



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The transfer of foreign modernity in Beijing: the new urban space in the Legation Quarter, 1900–1928

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## Abstract

This article suggests that the post-colonial viewpoint could be valuable in understanding Beijing during the colonial crisis between 1900 and 1928. Through the examination of urban space in the Legation Quarter, it pays attention to the emerging special types and forms, as well as the mechanisms behind them, and explains the transposition of a foreign modern cityscape to the local context. The Europeanized district in Beijing was a symbol of Western civilization and the uneven power dynamics in the city, and was regarded as both a spatial model and a competitor for the Chinese government's attempts to create a modern capital.

## Introduction

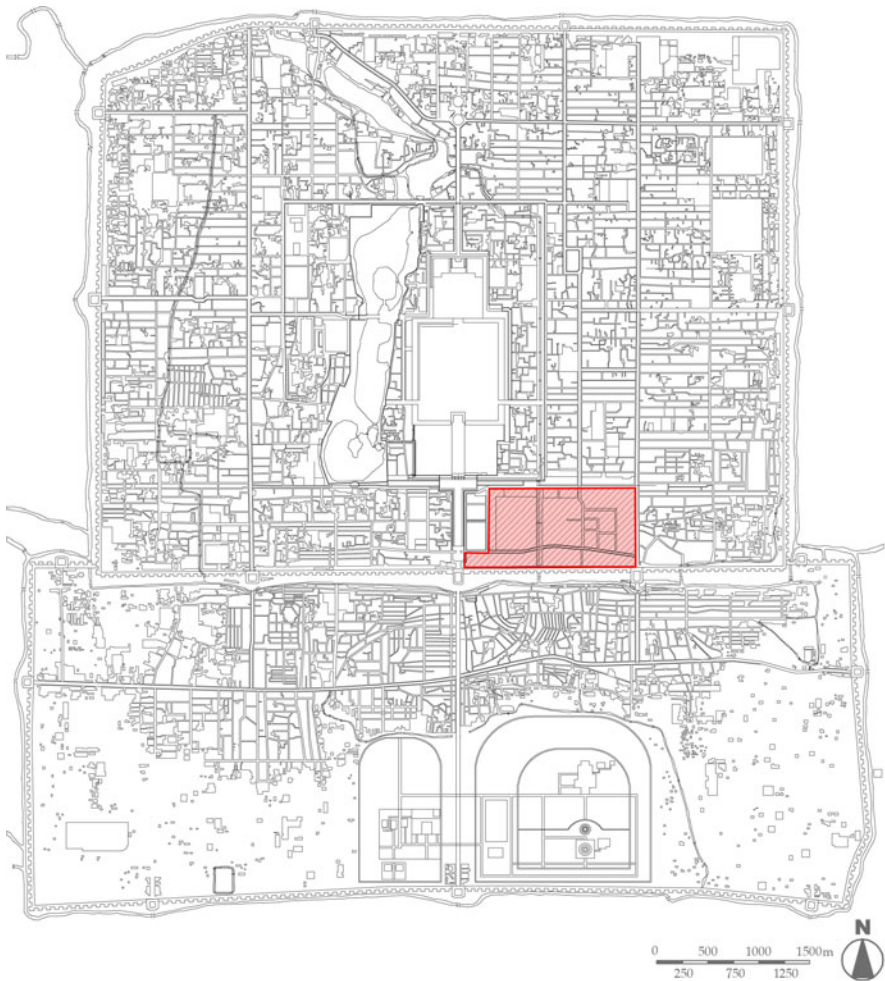
Now the mystery will reveal itself. It lies behind there: the subtle beauty of centuries is awaiting me... But the dream ends with a shock. I see a wide European street in glaring light, with European houses; a canal in the middle and quite near a large white building with bamboo scaffolding in front – a common, vulgar, modern, European street, that's all.

Henri Borel, a Dutch writer and journalist who visited Beijing in the 1900s<sup>1</sup>

As a nostalgist, Henri Borel wanted to see the 'beauty of centuries' of traditional Beijing, but unfortunately for him, he began his journey in Beijing with a Europeanized street in the Legation Quarter (Figure 1). Indeed, the first stop of almost all foreign visitors travelling by train would have been the Legation Quarter, since the central station had just been built nearby, and a specific city gate on the Inner City wall was even opened for the convenience of foreigners, so they could connect to the train.<sup>2</sup> Although Henri Borel felt disappointed at his first impression of Beijing, his reflection

<sup>1</sup>H. Borel, *The New China: A Traveller's Impressions* (London, 1912), 31. Henri Borel (1869–1933) served as an official Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

<sup>2</sup>There were four layers of walls in traditional Beijing that, from the centre outward, demarcated the Forbidden City (*Zi jin cheng*), the Imperial City (*Huang cheng*), the Inner City (*Nei cheng*) and the Outer City (*Wai cheng*), the last of which was attached to the Inner City and shared its south wall.



**Figure 1.** The Legation Quarter in Beijing.

Source: Redrawn by the author based on *Xin ce Beijing neiwaicheng quantu* (The New Map of the Inner and Outer City, Beijing) (Shanghai, 1921), in the 1910s.

on the urban space being both a symbol for the Legation Quarter and a common feature of Western modernity was very perceptible. This urban space reflected colonists' wishes to transplant a ubiquitous modern community onto their surroundings and so erase the previous reality, although to a certain extent it had to be intertwined with the local context of Beijing.

In recent decades, the influence of post-colonial theory and criticism has been rapidly growing in the urban and architectural history of marginalized countries, including China.<sup>3</sup> Despite many definitions of post-colonialism, for the history of urban

<sup>3</sup>T. Warner, 'Die Planung und Entwicklung der deutschen Stadtgründung Qingdao (Tsingtau) in China: der Umgang mit dem Fremden', TU Hamburg-Harburg Ph.D. thesis, 1996; H. Lu, *Beyond the Neon Light*:

planning it is generally understood as the impact of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance or cultural merging, which often in turn affected the colonizer's culture as well.<sup>4</sup> Laura Victoir and Victor Zatsépine define the relationship between the colonial plan and the local context as 'the adaptations and accommodations made between different sides in the process of colonization'.<sup>5</sup> It was also this interconnection that successfully expanded the European-derived norms of modernity to make them an international experience, which in turn shaped global modernity. Since colonial plans had universal applicability but were inevitably influenced by underlying cultural traditions, power relations and the everyday lives of the residents of the colony, it is necessary 'not to diminish the importance of the specific forms of colonization'<sup>6</sup> and to analyse individual cases of the process of colonialization to study the multiple forms of colonialism.<sup>7</sup> China in the first half of the twentieth century preserved formal independence and retained sovereignty over most of its territory and as a result the situation there exhibited 'not simply a quantitative difference from an always incomplete colonialism, but a qualitative distinction that produced a difference'.<sup>8</sup>

There were two types of colonial city in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: one was 'leased territory', which was usually ruled by one colonial power and constructed as a new metropolis. Because of the long period of domination by one colonial authority, the governor would generally create a master plan for the new city, such as Dalian (under Russian rule from 1898 until 1904), where a baroque city plan was implemented.<sup>9</sup> For these colonial cities, such as Qingdao (governed by Germany from 1898 until 1914) in China, Singapore and cities in India, Indochina, Morocco and other countries,<sup>10</sup> urban planning was not merely a transplanted model, but was adapted to the local context and its realities, with the purpose of gaining more effective control of the colony and promoting the global development of capitalist markets.<sup>11</sup>

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*Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, 1999); L. Victoir and V. Zatsépine (eds.), *Harbin to Hanoi: The Colonial Built Environment in Asia, 1840 to 1940* (Hong Kong, 2013).

<sup>4</sup>D. Gregory, R. Johnson, G. Pratt, M. Watts and S. Whatmore (eds.), *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Malden, MA, 2009); A.D. King, 'Internationalism, imperialism, postcolonialism, globalization: frameworks for vernacular architecture', *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 13 (2006/07), 64–75.

<sup>5</sup>L. Victoir and V. Zatsépine, 'Introduction', in Victoir and Zatsépine (eds.), *Harbin to Hanoi*, 1–16, at 3.

<sup>6</sup>F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), 53.

<sup>7</sup>K. Mühlhahn, 'Mapping colonial space: the planning and building of Qingdao by German colonial authorities, 1897–1914', in Victoir and Zatsépine (eds.), *Harbin to Hanoi*, 103–28.

<sup>8</sup>B. Goodman and D.S.G. Goodman, 'Introduction: colonialism and China', in B. Goodman and D.S.G. Goodman (eds.), *Twentieth-Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday and the World* (Abingdon and New York, 2012), 13.

<sup>9</sup>After the Russo-Japanese War, Dalian was colonized by Japan from 1905 until 1945.

<sup>10</sup>Qingdao was occupied by Japan after World War I, and sovereignty was only returned to the Republic of China in 1922. However, Japan reoccupied the city in 1938 until the end of World War II. For more information on this kind of colonial city, see A.D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London, Henley and Boston, 1976); G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, 1991); Warner, 'Die Planung und Entwicklung der deutschen Stadtgründung Qingdao (Tsingtau) in China'; B.S.A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur and New York, 1996); P. Scriver, *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (London, 2007).

