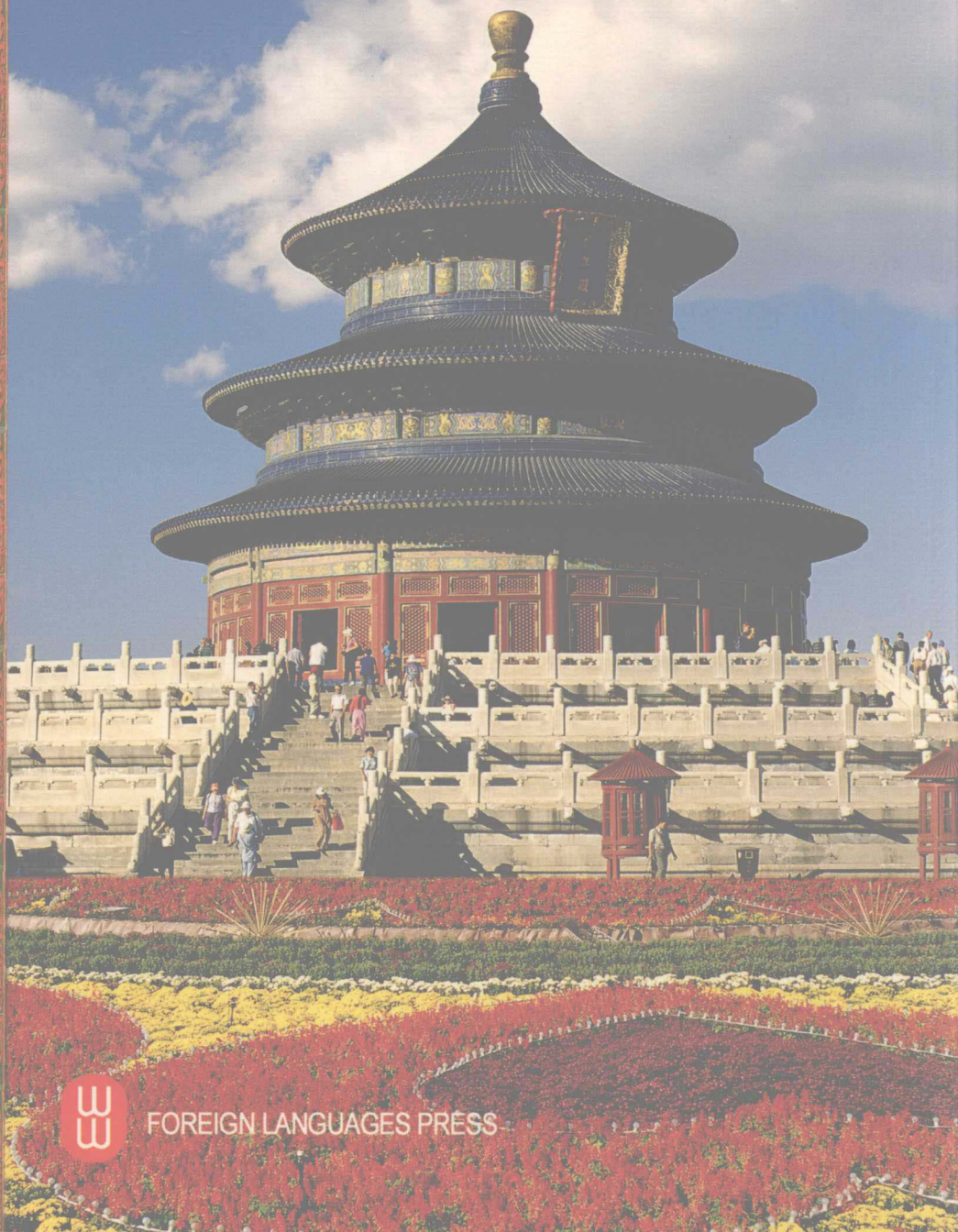


全景中国 PANORAMIC CHINA

# BEIJING:

## The City and the People

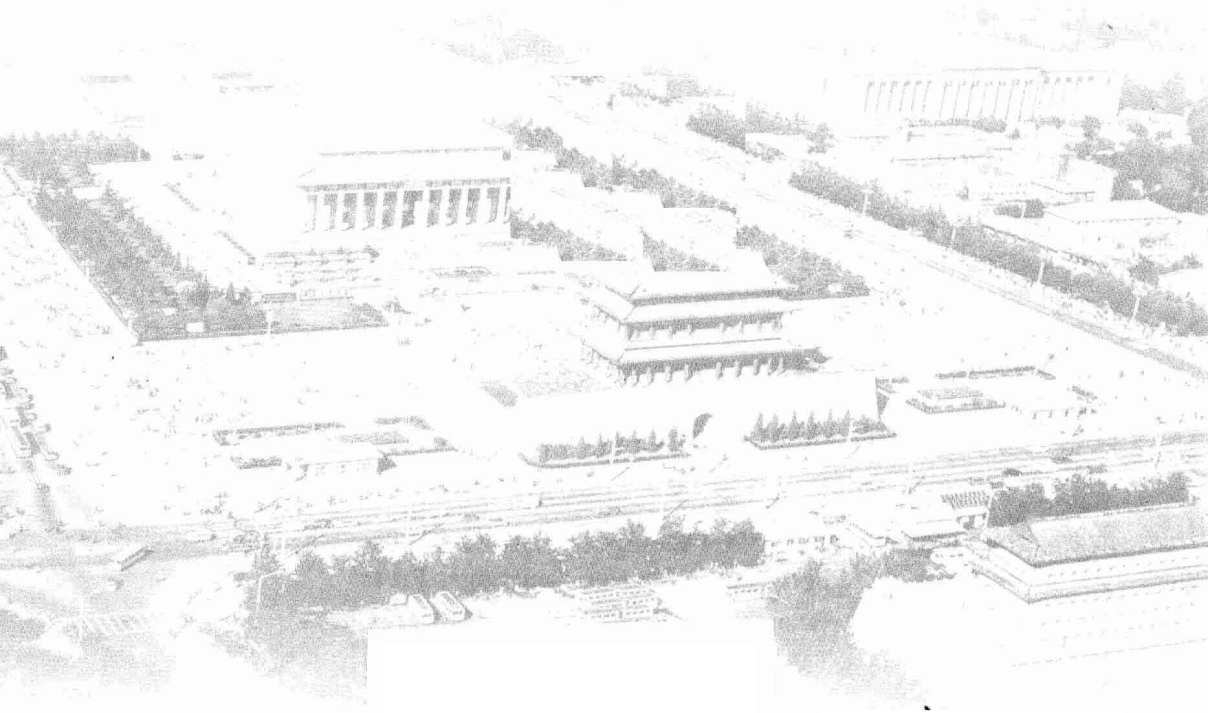


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PANORAMIC CHINA

# Beijing

## —The City and the People



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# Introduction

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities directly under the Central Government, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions. Due to geographical and topographical differences and climatic variations, each area has its own unique natural scenery. The mountains in the north of the country are rugged and magnificent, the waters in the south are clear and turbulent, the Gobi in the northwest shines brilliantly in the sunlight, the hills in the southeast are often shrouded in floating fog, green waves of sorghum and soybean crops undulate over the vast fields of the northeast, and the mountains in the southwest, with sequestered villages and terraced fields, look tranquil and picturesque.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China. The Han, making up the overwhelming majority of the population, mainly live in the eastern and central parts of the country, while many ethnic groups with smaller populations live in the west. In China, all ethnic groups, regardless of size, are equal and respect each other. Each ethnic group has its own folk customs, religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and most use their own language and script. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities. All the ethnic groups call themselves “Chinese.” They are courteous and friendly. In the ethnic-minority areas, the quiet environment, quaint buildings, exquisite fashions, unsophisticated folk customs and hospitality of the local people hold a great appeal to visitors from afar.

China boasts 5,000 years of recorded civilization and a brilliant culture. The country is home to such world-renowned cultural treasures as the Great Wall, terracotta warriors and horses of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, and Ming and Qing imperial palaces and mausoleums, and large numbers of ancient architectural masterpieces, including temples, Buddhist pagodas, residential buildings, gardens, bridges, city walls and irrigation

