

Yet even as cigarettes have declined in exchange value, they can still be used to subvert state power. Because the value of premium cigarettes has declined, the link between cigarettes and social power is less sharply perceived. A premium cigarette is now more likely seen as a good smoke or a status symbol than as a bullet for a Mauser pistol with which to storm the fortress of the state bureaucracy. Yet as illustrated by my encounter with the official in the Xiamen business-licensing bureau, even a good smoke can break down barriers. Smoking together conveys the spirit of sociability rather than obligation and therefore is not perceived as influence per se. Yet sociability is also highly effective in obtaining a favor. In fact, it could be said that the declining visibility of premium cigarettes as vehicles of influence has rendered them even more subversive in interactions with officials because they are no longer recognized as such. Also, in the command economy, citizens negotiated with officials for access to resources already marked for redistribution, whereas now they negotiate for access to items not so marked. For example, in 1981 my friend used cartons of cigarettes to obtain access to a bed at a cadre hospital (see footnote 7). From the vantage point of the state, the bed was already marked for allocation and it made no difference who filled it as long as the patient was sick and was a cadre of a certain rank. Almost a decade later I used cigarettes to see documents that were not intended for my eyes.

In sum, I have identified such institutional transformations as localization, changes in valuation, and shifting processes of subversion that are distinct from questions of societal autonomy and declines in state power. People use commodities available in markets to transform prior patterns of domination and construct new ones. In other words, the institutional consequences of expanded market-based consumption in China's redistributive economy are portrayed as changes in relational networks rather than in state and society. The institutional transformations linked to social practices of consumption of the emerging middle class could be occurring in either a democratic or an authoritarian context. This helps explain China's rapid marketization within an authoritarian one-party state.

Public Monuments and Private Pleasures in the Parks of Nanjing

A Tango in the Ruins of the Ming Emperor's Palace

Richard Kraus

Time has not been kind to Nanjing's Imperial Palace since the Ming dynasty decamped for Beijing in 1421. Fire, conquest, and a 1911 English plunder of remaining statuary has left little but a grand gate, five stone bridges, and some broken columns set amidst a pleasantly wooded park in the south-eastern part of the city. The palace grounds today are the locus of typical urban park behavior: there are rides for children, pool tables, paintings for sale, a bookstore and a restaurant, vendors of trinkets and foodstuffs, citizens dressed to the nines to show off their new clothes, and dancers. The Ming ruins have two places where couples dance to recorded music, a democratic contrast to the spot's once awesome majesty (Figure 13.1).

The realms of public and private, of state and consumer are in constant juxtaposition in the public places of urban China: parks, memorials, and city squares. Using Nanjing as my primary example, I here examine the relationship between private consumer and public art and argue that, contrary to much recent writing on the question of civil society in China, China does indeed have a public sphere. I also argue that monuments and relics are highlighted, refurbished, rearranged, and invented by the state in its effort to adapt this sphere to the emergence of consumer society, and that this tacti-

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FIGURE 13.1. Dancers among the trees behind the great gate at the ruins of the Ming Palace (Photo by Richard Kraus)

cal flexibility masks a retreat of the state from its former easy assumption of ideological hegemony.

PUBLIC ART, PUBLIC SPHERE, CIVIL SOCIETY

The monuments, statues, murals, and other art works found in public spaces in urban China offer a way to discuss the thorny question of China's "public sphere." In the West, controversies over art in public places often remind us sharply how contested our own public sphere can be. Controversies about specific art works, deemed "public" either because they were state-funded or by their conspicuous placement, propelled the concept of public art into popular debate in recent decades. Disagreements are often sharp and center on the control of symbols that are ostensibly sponsored for the public but that critics sometimes charge only represent a part of a community. For instance, many middle-class residents of the Chicago suburb of Berwyn expressed outrage that their lives and values were being mocked by a cement tower embedded with washing machines and other appliances at the entrance to their Cermak Plaza shopping mall. More notorious was the rebellion of sophisticated New Yorkers against the placement of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in the square in front of their office building, where the work created a new community united in opposition to its planned rust and "site-specific" conception.¹ And the politics that accompanied the selection of Maya Lin's

1. See "The Storm in the Plaza" 1985; and Storr 1989.

design for the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., have been extensively documented.²

Is there public art in China? One might answer no, because there is no popular involvement, no public controversy in the selection and construction of such art works that would conform to Western notions of a vital "public sphere." Although such an answer might be in the spirit of much of the discussion of whether China has ever had a public sphere, it would also lead to a nonsensical conclusion: if the art put in public places by the current Chinese state is not public, what is it? It is assuredly not private.

China has an older public art far richer than the United States: grand architecture, arches, and stone-carved calligraphy have long been placed by the state in public spots for the elevation of popular morality. To such state monuments we may add temples as another kind of nonofficial yet still public art. In the twentieth century, a Western-influenced public sculpture joined the relics of past dynasties, making China awash in public art.³ Thus, while the name is new the practice is not. States have commissioned art works as long as there have been states—indeed, our popular indications of ancient states flows from the pyramids and other glorious tombs for dead rulers.⁴

Western discussion of China's public sphere often confuses by conflating two separate ideas: public sphere and civil society. This misstep has an easily identifiable origin. After centuries of disuse, the archaic phrase "civil society" was revived in order to explain the collapse of Communist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, as scholars searched for sources of power apart from the state.⁵ Students of modern China understandably began to look for evidence that the civil society hypothesis might also apply to China. Historians, political scientists, and sociologists began a debate about whether one could identify signs of autonomous or potentially autonomous social groups. The debate has been inconclusive but valuable for raising consciousness of certain issues. Perhaps unavoidably, the China discussion took as its starting point what is probably the brainiest discussion of civil society in Europe, the work of Jürgen Habermas.⁶ Habermas links civil society tightly to his notion of the public sphere, which he regards as the realm where pri-

2. For example, see Abramson 1996; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991.

3. On management of relics, see Beijingshi wenwu shiye guanliju 1990; and Murphy 1995. One hundred examples of new monuments selected as exemplars for "patriotic education" are illustrated in Duoqi Cairan 1997.

4. One must also recall, however, that the most precious symbols of the old elite included small and personal "superfluous things," exquisitely portable jades and porcelains that were far better insurance against political disaster than monuments were. See Chinas 1991.

5. See Gellner 1994. In one useful formation, civil society is "a sphere of non-state-dominated public activity, a vantage point from which it is possible to reject the state's claims to authority and legitimacy while, in this very act, reaffirming the value of alternative social organizations, units, networks, or rituals." Shue 1992, p. 104.

6. Habermas 1989.

vate individuals come together to debate the rules that govern privatized relations.⁷ In Europe, where civil society grew as the public sphere was transformed, it makes sense to join the concepts. In China, where the depth of civil society is open to considerable doubt, it makes less sense. China scholars need not join Habermas in coupling them so tightly. All societies have a public sphere. Although many China scholars have cautioned that civil society and public sphere are distinct concepts, the two are still bound together, so the debate often shifts unintentionally from civil society, which is richly debatable, to the question of public sphere, which seems less controversial.⁸ The idea of a public sphere surely embraces many state-society combinations, including both premodern and contemporary Chinese autocracies. The evidence for a Chinese civil society is contestable; the existence of a Chinese public sphere is questioned only because of the China field's unhelpful obsession with Habermas.