<sup>11</sup>Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*; R.K. Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London, 1997); A.J. Njoh, *Planning Power: Town Planning and Social Control in Colonial Africa* (London and New York, 2007).

The other type of colonial city was the ‘concession’, which was normally constructed in a new territory side by side with a Chinese port city. It included Shanghai (1845–1945), Guangzhou (1859–1945), Tianjin (1860–1945), Hankou (1861–1945) and others, where the colonizers only achieved municipal authority in their own segregated settlement. Although the built environment of the concessions was quite different from the old Chinese city, it was normally built without a general plan. Because of the political and economic benefits and the limited territory of the concession, colonizers preferred a simpler checkerboard plan and a grid street pattern to maximize the rent value of the land. This strategy reflected the feeling of uncertainty of the rulers of the concession, contrasting with those in the ‘leased territory’. As Cole Roskam notes, the foreigners in Shanghai were worried about ‘the lack of insight regarding just how long such a treaty port might be able, and allowed, to operate’.<sup>12</sup>

However, Beijing is relatively neglected in the discourse of colonialism. On the one hand, the Legation Quarter has been overlooked as a territory in China that was influenced by colonialism. In contrast with the practice for normal embassies, the Qing government was forced to accept the Legation Quarter as an enclave built at the heart of empire under the unequal treaty of the Boxer Protocol, one that had an unnecessarily large territory, a unified and independent administration, city walls, city gates, glacis and military forces, showing the strong lingering colonial impact on the city and country.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Beijing was constantly in the shadow of the colonial crisis. On the other hand, since there is a tendency to characterize the process of modernization in China as consisting of different ‘types’ – traditional cities, port cities, modern industrial cities and transport-hub cities<sup>14</sup> – Beijing is often seen to represent indigenous modernization from within a traditional city, compared to the colonial modernization of Shanghai and the industrial modernization of Guangzhou. However, Beijing should not be underestimated when studying the colonial influence on China, as there is a good case for its spatial political significance. The city was governed by the Chinese until 1937 and even maintained its status as the capital of China until 1928, but had the Legation Quarter as a special district under the colonial powers’ control.

Another topic that has not been considered enough is the role of urban public space in the study of the relationship between urban modernization and colonialization in China. The transition of urban space plays a central role in urban planning and improvement. There has been fruitful historical and theoretical research on the production of urban space by Western scholars, for example, Anthony

<sup>12</sup>C. Roskam, ‘The architecture of risk: urban space and uncertainty in Shanghai, 1843–74’, in Victorio and Zatsopine (eds.), *Harbin to Hanoi*, 129–50, at 130.

<sup>13</sup>The Legation Quarter in Beijing is regarded as a special concession in terms of its historical and political condition, administrative jurisdiction and military engagement; see C. Fei, *Zhongguo zujue shi* (The History of Concessions in China) (Shanghai, 1991), 345.

<sup>14</sup>Y. Wei, *Zhongguo jindai butong leixing chengshi zonghe yanjiu* (The Comprehensive Study of Different Types of Chinese Cities in Modern Times) (Chengdu, 1998). Port city, on the one hand, refers to the ‘ports’ opened by the unequal treaties all over the country, not just on the seacoast or on rivers; on the other hand, it included the so-called self-opened ports, which were opened by the Chinese government without the need for foreign inducement.

Vidler's interpretation of street transformation, Setha M. Low's work on the plaza and politics, Walter Benjamin's manuscript on Paris' arcades and Carl Schorske and Vittorio Lampugnani's inspiring examination of the Ringstrasse in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.<sup>15</sup> Henri Lefebvre argues that urban space is a social product as a 'means of control, and hence of domination, of power',<sup>16</sup> and that every society produces its own space. The colonial power in Beijing produced very different space from traditional types, but how were these spaces created, formed and used? What was the social, cultural and, ultimately, political character of the production of space?

The other obstacle in the study of urban space is the difficulty of collecting and interpreting data. The plan and construction of the space, as well as everyday lives within it, are usually absent from standard historical accounts because of the undeveloped archive system in China and many years of war and deprivation. Because of the lack of conventional sources, this article focuses not only on the documents of the local government, such as official reports, but also unofficial materials, thanks to the emerging new media and the publishing industry in the modern era. Therefore, special emphasis is given to social surveys, newspaper articles, personal memoirs and notes and photographs revealing the urban space and daily activities. In this way, this article attempts to re-read and re-interpret the interdependence of the physical space and the mental space conceived by the government and foreigners as well as experienced by the city's citizens, examining three cases: Legation Street, the boulevard and the fortified space.

This article aims to contribute to our understanding of Beijing's modernization from the perspective of the transplantation of Westernized urban space, alongside the discourse on Beijing as a traditional capital city. The Legation Quarter displayed the imprint of colonialism and represented a specific situation created by the locus of a particular society and its history. The article explores how foreign urban spaces were reproduced in historically specific times and places, within the cultural, political and institutional contexts of Beijing.

The article contains six sections. The first two sections introduce the background about foreigners and the administration in the Legation Quarter, while the third section focuses on the urban morphological transformation, regarding the approaches applied by foreigners constructing the Legation Quarter, and through which the new urban elements were introduced into ancient Beijing. The fourth section examines the socio-cultural meaning of the imposition of foreign spatial forms, whereby a separated 'modern city' was established as a symbol of superior civilization and power. Before the article concludes, the fifth section looks at the marginalized 'others' as well as connections and confrontations between the foreigners and locals.

<sup>15</sup>A. Vidler, 'The scenes of the street: transformations in ideal and reality, 1750–1871', in S. Anderson (ed.), *On Streets* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1978), 29–112; S.M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin, 2000); W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1999); C.E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980); V.M. Lampugnani, 'Vienna fin-de-siècle: between artistic city planning and unlimited metropolis', in C.C. Bohl and J.-F. Lejeune (eds.), *Sitte, Hegemann and the Metropolis: Modern Civic Art and International Exchanges* (London, 2009), 25–38.

<sup>16</sup>H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991), 26.

## A special territory impacted by colonialism: the foreigners and the administration

Under the Ming and Qing dynasties, East Jiaomin Lane was where the imperial government buildings, as well as several princes' palaces, imperial mansions and a royal ancestral temple, were located. It was a tradition to arrange for foreign guests to reside on East Jiaomin Lane, since in this way it was easier for officials to meet and control the foreign envoys and missionaries. The First Opium War from 1840 to 1842 failed to open Beijing to foreign powers, and it was only in 1860, after the Second Opium War, that Beijing was obliged to allow the establishment of foreign legations in East Jiaomin Lane, where foreign powers in turn profited from the geo-political advantage provided by the legation's position in the city's centre, close to the Forbidden City. At that time, locals and foreigners resided side by side in the district.

In 1900, the Boxers, initially united in Shandong under the slogan 'Support the Qing, exterminate the foreigners', flooded Beijing and besieged and attacked the foreign embassies in East Jiaomin Lane. Most of the buildings there were demolished, mainly by arson and bombardments. However, with the invasion of foreign armies and the escape of the imperial government, this rebellion was doomed to fail. One year later on 7 September 1901, after a lot of haggling, the Qing dynasty's government was forced to sign an unequal treaty, the Boxer Protocol, which represented the predominance of colonial power over the local government.<sup>17</sup> According to the treaty, a new Legation Quarter was established (Figure 2),<sup>18</sup> where Chinese people were forbidden to reside; even 'servants and other Chinese who worked inside the Legation Quarter by day were required to hold special passes'.<sup>19</sup>

Most foreigners in early twentieth-century Beijing lived inside the Legation Quarter. Because 'Peking ha[d] never been definitely opened to the trade of the world as a treaty port',<sup>20</sup> foreigners were forbidden to live outside the boundary of the Legation Quarter according to Chinese law. However, it was still possible for a foreigner to be a neighbour of the Chinese people in Beijing's old city, a fact that, according to Sidney David Gamble, reflected Chinese officials' tolerance.<sup>21</sup> Compared to the thousands of foreigners who resided within the bounds of the Legation Quarter,<sup>22</sup> in 1917, 1,524 foreigners lived outside it, of which 929 were

<sup>17</sup>For the content of the Boxer Protocol, with 19 annexes, see J.V.A. MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China, 1894–1919* (New York, 1921), 278–320.

<sup>18</sup>For the map and description of the boundaries of the Legation Quarter, see *ibid.*, 298–9.

<sup>19</sup>M.J. Moser and Y.W.-C. Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates: The Legations at Peking* (Hong Kong and New York, 1993), 116.

<sup>20</sup>S.D. Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey* (New York, 1921), 110.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 110–11.

<sup>22</sup>It is difficult to know the exact figures for the number of foreigners residing in the Legation Quarter, since 'the Diplomatic Corps controls the Legation Quarter and has never taken a census of those living inside its walls', and 'each legation keeps track of its own nationals living in Peking'. However, an approximate number in the thousands can be reached based on Gamble's social surveys, in which he stated that: 'It is known, however, that the strength of the American Legation Guard, a detachment of the U.S. Marine Corps, is ordinarily about 300 men, and that the number of Americans who might contribute to the American Liberty Loan was well over 500. It is also known that the Americans are the largest group of foreigners in Peking, next to the Japanese.' *Ibid.*, 111.



