Montreal Architectural Review

The Memory of Landscape in Beijing

Hui Zou
University of Florida

Abstract

The paper studies the memory of landscape in Beijing and its significance to communicative spaces. The research focuses on historical coincidences between Beijing and ancient Chinese capitals to reveal the historicity of landscape in Beijing. The research analyzes the polarized relationship between imperial landscape and scholarly landscape in Chinese capitals to discover the cultural role of mnemonic landscape for the identity of a city as well as the freedom of human individuality. The paper interprets the planning of a capital as recorded in earliest Chinese literature, compares suburban landscapes and urban gardens in the capitals of the Western Han, Northern Wei, and Tang dynasties, configures the map of mnemonic landscapes in Beijing of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and discloses the hidden landscape enclaves in modern Beijing. The paper concludes with a historical criticism regarding urbanization in contemporary China.

Landscape and Peaceful Living

Throughout contemporary urbanization, many rural Chinese migrate to larger cities for a better life through seeking employment at thriving construction sites. The high density of new tall buildings shrinks the existence of mnemonic landscapes, which latter are inherent to public spaces and the characteristic of a

city. The theme of the Shanghai Expo in 2010 was coined as "Better City, Better Life," which implied both the ambition and anxiety regarding urbanization. What is missing in urban society is people's realizing that the value of a good life lies in the collective memory of historic landscapes. Faced with the dominant skyline of autonomous buildings, this memory becomes difficult to sustain and gradually disappears. The communicative spaces for spiritual remoteness used to be very active in Chinese gardens but are seldom encountered in present mega cities.

Two early documents about city construction in Chinese history appear in the *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*) (7th century BC). The first is the poem "Ding zhi fang zhong 定之方中;" the second, the poem "Gong Liu 公刘." The former discusses how king Wengong of Wei (Weiwengong 卫文公, reign 659-635 BC) constructed his capital city Chuqiu 楚丘; the latter about how the king Gong Liu of early Zhou[1] constructed his capital Bin 豳. Wengong spotted the star of construction for the most suitable construction time. He followed the movement of the sun to decide the orientations of buildings. Standing on a high place of nearby ruins, he viewed the distant (*wang* 望) mountains and hills, then descended to observe (*guan* 观) agrarian fields. With the help of divination, he chose the most auspicious site for his city.[2] Gong Liu climbed a hill looking into (*zhan* 瞻) the expansive plain. After ascending to a southern hillock, he suddenly discovered (*gou* 觏) the suitable site for his city. The land there is expansive and far-reaching. He measured the shadows of the sundial for orientations (*yinyang*) of the site and observed carefully (*guan*) the spring watercourses. He examined the sunset of the western mountain to ensure spacious land for the city, and he thought that the curved bank of a watercourse was most suitable for people to live together. In the poem, he advanced the concept of "peaceful living" (*anju* 安居) in the city where people could properly dwell, build, and joyfully communicate.[3] Both poems demonstrate that an auspicious site is crucial for a capital as well as the perception of the cosmic order of light and shadow and beautiful landscapes. There exists an inherent relationship among the perception of landscapes, cosmic dwelling, and joyful communication in urban life.

In another poem, the "Sacred Terrace (Lingtai 灵台)" of the *Shijing*, King Wen of Zhou (reign, c. 1105-1056 BC) built his Sacred Park (Lingyou 灵囿), which included the Sacred Pool (Lingzhao 灵沼) and Sacred Terrace.[4] The Sacred Park was an extensive natural landscape enclosed by a wall where all creatures lived in harmony so that sacred ethics (*lingde* 灵德), Dao, would pervade the entire park. The Sacred Terrace was not only for perceiving the landscape but also for observing the auspicious *qi* and providing space for public celebrations.[5] The Sacred Park is the first recorded imperial garden in Chinese history. It established the interactive relationship among memorable landscape, memorable water, and the buildings for engaging in that memory. This relationship model was paradigmatic and was repeatedly alluded to and imitated in later imperial gardens such as the Shanglin Park (Shanglinyuan 上林苑) of the Western Han dynasty and the Yuanmingyuan 圆明园 (Garden of Perfect Brightness) of the Qing dynasty.

A memorable landscape provides a chance for the individual to identify with nature. In the *Lunyu* (*Analects*), Confucius stated that "the wise man delights in water, and the humane man delights in a

mountain."[6] The virtue of man is compared to the beauty of landscape. This is the aesthetic concept of so-called "comparative ethics" or "moral analogy" (*bide* 比德).[7] As Confucius further stated, "poetics can be visible;"[8] it can thus be said that a memorable landscape is a scenic view (*jing* 景) where the mind dwells. In another sense, the mind inhabited by a memorable landscape acts as the Daoist saint Zhuangzi's "fasting room of heart" (*xinzhai* 心斋) whose emptiness in turn brightens the beauty of nature.[9]

With heavy polluted air and the radical shrinking of public spaces, Beijing is reaching a moment of life or death in its urban history. The city continuously expands into suburbs and surrounding rural areas while painstakingly maintaining its symbolic geometrical center of politics and culture. The sunny ordered texture of traditional courtyard housing (*siheyuan* 四合院) has been gradually devoured by stretched disoriented shadows of glossy institutional towers. The centripetal escalation of land value resonates with the hierarchical ground and sky occupation and leaves no free space for cultivation of individuality. The social groups which produce cultural creativity and diversity are pushed to the periphery of the city where they humbly build their enclaves, such as the Factory 798 artist colony.