I emphasize this point because we should not lose sight of the fact that the Chinese Communist Party reorganized Chinese society precisely to create a public sphere over which it could hold hegemonic power. Although the party has often been intolerant of even small signs of personal autonomy, many understand that it has now made "room for the personal and the private in a public sphere monopolized by the state."⁹ It is this state-hegemonic public sphere that is the realm of public art in China today. Not only is there public art in a public sphere, but there is also a presumptive public to which the regime responds as it shapes this art. This public is still amorphous because it lacks the clear edges given by the political organizations and movements of a civil society. Any political activities that directly challenge the Chinese state remain at high risk. Yet the consumer revolution of the 1990s each year embraced more urban Chinese within the domain of the commodity as it transformed their personal lives. This sometimes active, often passive and presumptive public takes much of its present shape from emerging consumer society, embracing a set of social activities that the state encourages but that follow a different logic from accustomed Communist politics.

NANJING AS A LAYERED ARRAY OF RELICS

Primarily because of Nanjing's strategic location, at a narrowing of the Yangzi River that commands the approach to the rich Jiangnan plain, the city has repeatedly served as capital of China: the Kingdom of Wu during the Three

Kingdoms period, the early Ming dynasty, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Republic of China, and the Japanese puppet regime of Wang Jingwei are the most notable. Choice location and imperial status have also brought the city massive human and physical destruction, most recently in its conquest by the Taiping rebels in 1853, Zeng Guofan's destruction of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1864, and the Japanese rape of Nanjing in 1937–38.¹⁰

The political history of Nanjing in the People's Republic remains unwritten.¹¹ The victorious Communists seem to have regarded Chiang Kaishek's former base with initial suspicion and disdain, and the city's status certainly declined as it was demoted from national capital to capital of Jiangsu Province. Proud buildings housing national ministries were given over to officials managing the parochial affairs of Jiangsu—the once grand supreme court building of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party), for instance, now rather shabbily houses the Jiangsu Grain Department. Natives speak of Beijing with some combination of envy and resentment, and of Shanghai, East China's dominant economic center, with enthusiastic distaste. Such feelings are not just the consequence of metropolitan loss of status but also have a material foundation. Shanghai enjoys a cap on the proportion of its revenues that must be turned over to the central government. Jiangsu province does not, and officials in Nanjing believe they contribute a disproportionate share of Beijing's total revenues.¹² Xu Shiyong, the often brutal commander of the Nanjing Military Region, kept the city under tight control during the Cultural Revolution. The military presence remains conspicuous. When the Fuzhou Military Region was abolished in the early 1980s as a friendly gesture toward Taiwan, its responsibilities and territory were transferred to Nanjing, whose command now stretches from the Jiangnan to the Straits of Taiwan. Some claim that one-sixth of the city's land is controlled by the army, and many of the local industries have a military connection, such as the huge Panda Electronics firm. After the Cultural Revolution, economic reform came relatively slowly to Nanjing, although it has accelerated dramatically since the early 1990s. Currently, the entire city seems under reconstruction, building atop an economic foundation strong in electronics and petrochemicals.

Nanjing's public spaces reflect this past, in a way found only in Beijing or

10. I know of no general account of cultural destruction in Nanjing. Jonathan D. Spence describes the Taiping burning of Daoist and Buddhist temples and the smashing of religious images in *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (Spence 1996, p. 176). Guomindang and Communist regimes later destroyed additional religious relics in drives against feudal superstition. For background on the monuments and relics of Nanjing, I have relied upon Fan Yuxi 1995; Chen Ping 1995; and Jiang Yongcai and Di Shuzhi 1991.

11. See McCormick 1990; Crane 1994; Xu Kaifu 1995.

12. Conversation with Bruce Jacobs, Nanjing, November 4, 1996. It may be that Nanjing resentment is unjustified in this instance.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

8. For caution that China's premodern concept of *gong* is public, but not an equivalent for civil society, see Rowe 1993 and Rankin 1993. See also Huang 1991.

9. M. Yang 1994, p. 18. For a sample of public sphere discussion, see also Wakeman 1993; Wagner 1995; Wasserstrom and Liu 1995; and Wang et al. 1995.

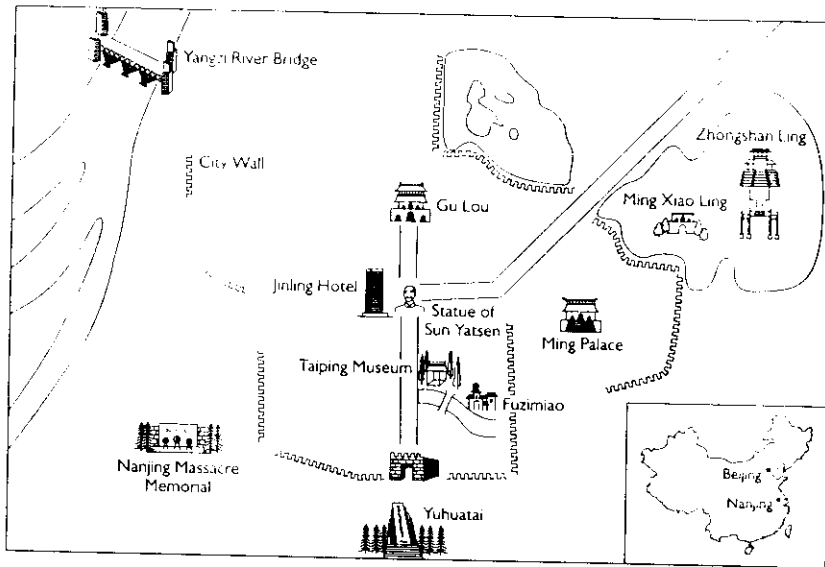


FIGURE 13.2. Map of Nanjing, showing location of major relics, both old and new. (Map designed by Wang Haizhang)

Xi'an among China's great cities. One way of making visual and political sense of the city is through a fictive archaeological image in which the city's public monuments and parks form distinct strata. In this perspective, Nanjing consists of five layers of monuments. The first, representing imperial times, includes such relics as the tomb of the first Ming emperor, the ruins of his palace, and the Ming dynasty city wall. A second represents the short-lived Taiping Kingdom, which renamed the city "Tianjing" (Heavenly Capital), and whose chief marker is a museum in the former home of a Taiping general. The third stratum is the Republican era: the tomb of Sun Yat-sen, a monument to martyrs of the Northern Expedition, and Guomindang bureaucratic buildings scattered throughout the city. Fourth is the postrevolutionary city, which is symbolized by the stern revolutionary figures carved on the Nanjing bridge over the Yangzi and the martyr's monument at Yuhuatai. The newest and still living stratum is the reform period, which has produced a new statue of Sun Yat-sen at the city's commercial center of Xinjiekou (literally "the new intersection"), and high-rise commercial buildings that tower arrogantly over the relics of earlier eras (see Figure 13.2).