Figure 2. The transformation of foreign legations, 1900–02.  
Source: H.B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (London, 1918), 356.

Caucasians and 595 Japanese.<sup>23</sup> They came from different countries, including America, England, France, Germany, Japan and so on, and engaged in a wide range of occupations, including among them pushy Western business agents, concession hunters, newspaper correspondents, moneylenders and curio buyers.<sup>24</sup> We might also speculate that the foreigners in the Legation Quarter were engaged in similar occupations, with most being lawyers, mechanics and doctors in Beijing, as well as soldiers and members of the diplomatic corps.

Establishing a unified administration for the quarter was not easy. Although the international agreement of the Protocol of 13 June 1904 laid down certain fundamental principles for the administration of the quarter, it was difficult to find agreement among the diplomatic representatives of the foreign countries, as each of them had different intentions and interests.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, until 1904, rather than setting up a relatively unified system, the Legation Quarter had been divided into three distinct sections: the eastern section, which housed the Japanese, Italian, Spanish, German and Austrian embassies on the east side of the Imperial Canal; the western section, which housed the American, Dutch and Russian embassies on the west side of the Imperial Canal; and one exclusive administrative area for the British Concession. Each section had different administrative rules and regulations, such as the right to elect their own dean of ministers or set up an independent police force.<sup>26</sup>

With the establishment of the Republic of China, the diplomatic body began to seriously consider setting up a unified administration. The Administrative Commission of the Diplomatic Quarter (ACDQ) was eventually established in January 1914. It constituted five members, 'three being nominated by the diplomatic body and two elected by contributors within the Legation Quarter'.<sup>27</sup> Rules were formulated by the committee under the title of 'Eighteen Rules for the Beijing Legation Quarter', as well as a series of appendixes, including Rules for the Police and Roads, Rules for the Rickshaws and Security Rules for the Use and Construction of the Roads and the Two Water Gates. But the ACDQ was not formally established until after the end of World War I, in 1919, when the foreign powers could co-operate.<sup>28</sup> As for other concessions, which were characterized by uncertainty and short-sightedness, the new administration could not be expected to function as an accountable administration with a master or detailed organized plan. The Legation Quarter in Beijing in particular was shaped by the Protocol Powers' political interests and influence.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>J. Bredon, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of Its Chief Places of Interest* (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Hankow and Yokohama, 1922), 49.

<sup>25</sup>MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements*, 315–16.

<sup>26</sup>H. Unokichi, *Qingmo Beijing zhi ziliao* (Documents on Beijing Annals in the Late Qing Dynasty) (Beijing, 1991), 244.

<sup>27</sup>A. Ramsay, *The Peking Who's Who* (Peking, 1922), 50.

<sup>28</sup>For the detail of the administration of the Legation Quarter and the operation of the ACDQ, including the financial system, police administration, public work maintenance and so on, see R.M. Duncan, *Peiping Municipality and the Diplomatic Quarter* (Peiping, 1933), 103–20.



## Building a Europeanized cityscape via urban improvement

Rapid urbanization in nineteenth-century Europe brought with it many problems, including population growth, poor traffic conditions and low standards of hygiene. These problems were both quantitatively and qualitatively new, because the pre-industrial urban structure underwent a dramatic change to meet the needs of the emerging machine age.<sup>29</sup> Baron Haussmann criticized Paris as ‘a sick city’, and prescribed the surgeries needed to resolve the problems by the means of city planning. Functional efficiency, normally proposed by engineers, became the decisive factor. In 1859, the Swedish engineer and urban development theorist Adolf Wilhelm Edelsvärd wrote, ‘that which is useful and appropriate to its purpose is also the most beautiful’.<sup>30</sup>

Based on the new understanding of urban environment, Western thought about Beijing underwent dramatic change over the centuries, from Marco Polo’s Cambalu, the greatest city in the world, which was ‘planned out with a degree of precision and beauty impossible to describe’,<sup>31</sup> to ‘the dirtiest and most evil-smelling town in the world’<sup>32</sup> at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though Beijing’s pre-industrial environmental problems were quite different from those caused by industrialization in the West, the foreigners believed that the urban improvements found in their home countries would be the solution, and that the ‘advanced’ cityscapes of their home countries should be the model for the ‘backward’ colonial city that was viewed almost as something ‘as in the European Middle Ages’.<sup>33</sup> To meet the requirements of a ‘modern’ street in Europe, the Legation Quarter in Beijing underwent a thorough reconstruction with the elimination of all *hutongs* (Figure 3). The new materials used for street paving, gravel, macadam and asphalt, the underground sewer system and the other urban infrastructure systems such as water supply, electric lighting and so on, which had become widely used in the West by the late nineteenth century, were soon introduced to the Legation Quarter.

### **Legation Street: the elimination of the characteristics of a traditional Chinese street**

The first important case is the reconstruction of East Jiaomin Lane. The detailed Complete Map of the Capital in the Qianlong Reign created in 1750 supplies the material for analysing the original street form (Figure 4).<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the urban square as the principal spatial type in Western cities, the organization of Beijing’s urban space mainly relied on linear space. East Jiaomin Lane was an important street in the city, on which government officials and imperial palaces were located. It also connected two areas that were flourishing – Zhengyang Gate

<sup>29</sup>T. Hall, *Planning Europe’s Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London, 2005), 53.

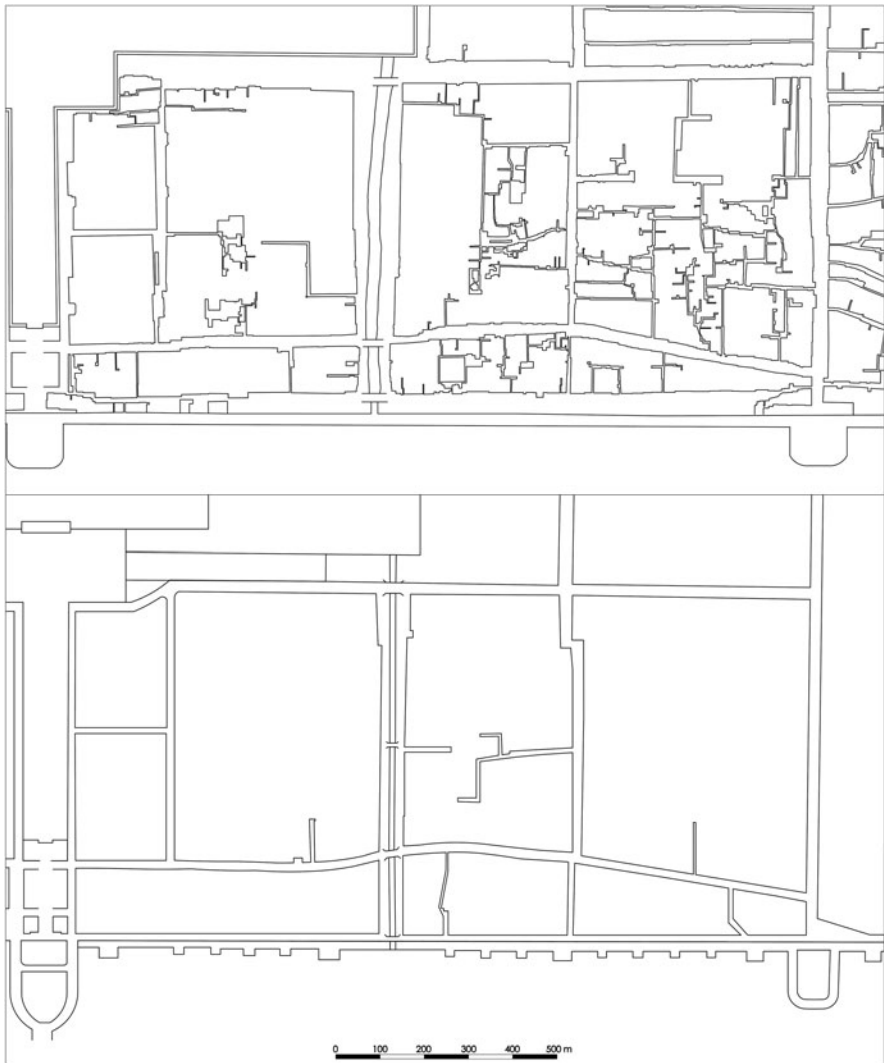
<sup>30</sup>T. Hall, ‘Urban planning in Sweden’, in T. Hall (ed.), *Planning and Urban Growth in the Nordic Countries* (London and New York, 1991), 167–246, at 187.

<sup>31</sup>M. Polo and J. Masfield, *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian* (London and New York, 1908), 174.

<sup>32</sup>L.S.M.K. Townley, *My Chinese Note Book* (London, 1904), 234.

<sup>33</sup>O. Sitwell, *Escape with Me! An Oriental Sketch-Book* (London, 1940), 203.

<sup>34</sup>The map, which was influenced by the Western method of drawing in perspective, drew both the plan and façade of a building together.



