NEH, Fulbright-Hays, AACU, and ASIANetwork to travel and learn in Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, and India, forming the foundation for four courses, including study abroad, on Asian art and culture.

Lobby of Terminal 3, Beijing Capital International Airport, 2008. Photo: Wikipedia



ments, academics, professionals, developers, or local communities? And, ultimately, can rapid modernization be integrated with the past, resulting in an authentic continuation of history, or will it descend into, as Mee-Kam Ng asks, “just a nostalgic twist of an increasingly consumptive orientated society, turning history into a commodity to suit the taste of the affluent classes” (Ng 2009, 269), leading to gentrification or the “Disneyfication” of artifacts? Given the enormous pressure to redevelop city centers and add gross floor area (GFA) in the wake of massive internal immigration, the government has walked a thin line between conservation and modern development in their quest to “construct a harmonious society.”<sup>5</sup> Are these desires mutually exclusive?<sup>6</sup> While all of these issues cannot be addressed within the scope of this paper, I turn attention to the current problems relating to historic preservation, and some perspectives for the future.

Each person I interviewed on my recent trip to China responded similarly to my inquiries: with an awkward, defensive admission that they, their institution or government, driven by pressing needs, had insufficiently considered saving cultural heritage. One scholar defiantly rejoined that the U.S., which seems to preserve and memorialize nearly everything, is but 300 years old, while China has 5,000 years of history to contend with. Wang Yingjie of Beijing Normal University lamented that the prevailing view in China today is that “everything new is better,” and developers currently have the upper hand (Wang Interview 2010). All spoke of the unfortunate reality that cities must be rendered “livable” for China’s 1.4 billion citizens, increasing numbers of whom are relocating to cities and demanding ever more GFA. In a country fond of concise sloganeering (the Communist Party line today is “Constructing a Harmonious Society”), the tag for Chongqing city, for example, is “Green, Livable, Safe, Accessible, and Healthy Chongqing;” nowhere in that slogan is there mention of “historic,” despite the city’s 3,000 year history. Historical preservation, it would seem, is the least of China’s concerns today.

#### PROBLEMS

Among the many problems facing historic preservation efforts are two seemingly intractable ones: the absolute top-down process of decision making, and the absence of knowledge among ordinary Chinese of their long and complex history. When I queried

my 27-year-old home-stay hosts in Chongqing—upscale, educated, and newly wed—about recent history, specifically the impact the Cultural Revolution may have had upon their parents, they were perplexed. King and Walls explain that post-Cultural Revolution leaders opposed any teaching or research about the “ten lost years,” focusing instead on recent economic successes “rather than revisiting a past in which the ruling Communist Party was responsible for chaos and injustice” (King and Walls 2010, 3).<sup>7</sup> Matthew Hu, a young Chinese cultural heritage preservationist, confirmed that, “My generation has been taught history in a very censored, standard way that has been tightly controlled and approved by the government – it’s not very in-depth” (*WildChina Blog* 2010).<sup>8</sup> His own education came from working in the cultural tourism industry. Historical photographer Liu Bowen adds, “Our textbooks cover how the Communist Party came to power in China. That’s the only point,” and offers this explanation for public apathy about the past:

Average people--like those who have less education, such as workers or shopkeepers--they really never think about their cultural heritage. They regard places like the Forbidden City as tourist sites, but they never want to research them or know them deeply. I think most young people are not very interested in their past (Archeology.org 2008b).<sup>9</sup>

Concerning top-down decisions in the demolition of the Gulou *Hutong* in Beijing (fig. 2), a very controversial planned destruction of a large neighborhood around the Drum and Bell Towers just north of the Forbidden City, Hu added, “The government has already begun the project. It’s hard to say what we can do at this point. There is no public petition process, so the public cannot be part of the game. Anyone who cares about the *hutongs* can still go and document these areas, and preserve them in that way” (*WildChina Blog* 2010)—as though photographs of *hutongs* (traditional alleyways) and *siheyuan* (courtyard houses) are an adequate substitute for several-hundred-year-old neighborhoods facing a wrecking ball.<sup>10</sup> Some, including official Chinese media, view the Gulou area as little more than a slum, with ramshackle houses crammed tightly together (Sebag-Montefiore 2013).<sup>11</sup> (The houses, many built since the revolution, average twenty-four square yards and, because the passages are three yards wide—too narrow for fire trucks—they are a fire hazard [Watt 2013].) Others, however, take an historical view, describing the area as “kind of the living museums of China, or Beijing at least” (Watt 2013), and “a special place where the past with its historical monuments combines with the everyday life of the inhabitants who often live in very modest conditions” (Krajewska 2009, 63). Yet even these people acknowledge that a population cannot “live only in one-story buildings which spread endlessly” (Krajewska 2009, 63). Since the building boom that began in the mid-1990s, “Nearly 2,000 *hutongs* have been replaced by high-rise apartment buildings. Of the roughly 1,100 that remain, 600 are in ‘protected’ areas, while 500 are still in jeopardy of being torn down” (Archeology.org 2008e). An estimated 1.25 million Beijing residents have been displaced by *hutong* destruction (Meyer 2008a).