The array of relics is not just temporal, but spatial as well. A large amount of city space is given over to parkland, to be found in all six districts of the city. But the city's pride is Purple Mountain, an enormous public space on the eastern side of the city. Purple Mountain is a center for both relics and

recreation, serving both as funeral ground for past rulers and as playground for contemporary citizens. Sun Quan of the Kingdom of Wu was the first monarch to be entombed there, in A.D. 252; the grandest tombs are for the Ming dynasty founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, and Sun Yat-sen. Nanjing is unusual among Chinese cities in having such easy access to a vast area for recreation, often a cooler spot in the city's notorious summer heat. The city center is laden with Republican-era architecture, as well as Ming and Qing relics. The major monuments erected in the Communist era are on the city's periphery, with the 1968 Yangzi River Bridge to the north, the Nanjing Massacre Memorial to the west, and the monument to 100,000 rebels executed by the Guomindang at Yuhuatai to the south (the east is blocked by Purple Mountain). It is as if the Communist government has enclosed Nanjing within a second city wall, this one of remembrances instead of bricks.

SORTING THE STONES OF MEMORY

At first view it appears that these public sites are historically determined. Yet state officials have considerable latitude in what they choose to celebrate and to ignore. The presentation of Nanjing's past is conscious: the state actively arranges the stones of memory. The public Nanjing of today is fashioned by four types of state action.

Highlighting Existing Relics

The state can favor one era over another in its representation of the glorious past. Nanjing's visual symbol is the blue-tiled tomb of Sun Yat-sen, which Chinese associate as readily with Nanjing as the Eiffel Tower with Paris or the Statue of Liberty with New York.¹³ The tomb, located on a propitious site on the southern slope of Purple Mountain, was protected by the army during the Cultural Revolution, when radicals condemned the bourgeois Sun. Even though Purple Mountain is full of feudal relics, the tomb remained open. Yet the state took the precaution of covering the white-on-blue sun of the Guomindang, a symbol set repeatedly in the interior of the tomb. These coverings were removed after the Cultural Revolution as national policy toward Taiwan eased. Today, Nanjing plays a special ceremonial role in the protracted effort to reestablish links with Taiwan. Visitors from Taiwan are the most visible local tourists.

Similarly, the city wall of the Ming dynasty is being restored. Never very effective as a defensive structure, the 1366 wall is nonetheless visually impressive. Twenty-one of its original thirty-three kilometers remain; it is fourteen to twenty-six meters tall, and seven to fourteen meters wide at the top,

13. L. Wang 1996.

punctuated by several grand gates. Beijing destroyed its city wall during the Great Leap Forward, but Nanjing retained its wall and has restored places where it had been looted for building materials in recent years. Other relics have been recovered by easing out military and government offices. The Chaotiangong is a Ming dynasty palace built as a school to train young officials in court etiquette and was treasured by the public in the 1950s and 1960s, when it was open as a park. The People's Liberation Army occupied the palace during the Cultural Revolution, perhaps as much to enjoy as to protect its splendor. The army remained until 1986, when the city began restoration. Reopened in 1995, the palace has flourished anew as a public space; it is the weekend site of a busy sale of old books, curios, stamps, and Cultural Revolutionary memorabilia.

Here one should also note the state's highlighting of a relic that never was. Purple Mountain's greatest tombs are those of Sun Yat-sen and Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang. Between them, in a spot no doubt redolent of cosmic geomancy (*fengshui*), is the place Chiang Kaishek selected for his own tomb, envisioning a glorious burial between two predecessors. Today there is an obscure trail up the mountainside to Chiang's would-be tomb, marked by no granite and only a simple sign that politely but condescendingly chronicles the defeated generalissimo's funerary fantasy.

Refurbishing Vanished Relics

The recreation of relics once destroyed is a second and closely related official strategy. The oldest part of Nanjing is the Confucian temple (*fuzimiao*) neighborhood in the southern part of the city, a district of shops, restaurants, and sellers of snacks and trinkets, where people go to hang out in their spare time. Although the neighborhood retains the remnant of an imperial examination hall, the Confucian temple, founded in 1034, was destroyed once during the Taiping struggles and burned again by the Japanese invaders. The Confucian temple district thus had no temple at its center until Nanjing began its newest reconstruction in 1986. Because this was not a high time in popular reverence for Confucius, it seems likely that its construction was aimed at appealing to tourists. The Disney-like interior of the temple reinforces such a view. It is not a true relic but a simulacrum of a relic, with performances of "Confucian" dances by students (including women, for a very un-Confucian touch), who resemble a kind of decorous Chinese cheerleading team. A similar neorelic is the statue of Confucius on the campus of Nanjing Teachers' University, donated by Taiwan in 1994 from its vast oversupply.

The newest refurbished relic is the Jinghai Temple where the Treaty of Nanjing was negotiated in 1842, ending the Opium War and opening China to Western trade. The temple, once home to Zheng He, the famous Ming admiral and explorer, was destroyed by fire in the 1930s. Reconstruction was

impossible under wartime conditions, and the People's Republic was slow to deal with this symbol of China's past humiliation. But as Nanjing's contribution to the nationwide celebration over the return of Hong Kong, the old temple was reconstructed and outfitted with a new bell to ring the British from their Chinese colony in the summer of 1997. But it is a temple without gods or clergy, and its main hall is filled with an exhibition on the impact of imperialism on Nanjing.

Inventing New Relics

The state also actively creates new relics to fill new political needs. An obvious example of relic creation is the project launched in the early 1980s to create new urban sculpture that would symbolize the spirit of the post-Cultural Revolution era. I term these "maidens of modernization," because their most typical manifestation is a young woman questing for science and modernity. *Fine Arts (Meishu)*, the official visual arts journal, devoted an entire issue to promoting outdoor urban sculpture, with illustrations from Warsaw to Rome and Mount Rushmore.¹⁴ By 1984, seventeen provinces had set up leadership groups to plan new urban sculpture, as the reform regime sought to refurbish urban China with an uplifting set of new monuments.¹⁵ In addition to symbolizing a change in political mood, the project was intended to add a quick bit of at least superficial beauty to China's cities, long deprived of new construction. Sculptors, as creators of relics, were especially enthusiastic about the project, which has left maidens of modernization scattered about the streets of Nanjing and all Chinese cities.