**Figure 3.** The street system, top: 1750, bottom: after 1900.

Sources: Xinyayuan Institute (comp.), *Qianlong jingcheng quantu* (A Complete Map of the Capital in the Qianlong Reign) (Beijing, 1940), first made in the Qianlong reign, 1750; C. Madrolle, *Madrolle's Guide Books: Northern China, the Valley of the Blue River, Korea* (London and Paris, 1912), 15.

and Qipan Street in the west, and the Chongwen Gate and Chongwen Gate Inner Street in the east. The street was intersected by the Imperial Canal and Taijichang Street. At the western street entrance, symmetrical to the Fuwen *Pailou* on West Jiaomin Lane, there was a *Chongtian*-style *pailou* (archway) named Zhenwu, which had three *jian* (bays: the building unit between two columns), four pillars and three roofs.

From the perspective of spatial characters, in contrast to the common straight street in Beijing, the curved East Jiaomin Lane fostered diverse street scenes during

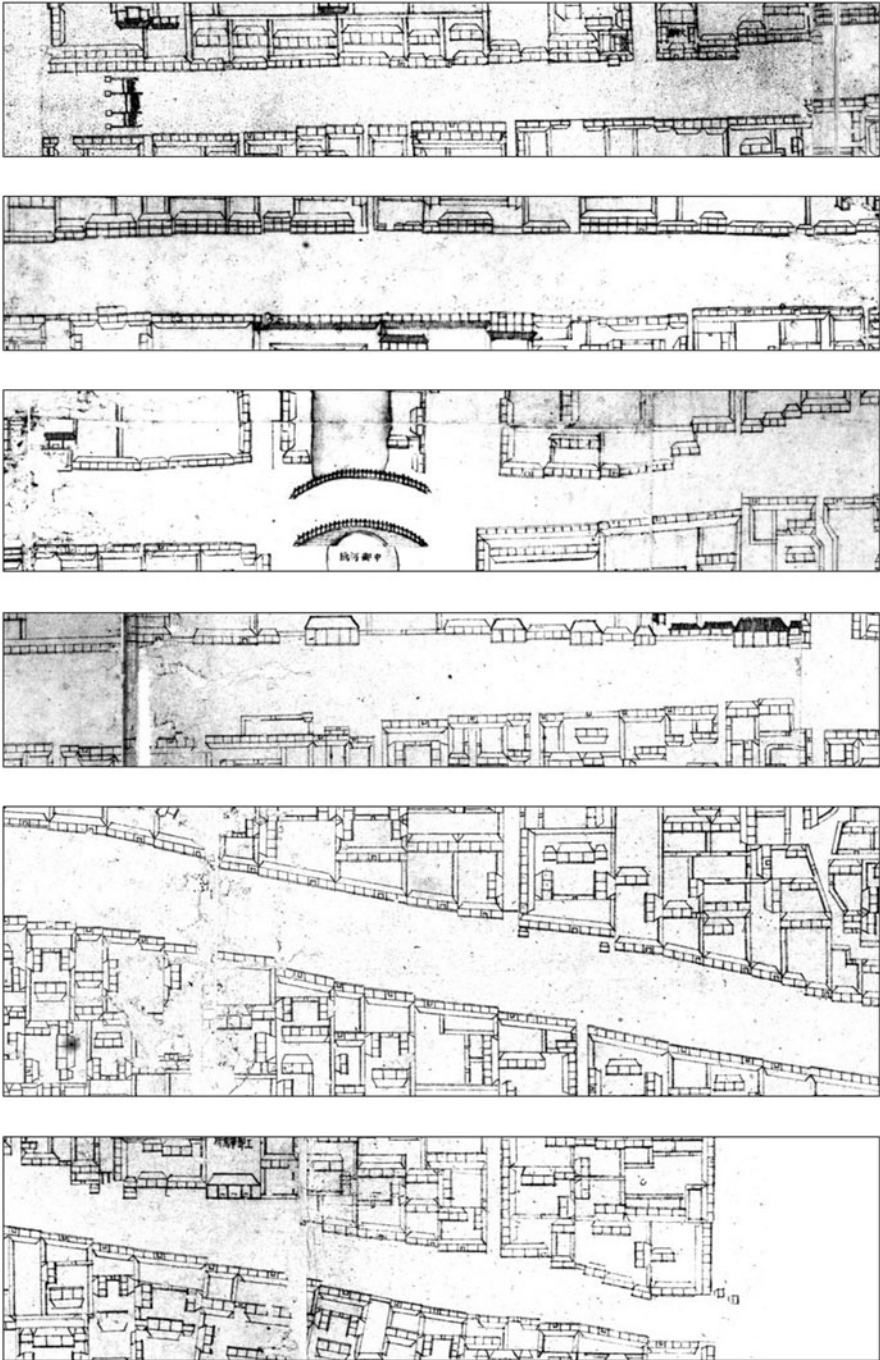


Figure 4. East Jiaomin Lane in 1750.  
Source: *Qianlong jingcheng quantu*.

the movement of pedestrians. The curved shape with buildings on each side formed a ragged line that made the street attractive for walking. The boundary of the street, like other traditional streets in Beijing, was defined by the continuous façades of courtyard houses, which played the role of both a division and facilitator of interaction between private and public spheres. The variation of the amount of *jian* – between two and thirteen, with most buildings having three or five – supplied the street with a rhythm. The *pailou* played the role of a symbolic edge. It identified the spatial domain's beginning and end points, which not only provided the feeling of the enclosure of a street, but also played a role as a frame visually connecting the street and the city. For the crossroads, the bridge with a white marble handrail became an important feature at the intersection of the street and the Imperial Canal, where the view was suddenly opened up after walking along the enclosed street, owing to the much broader space. However, it is also important to note that East Jiaomin Lane, similar to other streets, was in a dilapidated condition in Late Qing Beijing. The street in 1900 was much narrower – only around 10 metres wide – than when it was depicted in the map of 1750. This was very probably due to the intensification of the encroachment onto the street of buildings and sheds that were constructed without permission. Moreover, hygiene and traffic had become even worse. The dirt road was not paved, and there was no pavement to separate the pedestrians from vehicles.

When East Jiaomin Lane was renamed Legation Street, its traditional spatial characteristics were replaced by street scenes that displayed a civilized and technologically advanced power. The original characteristics, such as its continuity and unity, as well as the rhythm of the street, were totally ignored and eliminated with the replacement of the one-floor, pitched-roof buildings along the street by multistorey Western-style buildings, legation walls and compounds. One crucial duty of the ACDQ was street administration, which refers to construction, paving and upkeep. Due to the special attention paid to spatial development and the maintenance of the new urban space, urban construction even took up the majority of the budget of the committee.<sup>35</sup> In 1915, Legation Street was reconstructed as the first paved asphalt street in Beijing, while most other streets in Beijing remained dirt roads without pavements.

By the 1930s, the cityscape of the Legation Quarter was fundamentally changed, when nearly all the roads in the district – in total covering about nine miles – were paved with asphalt.<sup>36</sup> Hence, as Robert Moore Duncan stated, 'its streets are in far better condition in practically any kind of weather than is the case in other parts of the city'.<sup>37</sup> Over and above, the paved road, pavements, street lights and trees, street sanitation and maintenance together constituted a new streetscape. Buildings with functions beyond just offering places to live, such as banks, commercial institutions and hotels, as well as military compounds, ran along Legation Street. In short,

<sup>35</sup>It was also partly paid for by the Chinese government, to the tune of around 5,000 *yuan* each year as a subsidy, although the Legation Quarter was beyond the Beijing government's administrative authority; see Beijing Municipal Council, *Jingdu shizheng huilan* (Collected Reports on City Administration in Beijing) (Beijing, 1919), 103.

<sup>36</sup>The only unpaved streets in the quarter covered about two miles and were reserved for heavy cart traffic; see Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 118, 145.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

Legation Street became a modern, Europeanized and 'un-Pekingese' street, or 'a place of strange contrasts'<sup>38</sup> to traditional Beijing (Figure 5).

### **Transplantation of a boulevard**

The introduction of boulevards as a new urban type was the other case. The Imperial Canal, 'an evil-smelling canal, almost dry except in the rainy season, in which was dumped the refuse from the adjoining houses',<sup>39</sup> was covered by a street with a garden running down the centre. The Imperial Canal in the East Jiaomin Lane district was part of the Tonghui River, which began at the Baifu Spring and flowed to Tongzhou in the Yuan dynasty. Originally, it was a place for people to use in their daily lives, for purposes such as transport, laundry and recreation.<sup>40</sup> It was a famous scene that was praised by poets and described in plenty of literary works of the day. However, when the willows were removed at the end of the Ming dynasty, and the silted-up canal was finally abandoned as a means of transport in the Qing dynasty because of the transformation of the river system, this picturesque scene disappeared.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the canal then functioned as 'the main sewer from small ditches in the east city'<sup>42</sup> in the Late Qing period.