Beijing was peaceful and harmonic in historical times, interspersed with memorable natural landscapes and gardens. The Chinese like to use the traditional idiom "*anju leye* 安居乐业," which literally means "peaceful living, joyful working," for describing a good life. The concept of *anju* can be traced to the Daoist scripture *Laozi* and implies the peaceful life of the individual, the nation, as well as between neighboring nations.[10] The scientist Shen Kuo 沈括 of the Northern Song emphasized that only when the propensity of the *topos* (*dishi* 地势) looked good did the "peaceful living" become possible.[11] Contrasting to the natural form of landscape, the traditional plan of a Chinese capital typically adopted the artificial grid form. According to the oldest urban planning theory in the *Kaogong ji* 考工记 (c. 4th century BC), a capital city should be in a square form enclosed by a city wall and adopt a grid system of avenues to respond to the cardinal orientations of the cosmos. The builders needed to refer to the water surface to judge if the ground was adequately flat for building a city and employ a sundial for observing the cardinal orientations.[12] This ancient urban theory helps us understand the beauty of the built texture of sunlight and shadows experienced as the "cosmic consciousness" in traditional *hutong* 胡同 neighborhoods in old Beijing.[13]

Landscape and Capital

The advantage of *topos* (*xingsheng* 形胜) is a top priority for choosing a site for building the Chinese capital. In the official history book of Beijing entitled *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下旧闻考 (A Study of Old Records [of the Capital]) (1774), which was commissioned by Emperor Qianlong (reign 1735-1796) of the Qing dynasty, the four chapters of "advantages of *topos*" immediately follow the chapters regarding cosmos

and ancient history but stand ahead of the chapters of imperial palaces, city plans, institutes, imperial gardens, suburbs, and customs. In the book one official described the advantage of *topos* with the military concept of "formation of earth" (*dizhe*n 地阵), referring to the natural mountains and waters providing security for the capital.[14]

The advantage of *topos* highlights the importance of landscapes surrounding the capital. The survey of *topos*, as embodied by the ancient king's viewing gestures, starts from suburbs and moves towards the city site in order to establish an auspicious sense of place for living. Aristotle's concept of *topos* (place) can help us reinforce this understanding of the relationship between the suburban landscape and the city. He defined the *topos* as the primary sense of "in" in which both contained and container were parts of the same, and emphasized that no place could be isolated from what occupied it, rather that the limits of the container and contained coincided.[15] This coincidental double limit between container and contained is, according to Edward Casey, a space of mutual existence. Compared with Plato's *chōra* (space) which manifests interest in the shaping of the form of the contained (e.g., a building, city, etc.), Aristotle's *topos* emphasizes the fixed contour of the environing places (e.g., the original site of a building, the suburban natural environment of a city, etc.), the so-called "ordered natural world."[16] In other words, the advantage of *topos* is essentially related to peaceful living within a city.

The interactive relationship between the suburban landscape in the natural order and the grid city in the artificial order can be traced to the capitals of the Western Han, Northern Wei, and Tang dynasties. The capital Chang'an of Western Han was located on the plain between the Wei 渭 River to the north and the Zhongnan 终南 Mountain to the south. Eight rivers passed through the plain. The imperial Shanglin Park was southwest of the capital and north of the Zhongnan Mountain. The city plan of Chang'an followed the cosmic order of the grid system stated in the *Kaogong ji*.[17] The capital Luoyang of Northern Wei was located on the plain between the Mang 邙 Mountain to the north and the Luo 洛 River to the south. Multiple rivers passed through the plain. The city plan of Luoyang more strictly implemented the cosmic grid system. Its central axis was established to mark the spatial hierarchy of the imperial power. For consideration of food security, the Tang dynasty adopted the two-capital system of Chang'an in the west and Luoyang in the east. The Luoyang of Tang was built west of the Luoyang of Northern Wei. Imitating the magnificent Shanglin Park of Western Han, both Tang capitals established a large Forbidden Park (Jinyuan 禁苑) in the suburb for the emperor's extensive wandering and hunting. The royal army was stationed in the Forbidden Park, which built up a military buffer zone between the capital and the main watercourses in the suburb.[18]

