

A Concise History of the City of Nanjing: How it Relates to the City You See Today

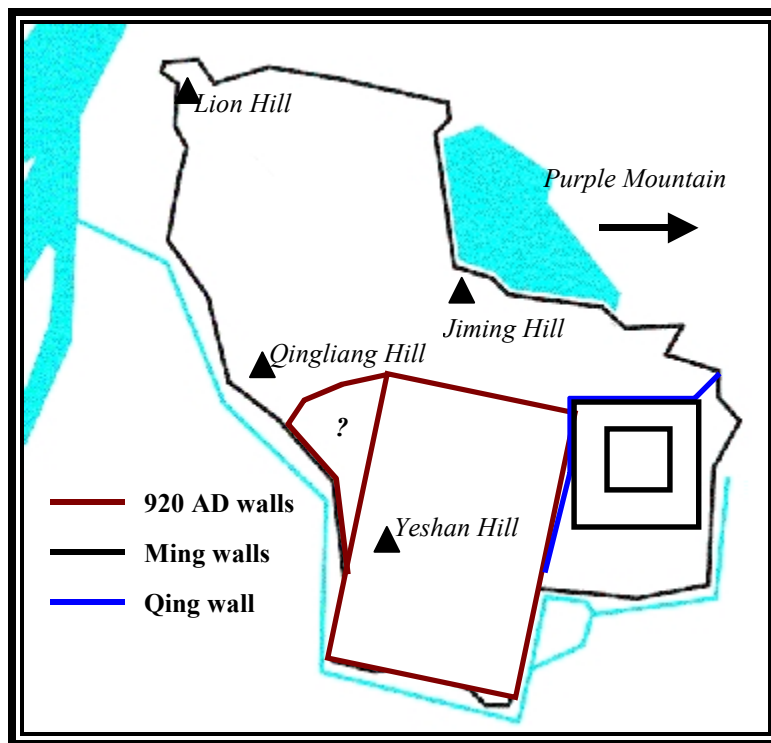
Nanjing is a port city on the Yangtze River and hence lies in an area outside of the birthplace of Chinese civilization on the plains of Northern China. Because of this it has no reliable history prior to the Han dynasty, the first to rule an area roughly equivalent to modern China. The first bits of clear evidence concerning the site appear during the Spring and Autumn Period. The town was an important site for the forging of swords by the kingdom of Wu and was known as Yecheng (冶城, city of metallurgy). It is said to have been located on and around Yeshan Hill near the present-day Chaotian Palace and operated between 495 and 473 B.C. In 473 B.C. the state of Wu was conquered by the state of Yue which built a town somewhere in the vicinity to the south of today's Zhonghua Gate known as Yuecheng (?城). And during the Warring States Period the state of Chu built a town in the area in and around Qingliangshan (清凉山), known as Jinling (金陵, gold mound). Finally, during the Qin and Han dynasties the area was known as Moling (秣陵, hay mound). The city on Qingliang Hill was expanded at the end of the Han dynasty and a city wall almost six miles in length was built around the Chu city. This city is popularly known as the Stone City, (石頭城, *shitoucheng*) and its remains can be seen in at Qingliang Park. All during these periods Nanjing was of only small political importance.

It is during the period of the Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties (between the Han and Sui dynasties that ruled a unified China), that Nanjing first became a major political center. During these times it was known by the names Jianye (建業) and Jiankang (建康). During the Three Kingdoms Period, the city was the capital of the Kingdom of Wu, though it lost this distinction in 280 when the Jin dynasty briefly reunified China. Tradition holds that the first Wu emperor, Sun Quan, was buried on Meihua Hill just to the south of the Ming tomb on Purple Mountain. In 317 the emperors of Jin fled to Nanjing and made it their capital. It remained the capital of the six southern dynasties until 589 when the whole of China was again united under the Sui dynasty. During this period the rulers in Nanjing viewed themselves as the repository for Chinese culture as non-Chinese ruled the northern dynasties. Nanjing flourished economically and became a major production center for silk, ceramics and metalworking. Estimates put its population in the neighborhood of 300,000 households during this time. Buddhism made huge inroads into Chinese culture during this period and Nanjing had scores of famous temples; three of these being today's Jiming Temple (雞鳴寺), Linggu Temple (靈谷寺) on Purple Mountain, and Qixia Temple (棲霞寺) to the northeast of Nanjing. The earliest of the grottos at Qixia Temple date from its establishment there in 489. Sometime during this period a wall was built along the south shore of Xuanwu Lake, the remains of this wall were incorporated in the the Ming city walls a thousand years later.