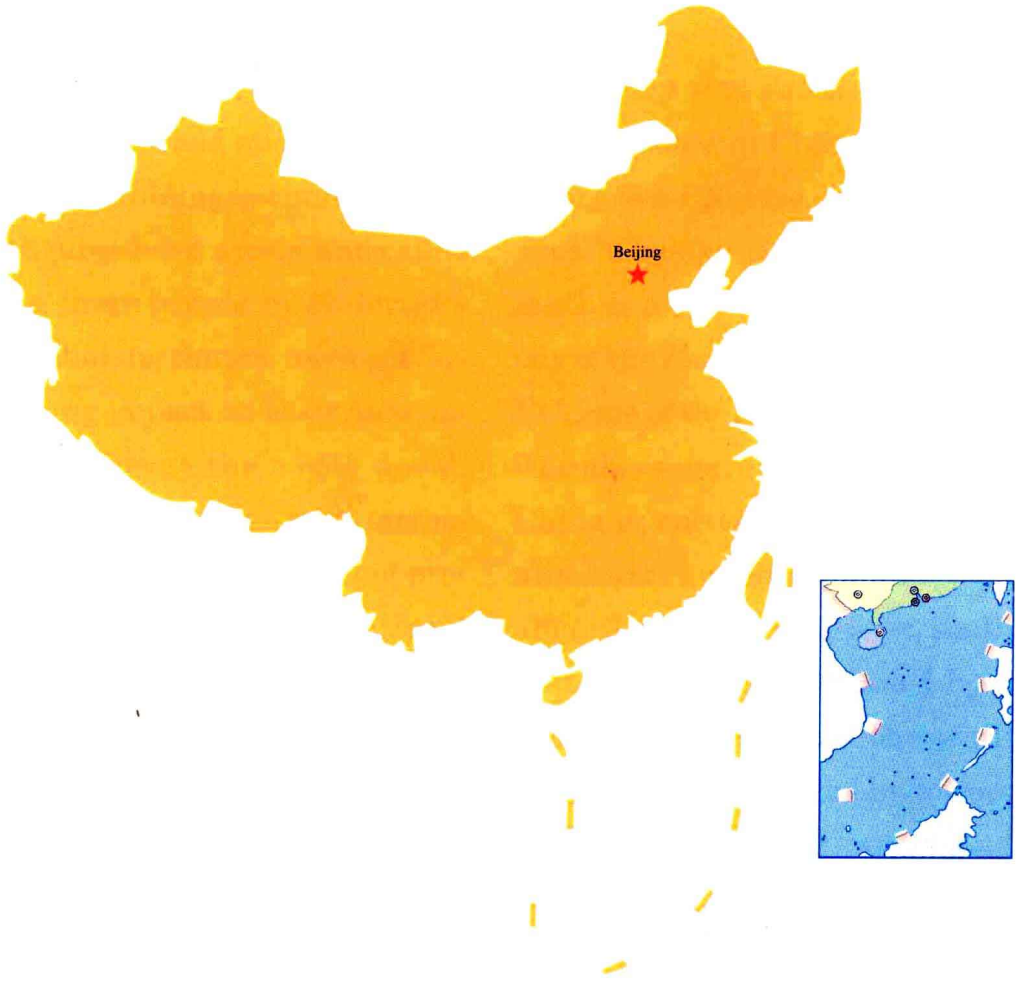
works. There are also cultural relics unearthed from ancient sites, including painted pottery, jade ware, bronze ware, large and ornate tombs and foundations of historical buildings, and many more as yet undiscovered. The museums of China's various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions house thousands of cultural relics and works of art, among which are treasures rare in the world, displaying the long history of China and the splendid Chinese culture from different aspects. The strong, deep-rooted Chinese culture has always influenced the mentality and moral standards of the Chinese people, having developed continually in pace with the civilization. A careful study of today's Peking Opera, kunqu opera, shadow plays, calligraphy, painting, paper-cutting, and even the flower-shaped steamed buns on the kitchen range of farmers will reveal elements of traditional Chinese culture as well as replications of the art of the past.

Like other countries of venerable age, China has suffered grievous calamities. During the century and more before the 1950s, the Chinese people made unrelenting struggles for the prosperity of the country, and national independence and liberation. A large number of insightful people and revolutionaries, cherishing all kinds of dreams for a strong China, studied the ways of the West in a quest for prosperity and strength, and borrowed the revolutionary experience of foreign countries. At last, the Communist Party of China, proceeding from the reality of China, and relying on the working people, founded a brand-new country, the People's Republic of China, in 1949. Since then, the Chinese people have made persistent efforts and explorations for the grand revitalization of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people's efforts in the past two decades and more have resulted in outstanding achievements, with rapid social progress, a well-developed economy, and a modern civilization and traditional culture enhancing each other.

