

## **Monumentality in Nanjing's Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park**

CHARLES D. MUSGROVE  
*Saint Mary's College of Maryland*

This article explores the changing perceptions of monumentality on Nanjing's Purple Mountain, location of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial National Park, which was constructed during the early years of the Nationalist Era in China (1927–49). *Monumentality* refers to the characteristics that cause an object to be considered a monument. At Purple Mountain, these characteristics were neither uniform nor unchanging as the site developed. In essence, the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum combined older, symbolic Chinese conventions of monumental form with new emphases on the visual representation of power and public access to those representations, exemplifying ambiguous attitudes about the nature of government in the era of nation states. As a result, monumentality itself in Nanjing became, more so than previously, a medium that precluded uniform, prescribed meanings from predominating the site, as the mausoleum became a focal point of the struggle over symbolic construction in the Nationalist capital.

### **Monumental Architecture in Nationalist Nanjing as a “Ceremonial Center”**

An important element in the construction of a new visual modernity in early twentieth-century China was the transformation of concrete representations of the state, embodied in architectural forms that were designed to define a seemingly new set of roles between the state and its subjects. During the decade from 1927 to 1937, when the Nationalist Party (Guomindang, or GMD) nominally ruled China, monumental architecture in the form of public buildings, statues, and tombs formed part of a concerted effort to construct a new symbolic template for transforming China's people from “loose sand” into citizens, united under the “revolutionary” leadership of the Party. This template was inherently visual, as monumental architecture was meant to be seen in order to convey the larger messages. Certain aspects of these messages were explicit in inscriptions on the monuments. Other aspects were implicit in the more subtle meanings to be gleaned from the frames themselves: the orientation, the materials, and the forms of the buildings that spoke to older symbolic systems while tapping into new

ones.<sup>1</sup> Although the state certainly had desired meanings it wished to express in its monuments, those who were supposed to learn the messages often applied their own meanings to the structures in both subtle and spectacular means—either through the mundane contemplations of personal experiences or through dramatic, deviant behavior that was purposely designed to challenge the prescriptions.

This article focuses on the GMD's effort to create a monumental, ceremonial center of the nation, a place where important state rituals could be conducted that would legitimize state power and define the body politic. Essential to the construction of a ceremonial center is the building of a space that channels feelings of respect, awe, and patriotism in ways that would impress visitors with power, inspiring them to respond to that perception of power in certain desired ways. In essence, members of the GMD first created a monumental mausoleum to their heroic founder, Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925); and then they expanded the scope of that sacred space to express much more through their Sun Yat-sen Memorial National Park. Ultimately, this ceremonial center would become the GMD's fullest symbolic expression, in microcosm, of a newly envisioned universe—as well as the Party's claim to be China's leaders in this new configuration.

With the construction of a new capital in Nanjing, GMD leaders set out to create a space that would naturalize, in concrete symbols and national rituals, a new “cosmology,” though they never referred to it as such. The capital as a ceremonial center would become a metaphor for an envisioned wholeness in modern Chinese life. Nationalism and ideology became the core concerns of an attempt to unify the nation and direct its people toward particular goals of national development. At the same time, GMD theorists relied on scientific methodologies to show that such goals were natural outcomes of a universe organized by a set of rational laws. The GMD's plans for the capital would embody the ideology of Sun Yat-sen and the rationale of scientific planning, but the planners also needed a sacred element to inspire in the people of China new motivations for loyalty and service. The planners furthermore needed a solid, physical symbol to make abstract feelings of nationhood feel more real—to give form to the “essence of modern China.” In turning the grave of Sun Yat-sen into the sacred symbol of GMD nationalism, they tried to make it recognizably Chinese by borrowing from imperial-era sacred sites and rituals, yet they used new forms and methods to make the site appropriate for an entirely new conception of how the state and citizenry should interact.

### **The Mutability of Monumentality**

This article also considers the changing nature of monumentality reflected in the transformations effected at the site of the mausoleum, Purple Moun-

tain (*Zijin shan* 紫金山), which was already the home of a monumental tomb to Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–98), founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). This article considers monuments in today's conventional understanding, as large, impressive structures erected in public places designed to keep alive the memory of important individuals and events. But sometimes objects become monuments, even if they were not intentionally constructed to commemorate, as they come to attain historical value or even simple age value. (For example, certain ruins of what had been inconsequential buildings are monuments simply because they are remnants of something that is particularly old.)<sup>2</sup> Thus, any particular object can be considered a monument if it comes to serve a broader commemorative function: a document (like the Declaration of Independence on display in the U.S. National Archives), a book (like a Gutenberg Bible), or even a work of art (like Michelangelo's *David*) could be considered a monument.