Though the conquering Sui sacked the city in 589, the Sui rulers were very worried that Nanjing might emerge as a center of resistance. To prevent this, they completely razed the city and went so far as to plow under the foundations of the buildings. Because of this, virtually no trace remains of the city prior to the Sui dynasty. Despite this destruction, Nanjing quickly recovered during the Tang dynasty and was an important economic center. After being devastated during civil unrest at the end of the Tang, it was rebuilt anew in 920 to serve as the capital of a local dynasty, the

Southern Tang. The square walls of this 10th century city were the base that the first Ming emperor used when constructing his walls around the city more than 400 years later. The old walls lay along the same lines as the current southern wall with the Zhonghua Gate as the main south entrance. The eastern outline of these walls can still be seen on a map of modern Nanjing as the moat has survived in the form of urban streams. They ran north from Tongjimen to the east of modern Longpan Road and then west to the south of modern Zhujian and Guangzhou Roads past the south entrance to Nanjing University. From here there is less certainty where they lay. Some studies show them running south along modern Shanghai and Muchou Roads where they joined up again with the Ming walls at Shuiximen. Others show them looping around Wutaishan and meeting up with the Ming walls just north of Hanzhongmen. It appears that these walls were largely left standing when the new, improved Ming walls were built. They are mostly made of stone, while the other parts of the Ming wall that were clearly new are mostly made of brick.

This city had an inner walled area called the *zicheng* (子城) where the Southern Tang emperor had his palace city. The exact location of this palace city is not known, but it is known that the court had a summer palace and temples built on Qingliang Hill where the old Stone City once stood.



Approximate Relation of Various Nanjing City Walls

Nanjing was captured in 975 by the Song dynasty. During the Song period Nanjing was a provincial capital. In the late 11th century the governor, Wang Anshi, filled in Xuanwu Lake to provide more farmland for local farmers. When the Song capital at Kaifeng fell in 1126 the Song court fled to Nanjing temporarily before establishing a new capital in Hangzhou. During this period and during the Yuan dynasty, the former palace city was used as administrative offices for the local prefecture. The Song

emperors used it as a detached palace, however, and improved and expanded it during their rule. The site of Fuzimiao (夫子廟), the Temple of Confucius, was chosen during this period and it served as the local state-run academy then and later. Apparently Chaotian Palace (朝天宮) was the site of an important Taoist temple during this period and was later the Central Taoist Registry for Nanjing during the Ming dynasty, though none of the literature on site indicates this was so. Near the end of the Yuan dyanasty Xuanwu Lake was redug. The population of the area had shrunk to less than 100,000 households and there was no need for the farmland. Marco Polo is said to have visited Nanjing in 1275.

The first Ming emperor was proclaimed in 1368 and a great deal of preparation was done prior to this to have an imperial city and all the imperial trappings ready in time. The name of the city was changed again to Yingtianfu (應天府, responding to heaven). A “new city” was built to the east of the old one to be used as a new palace or “forbidden” city. This city was laid out in much the same pattern as Beijing; indeed Nanjing’ s was the pattern for Beijing’ s Forbidden City.

Today little remains of the Ming palace. In Wuchaomen Park, the remains of the Wu Gate (午門) still stand, and the stream with its five marble bridges just to the north are still to be seen. Little else remains. The Temples of Heaven and Earth (天壇 & 地壇) were located just outside the city wall to the south of the modern Guanghuamen area, roughly where the railroad runs now between the Qinhuai River and the old moat. The gate in the wall here was called the Chengyang Gate (正陽門) but the name was later changed to Guanghua Gate (光華門). From here a bridge led over the moat to the Hongwu Gate (洪武門). This was the main entrance to the palace city. A broad boulevard lined with roofed corridors led north from here to the Forbidden City. Known as the Imperial Way (御道, yudao), it was flanked on the east with offices for five of the six ministries and with the five military commissions on the west. This road is still called Yudao Street today. Somewhere near modern Ruijin Road, the Imperial Way passed through a second set of walls at the Chengtian Gate (城天門) and then on through a third set of walls at the Wu Gate. Each of these inner sets of walls was roughly square and was pierced by four gates in each of the cardinal directions. The moat from the innermost set is clearly visible on a map as the canals that surround the Old Ming Palace Plaza and Wuchaomen Park. The Imperial Ancestor Temple (太廟, taimiao) was located inside the second set of walls in the southeast corner, somewhere in the southeast corner of Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

In expanding the walls, it appears the Hongwu Emperor intended initially to simply add a bulge to the existing walls and encompass the New City to the east. The main north gate would have been the Drum Tower. However, a decision was made to bring Lion Hill (獅子山) to the northwest into the city defenses for strategic reasons, and this almost doubled the area the walls would encompass. In addition to the surviving walls of stone and brick, an outwall was built along the river and to the south as an additional defensive measure. Old maps show that there were close to twenty walls in this rammed earth wall. This outwall is long gone, but the names of the gates survive as local place names. Part of the wall on the south shore of Xuanwu Lake was built on the foundations of the old Stone City walls from the Six Dynasties period, and this construction reused many of the bricks from that old wall.

