

“Traditional to Modern” Transformation of Beijing's Urban and Historically Conserved Areas—Based on Neoclassical "Structural-Functionalism"

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How to deal with the relationship between cultural heritage and development in the process of urban modern transformation is a hot topic of urban regeneration. It is necessary to prevent the problem of homogeneity caused by the repetitive construction of “the same images of the city”, but also to promote the innovative development of cities. Based on the Neoclassical "Structure-Functionalism", this paper takes four urban historical and cultural areas in Beijing as examples to conduct a typological analysis. The urban and historically conserved areas as “structural heritage” can jump out of the dilemma of “traditional” and “modern” and realize the living inheritance of urban culture through endogenous development.

Keywords: urban cultural heritage, the Neoclassical “Structure-Functionalism”, endogenous development, creative transformation and innovative development

INTRODUCTION

With the continuous deepening of China's social modernization, the degree of urbanization in Chinese cities, especially the eastern cities, is also rising sharply, and the content and methods of urban cultural life are also undergoing rapid changes. However, the cultural heritage, which is the “gramophone” of urban change, cannot achieve rapid “leapfrogging” development like that of cities. Urban cultural heritage such as old neighborhoods surrounded by modern civilization bear the brunt of the urbanization. Under the influence of the tide, it has been forced to develop and reform, or because of blindly clichéd tourism development, the old neighborhood has lost its unique cultural imprint. The resulting so-called urban homogeneity phenomenon has caused many experts, scholars and cultural figures to worry about the issue of “the same images of the city”.

In a rapidly developing modern city, the material and intangible cultural heritage preserved is undoubtedly a strong representative of the characteristic culture of the city to which it belongs and has played a role as a “symbol” to show the uniqueness of the city’s culture. How to protect or use these “symbols” of urban culture has always been an enduring topic of discussion in the field of cultural heritage and urban regeneration. As the ancient capital of the Six Dynasties and the political and cultural center in China, Beijing has a long urban history itself which has bred both the tangible and intangible culture of the city with local characteristics, that is, the “Beijing style” culture. How does Beijing, which is at the forefront of China’s modernization development, deal with the tension between urban development and inheritance

of urban characteristics? How to realize the traditional-modern transformation of urban culture in the process of modernization? And how to rejuvenate the characteristic urban districts? Analyzing Beijing's answers to these questions has a deeper significance for exploring urban rejuvenation and urban cultural transformation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review on the Cultural Heritage

One point of view is that the cultural heritage in the city should be fully protected for authenticity, and commercial development and utilization should be eliminated. It is believed that commercial development and modernization for the purpose of profit will inevitably destroy the old streets of the city. Commercial development and reconstruction will change the “old style” of the city. It is also a kind of forgetting and tampering with the memory of the city, and it is also the root cause of the homogenization of Chinese cities, the so-called “the same images of the cities”. Based on this perspective, many experts in ethnology, anthropology, and cultural circles are actively calling for the protection of the authenticity of urban old neighborhoods and traditional culture. For example, the famous contemporary writer Feng Jikai¹ and the architect Ruan Yisan² have both criticized the “constructive destruction” and the “New City Movement” in urban planning for forgetting urban memory and homogenization of neighborhoods.³ The second point of view is relatively optimistic, advocating the active commercial use and tourism development of the old neighborhoods, time-honored brands and characteristic culture in the city in order to demonstrate the value of the city’s “symbol”. Therefore, in the process of the integration of culture and tourism in recent years, what to do in the dual dilemma of “traditional protection” and “modern utilization” has become an urgent issue to be answered in the future.

Neoclassical “Structural-Functionalism” and the Transformation of Cultural Heritage

In response to the current dualistic thinking of protection and utilization of cultural heritage, and based on Malinowski’s “cultural function theory”, Radcliffe-Brown’s “Structure-Function Theory”, Fei Xiaotong’s “Cultural Development and Utilization View”, Professor Li Peilin’s “Another Invisible Hand”⁴ and UNESCO’s “Endogenous Development”⁵ and other theories, Zhang Jijiao, a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, proposed that we should look at the modern transformation of cultural heritage from a different perspective, that is, the neoclassical “structure- functionalism” (Zhang 2020).

¹Feng Jikai is a contemporary writer, painter, and cultural scholar. He is currently the director of the Expert Committee of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, the director of the Expert Committee of Chinese Traditional Village Protection, and the dean and professor of the Feng Jikai Institute of Literature and Art of Tianjin University.

²Ruan Yisan is currently the director of the National Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center of Tongji University, a professor at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tongji University, and a member of the Expert Committee on the Protection of Chinese Historical and Cultural Cities.

³In an interview with “National Humanities and History”, Professor Ruan Yisan emphasized that in the process of protecting cultural heritage, we must abide by the four principles and five principles, namely, authenticity, readability, integrity, sustainability, and raw materials, original craftsmanship, original style, original structure, and original environment.

⁴Li Peilin pointed out that in addition to the government (the visible hand) and the market (the invisible hand), there is “another invisible hand” that is, the transformation of social structure that affects resource allocation and socio-economic development.

⁵The primary meaning of endogenous development is: respect for the identity of culture and the rights of people of all countries to enjoy their own culture; in form, development should be generated internally; in purpose, development should serve mankind.

In the face of the “traditional-modern” transformation of historical and cultural heritage, no matter which side is chosen in the binary opposition, there is a tendency of selfish departmentalism. All parties fall into a kind of cultural attitude based on their own positions and interests. Many scholars only view its “traditional” and “modern” in the field of cultural heritage itself. We should get out of the dilemma of choosing between “protection” or “development” in traditional thinking. If you are entangled in the debate about “authenticity protection” or “modernization development”, and the dualistic discussion of “tradition” and “modernity” that insist on cultural heritage, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of culture and tourism integration and development. In fact, in the transformation process of various cultural heritages, they are not completely in a state of duality. There may also be many “continuum” phenomena such as the coexistence or connection of tradition and modernity. This phenomenon is the research paradigm of “quadrant method” or “multiple analysis method” proposed by neoclassical “structural-functionalism” in analyzing the modern transformation of cultural heritage (Zhang 2020).