Furthermore, the idea of what is considered worthy of monumental status actually changes over time, as certain objects are erected to be important, then become significantly less important (like Grant's Tomb), and might become important once more. Meanwhile, monumental conventions are not uniform and vary considerably in different times and places. The term *monumentality*, then, refers to the characteristics that cause an object to be considered a monument, and these characteristics are neither uniform nor unchanging. In essence, the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum combined older, Chinese symbolic conventions of monumental form with new emphases on the visual representation of power and public access to those representations, exemplifying ambiguous attitudes about the nature of government in the era of nation states. As a result, monumentality itself in Nanjing became, even more so than previously, a medium that precluded uniform, prescribed meanings from predominating the site.

### **Nanjing & Purple Mountain: Capitals & Tombs, Monuments & Decay**

In April 1927, during the GMD's Northern Expedition to unify China after two decades of warlord rule, General Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) declared that Nanjing would become the capital of China in accordance with the desires of the late revolutionary hero and GMD founder, Sun Yat-sen. Shortly after the GMD entered Beijing in June 1928, the new one-party government confirmed the decision to move the capital to Nanjing permanently. As a result, municipal planning for the new capital's much-needed infrastructure, including roads, utilities, public buildings, banks, and residential neighborhoods, began in earnest. A high priority for the fledgling Nationalist Government was the completion of a tomb for Sun Yat-sen, construction of which had begun even before the Northern Expedition commenced. In fact, well before running water was common or the various ministries had

their own permanent homes, Sun's remains were safely interred in their final resting place.<sup>3</sup> With the many pressing needs facing a state that was constantly in debt, why was this structure considered essential?

GMD leaders wanted the capital to be a stunning example to the country and the world that China was on its way to becoming a successful, modern nation under party leadership. Meanwhile, it was also clear to GMD planners that tombs are often essential features of capital cities. In the early twentieth century, when capital cities all over the globe—from Washington, D.C., to Tokyo—were being renovated and adorned with monuments in order to express new nationalistic sentiments, many nation-builders considered tombs to be vital symbols of modern nationalism. From Napoleon's tomb in Paris to Lenin's tomb in Moscow, it seems that every capital featured an important tomb or cemetery rife with national significance.<sup>4</sup> Sun Yat-sen himself recognized the importance of such symbols. Thus, while on his deathbed in 1925, he instructed the Party to place his remains on display (like Lenin's) in a tomb on Purple Mountain, just east of the city walls of Nanjing, where he had served as the first president of the Republic, thereby immortalizing his role as a founding father of the modern Chinese nation.<sup>5</sup>

In doing so, Sun was forging a link between himself as self-proclaimed founder of the Republic and Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–98), the heroic founder of the Ming Dynasty, who was also buried on Purple Mountain. The parallels between their careers, at least in Sun's eyes, were many. Zhu had led a patriotic drive to expel the Mongols from China. He then moved the capital from the "tainted" Mongol city, now called Beijing, to the more "pure" city of Nanjing, in the south. After Zhu's death, however, his grandson moved the capital back to the north. Sun, too, had seen himself as leading the effort to expel what he considered a foreign dynasty—the Manchu Qing—from power, essentially accomplished while he was overseas in the Revolution of 1911. Nonetheless, in January 1912, Sun was inaugurated as provisional president of the Republic in the city of Nanjing, which he vainly argued should be made the permanent capital of China over the Manchu city of Beijing. After Sun resigned his post in favor of Yuan Shikai (1859–1916, r. 1912–16) in February 1912, however, Beijing remained the capital of the Republic.<sup>6</sup>

In calling for the construction of his tomb on Purple Mountain, Sun redefined the monumental nature of the tomb of Zhu Yuanzhang that already existed there. Even though the capital had been moved to Beijing, Zhu was buried in Nanjing, according to his wishes. Although the rest of the Ming rulers were buried outside Beijing, Zhu's tomb remained a revered site in the "southern capital" throughout the Ming Dynasty. That Zhu's tomb was monumental in nature is unquestionable, but it was built in a style quite different from that of Napoleon or Lenin. Instead of occupying a central location in the middle of the capital, Chinese emperors built

their tombs in mountainous locations outside their capitals, in places that were said to be auspicious and full of natural power (as in *fengshui* 風水). Zhu's tomb was intended to be hidden from common view. Commoners were forbidden on penalty of death from treading on the sacred ground of the imperial tomb area; and, in fact, the precise burial place was to be kept a strict secret so that no one could desecrate the emperor's remains. Even the imperial descendants generally did not gaze upon the tomb itself, which was located in a large earth mound surrounded by a wall 350 meters in diameter. Instead, special imperial family rituals were conducted in an ancestral temple pavilion located at the end of a "spirit road," which led from the city to the site.<sup>7</sup> (See fig. 1, p. 6.)