Originally, thirteen gates were built through Nanjing's walls, but this number had grown to eighteen by the end of the Qing dynasty. Of the thirteen original gates, only Zhonghua Gate (中華門) in the south, originally known as Zhubao Gate (珠寶門), and Heping Gate (和平門) in the north, originally called Shenci Gate (神薊門), are still standing. Heping Gate is closed to the public as it is still used as an army barracks. Parts of other gates survive or have been partially reconstructed. The remains of a west gate, Hanzhongmen (漢中門), originally called Shichengmen (石城門), stand in the middle of a plaza. These walls are part of the last of a series of three or four courtyards that made up the gate complex. During the Qing dynasty three more gates were added, including an entrance to Xuanwu Lake from the west built in 1910. Yijiang Gate (挹江門) on North Zhongshan Road was built in 1921, as was the major entrance to the city during Republican times when most visitors to the city arrived by boat at the docks just to the west. Additional gates were added in 1929, 1932 & 1954 to improve traffic and older gates were torn down for the same reason.

In addition, a new Imperial University called Guozijian (?) was built just to the east of Jiming Temple where the Nanjing City Offices are located today. Records indicate that this school had an enrollment of almost 10,000 in 1422, many of these from foreign nations such as Korea, Vietnam & Thailand. The office of the Ministry of Justice was built on the northeast shore of Xuanwu Lake, to the north of the city. The Censorate and the execution grounds were here also. The archives for tax a census records were kept safe in special warehouses located on the largest island on the lake. The lake and its environs were used mostly as a retreat for the imperial family and important court officials. In 1381 the emperor began work on his tomb on Purple Mountain and was buried there in 1398. This is the only Ming Tomb not near the other twelve in Beijing. (The Hongwu Emperor's grandson and immediate successor, the Qianwan Emperor, either burned to death in the imperial palace or was sent away secretly to a monastery and has no imperial tomb.)

In 1402 the fourth son of Hongwu, marched from his base near Beijing and seized control of the state from his nephew. During this campaign many of Nanjing's historical buildings, including much of the Forbidden City, were destroyed. Though reconstruction was begun, it was never properly finished as the new Yongle emperor moved the capital to Beijing in 1421. One major architectural work that Yongle managed to finish was the famous Porcelain Pagoda, which stood outside the city walls just to the south of Zhonghua Gate. This pagoda was considered one of the marvels of China, but was destroyed by the Taipings during their occupation of the city in the mid-1800's. All during the Ming dynasty, Nanjing remained a secondary capital and was given its current name, meaning "south capital" at that time. It remained an important center of government throughout the Ming dynasty, but was clearly a second city to Beijing.

When the Manchu's seized China in 1644 they made Nanjing the seat of government for the Viceroy of Jiangnan (江南), an area consisting of modern Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui provinces. They also changed the city's name to Jiangning (江寧). The Manchu's were concerned about retaining their ethnic identity while ruling such a vast country as China, and in order to separate themselves from the ethnic Chinese

they set apart portions of the cities they conquered where only Manchus could live. To do so in Nanjing they built a new wall inside the city that gave them the area of the old palace city. The second wall of the Ming palace city was gone by then, but apparently the innermost wall was still standing. This wall ran north and south along modern Longpan Road and then east and west along modern Houzaimen Street. The Viceroy's office was located just outside these walls on the site of a Ming Prince's Palace where the republican-era Presidential Palace stands today.