In addition, different from the traditional static analysis, the Neo-Classical “structure- function theory”⁶ thinking vision guides us to regard cultural heritage as a kind of “structural heritage” for dynamic analysis and put cultural heritage into a specific structure to jump out of the predicament of selfish departmentalism. In this article, we will endorse this idea to think about the transformation of urban culture and put urban culture into the structure⁷ of urban blocks for analysis, and then to analyze the innovative development of urban culture in urban blocks and the structure-function transformation between the two. Combining with neoclassicism, the cultural heritage is divided into three dimensions: “ontology structure”, “external structure”, and “self-generating structure”.⁸ We also treat cultural blocks in cities as a kind of “structural blocks” for the sake of analysis. As Beijing has long been the political, cultural, and economic center in China since the ancient times, it has various rich cultural heritages. Therefore, we divide the cultural heritage in the city into the traditional cultural heritage preserved in ancient China and the “new tradition” cultural heritage created after the founding of the People's Republic of China and after entering modern industrial civilization. On the other hand, we start from the structural level of cultural blocks to analyze whether the structure and functions of urban cultural blocks have changed during the process of modernization. Is it a partial transformation or a complete transformation? Has the original function of this block been changed after the transformation? We will carry out specific classification and analysis based on the four cultural districts in Beijing.

ANALYZE THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FOUR TYPES OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL (STREET) DISTRICTS IN BEIJING

We start from the perspective of Neo-Classical “structure-function” and take the transformation and development of the four characteristic blocks of Beijing city as an example for typological analysis. The transformation of the following four kinds of blocks can also be regarded as the transformation of Beijing's four urban cultural districts. Their own “ontological structure” contains rich historical and cultural heritage and cultural resources. But it is different from scenic spots such as the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, and scenic closed tourist areas. From the perspective of the middle view, historical and cultural blocks are

⁶Classical “structure-function theory” often only statically analyzes what cultural heritage is now, while neoclassic focuses on analyzing why, when, and how to change.

⁷The “structure” here does not only refer to the physical environment but can be understood as the rules and resources that are constantly involved in the reproduction process of the social system.

⁸Three research dimensions of neoclassical “structure-function theory”. The first research dimension analyzes the ontological structure of cultural heritage, regards cultural heritage as cultural capital and cultural resources, and specifically studies material and intangible cultural heritage. The second research dimension analyzes the external structure of cultural heritage, placing cultural heritage in what Bourdieu calls “fields”, or Giddens calls “structures” (i.e. villages, towns, cities). Look at how cultural heritage is affected by external structures. At this time, the analysis is on the passive and affected side of cultural heritage. The third research dimension analyzes the self-generating structure of cultural heritage and regards cultural heritage as structural heritage. It can not only self-expand the structure of various enterprises, organizations and even industrial clusters, but also affect its external structure (such as countries, regions, cities, towns, villages, etc.).

not only the structural heritage contained in the large field, but also as an “external structure” that affects the cultural heritage of the block. It is true that Beijing is China’s famous tourist city and destination. Because of its profound urban heritage, we cannot exhaust all types of analysis here, but we can summarize it afterwards. It can provide a reference and template for the revival of old streets and traditional-modern transformation in other cities, to provide new ideas for the integration of culture and tourism.

Yandaixie Street (烟袋斜街)—The Spontaneous Evolution of Commercial Culture

In this type of cultural heritage, the structure and function of the street itself are constantly adjusted with external structural changes, and it has undergone several structural and functional transformations in history. In the process of traditional-modern transformation, the original traditional street structure and function have not undergone fundamental changes, but have evolved and updated spontaneously along with changes in the external structure. We can use the three historical changes in the structure and function of Beijing’s long-standing old shopping street, to further analyze this type:

1. Yandaixie Street formed as a trade channel in the Yuan Dynasty. Yandaixie Street, which prospered by water transport as early as in the Yuan Dynasty, is one of the Beijing’s longest-standing commercial streets. When the Yuan Dynasty was preparing for the establishment of the Yuan Government, the entire city was planned for its overall structure.⁹ Zhonglou (钟楼) and Gulou (鼓楼) and its surrounding areas were the core areas of the “market”, which had gradually evolved into a lush commercial area. The formation of this external structure created environments for the progress of the commercial street structure of Yandaixie Street. On the other hand, the important position of inland shipping in the Yuan Dynasty made bulk commodities to be traded from the North to South through the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal. Due to this economic structure, there were frequent interactions between Gulou commercial area and Jishuitan (积水潭) Wharf as a shipping hub. The north and south ends of Yandaixie Street were connected to the market, and the wharf prospered as a “drive shaft” in this economic structure. Under this trading system, the linkage between the market and the transportation also needed to be coordinated and managed. Obviously, the diagonal street that connected the market and the wharf was geographically the best choice for this function. Therefore, the Yuan government built official agencies such as “Dayu Hall” (打渔厅)¹⁰ and the water transport terminal on Yandaixie Street to manage the canal and its commercial business.

The street culture at this stage was born in the “Jishuitan-Gulou” area with canal shipping as its main function. Therefore, in addition to linking Gulou-Jishuitan Wharf at the geographic level to serve as a traffic function, the function of coordinating and managing trade-related shipping and trade has been developed, realizing the linkage between the market and transportation in the economic structure of the canal shipping.