The poor condition of the Imperial Canal was improved through a series of renovation works supervised by Mr A. Thiele, the clerk of works, and financed by the ACDQ.<sup>43</sup> First, it was regulated as a tree-lined central-canal street; second, it became the centre-median boulevard that later had two roadways separated by a wide public garden (Figure 6). For the south section in front of the Wagons-Lits Hotel, during the first stage, the curved canal was changed to follow a straight line, with regular fences erected on both sides of the canal. The canal itself was also made narrower to increase the width of the streets. The new pattern for the streets was to have sidewalks set on two sides with an asphalt street for vehicles in the middle. The lines of trees were not only planted on the pavement along the canal but also on the pavement next to the buildings. However, because of the foul smell,<sup>44</sup> in the autumn of 1921, it was reconstructed to be the subsurface drain with bricks on both sides and covered by concrete slabs over the top. The streets on the two sides were maintained. Above the ditch, a linear park was cut into geometric figures by circular lawns, planted with European flowers and shrubs, bordered by rows of comfortable benches, and passed through by a walking path in

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>L.C. Arlington and W. Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking* (Peking, 1935), 8.

<sup>40</sup>Y. Li, *Shui he Beijing: chengshi shuixi bianqian* (Rivers and Beijing: The Transformation of the Water System in Beijing) (Beijing, 2004), 88–9.

<sup>41</sup>Because the city wall extended eastward, the canal from Dongbuya Bridge to Chang'an Avenue came inside the imperial city, which stopped ships entering from Tongzhou. It also happened because the Baifu Spring gradually dried up during the Ming dynasty.

<sup>42</sup>Department of Construction (Japanese Puppet Government), *Jingshi chengnei hedao gouqu tushuo* (Mapping the Rivers and Sewers in Beijing) (Beijing, 1941), 32.

<sup>43</sup>According to Duncan, Mr Thiele had been connected with the Diplomatic Quarter since 1907, when he began his service in the Eastern Legation Quarter. From 1914, he worked for the ACDQ. All the work of street construction and maintenance in the quarter was under his supervision; see Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 145.

<sup>44</sup>Moser and Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates*, 113.



**Figure 5.** Postcard showing Legation Street. The Yokohama Bank was on the left, while Hotel des Wagons-Lits was on the right.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Legation\\_Street,\\_Peking.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Legation_Street,_Peking.jpg), accessed on 15 Aug. 2021.

the middle, with trees planted on both sides.<sup>45</sup> The remaining portion of the canal was covered between September 1924 and the following December,<sup>46</sup> becoming a wide, attractive promenade.

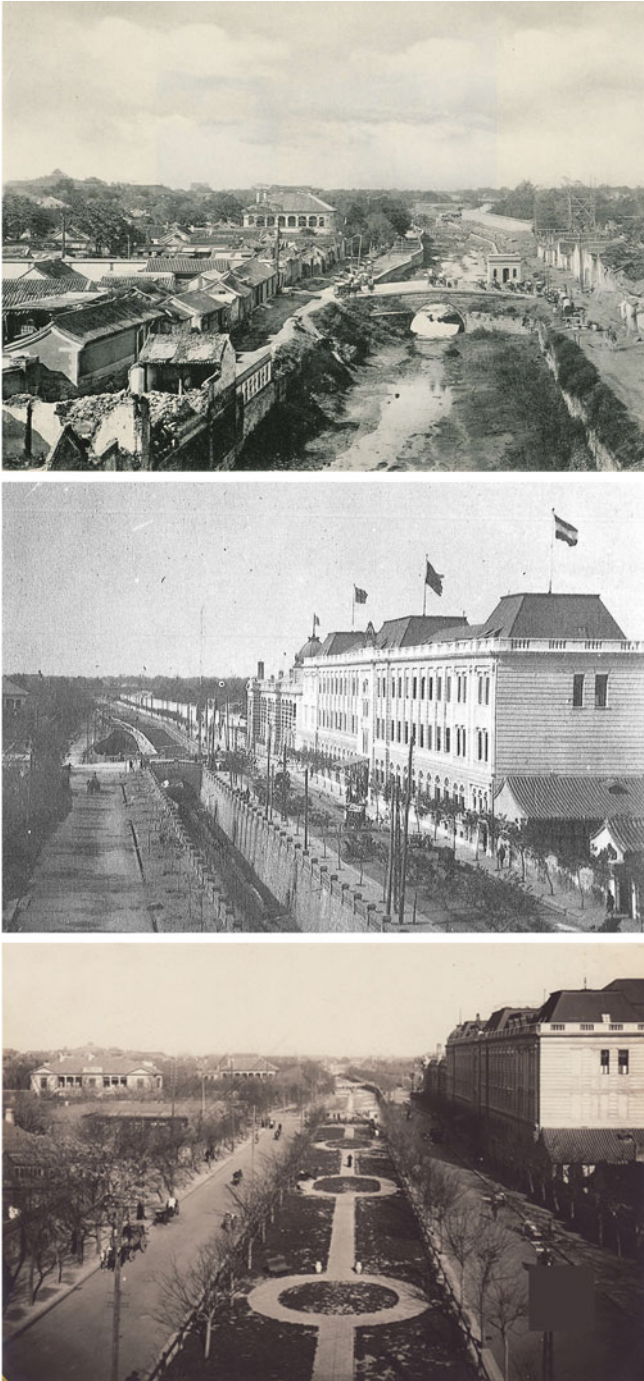
The newly built Western-style sewer was high, wide and shaped like a horseshoe, contrasting with the section of the Chinese drainage system, which was square and usually much smaller – only around one metre high and wide – with a flat slope which constantly silted up. Despite no drawing having survived, the scale of the canal can be estimated from the ditch outlet, which was directly connected to the city moat at the southern city gate, as being about four to six metres deep and five metres wide.<sup>47</sup> It contrasted remarkably with Beijing's old sewerage system that had been established in the fifteenth century, which was among the most sophisticated in the world but overburdened and on the verge of collapse by the end of the nineteenth century, since it was designed for the drainage of storm water rather than large quantities of sewage.

The new street section of asphalt pavement, with streetside trees and lights, accompanied by a central park with benches and the Western-style underground sewerage as a whole represented a technology- and sanitation-oriented built environment, replacing the odour of the open canals and the rundown appearance that

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>But according to 石桥丑雄 (Ishibashi) from the Tourism Department of the Municipal Council, the project was finished later, in April 1925; see Department of Construction, *Jingshi chengnei hedao gouqu tushuo*, 33.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 32–3.



**Figure 6.** From the Imperial Canal to a boulevard, top: before 1902, middle: before 1921, bottom: after 1921. Sources: A. Mumm, *Ein Tagebuch in Bildern* (Berlin, 1902), 123; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Grand\\_Hotel\\_of\\_Peking1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Grand_Hotel_of_Peking1.jpg), accessed on 15 Aug. 2021; <http://jiuyingzhi.com/antiquephotos/1157.html>, accessed on 15 Aug. 2021.

damaged the prestige of the ancient capital.<sup>48</sup> Compared to the previous situation, the new grand street was much more magnificent (Figure 7). The scenic nature of this boulevard surpassed all the other streets in Beijing at the time, despite the fact that the local government had also started to reconstruct the urban canals and build new streets in the old city. Zhang Yuhe envied this transformation, saying that ‘All the ditches are effective. Even after a heavy downpour, the rain water drains away soon, and the street was not muddy at all...could you imagine this forty years before?’<sup>49</sup>

### **Fortified space: the city wall, city gate and glacis**

The fortified space, including the Legation Quarter’s wall, gate and glacis, represented the Legation Quarter’s status as being isolated from the Chinese city of Beijing. According to the Boxer Protocol, ‘to prevent the uprising by the Chinese after the Boxer Rebellion’,<sup>50</sup> foreigners secured military dominance over the Inner City wall on the south side of the Legation Quarter. It also allowed the construction of a brick wall surrounding the entire district and the digging of an entrenchment on the north-eastern and eastern sides. The gates built at every entrance were designed in the European style, including two towers and a barbican on each side with a large wrought-iron gate (Figure 8).

It seems ironic to build a city wall in the early twentieth century when most of the fortifications had been torn down in Western cities and in Beijing, where the foreign powers had just proven the uselessness of a pre-modern urban wall during the war. It is of no surprise that a Beijing magazine article called it a ‘spectacle in a civilized city’.<sup>51</sup> But the fortification, at nearly six metres high and several metres thick, gave foreigners a sense of security while they resided in uncertain circumstances, and so acted in a similar manner to the traditional Beijing fortifications, which not only had a military function but existed as a symbol of power. The foreigners thus adopted the city wall and gate as an urban design and a form of segregation strategy, which was very familiar to the Beijing government and its citizens, and built a ‘forbidden city’ beside the Forbidden City to demonstrate colonial power.

Similarly, the building of a wide defensive space, the glacis, was the other significant change that was made to the traditional city centre. The glacis stretched around 70 metres to Bingbu Street (Dong Gong’an Street, Gaselee Road) in the west, 150 metres to the Chongwen Gate Inner Street in the east and 100 metres to Chang’an

<sup>48</sup>The Beijing Municipal Council regarded covering the open canal as one of the important government projects in the early twentieth century, as can be seen, for instance, in the reconstruction of Xinhua Road. Influenced by the renewal of the Imperial Canal in the East Jiaomin Lane district, the north part of the Imperial Canal was soon reconstructed as a new street in the underground Western style, with a large horseshoe-shaped section of the sewer as well.