There were certainly striking architectural and visual elements to this tomb complex, including the spectacular ancestral pavilion, or sacrificial hall, which originally covered an area of  $9 \times 5$  *jian* 間 (about  $66 \times 29$  meters), which was probably the largest wooden structure in Ming China, equaled only by the sacrificial hall of Yongle's (1360–1424) tomb in Beijing. Housing the spirit tablet of the emperor, the ancestral pavilion was the most important building for visitors, since sacrifices to the imperial ancestor were always performed there.<sup>8</sup> Other impressive structures included an arched gate (the *Dajinmen* 大金門), signaling that one was entering a particularly hallowed portion of the spirit road, and a large rectangular stone structure (the *menlou* 門樓, or gate tower), separating the ritual spaces of the complex from the tumulus mound itself.

Visitors to the site did not see these monumental elements all at once, however. Instead, visitors experienced gradual intensifications of feeling as they traversed the spirit road through a series of architectural climaxes. The journey began at a special arch (*pailou* 牌樓) that instructed visitors to dismount their horses. Visitors then walked along a winding path that ascended the hill, passed through a stele pavilion that housed a large stone dragon-turtle, and passed a series of twenty-four larger-than-life stone statues of auspicious creatures such as lions, camels, elephants, and the mythical guardians of justice, the *xiezhi* 獬豸 and *qilin* 麒麟 (characterized as Chinese unicorns). After passing the stone animals, visitors meandered around a small hill believed to house the tomb of members of an earlier dynasty, passed under the watchful eye of eight stone civilian and military officials, and eventually arrived at the gate of the "square city," the location of the ancestral pavilion and final destination for most royal visitors.<sup>9</sup> Overall, the monumentality of the site was not expressed in an awe-inspiring view of any given structure that dominated the whole scene; instead, it was gradually revealed and felt by moving through the complex.<sup>10</sup> Visuals and vistas were important, but ritual movements seem to have conveyed power more effectively in this form of monumentality. Visitors had the sense of building toward a climax while slowly approaching the wooden ancestral pavilion.