2. Transformation from trade channel to commercial street. In the early Ming Dynasty, the canal near Jishuitan Wharf was blocked. At the same time, as land transportation gradually replaced water transportation, the economic structure formed by relying on canal shipping in the Yuan Dynasty disintegrated. The “Jishuitan-Gulou” area was transformed into a new place for dignitaries to live and play, and aristocratic culture became the main tone of this period. The Gulou area adjacent to the imperial city became a noble settlement area, and the Houhai (后海) water system evolved from the canal became a precious natural garden for the nobles to entertain. The street had also been transformed into an “entertainment corridor”. The groups of people going to Jishuitan via Yandaixie Street changed from trade-oriented merchants to aristocrats and officials looking for entertainment. It had become the only way for noble residents in the Drum Tower area to go to Houhai, which was the high-end commercial street to entertain the nobles. In the early Qing Dynasty, the strong demand for tobacco from the Baqi (八旗) nobles led to the prosperity of the tobacco and smoking utensils business in Yandaixie Street, and the name

⁹For the preparation of Yuan Capital City, Liu Bingzhong made an innovative plan on the basis of complying with “Zhou Li” Zhongying State Regulations. The “front government back market” can be understood as the “government” from Yongding Gate to the three halls, and the “shi” as the Bell and Drum Tower and its surrounding areas.

¹⁰“Dayu Hall” was the agency in charge of shipping and fishery administration in the Yuan Dynasty

of “Yandai” (means Pipe) also came from this.¹¹ At the same time, it also led to the development of other entertainment industries such as restaurants, tea houses, and bath-houses. In the Guangxu (光绪) period of the Qing Dynasty, Yandaixie Street reached its peak, with all kinds of cigarette shops, restaurants, tea houses, etc., and the noble-oriented commercial structure connecting the residential area of the north of the city and the entertainment area of Houhai was basically formed (Lei 2019). After the Republic of China was founded, with the abdication of the Qing emperor, the Baqi aristocratic structure that relied on the Manchu imperial family disintegrated. Affected by this, the commercial structure of the street serving the aristocratic class also begun a new round of transformation. The nobles, who were originally a consumer group, turned into merchants selling antiques, calligraphy, and painting to make a living, and finally added a new function of buying and selling antiques to the economic structure that relied on the entertainment of the nobles. After the founding of the Republic of China, with the disappearance of the aristocracy and the rise of the lotus market in the Houhai area for the citizens to enjoy summer and entertainment, Yandaixie Street, which was an important entrance and exit adjacent to the lotus market, gradually changed from aristocratic commercial street to civic culture. In addition to the original tobacco shops and teahouses and other high-consumption places, more civilian shops such as barber shops and snack bars had been added. So far, the economic structure of Yandaixie Street had gathered the functional needs of residents of all levels in old Beijing and had truly become a block representing Beijing’s commercial culture.

3. Carrying on the past and opening up the future: the transformation from traditional to modern tourist shopping street. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the commercial structure and function of Yandaixie Street are still the same as those in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. The various old shops in the street mainly provide life services and entertainment functions for residents living in the Gulou-Jishuitan area. For example, the “Xinyuan Bath” (鑫园浴池) with a century-old history on the street carries the common memory of a generation of Beijingers. The baths are not a simple for bathing function. People regard “baths” as a way of connecting feelings and maintaining human relationships. It has become an institutional consensus of the society.

With the modern transformation of the social structure after the reform and opening up, the external structure of Yandaixie Street has also quietly changed. The old Beijingers in the surrounding hutongs are gradually getting old, and the young people of the new era are no longer following the living habits of the old local residents such as “bathing”. According to the living habits of the old residents, Yandaixie Street needs to find a new position in the new era to maintain the vitality of the economic structure. With the establishment of Beijing as a historical and cultural city, the “Gulou-Jishuitan” area where Yandaixie Street is located has become more popular with tourists as a gathering area for Beijing’s citizen culture. At the same time, the rise of Shichahai Bar Street in the external structure, and Beijing’s new fashion represented by bar culture and avant-garde culture have brought a brand-new cultural structure to the Jishuitan area. Yandaixie Street positions itself as the “tourism corridor” of this historical and cultural area, as an old commercial street that has been passed down since the Yuan Dynasty, from the site of the Dayu Hall in the Yuan Dynasty to the Guangfu Temple (广福观) in the Ming Dynasty and then to the time-honored brand in the Qing Dynasty. It allows visitors to experience the development of the street during the tour. As a structural heritage, Yandaixie Street integrates its own cultural resources that have gone through the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties and the Republic of China for a concentrated display of culture for tourists. It is also a concentrated display of Beijing culture. Innovative development of resources, such as the opening of special post offices such as the Daqing Post Office to show the postal culture of Beijing and even China, and the transformation of the century-old bath “Xinyuan Bathhouse” into an inn for cultural experience. In this process, the rich historical and cultural capital is successfully transformed for productivity, and the vitality of the commercial structure of the century-old street continues.

¹¹It is said that in the middle and late Qing Dynasty, banner people were keen on dry tobacco and hookah, and for this reason, there were a lot of smoking utensils on the side streets. Among them, the most famous Shuangshengtai tobacco pouch shop was named after a huge wooden pipe erected at the door. Another theory is that the side street looks like a long and narrow pipe.