In terms of the relationship between the urban grid plan and suburban landscape, the ancient capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang established good models for the capital Beijing of the Ming and Qing dynasties. All these ancient capitals were located on a plain in northern China with nearby characteristic mountains and waters. There are many similarities between the Chang'an of Western Han and the Beijing of Qing. The biggest imperial garden of Chang'an was the Shanglin Park, founded by Emperor Wu

of Han (reign 140-87 BC), in the southwestern suburb. The largest imperial garden cluster of Beijing was located in the northwestern suburb between the city and the West Mountain range, including the magnificent Yuanmingyuan, and the Summer Palace (Yiheyuan 颐和园; old name, Qingyiyuan 清漪园) founded by Emperor Qianlong. Both the Shanglin Park and the Summer Palace contained a huge Kunming 昆明 Lake.[19] According to Qianlong's garden record, his Kunming Lake intentionally alluded to Emperor Wu's[20] and this implied that the former took the latter as his admired model for administrating the nation. In the imperial gardens of Chang'an, Emperor Wu built multiple observing towers (*guan*) for a bird's eye view of extensive landscapes.[21] The imperial Forbidden Park of the eastern capital Luoyang of Tang was located in the western suburb. Like Luoyang, the imperial garden cluster in the northwestern suburb of Beijing acted as a military buffer zone where the imperial army of Eight Banners was stationed.

In the Luoyang of Tang, the imperial gardens were concentrated in the northwestern corner of the city and spread to the western suburb, but many scholars' private gardens were hidden within the grid-iron neighborhoods (*lifang* 里坊) in the southern city, especially the southeastern corner where the great poet Bai Juyi's domestic garden was located.[22] According to Bai's garden record, his home was within the Lüdaoli 履道里 block on the southern bank of the Yi 伊 River. He was proud that the southeastern corner of the city had the best fengshui and landscape.[23]

The need for retreat is crucial for humanity. Bai Juyi once described the retreat within the bustling capital as the best approach towards blessings and peace, as a situation of shuttling freely between appearing and disappearing, the hectic and relaxed. In his view, when encountering setbacks in life, resorting to the wilderness of nature like a hermit could be called a "small retreat;" being your ethical self while serving in the imperial court could be called a "big retreat." The retreat within a city as a free scholar is what he described as a "middle retreat" (*zhongyin* 中隐),[24] which echoes the Confucian concept of the "middle way" (*zhongyong*) and the Daoist negative approach towards ultimate freedom.[25] The freedom of humanity needs a remote place for ethical development. The "middle retreat" approach historically represents Chinese intellectuals' philosophy of life and was best materialized by gardens throughout the city and beyond. After the eastern capital Luoyang of Tang was changed into the western capital Luoyang of Northern Song, the joy of retreating into a garden within the city was continued by the great scholar Sima Guang whose Garden of Solitary Joy (Duleyuan 独乐园) was located within the Zunxianfang 尊贤坊block, which was across the Yi River from Bai Juyi's block. According to Sima's garden record, he built a terraced pavilion in the garden for observing distant mountains (Jianshantai 见山台), and such a view of distant mountains from within the city was highly valued by local residents.[26] In terms of the urban structure, what is interesting is the diagonally polarized relationship between the imperial landscapes in the northwestern corner of the city and the scholarly gardens in the southeastern corner. For both Bai and Sima, their residence was remote and small, but the solitary joy in the garden engaged the cosmos. In Beijing of the Ming dynasty, there existed a similar diagonal pattern between the imperial gardens in the northwestern suburb and the scholarly gardens surrounding a body of water called Bubble River (Paozihe 泡子河) within the southeastern

corner of the city. More interestingly, the cosmic connection of the scholarly gardens by the Bubble River was related to a nearby Daoist temple and the Observatory (Guanxiangtai 观象台).

Landscapes of Beijing in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The area of Beijing was the location of the capitals for four consecutive dynasties. Since the Jin dynasty, there had been recorded "Eight Scenes of Yanjing" (Yanjing bajing 燕京八景) for characterizing the most iconic landscapes of the area.[27] All these scenes were either relevant to the distant view of West Mountain in the western suburb or connected to the watercourses emerging from that direction. A popular phrase, circulated among modern scholars, of so-called "three hills and five gardens" (*sanshan wuyuan* 三山五园) describes the characteristic landscape in the northwestern suburb of Beijing of the Qing dynasty.[28]

The desire for viewing the distant landscape was embodied in Beijing through the city wall and the multistoried pavilions (*lou* 楼) in gardens and temples, most of which existed in the western suburb between West Mountain and the city. Among the chapters on the suburbs of the capital in the historical book *Rixia jiuwen kao*, two are on the eastern suburb, one respectively on the southern and northern suburbs, and sixteen on the western suburb which includes numerous Buddhist and Daoist temples and their gardens.[29] During the springtime, citizens liked to pass through the Xizhi 西直 Gate of the northwestern corner of the city, cross over the Sorghum Bridge (Gaoliangqiao 高梁桥) and go sightseeing in the northwestern suburb near West Mountain. Within the same city corner, scholars built private gardens by the Lake of Collected Water (Jishuitan 积水潭) which received the watercourse originating from the northwestern suburb.[30]