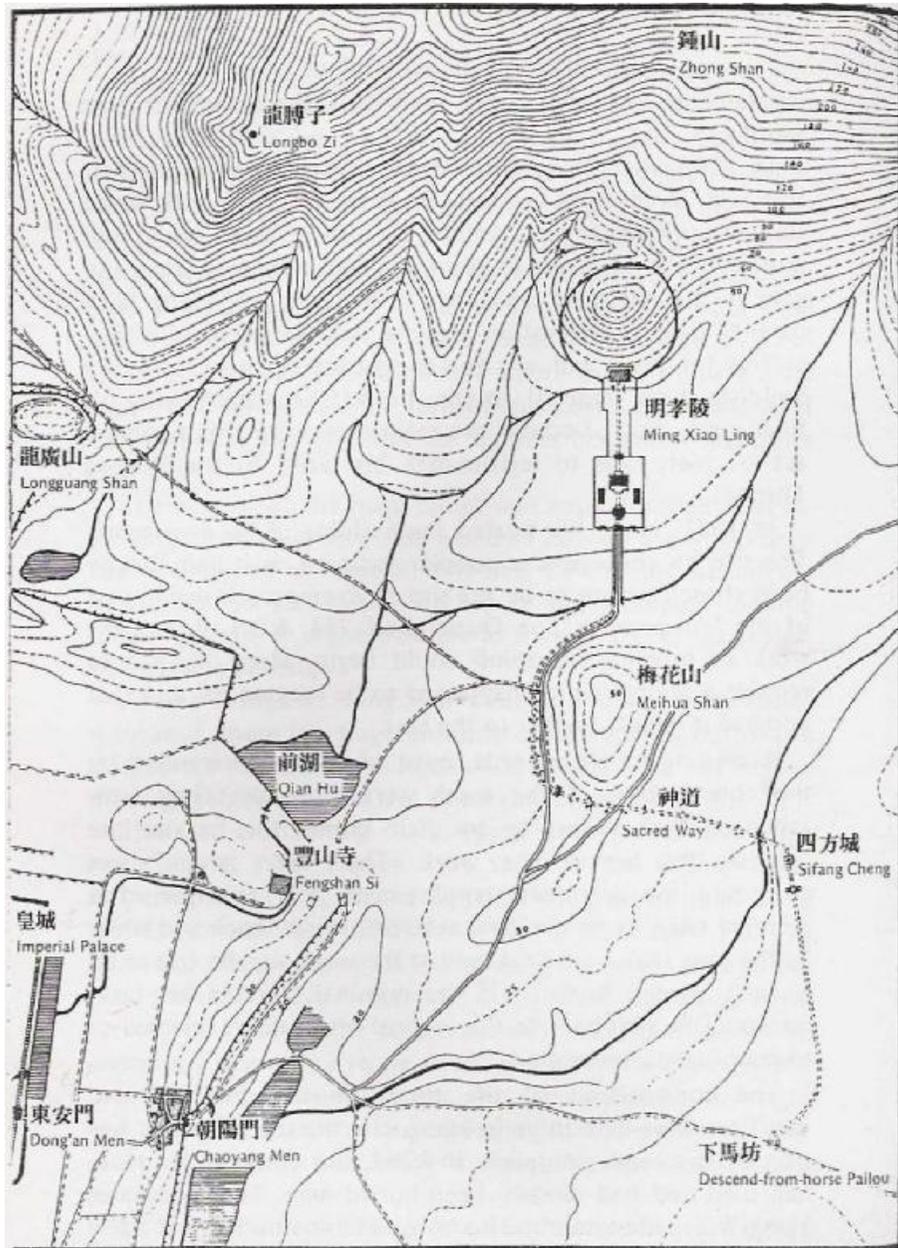


FIGURE 1 Layout of Zhu Yuanzhang's tomb in Nanjing. Source: Barry Till, *In Search of Old Nanking* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1984), 136 (redrawn from commonly found tourist maps of the area).

Nevertheless, visitors were generally not invited to go beyond the sacrificial hall to the gaze on the earth mound itself, where the actual burial site

was hidden. Even being allowed to come as far as the ancestral pavilion was a sign of privilege.

By Sun's day, however, the Ming tomb offered only a shadow of its former grandeur. It had served as an intentional monument to the dynastic founder and, as such, was well maintained for as long as it was considered crucial for the maintenance of imperial power itself. But once the dynastic reins changed hands, its purpose changed considerably, and the attentiveness of its new caretakers gradually waned. It was customary for succeeding dynasties to maintain the imperial tombs of their predecessors as a sign of respect for the position that sitting rulers still occupied. Both the Kangxi (1654–1722, r. 1661–1722) and Qianlong (1711–99, r. 1735–96) emperors performed ritual sacrifices at the tomb during their Southern tours, and a special team of two eunuchs and forty bannermen guarded the site.<sup>11</sup> However, there was little incentive to glorify too much the dynasty that one had overthrown. The Qing rulers, in fact, had to deal with persistent conspirators whose rallying cries were “overthrow the Qing, restore the Ming.” Thus, the Qing continued to forbid commoners from venturing near the Nanjing tomb, as much to prevent it from becoming a symbolic center of revolt as to protect the sanctity of the imperial site.<sup>12</sup> Overall, its significance, from an official standpoint, had decreased significantly; and it had more subversive potential as a monument than anything else. It should be no surprise, then, that the site became dilapidated from neglect, especially following the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). Nanjing had been the capital of the “Heavenly Kingdom,” and the Qing almost completely destroyed the city in putting down the movement in 1864. The Ming tombs were badly damaged during the rebellion, and the spectacular ancestral hall burned down. In the late nineteenth century, the Qing hardly invested its scarce resources in restoring this potentially dangerous symbol of Ming power, and a much smaller ancestral hall was rebuilt in its place.<sup>13</sup>

When Sun held a ceremony at the Ming tombs on February 15, 1912, three days after resigning as provisional president in the wake of the emperor's abdication, he helped bring the site into the forefront of the public's imagination.<sup>14</sup> The ceremony itself was remarkable in that it burst through the taboos surrounding the site. In plain view of all, and captured by a number of photographers present to commemorate the event, Sun marched respectfully on foot with his entourage past the ancestral hall all the way to the roof of the gate tower, where he paid obeisance to the Ming founder with a racially charged speech in which he proclaimed China's liberation from the “Tartar savages.” Sun's offering ode concluded:

I have heard that in the past many would-be [deliverers] of their country have ascended this lofty mound wherein is your sepulcher. It has served them as a holy inspiration. As they looked down upon the surrounding rivers and upwards to the hills, under an alien sway, they wept in the

bitterness of their hearts, but today their sorrow is turned to joy. The spiritual influences of your grave at Nanjing have come once more into their own. The dragon crouches in majesty as of old, and the tiger surveys his domain and his ancient capital. Everywhere a beautiful repose doth reign. Your legions line the approaches to the sepulcher; a noble host stands expectant. Your people have come here today to inform your majesty of the final victory. May this lofty shrine wherein you rest [attain] fresh luster from today's event and may your example inspire your descendants in the times which are to come. Spirit! Accept this offering!<sup>15</sup>

Sun dramatically emphasized the Ming tomb as a site for rallying the forces of nationalism. The tomb immediately ceased to be a somewhat modestly hidden resting place for a former emperor or a symbol of secret resistance. Now it was reconfigured for contemporary use as a place to glorify a fully resurrected hero of China's redefined past, wherein the nativism of the power he represented was more important than his role as emperor.