From the perspective of neo-classical “structural-functionalism”, we can see the three-stage transformation process of Yandaixie Street. As a historical and cultural street of commercial culture, the specific functions of Yandaixie Street are always consistent with each period. The cultural characteristics of “Gulou-Jishuitan” in the grand field of Beijing and even Beijing’s urban transformation are highly integrated. From the perspective of the self-generating structure, the overall structure of Yandaixie Street, including the architectural layout, has not undergone major changes since its inception, and its positioning as a commercial street is in the same line. In the process of major transformation of the external economic and cultural structure, it can actively follow the needs of the external structure to re-allocate resources and find its own position in the new area, and then transform its own historical and cultural resources into productive forces, thus realizing the live transmission of the vitality of the commercial culture of the old street.

Nanluoguxiang (南锣鼓巷) —Mosaic Cultural Transformation

As a tangible cultural heritage, this type of historical and cultural block often retains a relatively complete architectural layout. But the major transformation of the economic and social framework in the external structure has caused the structural disappearance of some functions. Under this situation, new cultures are tapped endogenously, and new functions are added, and creative transformation is achieved through the integration of new and old functions.

1. Inheritance of street structure—the core competitiveness of Nanluoguxiang. Take Nanluoguxiang, another famous tourist “name card” in Beijing, as an example. As a historical and cultural block, unlike Yandaixie Street, which continuously undergoes structural and functional transformations in conjunction with external structures, the main structure of Nanluoguxiang is relatively stable, and has always been a residential area dominated by residential functions in history. Because Beijing’s planning has always been adhering to the central axis of symmetry, Nanluoguxiang block has always been near the central axis of Beijing’s core. Throughout the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, this area was close to the Gulou commercial district, which made it convenient for the dignitaries to work in the dynasty, and Gulou, Shichahai (什刹海) and other commercial and entertainment structures outside to provide life services, so it was favored by the nobility and scholar-official class. It had become the prestigious high-end residential area in Beijing (Liu & Yang 2021).

In the modern times, the structure and function of the central location of Beijing City, where Nanluoguxiang is located, has undergone tremendous changes. The traditional urban structure of “pre-dynastic and post-market” has disintegrated, and the nobility, scholar- bureaucratic class, and the authoritarian and centralized social structure on which they rely have died out. The demise of the resident groups in the neighborhood caused the loss of its function as a residence in the old structure to a certain extent, and the private residences used by dignitaries to live were also transformed into tangible cultural heritage. As a cultural heritage block, Nanluoguxiang is the main backbone, which continues the fishbone street layout formed since the Yuan Dynasty and connects many hutongs on the east and west sides, thus forming the most complete residential area with the hutong structure of the Yuan Dynasty in China. It is also one of the oldest historical districts in Beijing, and it can be called the “living fossil” of the courtyards of the urban alleys.

Pieces of well-preserved building structures have become a representative block of Beijing Hutong culture, which is also a competitive resource of Nanluoguxiang for endogenous development. At the same time, it also provides space and venue for the integration of the following derivative and creative structures.

2. Development in inheritance: residential structure with residential function—a new structure in which architecture, derivation and creativity are intertwined (Yao 2020). The first is the derivative structure. As the “name card” of Beijing’s Hutong culture, how do tourists who come to visit feel the resident culture of old Beijing? Obviously, relying on tourists aimlessly walking through the alleys is not intuitive enough, and it will also disturb the lives of nearby residents. Nanluoguxiang relies on its unique competitive advantage in its architectural structure to derive new functions for the folk culture of old Beijing and endow

the “soul” of intangible cultural heritage into its own competitive tangible cultural heritage. Based on this, the main street of Nanluoguxiang relies on the traditional old Beijing folk houses to operate such as: Nanluo Folk Culture Museum, Flour Sculpture Workshop, Old Beijing Paper-cut and Beijing Food Snack Bar represented by Nanluo people. These derived new shops have integrated the resources of the folk culture of old Beijing to a certain extent. The fragmented cultural resources are displayed in one place, and they are interlocked with the old houses so that tourists can experience the “body” and “soul” of old Beijing culture during a short trip. The derivative structure on this basis is still undergoing innovative development. As an international tourist city, Beijing not only carries the display function of Beijing culture, but also serves as a window for Chinese cultural exchanges.

Therefore, Nanluoguxiang further integrates the cultural resources of other provinces and cities across the country into this structure. For example, “Shanghai Women”, a specialty store that sells traditional Shanghai daily necessities, allows visitors to experience the cultural memory of old Shanghai in Beijing. The derivative structure makes full use of the excellent architectural heritage space of Nanluoguxiang and realizes the resource integration of tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage within this space.

The second is the creative structure. The major function of the street structure is to display residential culture, and it needs creative development in the folk culture and architecture. However, with the tremendous changes in the external economic and social structure and the declining cultural carrying capacity of Hutong’s ancient life mode, how to complete the creative transformation of the neighborhood ecology in the Hutong culture is another focus of the cultural transformation of Nanluoguxiang. What needs to be pointed out is that with the transformation of political and social structure, the residential groups in Nanluoguxiang do not consist of only permanent hutong aborigines. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, many art institutions such as the Central Academy of Drama and the Chinese Artists Association got settled in Nanluoguxiang. The aristocratic class that disappeared from the residential structure is replaced by artists and schoolteachers and students, which adds creative and modern artistic design functions to the cultural structure of Nanluoguxiang. On the premise of not damaging the facade of the architectural heritage, a few specialty shops such as bars, cafes, etc. that rely on the cultural atmosphere of traditional courtyard houses and at the same time integrate fashionable and creative culture for modern people’s hobbies are opened. Bars and courtyards, cultural heritage and modern creativity, which are seemingly contradictory traditions and modern culture, are intertwined in this space. Apart from the hustle and bustle of modern bars such as Sanlitun (三里屯), the characteristic cafes in Nanluoguxiang create a quiet and warm atmosphere of life, harmonious with the quaint old streets, and are functionally designed to break the social barriers between residents, owners and customers to realize the modern transformation of the neighborhood ecology in Hutong. For example, in the first batch of “passing-by” bars, the operators with a background in art design not only have not destroyed the facades of the ancient houses, but have realized the integration of modernity and tradition.