It is easy to have a quick look at China's past and present, but it takes time to gain a panoramic knowledge of China. The "Panoramic China" series is meant to assist readers, especially those overseas, in this respect. Each volume in the series focuses on a province, municipality or autonomous region, describing, with illustrations, the outstanding characteristics of each area from different perspectives. Through this series, the reader will acquire knowledge of the real and vivid daily life of the local people, the colorful society and the developing economy, assisted by relevant information.



# Location of Beijing in the People's Republic of China



## Preface

All over the world there are great cities with broad streets and impressive buildings, where historical figures have arisen and called upon their people to undertake earthshaking causes, having a far-reaching impact on their own nations and even the whole world. There are also cities with attractive scenery, long history and profound culture. Such cities attract tourists from all over the world. There are also a few cities which possess all the above-named advantages, and I'm lucky to live in one of them — Beijing.

Beijing is very old. When it was first constructed as a capital (1271, in the Yuan Dynasty), everything was planned. The outline

of the city was square, which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. There is a Chinese saying which goes “The sky is round, and the earth is a rectangle.” The capital city of the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), one of the first Chinese cities, was also square-shaped. Cities in China in ancient times were usually surrounded by a city wall aligned with the east, west, south and north. A moat crossed by a drawbridge encircled the wall, which was surmounted by towers of the same height, style and decoration, except that the tower over the southern gate was usually bigger (witness the tower of the Front Gate of Beijing). No gate was set in the middle of the north side of the Beijing city wall, be-



cause it was thought that the emperor's authority would leak out if a direct passage was opened from the central north part. The emperor and his concubines lived right in the middle of the city in the area containing the main source of the city's water. A wall similar to that of the outer city wall enclosed the imperial palaces. Outside it was the royal city, where the emperor's family members and close relatives lived. Outside the royal city was another wall, outside which the common people lived. Their residences were located in even-sized square areas, with special quarters for individuals of consequence. Today, there is still one royal palace complex in Beijing, a dozen princes'

residences and over 100 well-preserved courtyard houses, and numerous compounds.

Beijing remained square-shaped until the reign (1522-1567) of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty. Fearing attack from the north, it was decided to enlarge the city by adding another outer wall. The work started in the south, instead of the direction of the military threat, but before long it had to be abandoned, because the emperor had squandered the remaining money for the project. The result was the distinctive 凸 shape of Beijing during the Ming Dynasty. The expansion of the southern part of the city attracted peddlers from their traditional

trading place north of the palace complex, so that the main market settled there—the most important and conspicuous part of the city. In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) a tradition grew up of having markets on the north of the imperial palace, like those in Chang'an, capital of the Tang Dynasty, present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. Here, I'd like to discuss the source of the Chinese philosophical concept of "sitting in the north and facing the south." In ancient China, as in many other countries located in the northern hemisphere, the cold and severe north was a symbol of solemnity and divinity, while the warm and indolent south was an area to be subjected to rule. The irony is that

the sheer stupidity of the emperor ended up not only changing the traditional rigid Chinese philosophical rules but also in a very wise move to reshape the city of Beijing.

**H**ow has life within the city walls for so many centuries shaped the personality of the people of Beijing? The city walls are square, heavy and solid. This has made Beijing people straightforward, generous, talented, magnanimous and devoted to education, and they attach great importance to loyalty to friends. They love their city, including every brick and tile, blade of grass, tree, flower and bird. Beijing people are proud to live here generation after generation,

never giving a thought to leaving this city. Such is the sense of security which the massive city walls have handed down as a legacy to the people of China's capital. Doing things without haste is a deep-rooted disposition of Beijing's people. They work, relax and entertain all at the right time, and they have so many better ways to entertain themselves than people in other parts of the country. They don't bother with things that are not their business, regarding residence "at the emperor's feet" as the ideal life. No other place could be better than here. As for foreigners, they didn't give them a thought. China was the center of the world, and Beijing was the center of China.

This attitude of the people of the capital (of ignoring the outside world) led to dire consequences for China until the country opened itself up and learned to absorb others' advantages to make up for its own disadvantages.