Sun also redefined the purpose of the ritual performed at the tomb. Although he went through many motions that were similar to those performed in a sacrifice to imperial ancestors (he respectfully walked the route of the spirit road, he performed the proper number of bows before the spirit tablet of the emperor, and he used the appropriate ritual vessels), the purpose of his performance was as much to state that this was a new beginning for China as it was to show respect to a former hero. This pilgrimage was not to become part of a series of regularly scheduled visits that would be used continually to reconstitute and define the imperium.<sup>16</sup> Instead, Sun wanted to create a link to a particular past that was essential for constituting the idea of a nation-state. Ritually composing an imperium required sanctifying the emperorship through obeisance to all who held the office, even "Tartars." But in generating reverence for a nation-state, only those who met the criteria of being "Chinese" would necessitate ritual respect.<sup>17</sup>

In visual terms, the tomb itself remained rundown from neglect and hence somewhat unimpressive. Through the photographs, however, people all over the country could see various parts of a site that had previously been off limits to commoners. Thus one element of its former monumentality—its mystery—was torn down, and new ways of experiencing the site's power were made manifest. Meanwhile, Sun magnified the significance of Purple Mountain itself. The dragon and tiger in the speech referred to a common saying about Nanjing, that the city commanded the power and strength of a "crouching tiger and coiling dragon."<sup>18</sup> Now this power was to be felt from outside the walls, from the mountain perch where the tomb was situated. This combination of ideas would lead the GMD, more than twenty years later, to envision the Purple Mountain site as the ceremonial center of their new nation.

## The Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum

With the construction of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, the focus on Purple Mountain clearly shifted away from the Ming tomb to the far more visually stimulating monument to the GMD founder. The approach to this monument was far different from that of the earlier tomb. The Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum sits atop a peak on the southern slope of Purple Mountain, with a massive staircase fifty meters wide that consists of 392 steps leading to a clearly visible sacrificial hall, the view of which is unimpeded for miles around. The mausoleum was to become the centerpiece of the GMD's ritual reconstitution of the nation, and Purple Mountain was to encompass all the elements of a new "cosmology" that would reposition China within a new, modern world. More immediately, GMD leaders wished to impress upon the new citizens of the Nationalist-led Republic of China that they were the only legitimate leaders capable of effecting this glorious transformation. To do so, the Party invoked the ideology of Sun Yat-sen and attempted to embody that ideology in its greatest national monument, the mausoleum.

In 1912, Sun Yat-sen envisioned a liberal democracy developing in the wake of Qing collapse; but, by the early 1920s, his optimism had been clearly shattered as he accused the Chinese people of being "loose sand" with a "slave mentality." Inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), Sun saw ideology as the means for educating people on how to live in the modern world, and he quickly set out to develop his own "Three Principles of the People" (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義): nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood. Sun claimed the Three Principles would serve as a modern ideology for China, based on the particular conditions of the country as well as on scientific principles, with an eye toward achieving "revolutionary" social progress. He still proclaimed that the ultimate goal was liberal democracy, but, by the 1920s, he was also insistent that democracy could be achieved only after his revolutionary party, the GMD, had taught the people how to put the interests of the country before their own narrow ones. Thus, to Sun, an unspecified period of dictatorial "political tutelage" under the GMD would precede multiparty democracy.<sup>19</sup>

After years of warlord rule, viewed by many as supporting Sun's accusations about the inherent selfishness of China's leadership, Sun's popular image as a selfless patriot grew. He was at the height of his popularity when he died in Beijing in 1925. Hence, the GMD had every reason to take his burial instructions seriously. Here was a wonderful opportunity to fulfill their popular leader's dying wish by building a monument that would concretize his status as a "founding father" of modern China. In the process, the GMD would be given a chance to emphasize itself as the inheritors of Sun's revolutionary vision and thus as a power worthy of the people's loyalty in the civil war that began less than a year following Sun's death. After

completion of the Northern Expedition in 1928, the mausoleum would play a crucial role in simplifying Sun's contradictory legacies. Specifically, the mausoleum identified the GMD as the only leaders of China's modern revolution, as opposed to the Communist Party, which Sun Yat-sen had invited to join the GMD but which was purged in bloody fashion from the Nationalist Party in 1927 under Chiang's direction.

Despite the numerous financial difficulties that the GMD faced, builders finished the first phase of construction just in time for interment ceremonies in late May and early June 1929.<sup>20</sup> In the layout and architecture of the mausoleum, designer Lu Yanzhi (1894–1929) attempted to strike a balance between old and new, democracy and party dictatorship. (See fig. 2, p. 16.) First, he ensured that the form of the building roughly followed that of the imperial tomb, whose basic elements consisted of a wooden sacrificial hall in front of a round burial mound that enclosed the sarcophagus in stone. However, Sun's Sacrificial Hall differed from the imperial tomb model in several important ways. For one, the Sacrificial Hall and the tomb were connected to form one structure that was made entirely of stone and reinforced concrete. While the traditional hall was made of wood to emphasize the constant filial duties of the descendants to maintain the ephemeral structure, with Sun's tomb, permanent materials were used to demonstrate that Sun's ideals represented permanent truths, as permanent as the nation itself. Sun's ideology was supposedly based on a scientific understanding of the processes of history and nature, and that same science would ensure that this monument would last forever. Meanwhile, the tomb itself was designed to put Sun's remains on display, as was considered appropriate for a modern, ideological founding father, like Lenin. Featuring a metal door with a mechanical safe lock, the remains could be shut away for safe keeping. More importantly, however, the repository could be opened at will for people to go in and respectfully gaze at his body, which would also last forever. Unfortunately (at least according to GMD leaders), science failed to preserve his remains as he had hoped; and thus, in the end, the tomb instead contains a statue of his body as it appeared during the official lying-in-state ceremony.