A still fresher example of a new relic is no maiden but a 5.75 meter bronze statue of Sun Yat-sen, unveiled on the 130th anniversary of his birth, November 12, 1996 (see Figure 13.3). Situated in the middle of the Xinjiekou traffic circle, the heart of Nanjing's commercial district, this statue is truly a relic, both in its nineteenth-century Western bronze realist appearance and in its ideological suggestion. The modern history of this public space is curious. This Sun Yat-sen replaces an earlier incarnation, which was cast by a Japanese sculptor and placed at the intersection by Wang Jingwei's puppet government in 1942. The Japanese statue lasted until it was removed for its own protection early in the Cultural Revolution; it now stands on Purple Mountain in front of a Sun Yat-sen museum. The Xinjiekou circle was empty for two decades, then graced with a modernist work in 1989, a set of abstract keys, perhaps to unlock the future or the heart of the city. These proved unsuccessful as an emblem for the heart of Nanjing, and the new cane-wielding Sun was ordered.

14. See "Rang diaosu yishu wei meihua chengshi fuwu" 1984 and the other articles in this issue.

15. Situ Zhaoguang and Cao Chunsheng 1984.



FIGURE 13.3. This new statue of Sun Yat-sen stands in Nanjing's busiest intersection, where once the Japanese puppet government had installed another statue of Sun. (Photo by Richard Kraus)

Two monuments to China's complex interaction with Japan form an unconventional pair of new relics. One is the memorial to the 300,000 victims of the Nanjing massacre. This structure, part statue garden, part museum, is quite successful at capturing the horror of the rape of Nanjing. The predominantly abstract bas-relief of the memorial's walls is countered by a defiantly socialist-realist figure of a grieving and unforgiving mother (Figure 13.4). The latter figure is placed away from the wall in a way reminiscent of the American Vietnam Memorial's inclusion of realist figures of soldiers away from the nonrepresentational wall of names, and, like those American soldiers, was added after the completion of the original monument. The massacre memorial is alone among the monuments of Nanjing in not being in a park or other public space. It is in a light industrial neighborhood to the West of the city where thousands of civilians were killed, an unlikely destination for anyone except those commemorating a horrible event. Japanese friends



FIGURE 13.4. A realist figure in the courtyard of the memorial to the victims of the Nanjing massacre. (Photo by Richard Kraus)

have told me of being taken somewhat unwillingly to this site. In contrast, prime Purple Mountain space next to the tomb of Zhu Yuanzhang has been allotted to a new (1992) forest of stele called the Yan Zhenqing garden, in memory of the great Tang dynasty calligrapher who is much emulated in Japan. The inscribed characters, all by Japanese calligraphers, are arranged before a statue of Yan; the garden is a quiet and lovely spot to celebrate Sino-Japanese cultural amity. These two monuments, both of which received Japanese funding, have quite obviously different uses as China shifts between its feelings of friendship and hostility toward its East Asian neighbor and rival.

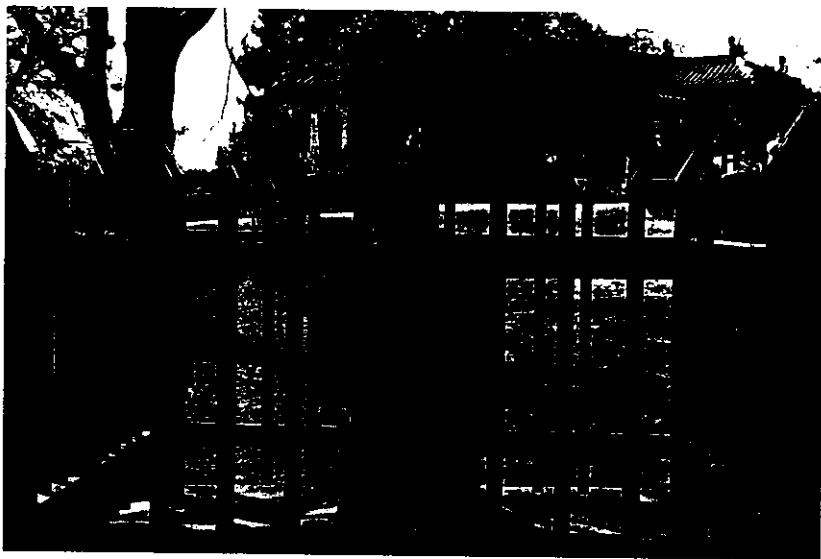


FIGURE 13.5. Wang Jingwei, who betrayed China to Japan, kneels in silent repentance at the site of his former tomb on Nanjing's Purple Mountain. (Photo by Richard Kraus)

A final new relic adds further complexity to the symbolic representation of relations with Japan. Wang Jingwei, renegade Guomindang leader and head of Japan's puppet government during the war, died in Japan in 1944. His body was shipped back to China, where it was entombed on Purple Mountain, near the graves of Sun Quan, Ming Taizu, Sun Yat-sen, and several Guomindang worthies. After Japan's defeat, outraged Guomindang troops blew up Wang's grave. In 1989, Nanjing officials commissioned a statue of Wang, who is depicted kneeling in shame (see Figure 13.5). A highly realistic life-sized figure of Wang, dressed in glasses and the formal Western clothes worn by Japanese politicians, kneels behind a fence, head bowed. He faces the northeast—toward Tokyo—and is out of alignment with the southern exposure of the mountain's geomancy (*fengshui*). A sign urges visitors not to spit on the statue, which of course eggs them on. China's most famous "Do not spit on the statue" sign is in Hangzhou, posted alongside an image of Qin Gui, the Southern Song official who conspired against the patriotic general Yue Fei. Over the centuries good patriots have displayed their continuing hatred of Qin Gui by spitting on his statue in the Yue Fei temple.

Demonumentalization

Finally, the Chinese state can either destroy relics or downplay their significance. Surprisingly few signs of the former Nationalist capital remain, and those that survive are not marked. Guomindang planners, inspired by thoughts of Paris and Washington, D.C., intended to rebuild Nanjing as a modern world city, escaping the *fengshui*-bound conventions of city planning found in Beijing.¹⁶ They constructed a series of grand government buildings throughout the city, combining such modern construction materials as prestressed concrete and the big roofs associated with China's traditional architecture.¹⁷ When writer Guo Moruo visited Nanjing in 1945, he viewed this new architecture with disdain, complaining of its disproportion to "the context of underdeveloped Nanjing." Amidst a low traditional cityscape and the desolation of wartime destruction "suddenly there emerge some enormously colossal, Chinese-Western combined palatial-style buildings."¹⁸ Half a century of economic growth has now cut these "palatial-style buildings" down to size, as new high-rise construction has turned them into odd little islands of tiled roofs.

Memories of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom are relegated to one threadbare museum today. Yet the Communists once valued the Taipings as revolutionary precursors. The Taiping museum's displays still carry the now quaintly heroic language of muscular proletarianism and anti-imperialist indignation that formerly flourished in China's public spaces.¹⁹ Other sites associated with the Taipings that could be celebrated are not. Nanjing bookstores are more likely to carry volumes about Zeng Guofan, who destroyed the rebellion and its capital, than about the Taiping emperor Hong Xiuquan.