The history of Beijing as the national capital started from the Jin dynasty whose capital, Zhongdu 中都, was laid out by including the watercourse from today's Lotus Lake (Lianhuachi 莲花池) in southwestern Beijing. The emperor created his retreat garden in the northeastern suburb by making use of an existing lake whose water source was in today's Purple Bamboo Park (Zizhuyuan 紫竹院) in western Beijing. Kublai Khan created his capital of the Yuan dynasty, Dadu 大都, northeast of the Jin capital by enclosing the Jin's retreat garden as his imperial palace garden. The Yuan capital shifted its main water source from the southwestern to the northwestern suburb,[31] which was well known for rich springs. The Yuan court diverted the spring waters into two separate watercourses: one served the imperial gardens within the city, the other flowed into a new canal for food transportation. The capital of the Ming dynasty, Beijing, enclosed the Yuan capital and combined the two watercourses from the northwestern suburb into one, serving both the imperial gardens and the food canal.

During the Ming dynasty, gardens of scholar officials began to emerge in the northwestern suburb, the northwestern and southeastern corners of the city wall. These three locations were connected by the water course flowing from the northwestern suburb throughout the city into its southeastern corner.

During the Qing dynasty, many imperial gardens were created in the northwestern suburb, replacing the Ming private gardens. Meanwhile, the private gardens within the city were mostly occupied by the princes.

The two most well-known private gardens in the northwestern suburb during the Ming dynasty were the royal relative Li Wei's 李伟 Garden of Delicate Brilliance (Qinghuayuan 清华园) and the scholar Mi Wanzhong's 米万钟 Dipper Garden (Shaoyuan 勺园). The two gardens were across from each other and well known for water scenes and the borrowed view of nearby West Mountain. A Ming document on the Garden of Clear Brilliance states: "Between the mountain and water a high tower rises up. Climbing up to the tower, look straight towards Fragrant Hill and gaze over the Jade Spring [Hill]. The two heights [of my garden tower and the West Mountain] are as intimate as two persons' eyelashes touching. In the garden there are over ten miles of watercourses, which carries the boat everywhere."[32] The scholars' poems praised the tiny Dipper Garden for its meandering depth of water.[33] During the Qing dynasty, Li's garden was replaced by Emperor Kangxi's (reign 1661-1722) Garden of Uninhibited Spring (Changchunyuan 畅春园). Kangxi's garden record stated that he loved the sweet spring water in this suburb and decided to build the garden here.[34] The northwestern suburb was called Haidian 海淀, which meant "shallow lakes," and its central area was the Village of Ten Thousand Springs (Wanquanzhuang 万泉庄).[35] North of Kangxi's garden was his son Emperor Yongzheng's (reign 1722-1735) garden of Yuanmingyuan, which was inherited by Qianlong and expanded eastward to the Garden of Gorgeous Spring (Qichunyuan 绮春园) and the Garden of Eternal Spring (Changchunyuan 长春园), which latter included the Western garden designed by European Jesuits.

In order to concentrate the spring waters in the northwestern suburb for the purpose of imperial gardens and the food canal, Qianlong expanded the West Lake east of the Hill of Jade Spring into a huge lake and renamed it Kunming Lake, which became part of the imperial Garden of Clear Ripples (today's Summer Palace).[36] The Kunming Lake worked as the first reservoir in the history of Beijing, serving as the primary water supply of the capital. The main road from Sorghum Bridge outside the Xizhi Gate to Haidian became a popular journey for scholars to appreciate the beauty of mountains and waters. A Ming poem states: "The spring lake with sunset and rippling bluish water, / The sky shades and terraces contain each other. / Ten miles of green-bluish mountains like walking in a painting, / Twin white birds are as in Jiangnan."[37] The author came from the beautiful Jiangnan area, which was well known for water landscapes in southeastern China, and the landscape in the northwestern suburb reminded him of his hometown.