The GMD hoped to inculcate its version of Sun's ideology at the site in a manner that would emphasize its own place of power in that vision. Inscriptions and carvings were a useful way to connote particular meanings. Thus, on the black marble walls of the Sacrificial Hall, the Party carved Sun's "Outline of National Construction" and the "Last Will and Testament," two texts that called for the GMD to lead the nation in its drive for modernization.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, these carvings represented Sun at his most general and his least ideological. The Three Principles of the People, explained in a series of rambling speeches, would have been too lengthy and contradictory to set in stone. Furthermore, by leaving out the more specific texts

on the principle of “livelihood,” the Party could avoid the confusing question of whether it espoused a form of communism, which the right GMD vehemently denied. The Party sidestepped the issue of further interpreting these notions, leaving that for the classrooms. Meanwhile, along the base of a seated statue of Sun in the hall, the Party carved scenes from Sun’s life. These scenes were decidedly civilian in character: caring for children, going abroad to propagandize, discussing matters with revolutionary colleagues, opening the National Assembly in Nanjing, giving a speech that “awakens the deaf,” and discussing how to protect the country. No scenes depict Sun leading a revolutionary battle or inciting angry masses. All the accompanying figures in these frescoes are reserved and respectful.<sup>22</sup> In sum, the inscriptions portray Sun as a great civilian leader, deserving of peaceful reverence, but with no hint of Marxist leanings. And above it all, shining down on the scene inside the Sacrificial Hall, was the GMD Party emblem of the white sun and blue sky, a vivid reminder of the Party’s importance.<sup>23</sup>

These messages were meant for a much broader audience than anything that appeared at any imperial-era tombs. The Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum was specifically designed to hold more than fifty thousand people for the state ceremonies that would be held there. Imperial ancestral rites had been largely closed affairs, and the imperial family gained power from the fact that it had the exclusive power to communicate with the imperial ancestors. The ceremonies at the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, on the other hand, were envisioned as huge, public affairs. They were meant to be seen. Their power lay in the expansion of the scope of what was considered the new “national family.”

Space is insufficient here to provide a detailed description of imperial rituals of ancestor worship.<sup>24</sup> But over the course of the Nanjing Decade (1927–37), the GMD developed a series of regular ceremonies honoring Sun that, generally speaking, modeled imperial rituals fairly closely. The Party utilized ritual bowing instead of the kowtow, but otherwise the GMD members conducted regular “reports” to Sun’s spirit: they read elegies on Sun’s greatness, set up ritual offering tables, and more.<sup>25</sup> The GMD emulated older rituals because these ancestral ceremonies already had an air of sacredness to them. More importantly, similar ceremonies were still being practiced by private families honoring their own ancestors, which allowed the state to make a more concrete connection to the people, who would therefore recognize the validity of these forms of meaningful words and motions. Finally, the GMD used such rituals because they were identifiably Chinese, which allowed Chinese official ritual to be differentiated from official pomp and circumstance that was simultaneously being re-invented in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

The key differences between the GMD rituals and the ancestral rites of the “traditional” state (as the GMD called it) were in who performed the

rituals and who comprised the audience. When the GMD performed its rituals to Sun, the audience was the nation. Everyone was supposed to see the rituals and even to participate vicariously in them. Certainly, GMD leaders maintained privileged positions in the rituals for themselves. Party members held the honor of making the reports and oblations to the spirit of Sun, from which they could claim to be led by his guiding will. Moreover, these rituals served a legitimizing function similar to that of the imperial rituals for the emperor and his government. However, these rituals were made in plain, public view, with cameras recording them for the benefit of the entire nation, which was supposed to learn lessons of proper citizenship and loyalty from them. By opening the central rituals to public view, the GMD was in fact extending the boundaries of sovereignty. Before, participation in the imperial ancestral rites had defined who had legitimate authority. Only members of the royal household and their appointed officials could participate in the central rites of the state, though local officials and sanctioned organizations, such as lineages, replicated some of them at the local level.<sup>27</sup> From the exclusion of individual families in the central imperial rituals, these participants gained the authority to rule “all under heaven.” People in Nationalist China, on the other hand, could not only replicate GMD rituals but also see them being performed at the highest levels; members of the “masses” (organized in officially sanctioned groups) even participated in them.<sup>28</sup> Everyone was included in the family of the nation, just as sovereignty ultimately now rested with the people.