The urban-rural mix during the Ming and Qing dynasties was very interesting. It was not the case that urbanization occurred only inside the city walls and there were many open fields inside. The old city was the most heavily populated area and the northwest of the city was mostly vegetable gardens and barracks for the local garrisons. The area south of Zhonghuamen (called Zhubaomen 珠寶門 then) was heavily urbanized and was the site of several important Buddhist temples including Baoen Temple, site of the Porcelain Pagoda. The area around Fuzimaio and the Qinhuai River was where many wealthy families lived. Hongwu had ordered a series of 16 state-run brothels built in this area to aid in attracting people to his capital. The main docks on the Yangtze River were located outside the city walls, of course. They were massed in two main areas. One was near the present docks to the east of Lion Hill and just south of the Yangtze River Bridge. These were the subsidiary docks, however, and the main docks were located on the river to the west of modern Hanzhongmen Road. The main road from the docks followed a man-made channel for the Qinhuai river dug in the 1370's and passed through the outwall somewhere near modern Jiangdong North Road. This is where the main tax office was located and there were a series of markets found here as well. This area was also notorious as a pleasure district and was crowded with brothels. It then ran along Shuiximen Road into the city through the Sanshan Gate (三山門). Outside the walls the road was bordered on the north and south by a series of lakes. Of these only Mochou Lake has not been filled up.

It is hard to find information on the location of other pre-Taiping buildings, but it is known that a temple of the God of Literature (文廟) was located on Jiangbai Street somewhere in the vicinity of Zhenghe Park. The Confucian Temple (called Fuzimiao, 夫子廟, to distinguish it from other Confucian temples) was originally the site of the state-sponsored academy for the Nanjing area, fed into the national universities in Beijing and in Nanjing, itself. To the east of this was the Jiangnan Examination Scholl which served as the site of the highest level of imperial examinations during the reigns of the first three Ming emperors, but which held lower-level examinations after the transfer of the capital to Beijing. The school was one of the largest examination sites in China and had over 20,000 cloisters for those sitting for the exams at one point. These were all torn down during the first two decades of the 20th century to make room for the market stalls that now crowd the area.

Two counties, Jiangning (江寧縣) and Shangyuan (上元縣), had their yamen offices inside Nanjing's walls along with the yamen for Yingtian prefecture. The first two were located in the block bordered by Zhonghau Road, Shengzhou Road and Zhongshan South Road, and near the corner of Hongwu Road and Baixia Road. The latter was located on Zhongshan South Road just across from Nanjing 1st Middle School. In addition, the city itself was divided into five wards (East, West, South, North & Central) with offices inside the wall just east of Guanghuamen, just outside

Shuiximen, south of Zhonghuamen, north of the Drum Tower, and across Hongwu Road from the Shangyun County yamen. Major markets were set up by the first Ming emperor just inside Tungjimen, just west of Xinqiao, and near Wangfuyuan.

In 1853, the city was captured by Hong Xiuquan and became the capital of his Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (太平天國). Hong built a huge palace complex, complete with a Temple of Heaven on the site of the Qing Viceroy's offices. In addition, Hong built palaces for many of his important followers. These were built at Zhanyuan (for the family of Xiao Chaogui), at Chaotian Palace (for Yang Xiuqing), near Fuzimaio (for the family of Feng Yunshan), near the intersections of modern Baixia and Jiankang Roads (for Wei Changhui), and just north of the Drum Tower (for Shi Dakai). Most of this building and much of the building that predated it was destroyed in a three-day fire that was set when Qing troops recaptured the city in 1864. The city was so devastated that it took decades to recover. For example, even though the city was opened up to foreign trade by the treaties following the two Opium Wars, trade did not actually start until 1899.

When foreigners began moving into Nanjing in the late 1890's they were given a foreign concession inside the walls in an area that had been mostly farmland prior to this. The European style buildings built as the homes of foreign merchants and for foreign legations can still be seen in the area north of Beijing West Road and to the east of the Jiangsu Provincial Offices. In 1911 Dr. Sun Yat-sen led the revolution that overthrew the Qing dynasty and a new government was established in the newly re-named city of Nanjing. The offices of this provisional government were set up on the site of the Taiping Palace. In 1912, the first president, Yuan Shikai, moved the capital back to Beijing. In 1928 when the Nationalist Party took control of the government, they proceeded to move the capital back to Nanjing. It was during this period that the Presidential Palace on Jianggang Road was built (atop the site where Hong Xiuquan's residence had once stood).

The Japanese captured Nanjing in 1937 in a bloody takeover known as the "Nanjing Massacre" or the "Rape of Nanjing". Several 100,000 Chinese were slaughtered in the taking of the city and its aftermath. From 1946 to 1949 it was once again the capital of the Republic of China. When Chairman Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949 the capital moved once more back to Beijing. Nanjing suffered a great deal from the Cultural Revolution when many of its historical relics were damaged or destroyed and many of its leading intellectuals were sent to the countryside for "reeducation".

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