3. Inheritance in development: reflection on the new structure and renewal and restoration of residential functions. The constant flow of tourists after the transformation is the best affirmation of Nanluoguxiang model. But at the same time, the huge passenger flow that far exceeds the carrying capacity of the scenic spot also affects the daily life of the residents in the neighborhood to a certain extent. The development has also caused a certain degree of damage to the historical buildings in Nanluoguxiang (Liu 2018).

The block responded to this problem in a timely manner.¹² In 2016, it voluntarily applied to revoke the national AAA-level scenic spot qualification and suspend the reception of tourist groups. In December of the same year, the guidelines for the protection of the style and features of the historical and cultural district

¹²During the 2017 National Day holiday, the 700-meter-long street in Nanluoguxiang welcomed 300,000 tourists in two days. In order to cope with the peak passenger flow, Dongcheng police deployed security forces at the 18 entrances and exits of Nanluoguxiang and in the alleys to evacuate tourists in time. At the same time, the Jiadaokou Police Station established a monitoring system for the flow of adults at the beginning of the year to monitor the flow of people in real time, and can promptly rectify and deal with congestion and other situations.

of Nanluoguxiang were issued, which screened and reduced the shops in the street, and focused on the restoration of the residential functions of the old street.¹³

The transformation of Nanluoguxiang has accomplished the mutual integration of ancient heritage and modern culture, and at the same time has achieved the mutual integration of tangible and intangible heritage. From the perspective of endogenous development, on the one hand, this transformation uses its own “visible culture” (that is, derivative structure) as a production factor to transform actual productivity.

On the other hand, it reorganizes and innovates another part of the “intangible culture” (that is, the creative structure), such as the neighborhood ecology, and then implement the creative transformation of historical and cultural resources. In this type of transformation, we have also seen that tradition and modernity can have a certain connection in the architectural heritage of ancient streets, helping to complete the live inheritance of historical and cultural heritage.

Qianmen Street (前门大街)—Resource Restructuring and Cultural Transformation

Most of the historical and cultural blocks of this type represented by Qianmen Street¹⁴ have been prosperous in history, with a characteristic of complete economic structure. They have many historical and cultural resources such as time-honored brands as their characteristic competitive advantages. But with the changes in the external structure of the region, the original tangible structure tends to be obsolete, and the economic structure is in urgent need of reorganization. This requires the reconfiguration of the block structure and its cultural resources to complete the traditional-modern transformation.

1. The first resource integration: Royal Sacrificial Channel-Entertainment Commercial Street. Qianmen Street was built in 1550 AD and located on the central axis of Beijing. The royal road was originally built to facilitate the emperor’s journey to the Temple of Heaven and the Altar of Mountains and Rivers for sacrifices. Part of the function played a political role in demonstrating the royal majesty and facilitating transportation. Relying on the front gate position of Qianmen in the overall urban construction structure of Beijing City, Qianmen Street is wider than other gate streets. The large capacity of the building structure provides material space for commercial gathering. Both political and commercial functions are also a special resource that distinguishes Qianmen Street from other commercial streets (Zhang 2021).

In terms of the social and economic structure, when the Ming Dynasty Emperor Zhu Di moved to Beijing, he broke the urban planning of “pre-dynastic and post-market” model followed by the Yuan dynasty. This provided policy and planning support for the formation of Qianmen’s commercial structure. At the same time, Zhengyangmen (正阳门, where Qianmen Street was located, was the front gate of Beijing City, and the street itself was a special location on the dividing line between Zhengdongfang (正东坊) and Zhengxifang (正西坊). This created a structured area around Qianmen where commerce was concentrated and developed. After the mid-Ming Dynasty, the government built guild halls on both sides of Qianmen Street to solve the problem of accommodation for foreign students entering Beijing to take the imperial examinations. The spatial structure of Qianmen Street assumed the functions of the imperial examination industry. At the same time, all the candidates who stayed here bought daily necessities or recreational entertainment. The consumer demand derived from the imperial examinations brought new production factors to the development of Qianmen’s economic structure.

In the Qing Dynasty, in order to maintain the dignity of the imperial family, the government moved the theaters and teahouses of Beijing’s Dongcheng out of the city. The wide street space in the Qianmen area and the commercial structure with considerable traffic had become an excellent ground for the entertainment industry planned to be moved out of the city. This industrial transfer had once again added

¹³On December 20, 2016, the guidelines for the protection of the style and features of the Nanluoguxiang historical and cultural block at the first meeting of the 16th National People’s Congress in Dongcheng District, Beijing were officially released and implemented. By the end of the year, the number of Nanluo merchants will be reduced from 235 at the beginning of the year to 154. Nanluo will focus on restoring residential functions.

¹⁴It should be pointed out that the Qianmen Street we are analyzing here is not just Qianmen Street itself, but the Qianmen commercial structure created by several streets including Xianyukou and Dashilan.

production factors to the economic structure of Qianmen, which not only became more diversified in the allocation of entertainment resources, but also brought the consumer groups of Dongcheng to Qianmen. With the increasing diversity of elements in the economic structure, Qianmen Street had also spontaneously integrated various resources in the structure. In this process, together with Xianyukou (鲜鱼口) and Dashilan (大栅栏) that were interspersed on both sides of the street in the economic structure, professional markets such as grain market and jewelry market had gradually formed. The agglomeration effect of commerce had caused new production factors to continue to flow into the economic structure of Qianmen, creating many time-honored brands in the Qianmen business district which were involved in almost all fields of entertainment, such as eating, drinking, and entertainment. The establishment of Qianmen Railway Station in 1901 enabled Qianmen Street to further increase the function of railway transportation based on the original land transportation, turning it into a modern transportation hub. Passengers stopping at the station also brought new consumer groups to the economic structure.