Mr. Hu offers a measured assessment of the challenges faced by native preservationists navigating cautiously between their aims and government censors, entailing a sober recognition of individual limitations and economic imperatives, and leading, at least publically, to a conciliatory search for some educational value in the conflict between the two. He observed,

While many see the demolition as a development that will be unsatisfactory to many parties, which I do not dispute, I am more inclined to look at it as a case study in understanding preservation versus economic impact. In the government’s eyes,

not including the public opinion might save them money, avoiding grassroots campaigns and petitioners to stop the development, which would mean jailings (sic) and other methods of control. In that way, they can coordinate a systematic method of renovation within the government. This system of disregarding public opinion, however, is not right, and so the outcome will not be satisfactory (*WildChina Blog* 2010).<sup>12</sup>

But the reality in China, writes Lily Kong from Singapore, is a “lack of openness of cultural perspective and the insistence on using art as propaganda...; culture is an instrument of the Communist Party” for promoting patriotic education (Kong 2007, 393). Thus, Kong noted, unlike in Singapore, “In Shanghai, there can be no public protest. The [new] monuments simply emerged!” (Kong 2007, 401). Chinese authorities provide few opportunities for public input into planned demolitions and rebuilding of neighborhoods.

The 1983 discovery of the treasures of King of Nanyue’s tomb in the deep southern city of Guangzhou points to additional political conflicts related to preservation. The find valorized a vast, autonomous, non-Han Lingnan culture (begun 203 BCE) that prevailed for over a hundred years after the end of the Qin Dynasty in the Pearl River Delta region extending into Vietnam, and whose splendor contravenes official state doctrine promoting a homogeneous Han identity for past and present China. While regional authorities zealously built a splendid museum to display the riches, their counterparts in Beijing were troubled. As Diana Lary clarified, the post 1949 ideological agenda set out “to prove a historical development that was both Marxist and centralizing,” based on Mao’s “great policy of ‘using the past for the present,’” and the Lingnan cultural find called that agenda into question (Lary 1996, 13).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it didn’t help that the southern Lingnan region was the “first place to bear the brunt of foreign aggression” and the “birthplace of modern [anti-communist] Chinese nationalism,” producing that movement’s most important leaders, including Sun Yat-sen; both of these facts were unmentionable in China before the revival of scholarship after Mao’s death in 1976 (Lary 1996, 17). Yet, as Lary points out, conducting research today is not without risk for Chinese scholars, as it is still subject to the scrutiny of North China (the Communist Party). It is only when a site has tourism appeal and reinforces official doctrine, like the Forbidden City or Summer Palace, that the government spends vast sums to preserve it (Meyer 2008a).<sup>14</sup> In one striking example, two thousand homes were torn down in 2001 in order to reconstruct a half mile of the city walls that had been razed in the 1960s, largely to impress Olympics visitors with China’s past magnificence. The resulting Beijing Ming Dynasty City Wall Relics Park was officially opened in 2002.