The watercourse from the northwestern suburb flows below Sorghum Bridge and into the Lake of Collected Water outside the Desheng 得胜 Gate, east of the Xizhi Gate. Both gates belong to the northwestern corner of the city wall. Passing through the sluice (Shuiguan 水关) of the Desheng Gate, the watercourse enters the city at the Shicha 什刹 Lake north of the imperial palace garden called Lake of Primary Nectar (Taiyechi 太液池). The Shicha Lake area, located between the Forbidden City in the south and the northern city wall, became a popular place for scholars to build their private gardens and hold parties for appreciating the beauty of near and far landscapes. Many poems acclaimed the expansive view of the lake

and the distant view of West Mountain. One poem states: "The Buddhist temple leans against the open northern gate, / Below the city tower sunset falls to the expansive lake."[38]

The water of the Shicha Lake flowed south into the Lake of Primary Nectar of the imperial palace garden, west of the Forbidden City. After building the Garden of Eternal Spring and the Western garden for his retirement within the Yuanmingyuan complex during the 1770s, Qianlong began to build his palace residence for retirement, the so-called Qianlong Garden within the northeastern corner of the Forbidden City. Similar to the open-stage theater at the eastern end of the Western garden of the Yuanmingyuan, the remotest destination of the Qianlong Garden was a secret interior theater designed by the Jesuit painters' Chinese students with the technique of illusionary perspective.[39] The perspectival depth of the theaters in both Qianlong's retirement gardens recalls another popular Jesuit technique of representation in China—the art of memory.[40]

The water from the imperial palace garden flowed further south and mixed with the food canal at the southeastern corner of the city wall. During the Ming dynasty the ground of the inside corner was low and formed a curved water body named Bubble River, which was connected to the canal outside the city corner.[41] Along the Bubble River many private gardens were built. Immediately north of the garden cluster were the Daoist Temple of Master Lü (Lügongci 吕公祠) and the ancient observatory on the eastern city wall. The observatory was established during the Yuan dynasty with the assistance of the Jesuit astronomers who later served in the Ming court. Next to the observatory was the Examination Hall (Gongyuan 贡院) where the national exam was held for scholars who wanted to be government officials. Scholars from all over the country liked to reside in the Bubble River area, visiting the gardens, touring the water landscape below the ancient observatory and city wall, and asking for a fortune telling in the Daoist temple prior to taking the national exam. A poem states: "There is an open woods and water within the capital, / In the city corner scatter small islands. / The terraced tower opens to the sun and moon, / Meandering paths hide in smoky clouds."[42] During the Qing dynasty, most gardens along the Bubble River declined, but the landscape maintained its charisma and mystique. Both the Bubble River and the Lake of Collected Water near the Desheng Gate were the most tranquil landscapes within the city. The mnemonic landscape of the Bubble River was essentially related to the observatory, the so-called Terrace towards Heaven (Tiantai 天台).[43] Coincidently, while the memory of Qianlong's imperial gardens was entangled with the Jesuits' design art, the scholars' memory of the humble landscape of the Bubble River was related to the Jesuits' astronomy. The observatory terrace on the city wall, which overlooked the gardens in the city corner, was perceived by the scholars as the "celestial path climbing towards the high-autumn sky."[44]

Landscapes of Modern Beijing

After the Qing dynasty most imperial gardens in the northwestern suburb of Beijing disappeared. The former Altar of Land and Grain (Shejitan 社稷坛) west of the Tiananmen of the Forbidden City became the first public park, called the Central Park, of modern Beijing in 1914.[45] After the founding of New China in 1949, there were heated debates among scholars and government officials regarding how to develop Beijing into a modern capital and whether the old city wall should be preserved. During the 1960s, except for two gate towers, the ancient city wall was completely demolished for the purpose of constructing highways and subways.[46] The two remaining towers stand respectively over the Shicha Lake and the Bubble River area, recalling the lost memory of the watercourse passing through the entire city from the northwestern to the southeastern corner. This water orientation in the capital matched the overall natural water orientation of China and was considered an auspicious fengshui. Since the 1950s the government has planned the development of Beijing based on the Forbidden City as the urban axis. In the past three decades modern high-rise buildings rapidly replaced the historical fabric of courtyard houses, gardens, and water courses. The disappearance of the city wall and water landscapes deconstructs the collective memory of historical Beijing. The Jiangnan-like landscape of rich springs and gardens in Haidian has been destroyed and the traces of the Bubble River are gone. The Shicha Lake shrunk and changed into a modern boisterous nightlife attraction. The traditional view of West Mountain within the city is obstructed by dense high-rise buildings.

Where is the retreat for spiritual peace and where is the place for tracing the memory of historical Beijing? In the fragmentary and chaotic environment of this mega city, some citizens never give up the desire for a retreat where the soul can find itself. These retreat places are usually forgotten and abandoned landscape enclaves, scattered in the high density of autonomous buildings and coldhearted infrastructures. As enlightened by Sima Guang's Garden of Solitary Joy, any retreat for spirituality requires a remote landscape where the view and mind can meet. Somewhere between the Xizhi and Fucheng 阜成 Gates outside the western city wall there is a cemetery for European Jesuits including the tombs of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining 郎世宁, 1688-1766), the chief designer of the Western garden of the Yuanmingyuan.[47] The cemetery site is now hidden on the campus of Beijing Academy of the Communist Party. The campus is a former Catholic church whose buildings and landscape were used as a plot site for the movie, *In the Heat of the Sun* (*Yangguang canlan de rizi* 阳光灿烂的日子, 1994), directed by Jiang Wen 姜文. Few people know about the existence of this Jesuit cemetery. For those who have found their way in, this secret landscape becomes a retreat for reflection and enlightenment in history.