With the collapse of the traditional economic structure since the end of the Qing Dynasty, the entire socio-economic structure of China and Beijing has gradually opened. The Qianmen area has become a window for foreign exchanges in Beijing. The production elements of modern culture represented by movies and photography have entered the economic structure of Qianmen, presenting a situation where traditional time-honored brands and the “new traditions” brought by modern civilization are intertwined and coexist in the same area. The coexistence of tradition and modernity in the economic structure has also become a highlight of Qianmen’s commercial structure. There are both traditional and time-honored origin shops such as Quanjude and Duyichu, as well as “new cultural origin shops” that represent the origin of modern Chinese culture, such as Daguan Yuan (大观园) Cinema and Dabai (大北) Photo Studio.

2. Reorganization of resources in modern society: a one-stop cultural exhibition complex. Since China’s reform and opening-up in 1978, with the adjustment of the regional structure and function of the city center and the emergence of new regional economic centers, the center of the city is no longer limited to the central axis, but has begun to shift to other areas of the city. Qianmen, which was originally located on the south side of the ancient city and provided commercial and living services, has been transformed into the center of a modern city with the modernization of Beijing. It is close to the Tiananmen Square area, which is a symbol of modern Beijing and the country. In the old economic structure, low-end industries such as bazaars that relied on low-cost, small profits and quick turnover are clearly unsustainable in this new economic field, and they occupy the valuable land resources in the Qianmen area. As a result, there is no room for expansion and upgradation of competitive cultural resources that are in urgent need of repair, such as time-honored brands. The outdated old streets that are incompatible with modernization were even called as the “slums” in the center of Beijing (Wang 2020).

In the modern economic structure, Qianmen Street has undergone a new round of reorganization of production factors, abandoning the disorderly development of the past, and introducing a new management model of industrial grouping. In terms of structure, it is clearly defined as the dual positioning of “shopping pedestrian street” and “historical and cultural exhibition area”. The old street structure was re-planned and widened by eliminating functions and production elements that did not meet the positioning requirements. The purpose is to maximize the endogenous competitive advantage of the rich cultural heritage of the Qianmen area. Together with the two old commercial streets of Xianyukou and Dashilan on both sides, a new set of cultural display complexes have been constructed. The new structure focuses on enhancing tourists’ one-stop service and immersive experience of “Beijing-style” culture. For example, the century-old theater “Tianleyuan” (天乐园)¹⁵ located in Xianyukou has developed one-stop and immersive experiences such as costume photography, cultural expo, drama and cultural creation, and Peking opera

¹⁵Tianleyuan Theater is located at the east end of Xianyukou Street in the Qianmen Historical and Cultural District of Beijing. It is an old Beijing theater with a history of nearly 200 years. Historically, the “Four Famous Peking Operas” have performed here. China’s first female Peking Opera class “Chongya Society” was established here. Mao Zedong’s autograph inscription “Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, and Let New Things Emerge from the Old” is published here. As one of the important stages of Peking opera performances, Tianleyuan has undoubtedly witnessed the whole process of the ups and downs of Peking Opera for a century.

training through innovative development of Peking opera culture. Whether it is for professional groups or for the early adopters of ordinary tourists, it can give a targeted, or shallow, or professional immersive cultural experience. New Qianmen Street transformed into an intangible heritage street has accomplished the integration of the time-honored brand and the commercial value of cultural heritage with the value of cultural tourism in this way.

In addition to the innovative development of traditional cultural heritage, Qianmen Street has not lost its historical cultural characteristics that blends with tradition and modernity, except for the “new traditional cultural heritage” such as cinemas and photo studios that have been developed spontaneously in the process of modernization. In addition to the endogenous development and utilization, it also uses historical buildings that have lost their original functions to create a fashionable and cultural experience area such as “Beijing Square” representing Beijing’s modern culture (Jiang & Zhang 2020). Traditional heritage, modernized “new heritage” and the culture of New Beijing coexist in the Qianmen area, showing the past and present of Beijing culture, and also recreating the cultural structure of Qianmen for a long time, stepping on tradition and moving towards modernity.

Functional Replacement—798 Park's Exploration of the Transformation of Industrial Heritage

In addition to the ancient neighborhoods that represent the accumulation of urban traditional culture, the modern cultural heritage represented by industrial heritage carries the charm of modern urban culture. Such old industrial areas are often huge in physical structure and strong buildings. Demolition or new construction will have a greater impact on the environment and increase costs. In terms of economic structure, industrial heritage often loses its economic functionality with industrial transformation. Therefore, we take Beijing’s 798 Park as an example to explore how the “new traditional” cultural heritage can be transformed and reborn in a modern city.

1. 798 Park as an industrial heritage. From the perspective of endogenous development, 798 Joint Factory has its own unique competitive resource advantage as an industrial heritage. In terms of tangible structure, 798 has a group of Bauhaus-style factory buildings that are rare even in the world and these highly designed buildings are precious industrial heritage in themselves. On the other hand, the large space characteristic of the factory structure also provides a material field for the self-generation of new functions and structural transformation in the later period. On the cultural level, the Bauhaus style contained in the industrial heritage is endogenous cultural resource. 798, as the “cradle of China’s electronics industry”, can be regarded as the epitome of the changes in the industrial culture of the new China. This is the “new tradition” heritage that carries Beijing’s contemporary culture. It complements the dazzling array of traditional historical and cultural heritage in Beijing. As a cultural resource, it shows the ancient-contemporary continuity of Beijing culture. The core value of 798 Park as an industrial heritage has two main points: one is the Bauhaus art building complex with material structure. The second is the cultural memory of the industrial development of the People’s Republic of China in terms of cultural structure.