Ultimately, the GMD came to marshal the symbolic powers of the whole mountain, including the Ming tomb of Zhu Yuanzhang, to glorify the Party founder while placing him as the central figure in a reconfiguration of the nation. In July 1929, the National Government set up the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park Management Committee and directed that the highest priority be the “protection of the mausoleum.” The committee maintained the mausoleum grounds and constructed further facilities to enhance them.<sup>29</sup> The committee oversaw the construction of lakes, gardens, forests, and numerous pavilions from which to view the “natural” beauty of the site. While beautifying the landscape and providing places to rest as in a traditional garden, the goal was not to encourage visitors to while away an afternoon with poetry or other such diversions. Within the Memorial Park, visitors were supposed to “think of the Party Leader’s grand and broad spirit and the difficulties of making revolution. Their thoughts are inspired and encouraged and are not simply entertaining their eyes and ears.”<sup>30</sup>

To assist in ideological contemplation, a Commemoration Hall housing relics of Sun, a Library of Revolutionary History, and a Sun Yat-sen Culture Institute were added to the site. At the same time, this new “national park” would house a special center for studying “real” Buddhism (not the “superstitious” kind that the GMD was concurrently attacking); an obser-

vatory with a new, modern telescope imported from Germany; a sports stadium and training complex; a martyrs' cemetery and shrine; and special tombs for other important leaders. And, of course, there was the Ming tomb, which was to be renovated and preserved. Zhu Yuanzhang thus took his place in what amounted to a necropolis devoted to the ancestors of modern Chinese nationalism, particularly as represented by the GMD. Modest ceremonies were conducted at the tomb to commemorate this "national hero," but it was overwhelmingly clear which tomb dominated the landscape: it was Sun's mausoleum that was visible from miles away. Most visitors made Sun's tomb their primary destination, and only some detoured to the Ming tomb. Renovation efforts did not attempt to restore the Ming site to its original grandeur. In fact, doing so would have damaged the "age value" that the site possessed. The Ming founder was considered important, but he was more valuable as a marker of past imperial greatness, tucked away in a fold of the mountain, while the present and future, as depicted by the GMD, were on center stage farther up the slope.

### Reverence & Contestation

Monuments have a habit of taking on lives of their own after the designers and builders are (supposedly) finished with them. Such transformations are particularly true of monuments meant for widespread public consumption and access. Distinct and unintended collective memories accrete to public spaces when actual uses defy prescriptions. For example, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., began as a monument to unity and the (mis-)perception that the United States' racial problems had been resolved; but the site-as-stage unintentionally turned into a locus for continued social protest. Under conditions of censorship and frequent martial law in Nanjing, the GMD hoped to preserve the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park as a place for the reverent learning of the lessons of "political tutelage." It was not intended to become a place for questioning authority, but as it gained power as a symbol of the nation, that is precisely what happened.

Throughout the Nanjing Decade, numerous people went to the mausoleum to pay their respects in the proper manner prescribed by the GMD. In fact, virtually all nationally significant gatherings that were held in either Nanjing or Shanghai, from party congresses and legislative sessions to product exhibitions and national sports meets, began with a ritual visit to the mausoleum, where officials made an offering and people paid their respects. The requisite visit almost always culminated in a group photograph taken on the steps. Meanwhile, domestic and foreign tourists and visitors paid homage at the site, and most sang its praises. For example, in 1929, a correspondent for the English-language *North China Herald* (published in Shanghai) wrote that the mausoleum was already impressive and that "all

who have seen it agree on its beauty.”<sup>31</sup> An American architect working in China indicated that the mausoleum was the perfect example of “modern, individual Chinese” architectural style.<sup>32</sup> The mausoleum was the GMD’s ritual centerpiece, and, by many accounts, it fulfilled its desired role of providing an awe-inspiring symbol of the young nation.

But from time to time, protestors managed to co-opt the site, most dramatically in an attempted suicide staged on December 27, 1935. Earlier that year, Japanese forces, which already controlled Manchuria, extended their influence over northern China by establishing a de-facto government in eastern Hebei province. On that day in December, General Xu Fanting (1893–1947), Chief of Staff for the First Army Corps in Xi’an, stood in front of the seated statue of Sun in the Sacrificial Hall and read aloud a text calling for the National Government to take a firm stand against Japanese aggression. He recited an ode that read, in part, “Visiting your mausoleum, my heart is sad. Crying in the mausoleum, I have no tears left. Worshipping at the Party Leader’s mausoleum, every inch of liver and intestines is broken. To die without a general [who will lead the fight against the Japanese], this is most shameful.”<sup>33</sup> Then he moved out of the hall to the terrace in front of the steps, perhaps the most visible location in the entire city of Nanjing, where he drew a short sword and cut his stomach open. Guards immediately called for an emergency team to take him to a nearby hospital, where he eventually recovered. This act was a protest against GMD leadership in general and its policy of appeasement in particular, but it also clearly illustrates how even those who were critical of the GMD came to respect the symbols of nationhood that the Party had constructed. At the same time, it served as a valuable reminder that one can construct a symbol more easily than one can control its uses, particularly when the figure at the center of the monument was one as contradictory as Sun Yat-sen.