<sup>49</sup>Y. Zhang, ‘Beijing shiguanjie zhi yange’ (The transformation of Beijing’s Legation Quarter), in Y. Shen (ed.), *Zhonghe yuekan shiliao xuanji* (Selected Historical Materials from Zhonghe Monthly) (Taipei, 1970), 491–509, at 508.

<sup>50</sup>K. Yao, ‘Beiping sumiao’ (A sketch of Beiping), in D. Jiang (ed.), *Beijingshu: xiandai zuojia bixia de Beijing 1900–1949* (Beijing: Beijing by Modern Writers) (Beijing, 1992), 358–74.

<sup>51</sup>Zhang, ‘Beijing shiguanjie zhi yange’, 508.





**Figure 7.** The transformation of the Imperial Canal to a boulevard, left: 1750, right: 1950.  
 Sources: *Qianlong jingcheng quantu*; maps from Beijing Institute of Surveying and Mapping.

Street in the north, and each foreign power had their own fields (Figure 9).<sup>52</sup> Later, the glacis was extended to the north of Chang'an Street, where 'Toutiao Hutong was turned into "common land"'.<sup>53</sup> The occupation and use of the glacis was regulated by

<sup>52</sup>W. Wang, 'Bei gongdi ji' (A record of the north glacis), in C. Lin (ed.), *Jingshi jiexiang ji* (A Record of Streets and Alleyways in the Capital City) (Beijing, 1919), vol. III, section on *Neizuoyiqu* (the Inner Left First District), 7.

<sup>53</sup>S. Song, 'Dong Chang'an jie' (A record of East Chang'an Street), in Lin (ed.), *Jingshi jiexiang ji*, vol. II, section on *Neizuoyiqu* (the Inner Left First District), 6.



**Figure 8.** The gate of the Legation Quarter.

Source: Hedda Hammer, *The Hedda Hammer Morrison Photographs of China 1933–1946*, Harvard-Yenching Library, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/olwork577706/catalog>.

the Protocol Regarding the Legation Quarter in Peking in 1904, which stated that ‘the glacis being recognized as common property...No construction, permanent or temporary, shall be made upon any part whatever of the glacis, without the unanimous consent of the Representatives of the Powers. The Legations, while the Imperial Customs, Associations, and private individuals, shall not make any encroachments on the glacis.’<sup>54</sup> However, it quickly became a public space for upper-class recreation, used as a polo field, tennis courts and other sporting facilities connected with hotels, bars, restaurants and even a brothel.<sup>55</sup> The British built a sports and polo ground, the Italians constructed a Legation Athletic Club, the Americans created a baseball field in the glacis and private companies and individuals were later issued building permits and leases. By the late 1920s, much of the glacis was occupied by sporting facilities,<sup>56</sup> providing ‘common land with luxuriant trees and rolling green fields that offered shade for enjoying the cool in the summer’.<sup>57</sup>

The glacis became a vast open space in the city centre surrounded by the crowded indigenous settlements. Duncan described it as the staging place for ‘practice maneuvers’, where only a light barbed wire fence separated the glacis from the

<sup>54</sup>‘Protocol regarding Legation Quarter at Peking’, in MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements*, 316.

<sup>55</sup>Arlington and Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, 18–19; Moser and Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates*, 122.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>Wang, ‘Bei gongdi ji’, 7.

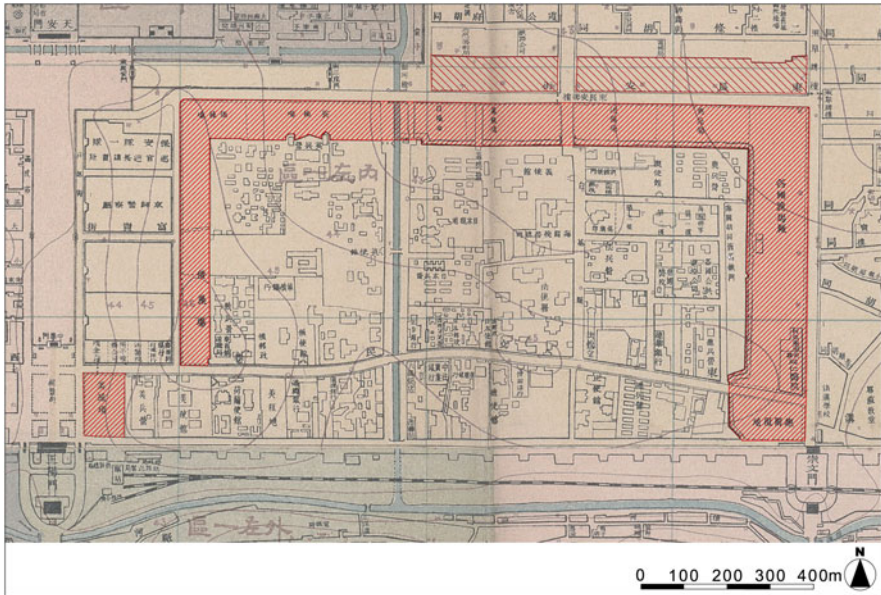


Figure 9. The glaciis of the Legation Quarter in the map of Beijing in 1916.

Source: *Jingdu neiwai cheng ditu* (A Map of the Inner and Outer City) by Beijing Municipal Council (Beijing, 1916).

main thoroughfares of the city.<sup>58</sup> It represented colonial power through the daily training of military forces, something that greatly distressed the Chinese people (Figure 10). A survey conducted by a primary school noted that ‘the open space at the north of Chongwen Gate, covering dozens of *zhang*, is the French glaciis, where the soldiers trained every day. Such a situation undermined the sovereignty of our state and was totally deplorable.’<sup>59</sup> Whether representing colonial power or exhibiting the Western style of living, the glaciis, the city wall and the gate, as fortified spaces, created a border between the foreigners and the Chinese, and played a fundamental role in shaping the spatial, social and cultural differences between them.

## A new power: the civilized and isolated territory

### *Exporting Western civilization*

Underlying the cityscape’s visible expression of the universality of Western concepts of urban beauty and order was the exportation of Western civilization itself. The ideology of Western civilization’s superiority and Western states’ individual national identities were inter-related, since both of them were simultaneously produced during the global development of colonialism. With regards to urban beauty and hygiene, for example, both contributed to not only projecting a bourgeois identity in Europe, but also the differences between home and colonized countries. In this regard, ‘the bourgeois concerns of bodily discipline and hygiene were primarily

<sup>58</sup>Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 29.

<sup>59</sup>Wang, ‘Bei gongdi ji’, 7. A *zhang* is a Chinese unit of measurement, which corresponds to 3⅓ metres.



**Figure 10.** The German glacié.

Source: Mumm, *Ein Tagebuch in Bildern*, 120.

a product of European efforts to bolster their identity and distinguish themselves from Oriental others'.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, with the shaping of national identity, the concept of 'advanced' civilization was also developed by its contrast with Eastern countries and nations. Haussmann emphasized the significance of urban reconstruction, stating that 'it is assuredly the great enterprise which will make of Paris a Capital worthy of France, or even, one might say, of the civilized world'.<sup>61</sup> Superiority in civilization thus became 'the main characteristic that distinguished the "West" from the "Orient"'.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, Beijing's disorderly, chaotic and insanitary urban environment thus confirmed and reflected a corrupt and dying civilization. Though China was once regarded or imagined as a civilized, utopian Orient in the European mind before the nineteenth century, in the early twentieth century the Pekingese were considered to be 'not a moral race'<sup>63</sup> following the logic of this material-cultural critique. The Legation Quarter was frequently called the 'civilized world' in the diaries, memoirs and books about the Siege of Peking.<sup>64</sup> The unpaved, narrow and

<sup>60</sup>R. Rogaski, 'Hygienic modernity in Tianjin', in J.W. Esherick (ed.), *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950* (Honolulu, 1999), 30–46, at 31.

<sup>61</sup>Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities*, 377.

<sup>62</sup>Rogaski, 'Hygienic modernity', 76.

<sup>63</sup>G. Casserly, *The Land of the Boxers* (London, New York and Bombay, 1903), 104.

<sup>64</sup>W.A.P. Martin, *The Siege in Peking: China against the World* (New York, 1900); A.H. Tuttle, *Mary Porter Gamewell and Her Story of the Siege in Peking* (New York and Cincinnati, 1907).

muddy roads, chaotic traffic and 'Peking dust'<sup>65</sup> were a manifestation of cultural and moral decline.

While these spatial problems were never criticized by Western travellers, missionaries and merchants in imperial times, a change was signalled when the British ambassador Sir George Macartney went to see the Qianlong emperor of China in 1793. Previously, Matteo Ricci, who was a resident of Beijing from 1601 to 1610, only mentioned the 'Peking dust' in relation to the dirt road, but never connected it to a decaying civilization.<sup>66</sup> The Jesuit missionary Gabriel de Magalhães, who spent 29 years living in Beijing, until 1677, highly praised the grand capital city for its developed politics, culture and morality.<sup>67</sup> Hence, George Macartney's trip to China was understood by Alain Peyrefitte as the encounter 'between two societies' that having undergone 'separate development for centuries, considered themselves the world's most civilized – and not without good reason'.<sup>68</sup> It was also the period when the industrial revolution began in Great Britain and when economic power shifted from the East to the West. From then, the unpaved roads, open sewers and wooden architecture constituted growing evidence that Beijing was now a dirty, backward and even 'immoral' city.