#### PERSPECTIVES

Until now, with one exception, which I’ll note later, the loudest voices of outrage over heritage degradation have come from foreigners or expatriates writing in the popular press.<sup>15</sup> Two authors bemoaned the destruction of Beijing in full length books published in 2008: Jasper Becker’s *City of Heavenly Tranquility: Beijing in the History of China*, and Michael Meyer’s *The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed*. Others, decrying an “orgy of destruction...driving culture out of the capital” (Mills 2008), wrote media accounts on the eve of the Olympics whose titles make their views clear, such as Jonathan Watts’s “Rush to Modernity ‘Devastating China’s Cultural Heritage’” in *The Guardian*, (June 11, 2007) or Edwin Heathcote’s “Modernism Minus Utopia,” in the *Financial Times* (December 28, 2007), in which the author counted 8,000 new building sites in Beijing alone, most of them designed by foreign architects. Heathcote aptly questioned the hodgepodge nature of Beijing’s urban character, and described how





*Hutong Roofscapes Viewed from Drum Tower, Beijing, August 2007. Photo: Wikipedia*

“coolly extruded, identikit modernist towers rise beside bland commercial slabs, green-tiled dragon roofs are applied like false noses to dumb façades only a couple of years old. The city is an architectural cacophony leavened by occasional snippets of harmony. Most striking is the contrast between the old city and the crushing march of the new” (Heathcote 2007). No Beijinger could have advanced such critiques, though many feel similarly.

Two issues dominate these writings: concern for disappearing heritage—both exceptional (as in the Great Wall) and mundane (the *Hutongs*—which undeniably in some cases are slums)—and distress over the generic look of modernist, largely foreign-designed architecture that is replacing it, labeled as “soulless” and “creeping imported scraps of foreign globalized culture” (Borg 2010).<sup>16</sup> Heathcote laments that, “Any of these buildings could have been built anywhere else.... Beijing is becoming a realization of the most superficial aspects of a contemporary design culture obsessed with the gesture and the icon, with the cleverness and complexity of its own structure” (Heathcote 2007). Victor Borg observes a similar soullessness resulting from a concurrent fading of intangible heritage:

Much culture is being eroded in China. Aside from New Year, almost all the other cultural events have almost lost their visibility. All that remains of many traditional festivals is some special dishes that a few people still eat. Even some of the manifestations of lunar New Year are dying out. This is a pitiful loss.... [Society is] becoming more individualistic, devoid of community bondage (sic) or sense of belonging, and the new generations [are] seeking flashier and immediate gratifications in life [Borg 2010].

Of related concern is the indiscriminate spiriting of portable patrimony out of China and into Western collections in recent years through looting and smuggling, denounced by Antoaneta Bezlova in the *Asia Times*, her title pleading, “For the Love of Art, Help China.” She identified new measures instigated in 2002, by a ruling party with a dubious record of protecting cultural patrimony, to impose restrictions on imports to the U.S. of objects over 95 years old (previous restrictions only applied to items made before 1795, or the end of the reign of Qianlong (1711-1799), the fifth emperor in the Qing Dynasty). In 2004 alone, “China had 36 large-scale robberies of museums, tombs and temples resulting in the loss of

223 antiquities, according to the State Cultural Relics Bureau. The rate of successful thefts has increased by 80% compared to the year before, the bureau estimates” (Bezlova 2005).<sup>17</sup> The new restrictions, however, are opposed by dealers and collectors alike, both private and public and on both sides of the Pacific, who believe they will have little impact on looting, and who cite much greater degradation of patrimony by government projects such as the Three Gorges dam.

China also has a lamentable record of destroying antiquities during the Cultural Revolution, considering them “symbols of pernicious old thinking and old customs” (Bezlova 2005), to be sacrificed in favor of Mao’s “forests of factory chimneys [that] should mushroom in Beijing” (Gross 2010, 34). Until ten years ago, the Ministry of Foreign Trade sold antiquities abroad to raise foreign currency to fund modernization. Indeed, Bezlova concludes that “with the ascendance of the Communist Party to power, what was left of China’s vast cultural heritage was either destroyed, or confiscated and exported” (Bezlova 2005).<sup>18</sup> However, what began “the suicide of Chinese culture,” as Olshin calls it, even earlier was the modernization efforts of the “new culture movement” that, flourishing between 1915-23, focused on bringing Western ideas of liberalism and science to China, where “the move to discard many aspects of traditional Chinese culture was promoted by the Chinese themselves” (Olshin 2007, 3-4).