In recent decades the population of Beijing swelled to the point at which the municipal government decided to restructure the whole city. In order to ease the congestion in the center of Beijing, large numbers of various new-style buildings were erected on the periphery of the city in all directions. These new suburbs were divided into several districts, separated by green belts. Today's Beijing has two axes—vertical and horizontal

—and two belts to the left and right of the vertical axis. The belt to the left of the vertical axis is devoted to technological development; that to the right, to cultural activities. In the past, there was only the vertical axis. Officials entered the palace to pay respects to or have an audience with the emperor by kowtowing along the vertical way. However, in modern times, communication between west and east are regarded as more important than that between south and north. In Beijing there are now horizontal “golden belts” — Chang’an Street, Ping’an Street and Liangguang Street — in addition to the two belts to the left and right of the vertical axis. The belt of techno-

logical development to the left was formed naturally in the last few decades with a little administrative regulation, and the ecological belt of cultural activities to the right developed in a similar way.

The northern part of Beijing has been expanded greatly in recent years, especially since Beijing hosted the Asian Games in 1990. Meanwhile, at the southern end of the original north-south axis, the tower of the Yongdingmen Gate Tower has been restored, and the vertical axis has been extended to Nanyuan. Chaoyang District is continuously expanding eastward, involving the development of the Tongzhou District, to which about 1.2 million people will eventually

move. In the western part of Beijing, Haidian District is where most of Beijing's universities are concentrated. In addition, its modern technological research facilities have given the district the nickname "China's Silicon Valley." Behind Haidian lie the Western Hills, a scenic and recreational area. Beijing is being built with the latest concepts, combining the best of the old and the new, the elegant and the practical, the magnificent and the simple. There is something for everyone here. Beijing welcomes you to visit and participate in its construction.

More importantly, Beijing people have become more mature. Beijing is the political and cultural cen-

ter of China. In the past it was thought that as long as the policies of a party and some advanced members were publicized and implemented, the country would naturally develop. Today, the trend is toward "multi-polarization," with more consideration given to the will and the interests of the majority of the people. Moreover, the old culture which rejected new things has been modified, and the principle of "developing the country by technology" has been firmly established. Nowadays, while valuing Beijing's cultural heritage, the people of this newly developing city are curious about everything foreign. They like to study new things, and adapt suitable aspects of them for the construc-

tion of Beijing.

Dear friends, I don't know if you've ever visited Beijing, but what you see in this photo album, whether it's old or new, is just a very small part of Beijing. If you come here on official business, the relevant departments of the government will warmly welcome you, arrange activities such as climbing the Great Wall, visiting the Palace Museum and tasting Beijing's famous dish, roast duck. If you visit Beijing in a private capacity, you will be able to witness the ordinary people's life, visit *hutong* (old alleys) by tricycle, and make dumplings in local homes. There have been some young foreigners who first came as

tourists, but stayed in Beijing, and even set up families here, as they gradually came to understand Chinese culture and found the traditional local folk art and trade intriguing and worthwhile practicing.

Recently, a sign indicating "kilometer zero" was set up in Tian'anmen Square. This symbolizes, first of all, that Beijing is the center of China, and, second, that the past has receded, and the future starts at "zero." Every day a new sun rises! Beijing welcomes guests from all over the world!

Xu Chengbei



### The Zhengyangmen Gate

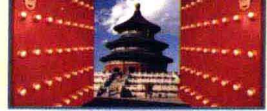
The inner city of Beijing was built around the Forbidden City and the Imperial City in 1420 (the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty - 1368-1644). Nine gates stood along the 20-km city wall. Zhengyangmen was the main gate in the center of the southern wall. The gate-tower and the arrow tower are still extant. It is popularly known as Qianmen, the "front gate," because it is situated directly in front of the Imperial City and the Forbidden City.

The gate-tower was built in 1437, the second year of the Zhengtong reign period of the Ming Dynasty. Between the gate-tower and the arrow tower there was originally a semi-circular enceinte of the city gate which was 108 m from north to south and 90 m from east to west, with four arched gates around the wall. From its construction to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the wall was burned down several times, then they were torn down in 1914. The next year, a German engineer was commissioned to renovate the arrow tower and redesign the surrounding streets to facilitate the flow of traffic.

The tower of the gate sits on the top of the brick city wall. It is a two-story structure with a traditional double-eaved roof.