In this sense, expressing cultural and moral superiority was the motivation for the foreigners to rebuild a modern Western district rather than continually use the Chinese-style buildings and maintain the old urban structures. In the former East Jiaomin Lane, most of the legations occupied the old land and buildings, even the Imperial Palace or Mansion, after the First Opium War. Whether they gave the original architecture new functions, like the British Legation, or demolished the original palace to make way for Western-style buildings and gardens, like the French Legation, Chinese architecture, including the official buildings, temples, mansions and residences, still made up most of the urban environment. As Chia-chen Chu recorded, 'the legations lay scattered, though fairly close to each other, in this section of the city, interspersed amongst Chinese houses'; however, after 1901, 'a definite large area was fixed within which all Chinese public buildings and private houses were razed to the ground'.<sup>69</sup> While the British Legation, which was one of the legations that suffered comparatively lightly during the siege, maintained the surviving old palaces of Liang Imperial Mansion with new decoration and furnishings and included Chinese-style roofs on some of their new buildings, most legations constructed Western-style freestanding buildings and legation compounds to replace the previous courtyard-building model.

Even though the indigenous buildings and spatial organization adapted well to the Europeans' living and working needs, as can be seen in the case of the British Legation, the foreigners despised the Chinese courtyard house, which they called a 'rabbit warren', and even the palace.<sup>70</sup> From this Eurocentric perspective, the rebuilding of the Legation Quarter as a 'little Europe' with 'modern' spatial

<sup>65</sup>B.L. Putnam Weale (ed.), *Indiscreet Letters from Peking* (New York, 1907), 1.

<sup>66</sup>M. Ricci and N. Tregault, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583–1610* (New York, 1953), 309–10.

<sup>67</sup>G. de Magalhães, *A New History of the Empire of China* (London, 1689).

<sup>68</sup>A. Peyrefitte, *The Immobile Empire* (New York, 2013), xvii.

<sup>69</sup>C.C. Chu, 'Diplomatic quarter in Peiping', University of Ottawa Ph.D. thesis, 1944, 112.

<sup>70</sup>Arlington and Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking*, 5.

structures, building forms and ideas of urban beauty was to transplant 'advanced' civilization – that oft-used euphemism – to the 'immobile' old capital. With the rebuilding of physical space, the disciplined control of the use of that space strengthened the district as a civilized area. For example, a series of regulations was made to discipline users of the space, such as rickshaw pullers. Owing to the unequal treaties and the privileges of the foreigners, these regulations were rigorously implemented. A report in 1926 satirized the different behaviour of the Chinese in and out of the Legation Quarter and praised the Legation Quarter as 'a holy place'. 'Everywhere in the city, the rickshaw man goes tortuously and makes a turn suddenly, only depending on his will, while in the East Jiaomin Lane District, even the rudest puller always follows the rules.'<sup>71</sup> The Europeanized built environment improved hygienic conditions and disciplined spatial use, and so constituted a conspicuous image of Western civilization.

### ***Differentiation of power: creating urban segregation***

The strategy of urban segregation contributed substantially to strengthening this spatial and moral difference. Robert Home claimed that spatial separation, which 'was not unique to the colonial cities of European expansion',<sup>72</sup> maintained both cultural difference and power relationships. Before it was practised in the Legation Quarter, racial separation as a colonial strategy had been applied in many colonies, such as India and Singapore, and also in colonies in China, such as Qingdao and Shanghai.

Apart from ensuring security, maintaining their exclusive Western living style and showing the superiority of colonial culture and authority, the foreigners tried to resolve the feeling of insecurity brought about by the presence of the large local population. Due to the large difference in numbers, they pursued a partition strategy to secure their own safety and cultural independence. For instance, the fortified space, whether it was re-used for recreation and sports or maintained its military purpose, gave a strong impression of the Legation Quarter's highly secure character and complete separation from the Chinese population. But, on the other side, the daily training of military forces greatly distressed the Chinese people, as seen above. To the Chinese, the same fortified space meant humiliation, inequality and even horror, which was a representation of the uneven levels of power in the city.<sup>73</sup>

The emergent cityscape was perceived as fragmented and discordant. The legations and compounds were separated by walls, and every legation sought to show characteristics of its home country. To 'mimick the style then in fashion in the home country',<sup>74</sup> the French Legation 'scattered about well-tended flower gardens', and had a large archway entrance in late and poor neo-classical style, much like one that could be found in some 'modern hotel *de luxe* in a French watering place'.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Xiaowu, 'Xiantan' (A chat), *Xiandai pinglun* (Modern Review), 4 (1926), 12–14, at 12.

<sup>72</sup>Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 117.

<sup>73</sup>Qixingfuzhaizhu, 'Dong Jiaomin Xiang suoji' (A Record of East Jiaomin Lane), *Ziluolan*, 1 (1926), 1–5, at 1–2.

<sup>74</sup>Moser and Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates*, 114.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 115; G.N. Kates, *The Years that Were Fat: The Last of Old China* (Cambridge, 1967), 78.

Dutch legation buildings were built in the late sixteenth-century Dutch style, in neat, red brick and white marble. The American embassy was designed by an American architect, Sidh Nealy, in the colonial renaissance style, described by Paul S. Reinsch, an American minister, as 'simple but handsome'.<sup>76</sup> It comprised the American guard compound, office buildings and a hospital in the western part, and a main building alongside the other four buildings in the eastern part that surrounded a huge, ordered and mostly symmetrical yard, in which trees, grasses and paths were arranged in geometrical patterns.<sup>77</sup> As a result, different styles, both Chinese and foreign, were combined to form an 'international exposition', which Gilbert Collins described as follows: 'These Legations under the wall are greatly out of conceit with the encircling city. They do not even harmonise with one another.'<sup>78</sup>

The transplantation of Western urban elements strengthened the city's image as spatially fragmented. Take the boulevard, for example. The construction of boulevards as a form of urban spatial regeneration in Western cities had significant socio-economic meaning. As David Harvey reveals, Haussmann's renovation of Paris should be understood as the production of space for solving the serious economic problems of the city – a crisis borne of capitalist over-accumulation. It reorganized the distribution of different classes in the city: for instance, the poor had to move to the more remote spaces, which promoted the development of urban peripheries. But the boulevard in Beijing was segregated from the city, because of the restrictions that prevented the locals from entering the district. The boulevard thus only reflected social isolation from the city, rather than facilitating better connections to the street network. It was used as a means of spatial fragmentation, where the contrast between the efficient, functional and clean boulevard and the local, backward urban streets was used to reflect Western colonial hegemony.

Urban segregation strengthened the image of colonial power by associating it with effective governance, an improved built environment and a richer, more virtuous and more stable life, in contrast to the local Chinese society, and thus symbolized 'the uneven distribution of power and wealth between the ruler and the ruled',<sup>79</sup> which also contributed to expressing the legitimacy of colonialism. Eventually, it was through the manifestation of a 'new power' that a Europeanized, civilized and isolated 'forbidden city' was constructed.

### The resistance: limitation and the use of foreign forms of modernity

Although the foreign powers had an impressive effect on the city of Beijing through the creation of a newly built 'little Europe', they failed to obtain the necessary control over the whole city. Beijing was still not open to foreigners, and the citizens in Beijing retained their national identity as 'Chinese'. This was different from the

<sup>76</sup>J.C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York, 1998), 17.

<sup>77</sup>For more details on architectural transformation in the Legation Quarter, see F. Zhang, *Beijing Jindai Jianzhushi* (The Modern Architectural History of Beijing from the End of the Nineteenth Century to the 1930s) (Beijing, 2004), 68–86.

<sup>78</sup>G. Collins, *Extreme Oriental Mixture* (London, 1925), 33.

<sup>79</sup>Njoh, *Planning Power*, 122.

colonial citizens in other colonies in Singapore, India and South Africa. Therefore, although these Europeanization projects had an impact on the modernization process of Beijing, they were limited to the Legation Quarter and surroundings and barely affected the daily lives of local citizens.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the national identity of the Chinese was still strong.

Due to this national identity, the foreign-style buildings and landscape became 'the other', playing a role as a window through which Beijing citizens could satisfy their curiosity towards the foreign world. The normal position of the colonizer as the audience and the local people as the actor was reversed, as Zhang Xiaochun notes regarding Shanghai's colonial settlements: 'The Western habits of daily life, style of living and even advanced technologies are all observed by the Chinese as a way to seek novelty with the passion for exoticism. This is exactly like the attitudes that the imperial colonial countries have taken towards the Eastern and African cultures.'<sup>81</sup> Many aspects of the Legation Quarter, including the buildings, approaches to urban governance and the modern facilities, could ignite this curiosity, making the Legation Quarter a theme park showcasing the foreign world for the local citizens as they looked in on it. The Chinese population expressed their envy of Western technology and the built environment, with one magazine article even describing the shape and the exact number of the streetlights and their bulbs in detail.<sup>82</sup> Emerging Chinese merchants also regarded urban features they saw in the Legation Quarter as symbols of modernity and transplanted them to the façades or the decorations of their own stores.