#### POTENTIALS

There are a few encouraging developments in recent years that might presage hopeful future directions for the preservation of Chinese cultural history. Chinese students of architectural historiography observe its youth—only since the 1930s have serious studies of architectural history been advanced in China. According to Li Boqian, an archeologist at Beijing University, under communism and until 1978, “We used to study archeology behind a closed door” (Archeology.org 2008b).<sup>19</sup> Such research is essential now, for “with the development of globalization, finding national identities from . . . traditional heritage has become a more important and meaningful research issue than before,” declares master’s candidate Cao Dapeng at Australia’s University of Adelaide. For his 2005 thesis Dapeng developed computer models to compensate for absent historical records of the 1,100-year-old Foguang Temple on Wutai Mountain, which was facing possible extinction (Cao 2005, 19).<sup>20</sup> Cao’s project addresses two problems mentioned above: lack of knowledge among ordinary Chinese of their architectural heritage, and the soulless modern edifices replacing old buildings. Cao hopes his digital technique will teach the Chinese about their own art history through the formation of a digital database of ancient Chinese architecture, “an efficient tool to store, identify and manage these great quantities of data” (Cao 2005, 120). In the future such a database could be used to fully trace the historic development of Chinese architecture. In turn, by “inheriting architectural wisdom and past experience,” indigenous designers, suffering from deficiencies of training during the upheavals of the 20th century, will apply them “now in the creation of a new architecture” (Cao 2005, 120), with the hope of reversing the “new form of cultural colonialism” that currently prevails (Xuefei 2008, 220).<sup>21</sup>

Technology holds promise in another realm: a website devoted to community outreach, with a focus primarily on saving *Hutongs* and the Great Wall, has been created by a grassroots organization called the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (BCHPC). Founded as an NGO in 2003 by He Shuzhong, Matthew Hu was managing director in 2008 (Heretage-key.com 2009).<sup>22</sup> Their program is ambitious, and not without risk. Hu contends, “What I have been doing now is approaching some student groups and volunteer groups, and also we want to approach the media, talk to the journalists. We want them to pass on

the relevant message to the public” (Archeology.com 2008e). However, founder He Shuzhong laments that “When the Chinese government wants to restore a building, they want to do it fast. The required methods and principles needed to renovate these buildings, however, aren’t fully used. So this process of restoring a historical site often leads to destruction. The more you fix, the more you destroy” (Heritage-key.com 2009).

Although most of the support for the organization comes from international groups, the BCHPC undoubtedly owes its inception to the publication in 2003 of Xinhua News Agency journalist Jun Wang’s controversial bestseller, now in English as *Beijing Record: A Physical and Political History of Planning Modern Beijing* (recently voted book of the year by China Readers’ Journal *Zhonghua dushu bao*, and considered one of the most influential books since 1949, now in its ninth edition) (Jun 2010). The book recounts the transformative socialist rebranding of the city since the birth of the PRC, and upon its publication “ignited a firestorm of debate and discussion in a country where public interaction over such a sensitive subject rarely surfaces” (Worldscibooks.com 2010).<sup>23</sup> It was followed in 2008 by *Cities in the Reporter’s Notebook*, which generated sorrow for today’s Beijing (Floracruz and Chen 2010). Jun’s books, and the sober aftermath of the 2008 Olympics, induced shock over the stunning alterations made to the city, and led other Beijingers to publicly question the cultural cost of modernization. Prominent historians and archeologists were interviewed by Archeology.org, voicing, as censorship would allow, both concern and optimism. Bo Songnian, an art historian working for the past thirty years at conserving the Forbidden City, held that people are just beginning to pay more attention to preservation, and art history is becoming popular among new college students. He noted that now “there is a regulation in our country: when an artifact is found at a construction site, the construction must be halted immediately and can be resumed only after experts [from the Cultural Protection Administrative Bureau] have examined the place” (Archeology.org 2008a). Additionally, the government has a new 2020 master plan that emphasizes more public involvement and the separation of old and new cities to protect the old (Floracruz and Chen 2010).

In recent years there have also been concerted efforts to create community around reestablished traditional festivals at restored or recreated sites in Beijing and elsewhere. For example, in 2008, the Mid-Autumn Festival (August 15) was officially reinstated as a legal holiday that brings visitors and Chinese to the “Dawn Moon at Marco Polo Bridge” (Lugou Xiaoyue) for feasting on seafood, moon cakes, and green oranges (Wei 2012), and viewing a lantern show, Peking Opera performance, and folk art (Dongya 2012). The bridge, which traverses the Yongding River (although diversion of the river to the city has left it mostly dry) fifteen kilometers southeast of Beijing, was built in 1189, covered in asphalt after 1949, and restored in 1986 upon the creation of the Beijing Municipal Government’s Marco Polo Bridge Historic Conservation Commission. In ancient times it was considered one of the Eight Great Sights of Yanjing (ancient Beijing).