Another major monument celebrating revolution is the Yangzi River Bridge, adorned with giant workers, peasants, and soldiers all captured in steely resolve in 1968. The bridge, once China's proudest construction achievement, may well be destroyed, not intentionally to efface its political message but because it is not high enough to permit the passage of 10,000-ton ships into the upper Yangzi after the completion of the Three Gorges Dam. Thus the expanding commodity economy will erase a now rather bumpy emblem of revolution.

Then there are the Mao statues. During the Cultural Revolution, Nanjing had two prominent Mao statues on the campuses of Dongnan and Hehai

16. Cody 1996; Musgrove 1996. On Beijing, see Wu Hung 1991.

17. For the continuing appeal of big roofs for Chinese architects, see Zha 1995, pp. 68–70.

18. Musgrove 1996, p. 34, translating Guo's *Nanjing yinxiang* [Impressions of Nanjing] (Litong chubanshe, n.d.), p. 3.

19. The Taiping exhibition was replaced in the summer of 1997 for a presumably temporary Hong Kong display.



FIGURE 13.6. These semi-abstract dancing figures of welcome were demoted from a major traffic circle to a high-school courtyard. (Photo by Richard Kraus)

Universities. The erection of a Mao statue symbolized a peace in factional warfare, when contending sides could unite in a common project. Nanjing University never erected a Mao statue because its factional problems were so severe. The removal of the Mao statues in the 1980s dememorialized the Cultural Revolution, just as the earlier removal of lesser Guomindang statuary after 1949 symbolized the fall of that party.

The most recent subjects of demonumentalization are the maidens of modernization. After their introduction in the early 1980s, the statues became something of a plague upon the land, revealing a lack of imagination and often poor quality of materials, and now people seem to be a little tired of them.²⁰ Perhaps more fundamental is popular disinterest in what is often

20. Geremie Barmé describes some of the controversies over these statues in Barmé 1988. Sculptor Wang Keqing argued that new state funding for urban sculpture created greater demand than China's 500 trained sculptors could meet. He established a new "China Sculptural Arts Research Institute," which he pledged would help "in any way it can to prevent inferior sculptures from seeing the light of day." Zhong 1989.

Russian-inspired quasi-abstract art. The sculptor of the keys that preceded the new Sun Yat-sen statue in Xinjiekou traffic circle was chagrined; after a debate about the quality of his work, his keys were sold to a technical school in another Jiangsu city. Moreover, another of his works—an abstract group of shiny steel women dancing in a circle with joined hands—has been demoted from the center of a major traffic circle to the courtyard of a middle school (see Figure 13.6).²¹ Many modernization maidens remain, but they seem unlikely to endure as symbols of Nanjing.

HEGEMONY LITE

Contemporary China is certainly not the first state to sort the stones of memory for political advantage. Nanjing has been built, destroyed, and rebuilt, often according to political plan, for two thousand years. Recent scholarship on Western cities shows a similar uncovering and concealing of layered historical spaces within the urban landscape. M. Christine Boyer describes "the city of collective memory" in which "different layers of historical time superimposed on each other or different architectural strata (touching but not necessarily informing each other) no longer generate a structural form to the city, but merely culminate in an experience of diversity."²² The confusing juxtaposition of restoration projects

forged a hybrid layering of architectural sites and a constant migration from one time period to another. This layering recoups many urban scenes for commercial or civil intent, situating the spectator between official narrations and more personal experiences or memories of city places. There is a constant oscillation established between any conventional and imaginary urban vision, a shimmering that produces both pleasurable and disturbing experiences.²³

Dolores Hayden, in her study of Los Angeles, shows how an elite-dominated history of built space has excluded ordinary working people, but that such an unsettled and unsettling environment can facilitate the reclaiming of contested sites and memories.²⁴ China's public sphere is less dynamic, revealing less open controversy and debate. The state enforces at least the appearance of hegemony over public art, yet the situation is far from static; the divergent connotations of competing images elicit a "shimmering" that alternately pleases and unsettles.

By American standards, there is surprisingly little grumbling about unpopular works. Yet we know that Chinese can act out their feelings about

21. Interview with sculptor Zhang Jiug, professor at Nanjing Arts College, May 28, 1996.

22. Boyer 1994, p. 19.

23. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

24. Hayden 1995.

public art. Consider an episode from Hong Kong, a capitalist city perhaps understocked with monuments. On September 16, 1996, Poon Singlui attacked the four-meter statue of Queen Victoria in Victoria Park. After denting her nose with a hammer blow, he poured red paint over the statue. Victoria had sat in Hong Kong since 1887, surviving a near-death experience in an Osaka military scrap heap during World War II. After psychiatric evaluation, Poon served 28 days in jail. Poon is an artist, a graduate of Beijing's Central College of Arts and Crafts, and was a recent emigrant to Hong Kong. At the time of his vandalism, his proposed entry had been turned down by a major Hong Kong exhibition, although he had won (but did not yet know about) a generous fellowship from a French foundation. Poon seems to have misread the indifference of Hong Kong toward the departing British colonialists, because he justified his act as a blow against "colonial art." Victoria had in fact been vandalized with more convincing anti-imperialist sentiment in 1968 and 1978. This time, few were amused, and no one seemed convinced by his conscious likening of his act to patriotically spitting on the Hangzhou statue of Qin Gui.²⁵

What is striking about Poon's act is that this kind of public art protest, familiar enough in the West, is nearly unknown in the People's Republic. Among the few recent exceptions are three Hunanese (including a 22-year-old artist) who were jailed for throwing ink-filled eggs at Mao Zedong's Tiananmen portrait in 1989 and Tibetan protestors who blew up a monument to Chinese road builders in 1995.²⁶ There are likely some other examples, but they are infrequent. The most common monument modifications have been official, such as the removal of Mao statues in the 1980s and the violent removal of Lin Biao's calligraphy from the plinths of these statues after his death and disgrace in 1971.²⁷ Nanjing's artists complain of being misunderstood, that officials are poorly educated in art, and that the state is more interested in designs for public toilets than public art, but their work is not physically attacked by a hostile public.²⁸

Public passivity toward the state's chosen symbols is part of a greater avoidance of the political that runs deep in Chinese society and is felt especially powerfully in the aftermath of the 1989 Beijing massacre. Yet the state tries to avoid eliciting protest by avoiding unconventional art that might become a focus for discontent. The Chinese state has been more proactive in shaping its hegemony over the public sphere than we often imagine. The exam-

25. See Lo 1996; Moir and Lee 1996; Chin 1996a and 1996b; Wan 1996.

26. A Chinese monument to road builders in the western suburbs of Lhasa was bombed three times in 1995. See Tatlow 1996.

27. See Kraus 1991, pp. 111-12.

28. William Cohen, describes an era of "statomania" in which the left favored monuments to Rousseau and Voltaire and the right favored Jean d'Arc, while rival mobs destroyed symbols cherished by both sides. Cohen 1989.

ples I have introduced from contemporary Nanjing suggest that this hegemony is not cast in stone but constantly changing, precisely so that the state can deploy its symbols for changing political needs, such as policy toward Japan. There is also some limited responsiveness to public feelings, as in the removal of the Mao statues, the toning down of the cult of the Taiping Rebellion, the ongoing recycling of the unpopular maidens of modernization, and the state's decision, after consulting the masses, to turn the new Sun Yat-sen statue to face south instead of north.²⁹

The relationship between public art and ideology is neither simple nor direct. The state deploys its monuments about the city, but one must not presume that bureaucrats are following a coherent plan as they erect new plinths and restore old walls. Instead, there is a quiet and ongoing negotiation as the state seeks to convince citizens that *its* monuments are *theirs*. If public art is to be successful as ideology, it should not be message art. The Chinese state seemingly wants to avoid upsetting citizens with public symbols that are radically out of harmony with their common-sense understanding of the world. For instance, there are no statues of model soldier Lei Feng, or exemplary bus conductors, or living political leaders, any of which might attract rude markings some night in the park.