Different from a tourist attraction such as the Temple (Altar) of Heaven, the Ditan 地坛Park (Altar of Earth) is quietly located outside the Anding 安定 Gate of the northern city wall. The park is fully covered with ancient pine trees. Tourists pay little attention to this park most likely because of its remote location and humble scale. But for the citizen who seeks himself, this park is a paradise. The park recently became well known because of a piece of published prose entitled "I and the Ditan Park" by Shi Tiesheng 史铁生

(1951-2010). Shi was a writer who had used a wheelchair since 1973. For fifteen years he had been a frequent visitor to Ditan Park, reflecting in solitude and observing the hope of life in an age when individuality was easily twisted and degraded. This prose touches the hearts of many Chinese. Here is an edited translation of some excerpts from his text:

> This is an abandoned ancient garden. It looks like a place of wilderness, seldom remembered by people. It is close to my home. I think this coincidence is a fate. It seems the ancient garden has been waiting for me for over four hundred years. Fifteen years ago, I came to the garden in a wheelchair. Bathing in serene sunshine, I sensed time and saw my shadow. This is the place where I escaped the world and entered another. Each tree and spot of the ground has witnessed my visit. In the corners of the park, I contemplated for hours the issue of death and the meaning of life. Some things are eternal in this park, such as the sunset through the stone gateway of the altar, the moment when serene sunshine spreads over the ground, the song of swallows in solitude, children's footprints in snow, and those silent ancient pine trees. Because of this garden, I am often thankful for my fate. When I have to leave this world, I would miss this garden and dream of it. If there is a garden god, he would see me sitting here, being happy, depressed, carefree, lonely, weak, lost, or confident. I often contemplate three questions: Should I die? Why do I live? Why do I write? I hear the god of the garden tells me: "This is your sin and blessing."[48]

After moving his home further away from the park, he wrote another prose item entitled "Missing the Ditan Park." Here is an edited translation of some excerpts:

> I miss the Ditan Park because I miss its serenity. When you sit there, the dusty world recedes but the song of four seasons never stops. The peacefulness of the park is not a silence. The garden might remember a young man in a wheelchair who came here daily, looking for his retreat. Whenever stepping into the garden, my heart calmed down. That serenity was the primordial opening of my heart and its surroundings. A lost soul seems to return to home, the beginning of life. I came across Roland Barthes's book, *Writing Degree Zero*,[49] and thought the degree zero of writing should be the beginning of life. What writing forever searches for is the original desire of the soul, endlessly desiring for the meaning of life. Whenever you live in a difficult life, or pray for hope in your soul, you will return to the degree zero. Each return is like stepping into the garden, retrieving serenity, and thinking of my new direction. Now I understand the god of the garden is those ancient pine trees whose heavy shades keep all the memories, reminding you of the remote dream. After moving my home, I seldom visit the Ditan Park. It has changed completely. I no longer go to the park looking for quietness, rather search for the park in my serenity. It is just like the Daoist saint Zhuangzi's dream of butterfly: Am I the Ditan Park, or is the park myself? I am not *in* the park, but rather the park is what I am.[50]

Like the scholars' dream by the Bubble River of the Ming dynasty, Shi Tiesheng's dream in the Ditan Park recalled Sima Guang's solitary joy in the garden.

Conclusion

What is the memory of landscape in Beijing? It can be the archived memory in literature and paintings such as the gardens in Haidian and the Bubble River, or the existing places of memory such as the Hill of Jade Spring and the Shicha Lake (today's Back Sea), or the historical memory which consists in the uncanniness of history such as the Western garden of the Yuanmingyuan and the Qianlong Garden in the Forbidden City, or the "strange places of memory" in Paul Ricoeur's sense,[51] such as the Jesuit cemetery garden and the Ditan Park.

Through deciphering the memory of landscapes, the historian is not to succumb to regret or nostalgia, but to join together, as does architect Steven Holl's design project of the "Linked Hybrid" residential neighborhood in Beijing, the fragments of history to evoke another way of living together. In his design, the architect set up a water garden with a movie theater in the community atrium to celebrate the memory of Beijing that is essentially related to water. He used the skywalks on the twentieth floor for connecting the eight residential towers, which recall the memory of the lost city towers and city wall near the Dongzhi 东直 Gate of the northeastern corner. These skywalks, including a gallery, café, theater, swimming pool, etc., act as communicative spaces for the neighborhood and are intended to project a view towards the distant West Mountain. Such a desired view towards the northwestern suburb sustains the historical memory of Beijing but becomes uncertain in the polluted smoggy air.