Another example, more political in focus, was a commemorative pageant held in October 2010 to mark the 150th anniversary of the sacking of the Yuanminguan, or Old Summer Palace, built in 1709 and pillaged and burned in 1860 by British and French troops during the Second Opium War (Cheng 2010); of course, the attention here is only upon foreign culpability in heritage degradation. The pageant, staged upon the ruins of the site, was accompanied by a call to restore 1.5 million lost or looted objects, which UNESCO asserts reside, among other places, in at least two hundred museums in forty-seven countries. Among the objects are the contested bronze rat and hare head sculptures (cut from full figures), formerly in the collection of late French designer Yves Saint Laurent, which were auctioned by Christie’s in Paris for 14 million euros each (\$19.55 million) in 2009.<sup>24</sup>



798 Space Gallery, January 2009.  
Old Maoist slogans are visible  
on the ceiling arches. Source:  
Wikipedia



Finally, there have been new attempts since 2000 to repurpose abandoned, sub-aesthetic, military warehouse and factory structures such as those found at the 798 Art Zone (Dashanzi District, originally consisting of six factories of unprecedented scale), housing galleries, shops, cafes, and studios. Arguably, these can be equated to New York's Soho or Greenwich Village, or Pittsburgh's Mattress Factory BoBo ("Bohemian Bourgeois") prototypes, but they exploit the uniquely "Socialist Unification Plan" style of massive, military-industrial structures of the 1950s inspired by Soviet examples (designs were by East German architects, Bauhaus-derived, fig. 3), providing a uniquely post-modernist art venue (Hung 2008,186). While these too have foreign roots, they yet provide a window into China's past and a respite from the urban "identikit" modernism or dull, boxy utilitarianism otherwise flooding the cityscape.

#### CONCLUSION

These recent examples of restorations and communal events speak auspiciously to a gradually changing attitude among Beijingers, and Chinese generally. Li Zhiyan, expert in Tang and Song Dynasty art at Tsinghua University, summarized the prevailing popular view on preservation:

Chinese people in general . . . are happy to see Beijing becoming a modern capital. The image of China used to be poor and weak, and that is the image that's left in people's memory. So now, we are happy to see a modern Beijing. However, during the rapid development of the past few years, not enough attention was paid to the conservation of our historical and cultural heritage. As a result, many sites were destroyed, giving way to fast development.

But Chinese people love their own history and culture. Now that people here are having better material lives, and there is a sense of more stability, they are beginning to feel nostalgia for the past, which is part of the old Chinese tradition because Chinese history is so long and old. People have been feeling this way for about 10 years. Many artists began to voice their concerns over our historical culture. And



people began to show interest in the conservation of old buildings, old trees, and old courtyard houses. But I still think the promotion in this area is far from enough. It takes time to raise people's awareness (Archeology.org 2008c).

Chinese national identity is deeply colored by the Century of Humiliation (*Bainian guochi*), an era begun in 1842 with the first Opium War, "whereby the British navy pried open the Chinese empire to Western capitalism" (Callahan 2004, 204), arguably the first true challenge to her sovereignty by an entirely alien civilization in her history, and ending with the 1949 Communist victory. The era was characterized by both "foreign aggression and domestic corruption" (Callahan 2004, 204).<sup>25</sup> Mao Zedong proclaimed to the world in 1949 that the Chinese people had finally shaken loose their shackles: "Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up" (Callahan 2004, 203). Li's observation that "China used to be poor and weak" but now revels in economic prosperity and world recognition is a reflection of how much that past identity drives modernization and nationalism today, giving rise at the same time, however, to much soul-searching and self-critiquing of "Chineseness."