The Chinese state imposes an official memory on Nanjing, but that is not identical to a public memory. Rubie Watson has described the private mourning that continues for the victims of still-controversial public events, such as the cultural revolution and the 1989 Beijing massacre.³⁰ The difference between a state-organized official memory and the memories shared by China's citizens suggests that the regime may no longer have the capacity to impose anything more than hegemony lite, the real thing having become too difficult to digest. To understand this, we must examine the activities of citizens in Nanjing's public spaces.

CONSUMING PUBLIC ART: PUBLIC PURPOSES AND PRIVATE DESIRES

What does this system of art in public places have to do with China's new consumer society? Put another way, how does one consume a relic? Old or new, these monuments and structures are not consumer goods; China has yet to give rise to an entrepreneur of monuments like Christo. Indeed, monuments are the least commodified of arts products. They are dead, passive, conservative, and huge, in contrast to the living and active consumers. Monuments are

29. He faced north at first, apparently because Sun died before completing his Northern Expedition to unify the nation; in the end he faces south because traditional *fengshui* dictates that men of power should have homes, tombs, and apparently statues facing south.

30. R. Watson 1994.

designed to appeal to some higher purpose than shopping, one of the eternal verities such as national glory, revolutionary dedication, or religious faith.

Most of the new consumption of culture is done privately, at home: watching television, reading books, listening to music, painting. More public are concerts and dancing.³¹ This brings us back to the dancers and why they tango in the ruins of the Ming Palace. Monuments enter the consumer economy indirectly; people must pay money to enter the parks around which these items are often built. Entrance fees vary, but may range between five mao and eight renminbi, neither a great expense nor a trivial amount, especially if one adds bus fare to reach a distant park. Just as in the class-riven consumer society outside the parks, not everyone in China can afford to "consume" relics.

Chinese citizens bring their consumption to the parks because their homes are small and lack privacy ("public" space may offer greater opportunity for confidential conversations than a crowded apartment), because the parks provide a convenient destination for group outings, and because Chinese have long enjoyed simply hanging out and observing society's spectacle (*kan renao*). The public purpose of these sites is secondary to private desires. One goes to Purple Mountain on a pretty Saturday or Sunday not because dead rulers are buried there but because the place is green, unpolluted, and pleasant. At best, the dead rulers lend the park prestige as a destination. On one outing, my hosts brought along an inflatable raft, which their daughter used in an artificial lake built during the Republican era. With campfires in the distance and the sounds of music wafting across the lake, the atmosphere was much like that in an American state park.³²

Certainly other nearby spots reveal personal pleasures mixed with the state displays that provide their setting. At the reopened Meiling Villa, built by Chiang Kaishek for his wife, Song Meiling, an elderly woman posed in a colossal old American car for a photograph, her face beaming at her temporary occupation of the dictator's vehicle. At the statue of Wang Jingwei, teenage boys were the first to defy the posted request not to spit, as they made a game of their youthful patriotism.

It is to the parks that Chinese bring their consumer goods for display. Chinese dress up to go to public places. No one adopts the American-style camping look; one especially notices the women, many of whom wear elaborate

31. Wang Weiming (1996) discusses phenomena of the new consumer economy, including: hair salons, karaoke, fast food, up-market curio shops, pubs, karaoke TV, private clubs, exclusive addresses, foreign hotels, nightclubs, exercise machines, DHL, credit cards, pedigreed dogs, satellite television, Christmas cards, running shoes, children's toys, pop music, imported automobiles, etc. Most of these items are for private consumption, either in one's home or in a club or restaurant. Thomas Gold (1993) reminds us that the popular culture imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan stresses personal messages quite different from those of official culture.

32. An observation made by Steven Levine.

dresses and high heels, even when climbing Yellow Mountain in neighboring Anhui. Taking one's child or grandchild to the park is of course an escape, a loving outing, but it also represents an escalation in conspicuous consumption, as kiddies are treated to food, balloons, rides, and other material goodies.

One way of reading the relationship between public monument and private consumption is the metaphor of offerings to the gods. A feature of Chinese popular religion is food left by worshippers on the altars of the deities (or the burning of paper money and goods in effigy for the dead). The citizens of Nanjing bring their new consumer goods into the sacred precincts of the public to frolic before the monuments and to dance among the ruins. A tango in the faded splendor of the Ming Palace juxtaposes two displays, one a state-sanctioned commemoration of the past, the other a group of individuals delighting in their personal pleasures.

It is perhaps tempting to read this as popular celebration of the victory of joyous consumer society over dour collectivist state. But the relationship between state and consumer today is far less antagonistic than in the 1960s, when radicals warned their fellow citizens to be watchful of the subversive behavior of bad elements in parks, where one might find wearers of pointed shoes and other bourgeois fashions, idlers playing chess, and signs of illicit romance.³³ This officially sanctioned suspicion of parks persisted after the Cultural Revolution. It was not until nearly 1980 that officials felt comfortable removing the ubiquitous public address systems that had filled parks with martial music and newspaper editorials and further diminished the space for private activities within public spaces.³⁴ In contrast to the Maoist era, when the state's legitimacy rested in part on its promise to uphold revolutionary and socialist values, the Chinese state of the 1990s based its claim to rule on its success at increasing consumer goods and thus welcomed the dancers.

Many believe that nationalism has replaced collectivism as the core of the regime's ideology, pointing to the regime's manipulation of an image of a newly truculent and jingoistic China.³⁵ Yet in Nanjing, a city that has suffered from Japanese rape and looting as well as shelling by British and American gunboats, there is surprisingly little open display of nationalism. The abundance of relics from China's imperial and revolutionary heritage could eas-

33. For example, see the polemic by Red Guards of Beijing Mao Zedongism School 1967. Wang Shaoguang (1995) discusses the formerly dubious reputation of parks. For an account of more recent park activity, see Chen 1995.

34. I discuss this phenomenon in Kraus 1989, p. 183.

35. Note the popularity of *China Can Say No* (Song Qiang, Zhang Cangcang, and Qiao Bian 1996) and its imitators, readily available from street stalls throughout Nanjing and in other cities.

ily be used in support of openly nationalist sentiment. Nationalism might well be popular, but it is also difficult to control. The complexities of diplomacy compel the state to impose limits on nationalism amid the symbols of power. In 1996, for instance, Nanjing University students were warned not to demonstrate against Japan's occupation of the contested Diaoyudao (or Senkaku Islands).