2. Contemporary Heritage—Contemporary Art Industrial Park. In terms of economic structure, after the 1980s, with the transformation of the economic structure of the entire city, the old factories that flourished in the planned economy era could hardly adapt to the new economic structure under the framework of the market economy. The old industrial structure was unsustainable, and workers were laid off one after another. Workshops were idle, and the factory area where the production structure collapsed became an industrial relic. Under such circumstances, how to restore the vitality of industrial sites while maintaining the original historical structure and regional characteristics to achieve creative transformation and innovative development? In terms of external structure, the relocation of the Central Academy of Fine Arts has added a new group of artists to the Wangjing (望京) area where 798 is located. On the economic level, 798 takes advantage of the large and low rent of idle workshop space to attract nearby Central Academy of Fine Arts’ artists to come here as a “creative factory” for art exhibition and design. In 1995,

the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts rented a workshop to create sculptures¹⁶ and opened a new chapter in the replacement of 798 regional functions. Since then, due to the low rents and the cultural attraction of the Bauhaus building itself,¹⁷ a large number of artists have settled in the factory to set up personal workshops and exhibition spaces,¹⁸ thus starting to incubate brand-new functions in the old building structure. With the agglomeration effect produced by the new artistic and creative functions, countless art and design-related shops, galleries, cultural companies and other art institutions have been set up. These groups representing contemporary art and culture know better how to develop endogenously the cultural resources of contemporary heritage. Today, 798 has become a world-famous modern art center, and the economic structure with art design as the core established by the use of contemporary industrial heritage has provided radiation for the transformation of the entire Dashanzi (大山子) region. After the disintegration of the economic structure of the original industrial production, 798 makes full use of the contemporary cultural resources contained in the heritage as the core production factor in the process of transformation. By making use of the advantages of material space, contemporary heritage can become an “incubator” of contemporary culture. In the process of this structural transformation, “reconstruction” and “protection” are not binary oppositions, but the cultural elements in industrial sites can be rejuvenated through transformation. Instead, the cultural resources in the industrial sites are revived through transformation. The “tradition” and “modern” here have not been assimilated and opposed, and the interweaving of the old and new cultural symbols has even demonstrated the uniqueness of the artistic style. This complementary progression of tradition and modernity in the same area is also the competitive cultural capital on which 798 Park develops.

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Traditional-Modern Transformation of the Four Cultural Streets (Blocks) in Beijing

We can clearly see that the four types of Urban Historically Conserved areas in Beijing are in the process of transformation from traditional to modern. There are communities with relatively stable structures and functions in history, such as the residence of Nanluoguxiang and the industrial production of 798 Park. There are also neighborhoods like Yandaixie Street and Qianmen Street that have undergone spontaneous transformation in history. In the face of modern transformation, Yandaixie Street and Qianmen Street, as old commercial streets, relied on traditional functions to achieve the inheritance and continuity of commercial vitality. Parts of the traditional functions are missing. Nanluoguxiang and 798 adopted the method of integrating the same type of cultural elements into the same type of tangible cultural heritage in the absence of traditional functions, filling the heritage structure with creative functions. In terms of economic structure, the four types of Urban Historic Conservation Areas have inevitably undergone changes to varying degrees during the transformation process. Among them, the economic structure of Yandaixie Street has been continuously and gradually changed throughout the history, and Qianmen Street has declined in the original structure. Structural upgrades have been carried out from time to time. Nanluoguxiang and 798 have created new economic structures when their traditional economic structures were disintegrated. However, this did not cause damage to the tangible structure of cultural heritage. The four types of areas have not undergone major changes except for the expansion of Qianmen Street to facilitate the integration of resources. The embedding of modernity does not conflict with traditionality. But it contributes to the live inheritance of “Beijing style” culture. We can see that in the above four Beijing Urban Historic Conservation Areas, tradition and modernity have fulfilled the coexistence or connection of

¹⁶In 1995, the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts rented the warehouse of Factory 706 for the production of large-scale sculpture “Lugou Bridge Anti-Japanese Group Image”.

¹⁷The artist Huang Rui, who moved to 798 in 2002, became the first artist to start transforming industrial buildings, and proposed the 798 building as a Bauhaus architectural style.

¹⁸In 2000, Sui Jianguo rented the 706 workshop to set up a personal studio; then Hong Huang and other well-known publishers and artists moved in.

each other. After the transformation, the four types of different styles are not “same images of the street”. But relying on their own competitive resource advantages, and with the help of modernity, they have realized the diversified development of “Beijing style” culture.

We can see that in history, the four types of blocks have undergone a spontaneous transformation of economic structure following the transformation of external structure. During the transformation process, the emergence of new production factors is the endogenous excavation of the block’s own superior cultural resources. This achieves creative transformation and innovative development. Compared to the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and other structures, it is a relatively simple and closed material structural heritage. The old (street) block in the city has the dual positioning of cultural heritage and living community, which means that its structure is more open than scenic cultural heritage, and its function as a community is more complex. As the “living fossil” of urban cultural heritage, it often has both the “fossility” of cultural heritage and the “liveness” embedded in the structure of modern society. Regarding the relationship between the transformation of cultural blocks and their economic and social contexts, whether the four types of blocks are the first three types of ancient cultural heritage or contemporary heritage such as 798 Park, both tradition and modernity appear to coexist or connect to some extent during the transformation.

From the perspective of Neoclassical “Structure-Functionalism”, the four types of Urban Historic Conservation Areas have undergone a spontaneous transformation of economic structure following the transformation of external structure. During the transformation process, the emergence of new production factors is the endogenous excavation of the area’s own superior cultural resources. This achieves creative transformation and innovative development.