Tu Wei-ming, Harvard professor of Chinese history and philosophy, has poignantly engaged in national and cultural soul-searching, observing that, "since China's backwardness, fully acknowledged by the Chinese intelligentsia as occasioned by the open-door policy of the reform, had deep roots in the Chinese polity, society, and culture, a total transformation of Chineseness is a precondition for China's modernization," requiring that "the sacred symbols of the ancestral land stand condemned" (Tu 2005, 148-9). This includes her ideographic language and Confucianism, to be replaced by "science, technology, the free market, democratic institutions, metropolises, and mass communication," all products of the Western world (Tu 2005, 166). Tu, an ardent neo-Confucianist, asks the most piercing question: "Can the meaning of being Chinese be sought in the limbo between a past they have either deliberately relegated to a fading memory or been coerced into rejecting or forgetting, a present they have angrily denounced, and an uncertain future, since they insist that the promise lies wholly in the alien unknown?" (Tu 2005, 149).<sup>26</sup> Put another way, Ien Ang, looking toward the future, asks how the Chinese can "create a modern world that is truly Chinese and not simply an imitation of the West" (Ang 1998, 230)?<sup>27</sup> These are questions only the Chinese can answer. Given the tragic destructiveness and violence of China's recent past, one can only hope that in rising from poverty, weakness, and humiliation, the Chinese do not destroy so much of their heritage that they lose their soul.

#### NOTES

1. Other "events" expediting change in China include the building of the Three Gorges Dam (fully completed 2009) -- "Of approximately 1,300 known archeological sites in the area to be flooded, archeologists have determined that between 400 and 500 are worth saving" (Chetham 2002, 47)-- and the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition.
2. Degradation, derived from dictionary definitions, in this context refers to both erosion and deterioration (e.g. The Great Wall), and lowering of dignity or estimation (e.g. *Hutongs*). These definitions can equally apply to the looting or selling off of antiquities abroad.
3. I am grateful for both my participation in a Fulbright-Hayes Summers Abroad in 2010, and my first travel/learning experience in China via ASIANetwork's Freeman Foundation sponsored College in Asia Summer Institute in Japan and China, 1998.
4. UNESCO (The United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture) offers the following definition of Cultural Heritage: "The cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs--either artistic or symbolic--handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is