An alternative to orchestrated nationalism is managed consumerism. Consumerism is also difficult for the state to control, but China's present leaders might easily prefer it to nationalism. Demonstrations against Japan or the United States might easily lead to broader social protest, but it is more difficult to imagine demonstrators demanding more imported televisions or the faster creation of new supermarkets. Consumerism's threat to state hegemony is long term, not sudden. With consumerism as an underlying ideology, the state's claim to legitimacy rests on a promise of economic performance similar to that of governments in Japan and the West.

Public space as a site for the popular celebration of consumption directly beneath the sober monuments of the state is a logical pairing, if initially an awkward one. Citizens, in entertaining themselves privately, reinforce the real new public foundation for the regime. The state's cost may be the loss of some dignity, since one space in urban China that can often be turned to commercial use is at the foot of a monument. Such loss of dignity only mirrors the problems faced by high culture at large in China today, but poses no threat to the political order.

In any event, it is not certain that consumerism will always triumph over monumentality. There is probably some core of the public monument experience that cannot be reduced to an aspect of commodity society. Many visitors to the martyr's shrine at Yuhuatai are teary-eyed, and a visit to the memorial to the Nanjing massacre cannot be turned into a lighthearted outing. A large number of Nanjing adults have memories of childhood visits to their city's solemn monuments as part of Youth League rituals. In the 1960s, for instance, Youth League members laid white flowers at the Yuhuatai martyr's monument—the place of mass graves of revolutionaries executed by the Guomindang. Such rituals may no longer seem important to them, but the sites are forever inscribed with memories more ardent and serious than tango dancing. Groups of pilgrims visit the tomb of Sun Yat-sen much as Americans tourists visit Mount Vernon or Lincoln's tomb on trips that are part frolic and part lesson in national heritage. The Chinese state encourages a solemn atmosphere within Sun's tomb, but with less success than at Mao Zedong's mausoleum in Beijing. The sober mood inside the tomb seems to be evidence that the state can inscribe its meaning in public places, although Sun Yat-sen is a popular figure not just because of state promotion of his cult—the cult may have been chosen because it would be popular. In any event, the mere presence of Sun's body may be enough in itself to quiet most crowds.

PUBLIC SQUARES AND PUBLIC SPHERES

There is a political affinity between the physical space of the public square and the metaphorical space of the public sphere. Nanjing's public spaces are the site of an ongoing yet quiet renegotiation of the relationship between state symbols and private desires. Parks and other public spaces are the spots under the strictest state supervision, the public face of the city where the state most wants to maintain its hegemony, yet where this state shares its most solemn monuments with the private activities of consuming citizens.

Ping-hui Liao, in an article on Taiwan's February 28 Incident (the 1947 massacre of perhaps 20,000 Taiwanese civilians by Chiang Kaishek's army), offers a helpful way out of the dilemma of the state's superficial control over the public sphere.³⁶ Liao suggests that it may be more helpful to look for multiple public spheres—one dominated by the government and at least superficially hegemonic, and alternative "counterpublic spheres." He argues that the political need to deal with the February 28 massacre is a part of a struggle to control the public sphere in Taiwan. It is possible that someday there may be a comparable process in the People's Republic of China because of a need to deal in public with the June 4, 1989, massacre in Beijing. But even without this kind of debate, it is helpful to consider the idea of multiple, flexible, and changing public spheres.³⁷ As in our conception of civil society, our concern for "a single, overarching public sphere" stems from Habermas, whom Nancy Fraser criticizes for not recognizing that "the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics" may be more democratic than "the institutional confinement of public life to a single, overarching public sphere."³⁸

We can find indications of such institutional flux in Nanjing's public sphere. The public square was, like the rest of the public sphere, a realm for controversy in the 1980s. In that decade, cultural debate was in the air throughout China and made its way into new art of the public square. The quasi-abstract new monuments of that decade, which I have labeled maidens of modernization, were erected to symbolize the four modernizations as a break with the Maoist past. Artists and officials alike enjoyed greater confidence in the future and a newfound willingness to deal with at least limited controversy.³⁹ Contention accompanied these statues because they were abstract and also because their sculptors frequently employed nudity

36. Liao 1993.

37. Bryna Goodman argues that the public sphere / civil society discussion often introduced too passive a view of Chinese society during the Republican era and calls for a focus on "interpenetration and shifting strategic boundaries" instead of "oppositional forces and absolute notions of autonomy." Goodman 1996, p. 165.

38. N. Fraser 1992, p. 122.

39. Julia F. Andrews and Gao Minglu (1995) trace this daringness of the 1980s in oil painting.

to shock, to make names for themselves, and to show that they could break through barriers into a previously forbidden zone. Today the maidens look a bit shopworn, often because they were made with inferior materials. The newer public art is representational, safe, and boring. This is partly a matter of the times, of lying low in an era when "political stability" is prized above all public virtues.

But there is an aesthetic reason as well, if the experience of the West is any guide. Murray Edelman argues that modernist art contributed to the rise of skepticism in politics, undermining legitimacy in government. The decline of human-centered art meant a decline in the centrality of reason in aesthetics:

In contrast to the optimism that was a dominant note in the nineteenth century, these judgments question the possibility of certain knowledge and the likelihood of progress, define the human subject as a peripheral construction rather than the center of the social world, see reason and instrumental intelligence as inherently flawed and look upon language as a form of action that can contribute to any kind of result rather than as a means to promote rationality. These developments are related as well to the marked disillusionment in public postures toward the state and other social institutions, and have helped to particularize and spread such disillusionment.⁴⁰

If Edelman is correct, official suspicion of modernism in public art may be justified, if likely ineffectual. But by turning away from this one new direction in public art, the state has demonstrated the diminishing vitality of its chosen public symbols, in contrast again to the vigor of private consumption. What could be more dull and detached than a new statue of Sun Yat-sen? It may well be that the Chinese state is simply too fearful and too exhausted to imagine and propagate meaningful public symbols. For all the *talk* of socialist ethics, visual expressions of the values of a socialist spiritual civilization are difficult to identify, thereby underscoring its shallow roots.

THE RECONFIGURATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Another Nanjing development underscores the tentativeness of state hegemony in the public sphere. Wu Hung, in his fine analysis of Tiananmen Square as public space, reminds us that every Chinese city, however small, must have a public square.⁴¹ Yet Nanjing has in fact destroyed its square. The former focal point for parades, official demonstrations, and popular protests was the Drum Tower. Until the early 1980s, there was a reviewing stand by the Drum Tower; but it vanished, along with much of the space, when city

officials built a vehicular tunnel under the Drum Tower traffic circle in 1995. A newly landscaped park may actually expand the total open space, but it is less welcoming to potential demonstrators, especially with the addition of a police station and the installation of video cameras for surveillance. One Nanjing intellectual commented that demonstrations could now be held in the Wutaishan sports stadium (originally a Guomindang project), and anyway, there were not so many demonstrations anymore. Demobilization of the populace is facilitated by making sure this public square will not become a part of anyone's counterhegemonic public sphere.