Citing Edward Casey, Ricoeur analyzes the significance of landscape in urban life. He claims that "the best of civilization cannot abolish the primacy of wilderness."[52] The more we aspire to the calmness and stability of house and home, the more we aspire towards freedom in landscape. The manner of construction in urbanization reinforces the urgency of mnemonic landscape. Laozi advised that wholeness (*quan* 全) be approached through a curved (*qu* 曲) rather than straight way and that newness emerge from preserving the old.[53] The "peaceful living," the concept of *anju*, should not be simplified into a spectacular skyline of new and robust buildings in modernization, but rather should echo philosopher Martin Heidegger's concept of poetical dwelling where we "save the earth, receive the sky, await divinities, and initiate our essential being."[54] The sky is the cosmic blue sky under which, as Merleau-Ponty wrote, "I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified…My consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue."[55]

While waiting for the return of blue sky in Beijing, local citizens, migrant workers, tourists, and power clubs compete for the limited mnemonic landscapes among the forest of anonymous (i.e., of no character) and autonomous (i.e., self-centered) buildings. The mystiques of these landscapes seduce the individual mind and provide remote peacefulness for urbanites. To ease the pressures of centripetal urbanization, the Beijing municipality is planning to distribute part of its national institutional functions into nearby Tianjing City and Hebei Province. During this new centrifugal urbanization (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化) surrounding the capital, small cities will become bigger and the rural areas will be transformed

into towns. It is crucial to learn the historical lesson that local mnemonic landscapes need to be enlivened as cultural enclaves for cultivating the dream of individuality, which all can really bring charisma to a city.

Notes

1 The Chinese historical dynasties mentioned in the text include: Zhou (c. 11th-3rd centuries BC), Western Han (206 BC-23 AD), Northern Wei (386-534), Tang (618-907), Northern Song (960 1127), Jin (1115-1234), Yuan (1279-1368), Ming (1368-1644), Qing (1644-1911). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. A short version of this essay was first presented at The Tenth Research Colloquium of Garden History of Germany, Schloss Benrath, Düsseldorf, September 2013.

2 Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 anno., "Ding zhi fang zhong 定之方中," *Shijing yizhu* 诗经译注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 66-67.

3 Ibid., "Gong Liu 公刘," 405-8.

4 Ibid., "Lingtai 灵台," 387-89.

5 He Qinggu 何清谷 anno., *Sanfu huangtu jiaoshi* 三辅黄图校释 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 229, 277.

6 Li Zehou 李泽厚 anno., "Yongye diliu 雍也第六," *Lunyu jindu* 论语今读 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2004), 179.

7 Chen Wangheng 陈望衡, *Zhongguo gudian meixueshi* 中国古典美学史 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 91.

8 Li Zehou, "Yanghuo dishiqi 阳货第十七," 477.

9 Zhuangzi, "Renjian shi 人间世," *Zhuangzi*, anno. & trans. Sun Tonghai 孙通海 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 72.

10 Laozi, Ch. 80, *Laozi*, trans. & anno. Rao Shangkuan 饶尚宽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 190.

11 Shen Kuo 沈括, "Zedi he dichuang 择地和缔创," *Mengxi bitan* 梦溪笔谈 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2002), 279.

12 "Dongguan kaogongji diliu 东官考工记第六," *Zhouli*, anno. Qian Xuan 钱玄 et al. (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2002), 429-30.

13 George N. Kates, *The Years That Were Fat: The Last of Old China* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1952), 251-56.

14 Yu Minzhong 于敏中 et al., *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下旧闻考, v. 1 (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2001), 71.

15 Aristotle, "Book IV," *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 83, 86, 98.

16 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 55, 58.

17 He Qinggu, "Han Chang'an gucheng 汉长安故城," 67.

18 Zhou Weiquan 周维权, *Zhongguo gudian yuanlinshi* 中国古典园林史, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2002), 132-33.

19 For classic literature on the Shanglin Park, see Sima Zhangqing 司马长卿 (or Sima Xiangru 司马相如), "Rhapsody of the Imperial Park (Shanglin fu 上林赋)," in Xiao Tong 萧统 ed., *Wen xuan* 文选, trans. & anno. David R. Knechtges, v. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 73-113.

20 Hui Zou, Appendix 5 "Qianlong's Record of Kunming Lake by Longevity Hill," *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture* (Lafayette, IN: The Purdue University Press, 2011), 178.

21 He Qinggu, "Guan 观," 326-36.

22 Li Hao 李浩, *Tangdai yuanlin bieye kaolun* 唐代园林别业考论, revised ed. (Xi'an: Xibei daxue chubashe, 1998), 205-211. An imaginative city map of the Luoyang of Tang, which includes the total 103 named *lifang* blocks, is in *Zhongguo gudai jianzhushi* 中国古代建筑史, ed. Jianzhu kexue yanjiuyuan jianzhushi bianweihui 建筑科学研究院建筑史编委会 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1980), 114.