The social and cultural independence of foreigners is a myth. In fact, even colonies were always 'zones of contact' between the colonizers and the colonized. Despite the foreigners believing that they 'are occupied with business and the social life of their own group and do not come in touch with many of the Chinese other than the limited number who speak their language',<sup>83</sup> to a significant extent, their livelihoods relied on the city and the local people in Beijing. Besides the underground sewer main covered by a spectacular boulevard, the drainage of the Legation Quarter still relied on the centuries-old ones inherited from the Ming dynasty, built by the Chinese.<sup>84</sup> The modern foreign style of life in the Legation Quarter was basically dependent on the services provided by their Chinese servants, as the following saying made clear: 'we hardly see anything of the Chinese at all...if we had no Chinese servants we might quite well fancy ourselves in Europe'.<sup>85</sup> It is also noteworthy that nearly 70 Chinese policemen worked for the Administrative Commission.<sup>86</sup> As demonstrated in the *Peking Utility Book* edited by the

<sup>80</sup>The Legation Quarter strongly influenced the surrounding area, especially the Inner First district, in terms of architecture, interests, habits and commerce, but hardly penetrated into more Chinese areas, even the *Waiyiqu* (Outer First District) to the south; see Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 32–3.

<sup>81</sup>X. Zhang, *Wenhua shiyi yu zhongxin zhuangyi: Jinxiandai Shanghai kongjian bianqian de dushi renleixue yanjiu* (The Cultural Adaptation and Shift of the City Centre: An Urban Anthropological Study of the Spatial Transformation of Modern Shanghai) (Nanjing, 2006), 12–13.

<sup>82</sup>Qiuxingfuzhaizhu, 'Dong Jiaomin Xiang suoji', 3.

<sup>83</sup>Gamble, *Peking*, 113.

<sup>84</sup>Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 119, 146.

<sup>85</sup>Borel, *The New China*, 72.

<sup>86</sup>Duncan, *Peiping Municipality*, 112.



Mothers' Club of Peking, the ways foreigners purchased supplies, educated their children and enjoyed the services in Beijing reflected the fact that it was difficult to be completely isolated from other parts of Beijing, either the physical urban spaces or the locals.<sup>87</sup>

So, if we consider the urban segregation strategy from the Chinese government's perspective, we can see the other side of the story. The social segregation of the Legation Quarter was not only the intention of the foreigners but was also promoted by the Qing and Beiyang governments. From the Chinese government's viewpoint, this was one of the few feasible approaches capable of minimizing colonial impact. Throughout history, the urban partition strategy had been used by the government to manage and guard against the foreigners.<sup>88</sup> For instance, during the Qing dynasty, the Chinese government ordered the foreigners to live together in the 'Canton Factories', gathering the residences and offices of the business agents. In Beijing, as the Chinese political centre, the foreigners were forbidden from owning property and restricted from renting houses from native Chinese people. The Qing and Republican governments maintained the segregation strategy, intent on preventing the permeation of foreign forces.<sup>89</sup> But this strategy also failed to achieve its original goal: although the governments' segregation policy was effective to a certain extent, it was not able to impede the foreign powers' intervention in Beijing, from either political or economic standpoints.

Since the colonial powers attempted to rebuild the Legation Quarter in a 'modern' style, to create the discrepancy between the Legation Quarter and the Chinese community in terms of the cityscape, civilization and power, the Beijing government, from the Qing to the Republican periods, constantly considered it as a great threat to sovereignty. With this background, urban improvement, social administration and citizens' education all played a role in safeguarding the national sovereignty and promoting national dignity. Building a 'modern' Beijing was regarded as not merely a strategy to reduce the differences between the Chinese and the foreign cityscape, but also a demonstration that Beijing, the capital of China, should be recognized as the same kind of great, independent and civilized capital city as those of the West. It did not deserve to be seen as a 'backward' or even a colonized city. To a certain extent, it was the comparison and competition with the 'foreign cityscape' in the Legation Quarter, or in other concessions in China, that promoted the reformation of urban space in Beijing.

The Legation Quarter was therefore often used as a point of reference by the elites to criticize Beijing's local urban environment. As Yu Xiezhong claimed, the roads in the Legation Quarter were clean, but could not be compared with local roads, for most local roads were filthy, with dust flying in the air, sometimes along with faeces.<sup>90</sup> Through the comparison with foreign cities and the Legation Quarter, the elites concluded that 'the foreigners are laughing at us, considering

<sup>87</sup>Mothers' Club of Peking, *Peking Utility Book* (Peking, 1921).

<sup>88</sup>Fei, *Zhongguo zujue shi*, 1–9.

<sup>89</sup>Gamble, *Peking*, 112.

<sup>90</sup>X. Yu, 'Beiping de gonggong weisheng' (Public health in Beiping), in W. Li (ed.), *Minguo shiqi shehui diaocha congbian: shehui baozhang juan* (Social Surveys in Republican China: Social Welfare) (Fuzhou, 2004), 337–56, at 337.

us an undeveloped nation' and noted satirically that foreigners would think the Pekingese 'favour the dust and flies, even more than the sugar and flavourings'.<sup>91</sup>

In this sense, the reconstruction of the city by the Chinese government aimed to reshape the 'backwards' image of the city in both the foreigners' and elites' minds, and further compete with the districts affected by colonialism. The Beiyang government accepted and learned the 'foreign modernity' in both its technological and ideological aspects, in order to reconstruct Beijing as the same kind of modern and civilized city as the Legation Quarter. As Zhang and Liu demonstrate, 'foreign concessions became a new model of urban community, aspects of which were later appreciated by the Chinese political elite'.<sup>92</sup> A modern cityscape would demonstrate that 'no foreigners would still have reasons to ridicule the Chinese'<sup>93</sup> and that the colonial powers should not expand their influence to the Chinese territory.<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

The establishment of the Legation Quarter in 1901 shaped primary 'modern' urban spaces in a way that was different from the traditional Beijing cityscape. The foreigners, mostly living in the Legation Quarter, organized the independent and autonomous legation administrative commission to take charge of public affairs, including urban construction. The destruction of the districts during the Boxer Rebellion, as well as the deportation of the original residents and removal of official buildings in accordance with the Boxer Protocol, provided an opportunity for the colonists to completely change the ethnically hybrid residential areas. Modern technology and European urban spatial elements were transplanted to transform the old streets and canals of East Jiaomin Lane District. The foreigners also set up a European-style boundary wall and constructed a broad glaxis in the crowded city centre to separate the Legation Quarter as an enclave. These spatial transformations had particular meaning, as the Westernized cityscape became a symbol of colonial authority and its legitimacy. Nevertheless, beneath the superficial prosperity, magnificence and sanitary nature of this urban environment, the sense of insecurity and the uncertainty of the foreigners and the resistance from the locals resulted in the implementation of a rudimentary municipal system, a fragmented urban space that was isolated from the city and a strategy of separation aimed at creating social, cultural and civil disparity that was ultimately unsuccessful.

The reconstruction of the Legation Quarter reflected the imposition of foreign forms of modernity and their interplay with the local context. The Europeanized urban space helped foreigners to maintain their own self-identity and their cultural and moral superiority, and to support their own psychological and emotional security in Beijing, a city that seemed to be 'immobile' and 'opposed' to the ancient

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>92</sup>C. Zhang and Y. Liu, 'International concessions and the modernization of Tianjin', in Victor and Zatsopine (eds.), *Harbin to Hanoi*, 83–102, at 100.

<sup>93</sup>Beiping Government Secretariat, *Beiping shi shizheng gongbao* (Beiping Municipal Bulletin), 3 (1931), section on *Zizhi* (self-government), 3.

<sup>94</sup>X. Huang, 'Reforming Beijing in the shadow of colonial crisis: urban construction for competing with the foreign powers, 1900–1928', in C. Hein (ed.), *International Planning History Society Proceedings, 17th IPHS Conference, History Urbanism Resilience* (Delft, 2016), 83–93.

world. The foreigners made every effort to change the original Chinese cityscape so as to make it modern and reflect their notions of advanced civilization, while the Chinese government and elites quickly accepted this Western discourse in improving urban space in technological and ideological respects. The cityscape became both a spatial model and a competitor in the effort to reconstruct Beijing to be as modern as the Legation Quarter.

**Acknowledgments.** This study is based in part on my doctoral thesis, 'Contested Beijing: the modernization of urban space, 1900–1937', at ETH Zurich. I thank Professor Josep Lluís Mateo and Professor Philip Ursprung for commenting on earlier versions, and the anonymous journal's reviewers for their insightful and helpful suggestions.

**Funding Statement.** This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China [Grant number 51708102].

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**Cite this article:** Huang X (2024). The transfer of foreign modernity in Beijing: the new urban space in the Legation Quarter, 1900–1928. *Urban History*, 51, 171–197. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926822000359>