The relationship between public sphere and public square has become physical: the state's officials can rest comfortably only if they physically restrict public squares in order to ensure lack of protest of the hegemony lite that fills the public sphere. Public squares always occupy prime real estate, with new commercial uses challenging the no longer urgent public demand for them as places to hold meetings. Rising urban property values and a politics of demobilization combine to change the shape and sometimes reduce the physical size of the urban turf that once most symbolized Communist rule.

Is Nanjing representative? There will of course be local variations in the role public spaces play in sustaining and reinforcing the new ideology of consumption. In cities with long winters, the parks can be used for less of the year, whereas in Nanjing they are accessible year-round. Many cities lack the density of historical relics found in Nanjing, but other kinds of monuments can mark public space just as easily. Hints from other cities suggest that similar processes are under way elsewhere.

Shanghai's People's Square, once a British race track and then a parade ground for mass rallies after 1949, has been renovated. A new city office building has replaced the reviewing stand, and across the square stands the striking new Shanghai Museum; a performing arts center was completed in 1998. An underground shopping mall operates beneath the park, whose formerly open spaces have been replaced by benches, sinuous walks, and signs urging visitors to keep off the grass, which grows behind fences. It is a rather nice space, but no longer easily usable by demonstrators. Fuzhou's vast May First Square, where thousands protested in the spring of 1989 beneath a statue of Mao, a relic of the Cultural Revolution. Mao still stands, but the square has been planted with trees, creating a pleasant urban forest that makes protest nearly impossible. The city of Tianjin has gone a step further: Haihe Square, former seat of political demonstrations, was sold to a foreign company for property development in the early 1990s.

China's most celebrated and notorious public space, Beijing's Tiananmen Square, is under constant electronic surveillance, which may affect the public expression of private desires. The state has not yet dared to begin de-commissioning Tiananmen Square, although there are hints of a changed

40. Edelman 1995, p. 22.

41. Wu Hung 1991, p. 90.

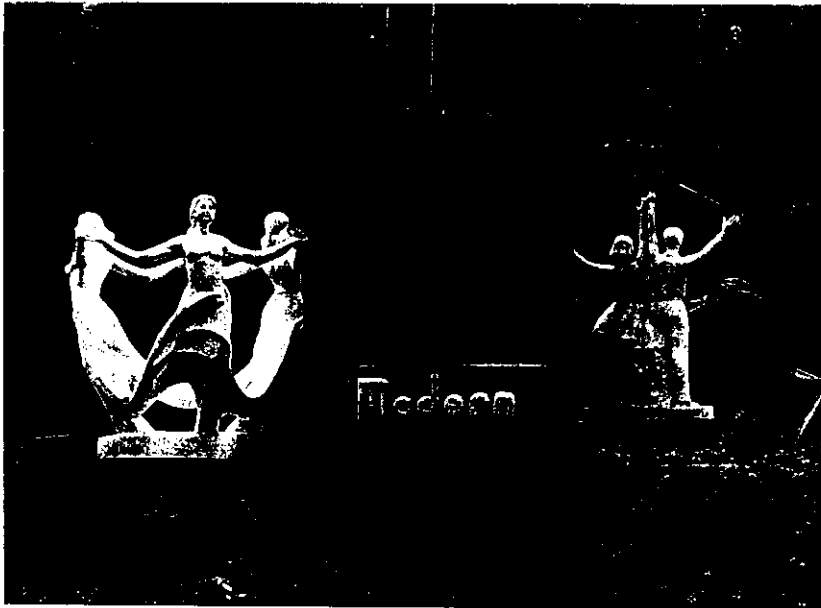


FIGURE 13.7. The yard of Nanjing's Sculpture World displays its diverse wares: abstract cubes, maidens of modernization, vigorous young workers, and lions that look suspiciously more like vestiges of the British than the Chinese empire. (Photo by Richard Kraus)

status. Foreign tour groups are now given lunch at the once sacred Great Hall of the People, and the part of the square before the Great Hall is now often turned into a temporary parking lot for high officials attending meetings. It is not difficult to imagine further encroachment on Tiananmen Square, the focal point of concentrated political and commercial pressure, from the installation of Mao's corpse in 1977 to the need to service tourists today. Beijing's "Democracy Wall," admittedly only a second choice for demonstrators in 1979 and never a sacred site of the revolution, now has a Pizza Hut where excited crowds once read big-character posters.

The retreat of the state is complemented by the extension of the private. One could argue that the real new monuments of Nanjing are the commercial and office towers that dwarf all else. When the Jinling Hotel was opened in 1987, it attracted rural visitors who just stood and gaped at this first high-rise building in a city dominated by horizontal structures. A decade later more sophisticated visitors visited the Golden Eagle Building, the most luxurious of new shopping emporia.

Another trend with a similar outcome is the appearance of private parks for the wealthy. The Nanjing Equestrian Academy offers horseback riding for the elite (I visited one fine spring day when the other guests were the entire party leadership of the neighboring city of Zhenjiang). Other cities have developed more private play areas, including theme parks and golf courses, but the impact is to create privatized spaces far outside the system that official monuments share with private consumption.

In contrast to the state's public-art monuments, there has emerged a curious species of private quasi-monumental art. Nanjing's Sculpture World is a private firm that sells large statues—Mao Zedong, Venus di Milo, Santa Claus, abstract black cubes atop bright red bases (labeled "modern" in English), and a variety of Roman-looking deities (see Figure 13.7). Some of these end up on private grounds, while others are placed on commercial buildings, thus blurring the distinction between the public and private spheres.

One Nanjing restaurant features a five-meter naked Roman deity staring down on the passing crowd. The Big Shot (*da renwu*) restaurant displays over its entrance a giant head of a sleek and mustachioed entrepreneur, truly a monument to consumer China. Initially I wondered if commercial advertising provided a private alternative to public monuments. But most citizens have learned to tune most of it out, just as Western citizens of consumer societies do, or for that matter just as Chinese had earlier developed a talent for tuning out political propaganda. These private neorelics are a different matter and echo the state's monuments in their scale and manufactured antiquity. Yet they are so obviously bogus and commercial, like the counterfeit Xi'an terra-cotta soldiers that guard still another restaurant, that their fantasy perhaps reminds citizens that the state's monuments are the real thing. This is the kind of uniquely urban ambiguity that M. Christine Boyer identified as "a shimmering." The spectator/participant simultaneously encounters official narratives and private sensations of the identical place. The experience is pleasurable to contemplate, yet obscure and sometimes disturbing to assess. The tango dancers cannot easily be brought into sharp focus through this shimmering; they move with private grace, but what is their offering to the graven deities of the state? Can we—or they—always tell the difference between dancers and demonstrators?