- the storehouse of human experience” (Jokilehto, 4-5).
5. The “harmonious society” (*hexie shehu*) slogan was adopted by Hu Jintao (General Secretary of the Communist Party from 2002 to 2012) to address “The social tensions brought on by the socioeconomic transformations that followed China’s reforming and opening up” (Zheng).
  6. The International Scientific Committee on the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage (ISCARSAH), a technical committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), offers the following in its 2003 recommendations: “Value and authenticity of architectural heritage cannot be based on fixed criteria because the respect due to all cultures also requires that its physical heritage be considered within the cultural context to which it belongs.... The value of architectural heritage is not only in its appearance, but also in the integrity of all its components as a unique product of the specific building technology of its time. In particular the removal of the inner structures maintaining only the façades does not fit the conservation criteria.”  
Further, in its 2004 statement on Cultural Landscapes, ICOMOS states: “Significance reflects the assessment of total value we ascribe to cultural and natural qualities in cultural landscapes, and thus how we evaluate their overall worth to society, to a nation or to local communities. Significance may relate to one particular quality or to a collection of several particular qualities.” These qualities may include: “Expression of aesthetic ideas/ideals/design skills; association with works of art, literary, pictorial or musical, that enhance appreciation and understanding of the landscape; associations with myth, folklore, historical events or traditions; spiritual and/or religious associations, sometimes connected with remarkable Topography; ...association with individual or group memory or remembrance; association with formative intellectual, philosophical and metaphysical ideas or movements, which impact on the subsequent development of landscape; generation of sensory or heightened emotional responses - awe, wonder, terror, fear or well-being, composure, order, appropriateness to human scale” (Jokilehto, 45-47).
  7. The authors add, “Thus, the history of the Cultural Revolution has largely been told by those writing outside China.” Andrews 27-9, notes: “Political leaders did not confront the Cultural Revolution, choosing instead to use euphemistic labels such as the ‘ten lost years’ and addressing it in the most abstract terms.... The causes, the culprits, and the effects of the Cultural Revolution were all too well understood by those who witnessed it, but this collective experience and memory was left largely unspoken and for the most part has not been passed on to the generations that followed.” Of those who were middle aged when the Cultural Revolution occurred: “They survived, but that was all, and most have been too scarred to let others know what happened to them.” Of those who were young: “The silence of most members of this generation comes from a mixture of disillusionment, shame, and fear” (Andrews 2010, 28, 29).
  8. Blogs and online journal interviews form a sizeable portion of the data for this paper. These offer perspectives that may not be well known in China by those wishing to push the boundaries of official journalism into what is deemed by Haiqing Yu “a kind of special political zone,” offering, like the socialist market economy, a “compromise and tacit negotiation between the state and the society” (2011, 380). Yu informs us that China established the internet in 2002 and had an estimated 298 million users, 162 million of whom were bloggers, in 2009 (2011, 379). Yu offers the perspective that blogging is “a deliberative practice among Chinese professional journalists, who, as gatekeepers of the mainstream news media, nevertheless go beyond gatekeeping by watching the ‘gate,’ poking the ‘gate,’ and mocking the ‘gate’ through blogging. I argue that j-blogging represents an experiment of amateur journalism by professional journalists in the blogosphere. The creativity in gate-watching, gate-poking and gate-mocking is situated in the feedback loop of the blogosphere and mediasphere in general. J-bloggers are essential to the mediated loop that is in itself a liminal zone, where ideas, visions, emotions and beliefs can be tested. J-blogging forms a crucial link in the formation of the mediated loop and transformation of the liminal zone, upon which the viability of the Chinese public sphere depends” (2011, 379).
  9. Liu adds: “in our college entrance examination, the point is *recent* history. Ancient history is just kind of acknowledged. You know--it’s okay if you don’t understand it, as long as you know the date of the Tang Dynasty and who created it, that’s enough. But recent people, you should know more about them.”
  10. “Gulou...contains some of the finest Qing dynasty structures in the city, including temples and official residences, as well as a large number of traditional *hutong* -- the distinctive, one-story lanes of Old Beijing.... The proposed redevelopment of Gulou is being driven by the district’s government, and involves turning a 12.5 hectare area around the Drum and Bell Towers into something called the ‘Beijing Time Cultural City’” (Mills 2010).
  11. The “Beijing Time Cultural City” and underground mall planned for this area did not come to pass due to opposition from civic groups. However, in late 2012 the government posted new notices for residents to vacate by Feb. 24, 2013. “The government’s latest plan is to restore the square to its original appearance, as laid out on 18th-century Qing Dynasty maps” (Sebag-Montefiore 2013).  
According to Watt, “They want to restore the Drum and Bell Tower square to the time of the prosperous Qing Dynasty,” but in doing so they will destroy a “rich accumulation of cultural heritage,” said He Shuzhong, founder of Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center, a nongovernmental organization. “We believe that protecting cultural heritage is about inheriting, accumulation. It is a process of history. It shouldn’t look like the prosperous time now,” he said. (Watt 2013).
  12. According to Mills 2010: “At the last minute, police stepped in to cancel a meeting on the Gulou development project organized by a local non-governmental organization.”
  13. King and Walls add, “As early as the 1950s, Mao had advocated the study of history from the perspective of ‘making the past serve the present’ (*gu wei jin yong*).... [W]hen Chairman Mao used his famous phrase, he