Further Discussion: Urban Cultural Heritage and Urban Revival

“Old Style” and “New Era” of urban development. From the perspective of neoclassical “structural-functionalism”, the traditional static thinking not only ignores the value of urban cultural blocks as a “structural heritage” and its dynamic changes following social transformation, but also ignores the existing cultural heritage stems from historical social transformations. As one respondent to Singapore’s Hawker Center said: “Hawker Center as we know them today did not exist 50 years ago, and in the same way, they will continue to evolve. We have no reason to let today’s Hawker culture become a fossil. We should take the best of it and continue to maintain informal dining, community connections, multicultural integration for all to feel it”. The cultural heritage we see today is the result of the needs of the social structure in different stages of urban development. As the social structure continues to develop, the levels of value generated according to its needs are becoming more diverse. The value of urban cultural heritage originates from the “structure-function” transformation of society. The new structure after the transformation develops new cultural elements that carry secondary functions and reacts with traditional cultural resources. It not only has opposition, assimilation, but also there will be states of coexistence and connection. The “new” and the “old” merge with each other in this process to generate a new cultural structure, and in the continuous transformation, new cultural elements are constantly added to enrich the layered sense of cultural value. The blocks of the four urban cultural types we discussed above are representative examples of this process. The distinctive cultural elements of these blocks are the functional products that are self-developed to match the needs of social structure in the social transformation of different periods. For example, the hutong culture contained in Nanluoguxiang uses the cultural element of “neighborhood ecology” under the needs of social structures in different periods, indicating that the heritage value we recognize is the value of the urban social structure in different periods. Therefore, we say that urban cultural heritage itself is associated with the development and rejuvenation of society. In addition to exerting its own cultural heritage value, the inheritance of heritage is more important to be coupled with the needs of social structure in different eras. Urban revival and cultural heritage in this relationship are the endogenous driving forces for each other's “development” and “protection”.

The shared “elegance” and “vulgarity” of the cultural heritage of the capital city. As the ancient capital of China’s six dynasties, Beijing’s urban cultural heritage includes both royal cultural heritages representing “elegance” and community cultural heritages representing “vulgarity”. The two complement

each other and constitute the value structure of Beijing's urban culture. Regarding the endogenous utilization of urban cultural heritage, we can certainly see the unique and well-known royal cultural heritage such as the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, and the related endogenous development around them, such as cultural and creative products. However, we must also pay attention to the endogenous development value of the community cultural heritage that has accompanied the diachronic development of the ancient capital of the Six Dynasties. From the perspective of neoclassical “structural-functionalism”, the royal cultural heritage has left many heritages of great cultural relic and appreciation value with the use of exquisite technical craftsmanship under the official leadership and has historical value. On the other hand, due to the disappearance of the royal group, the original social structure of the royal cultural heritage has completely disintegrated, so its value is generally appreciated in static ways such as scenic spots and museums. From the perspective of the tourism value chain, it mainly focuses on the “sightseeing” (We generally divide the tourism value chain into six links: food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment). The complementary community cultural heritage is a kind of “dynamic” heritage, because the dominant citizen group in the structure still has vitality and continues to follow the transformation of the social structure to derive new functions and increase value diversity. In addition, unlike the closedness presented by the Royal Heritage structure due to the functional requirements to maintain the majesty of the rule, the old street originating from the life of urban residents is more open in its own structure, which can meet the functional needs of tourists for the full cycle of the value chain (food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping and entertainment). It is also complementary to the Royal Heritage. Tourists can feel the “depth” of the heritage value in the royal cultural heritage such as the Forbidden City and experience the “temperature” of the cultural heritage in a tasteable and playable way in the community cultural heritage. Both are indispensable “treasures” for the endogenous development of the capital's cultural heritage.

Competitive resource advantage of community cultural heritage in urban regeneration. In previous discussions of neoclassical “structural-functionalism”, we have studied the endogenous development of historical and cultural heritage and characteristic towns. In the development process of rural revitalization, characteristic towns can generally use their own heritage with community cultural characteristics, such as characteristic folk customs, as a competitive resource for endogenous development, and then form new structures and new functions in the social transformation to promote the revival of the town. By analyzing the urban cultural heritage representing community culture in a metropolis like Beijing, we can find that community cultural heritage also has great endogenous development value in the urban social structure. For example, Yandaixie Street utilizes the original commercial structure and unique location advantages to allocate resources to realize the functional transformation of “old commercial street—new business format”. This commercial street not only meets the functional needs of tourists for tourism and shopping, but also is a link in the production of community cultural heritage value. In planning, the government only needs to use the allocation of asset elements in the stock structure without having to replanning. The revival of Qianmen Street has benefited from the support of the community cultural heritage represented by many time-honored brands in the form of capital. These time-honored brands not only have the advantages of resources that can be tasted and experienced, but also have unique historical witness value as origin stores compared with branches to attract tourists. In addition, the old streets that carry the cultural memory of the community have a unique “nostalgic” meaning for local people. Conclusively, in today’s increasingly urbanization, the old streets that carry the community culture are becoming more and more different “stingers” in the “similar” modern cities. The value of the heritage itself can be used by local people to retrace their past memories, and it can also be used as a cultural product to showcase the unique “city style” for tourists in one stop by way of display or experience. How to find the unique cultural elements of each city and the cultural growth point with vitality in the old streets so as to achieve the unity of the memory that the locals want to “find” and the cultural value that the tourists want to “experience” is the key to the endogenous type of urban cultural heritage development. This is also the core competitiveness of various cities in the urban revival to break “the same images of the city” and show their own values.

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