23 Bai Juyi, "'Chishangpian' xu '池上篇'序," in Chen Zhi 陈植 & Zhang Gongchi 张公驰 ed. & anno., *Zhongguo lidai mingyuan ji xuanzhu* 中国历代名园记选注 (Hefei: Anhui kexue jishu chubanshe, 1983), 5.

24 Bai Juyi, "Zhong yin 中隐," an English translation in Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere: Gardens and Objects in Tang-Song Poetry*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, Book 225 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 38-39.

25 Laozi, Ch. 28: 71.

26 Sima Guang, "Duleyuan ji 独乐园记," in Chen Zhi & Zhang Gongchi, 26-28.

27 Yu Minzhong et al., v. 1: 116.

28 Zou, *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture*, 11.

29 Yu Minzhong et al., "Chs. 91-106," v. 3.

30 Liu Dong 刘侗 & Yu Yizheng 于奕正, "Shuiguan 水关" & "Gaoliang qiao 高梁桥," *Dijing jingwu lüe* 帝京景物略, anno. Sun Xiaoli 孙小力 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 27-43, 280-86.

31 Hou Renzhi 侯仁之, *Beijingcheng de shengming yinji* 北京城的生命印记 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2009), 198.

32 Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, “Haidian 海淀,” 320.

33 Ibid., 325-26.

34 Zou, Appendix 1 “Kangxi’s Record of the Garden of Uninhibited Spring,” *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture*.

35 Ibid., Appendix 4 “Qianlong’s Record of the Village of Ten Thousand Springs.”

36 Ibid., Appendix 5 “Qianlong’s Record of Kunming Lake by Longevity Hill.”

37 Wen Zhengming 文征明, “Xihu 西湖,” in Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, 416.

38 Yu Shenxing 于慎行, “Lianhua An tanshang xiyin 莲花庵潭上夕饮,” in Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, 31.

39 Nancy Berliner ed., *Juanqinzhai in the Qianlong Garden: The Forbidden City* (London: Scala Publishers, 2009).

40 As for the relationship between theater and memory in 17th-century Europe, see the analysis of Robert Fludd’s theater memory system in Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), plates 17, 20. Fludd’s book was stored in the Jesuit library in 18th-century Beijing. See *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du Pé-T’ang*, ed. Mission Catholique des Lazaristes à Pekin (Pékin: Impremerie des Lazaristes, 1949), no. 1616.

41 Xu Pingfang 徐苹芳 ed., Appendix “Mingqing Beijingcheng fuyuan tu 明清北京城复原图,” *Mingqing Beijingcheng tu* 明清北京城图 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012).

42 Feng Kebin 冯可宾, “Ti Yangshi Biyuan 题杨氏泌园,” in Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, 83.

43 Yu Minzhong et al., v. 2: 719.

44 Ge Yilong 葛一龙, “Qiuye tong Wuzhong su Lügongci 秋夜同武仲宿吕公祠,” in Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, 82.

45 Zhu Qiqian 朱启钤, “Zhongyang gongyuan ji 中央公园记,” in *Zhongshan gongyuan zhi* 中山公园志, ed. Zhongshan gongyuan guanlichu 中山公园管理处 (Beijing: Zhongguo linye chubanshe, 2002), 266-67.

46 Wang Jun 王军, *Cheng ji* 城记 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2006), 296-321.

47 Liu Dong & Yu Yizheng, “Li Madou fen 利玛窦坟,” 303-5.

48 Shi Tiesheng 史铁生, “Wo yu Ditan 我与地坛,” *Wo yu Ditan* 我与地坛 (Beijing: Remin wenxue chubanshe, 2013).

49 For a Chinese translation of Roland Barthes’s *Writing Degree Zero*, see 罗兰·巴特, *Xiezuo de lingdu: jiegou zhuyi wenxue lilun wenxuan* 写作的零度：结构主义文学理论文选, trans. Li Youzheng 李幼蒸 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988).

50 Shi Tiesheng., “Xiangnian Ditan 想念地坛.”

51 Paul Ricoeur, “The Uncanniness of History,” *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 401.

52 Ibid., “Inhabited Space,” 151.

53 Laozi, Ch. 22: 55.

54 Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 352.

55 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), 214.

About the Author

Hui Zou is an associate professor of architectural history and theory at the School of Architecture, University of Florida. His research interests include architectural and garden histories, architectural philosophy, and comparative cultural studies in the built environment. His book publications include the *Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture* (2011) and the *Suipian yu bizhao: bijiao jianzhuxue de shuangchong huayu* 碎片与比照：比较建筑学的双重话语 (*Fragments and Mirroring: The Twofold Discourse of Comparative Architecture*) (2012).