- meant that history should be seen and used as a tool to advance the interest of the working class today.”
14. Meyer adds, “Between 2000 and 2003, the capital spent three billion yuan (\$360 million) preserving sites popular with tourists—an amount nearly equal to that spent in the same period on preservation nationwide. Another six hundred million yuan (\$72.6 million) was budgeted for heritage protection from 2003 until 2008. The total investment equaled Beijing’s heritage protection outlay ‘for several decades before 2000,’ according to the state-run newspaper *China Daily*, and went to tourist sites such as the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace.”
  15. This was the standard in the recent past: “For the last four decades the international discourse on cultural China has unquestionably been shaped by...writings in English and in Japanese [which] have had a greater impact on the intellectual discourse on cultural China than those written in Chinese. For example, Chinese newspapers abroad often quote sources from the *New York Times* and Japan’s *Asahi Shinbun* to enhance their credibility” (Tu 2005, 155).
  16. Xuefei (2008, 218) explores the confluence of three players—“the state, the corporate sector and foreign architects”—explaining that: “After the accession to the WTO in 2001, domestic service industries were opened up, and a large number of international architectural firms flocked to China for its lucrative construction market. Private developers and city governments sought after prominent international architects for the design of their mega projects, and as a result, some critics argue that large Chinese cities have become ‘laboratories for foreign architects’ to realize their design dreams. The foreign designed structures have replaced socialist monuments as new signifiers of power and modernity.”
  17. See also: Taylor 2006. The U.S. is the most frequent destination for such objects.
  18. An anonymous U.S. museum official (unnamed because of ongoing sensitive negotiations for exhibition materials) further laments that “99% of their museums are decades behind in terms of even basic conservation. The storage conditions at the Palace Museum archives would make you weep” (Personal Interview).
  19. “Dr. Li is director of the Center for the Study of Chinese Archaeology at Beijing University, and director of the Center for the Study of Ancient Civilizations at Beijing University; he has lead excavations at a Bronze Age site, Jin kingdom tombs [A.D. 265-420], in Shanxi Province since 1979” (Archeology.org 2008b).
  20. Cao has since attended SUNY Buffalo’s Department of Industrial Engineering as a graduate student.
  21. “Architectural education was frequently disrupted by civil unrest in the 20th century and Chinese architects were largely isolated from the outside world. The outdated state-owned design institutes could not meet the demand of the construction boom in the 1990s” (Xuefei 2008, 220).
  22. Today Hu is Head of Development at Prince’s Charities Foundation (China). The web site for the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center is: <http://en.bjchp.org/>.
  23. For example, during the Great Leap Forward, massive amounts of timber were lost when they were pulled from historic temples and traditional residences, and city walls and gates were also destroyed.
  24. The auction was sabotaged by a mystery Chinese winning bidder, later discovered to be Cai Mingchao, a “patriot” and advisor to China’s National Treasures Fund, who has refused to pay after China sought to halt the auction. Cai said, “I believe that any Chinese person would stand up at this time... I am making an effort to fulfill my own responsibilities” (*BBC News* 2009).
  25. Callahan adds: “Chinese nationalism is not just about celebrating the glories of Chinese civilization; it also commemorates China’s weakness.... The discourse of national humiliation shows how China’s insecurities are not just material, a matter of catching up to the West militarily and economically, but symbolic. Indeed, one of the goals of Chinese foreign policy has been to “cleanse National Humiliation...”. [T]he narrative of national salvation depends upon national humiliation; the narrative of national security depends upon national insecurity.”  
The events cited as the greatest source for Chinese humiliation are: 1. The beginning of national humiliation and the forfeit of sovereignty: the First Opium War; 2. The new expedition of the descendants of pirates: the Second Opium War; 3. A disgrace beyond redemption: Franco-British forces burn Yuanming Garden palace; 4. Nation conquered, country smashed: the Sino-Japanese War (1894); 5. Ghosts of the Black River: the massacres of Hailanpao and the sixty-four villages of Jiangdong [in Manchuria by the Russians]; 6. Deep humiliation of the Boxer Uprising: allied forces from eight powers invade China; 7. There are no national boundaries here: the Russo-Japanese War (1905) 8. A heavy burden to bear: the humiliation of the missionary courts; 9. Dirge of the Songhua River: the events of September 18 (1931: Japanese invasion); 10. Reign of terror in the golden tomb: the Massacre of Nanjing (1937). Missing is reference to the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) which, as a civil war, does not fit the humiliation metanarrative (from the book, *A Record of National Humiliation*, cited in Callahan 2004, 204).
  26. Ien Ang argues against a reductive reading of “Chineseness” and defines the concept as a diasporic paradigm: “Language, culture, civilization, people, nation, polity...that has never ceased to both fascinate and infuriate its dedicated scholar... The view from the diaspora has shattered the convenient certainty with which Chinese studies has been equated, quite simply, with the study of China. ‘China’ can no longer be limited to the more or less fixed area of its official spatial and cultural boundaries, nor can it be held up as providing the authentic, authoritative, and uncontested standard for all things Chinese.” Citing Tu Wei-Ming in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (1994), this view disputes an essentialist perspective on Chinese identity, and is a “departure from the mode of demarcating Chineseness through an absolutist oppositioning of authentic and inauthentic, pure and impure, real and fake” (224-5). Ang describes Tu’s position as “explicitly neo-Confucianist and largely anticommunist” (229), guided by “an overwhelming desire—bordering, indeed, on obsession—to somehow maintain, redeem, and revitalize the notion of Chineseness as a marker of common culture and identity in a rapidly postmodernizing world”

(231).

27. Ang, drawing from Tu, claims that inspiration can be drawn from the East—Taiwan, Singapore, and the Chinese communities of Southeast Asia (230).

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