The roof is of *xieshan* style (or "combination hip-gable" style), covered with gray semi-tubular tiles fringed with green tiles on the roof edges. There are doors on all four sides of both stories. The building is divided into seven bays, called *jian*, on the south and north sides, and into three bays on the east and west sides. (A bay is the spacing between two adjacent columns.) Corridors that face the outside are on all four sides of both stories of the tower. On the east and west sides of the tower on the inner side of the wall are ramps that lead from the ground to the top of the wall. The tower is 42 m high, the highest of all gate-towers of Beijing. The arrow tower of Zhengyangmen was built in 1439, the fourth year of the reign of Ming Emperor Zheng Tong. It is a brick bastion-like structure built on top of the 12-metre high wall. The total height of the tower from the ground is 38 m. It also has the traditional double-eave *xieshan* style. There are four rows of loopholes facing towards the outside, totaling 94 in all. Originally, there were two temples in the enceinte enclosure of the city gate, one for Guan Yu, the God of War, and the other for Bodhisattva Guanyin.

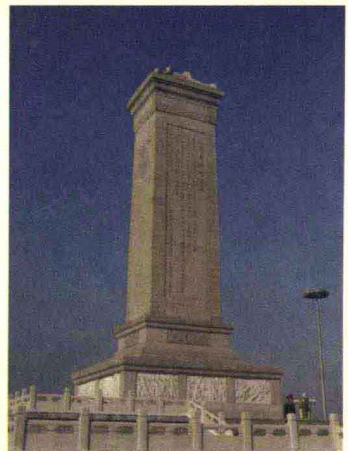




Tian'anmen Square at festival time

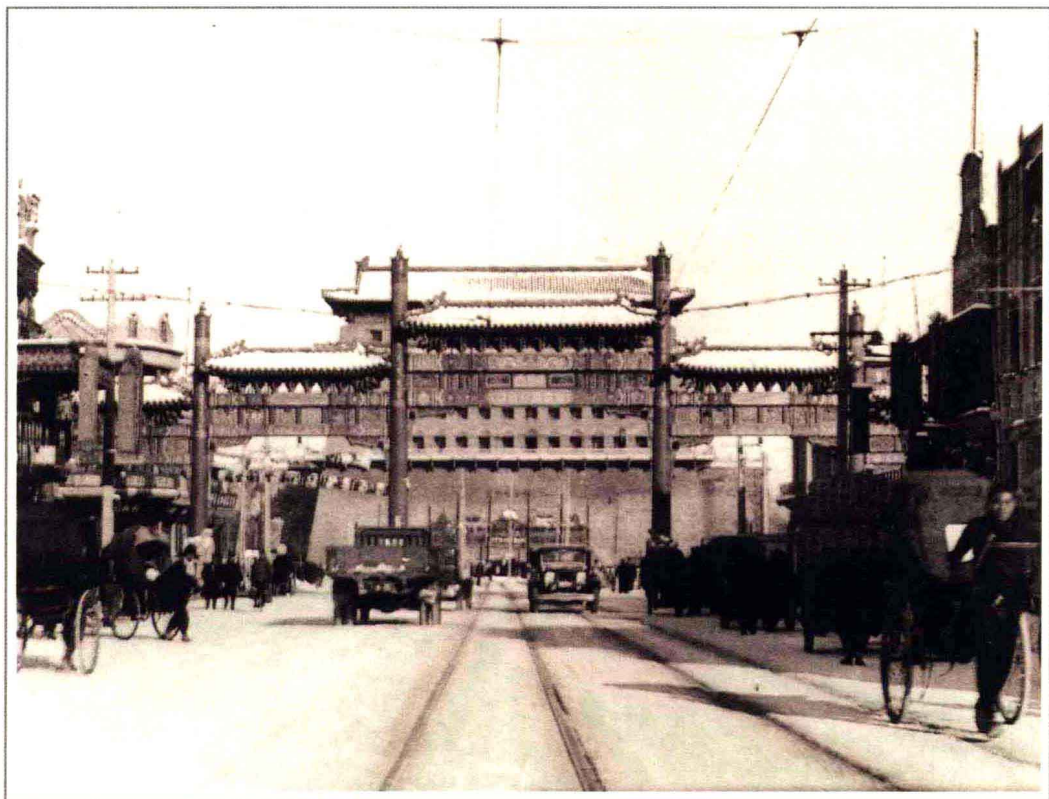


Zhengyangmen (Qianmen, the "front gate")



The Monument to the People's Heroes in Tian'anmen Square





**The *Pailou* (Decorative Archway) Outside Zhengyangmen**

The *pailou* had five bays supported by six pillars, and was commonly known as the Wu Pailou (Five-bay Archway). This wooden structure is no longer extant.