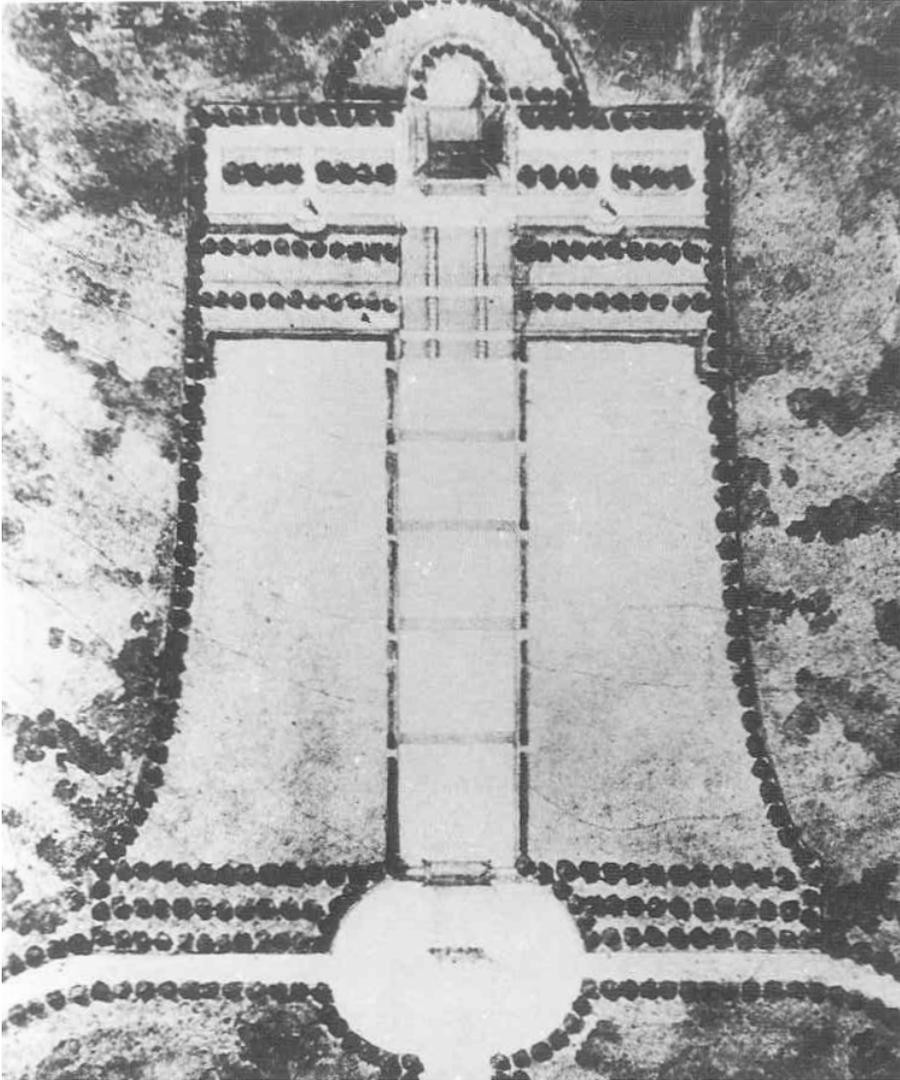
### **The Mutability of Monumentality at Purple Mountain**

After 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continued to treat the mausoleum with great respect. It was well maintained, even through the Cultural Revolution (1966–69, or 1966–76), and dignitaries who visited Nanjing often paid their respects. The CCP consistently argued that it remained the true inheritors of Sun’s legacy, as opposed to the GMD, which had fled with Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan. Once again, though, the meaning of the site’s monumentality changed. Sun’s tomb took on almost the role that Zhu Yuanzhang’s tomb had played for the GMD: It represented a site for the commemoration of an important national hero, but this hero was not considered nearly as essential as the CCP’s own founding icon, Mao Zedong (1893–1976). People who visited Sun’s tomb did not perform the ritual bows, nor did they deliver reports or other offerings. They removed

their hats to show respect, but generally they came just to look upon the images of the man. Sometimes, important people would say a few measured words in praise of Sun, a reflection of the old rituals.<sup>34</sup> All in all, there was still a feeling of reverence in the ways people tended to interact at the site, but the more sacred spaces of the People's Republic were constructed in Beijing, not least of which was Mao's own mausoleum in Tiananmen Square, where his remains were in fact put on display after his death in 1976.<sup>35</sup>

In sum, we tend to think of monuments as grand structures where the visual elements are dominant. This assumption certainly applies to most intentional monuments built in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of which still dominate the landscapes of Western capitals today. During the same period, however, China's people experienced monumentality somewhat differently than did others in Europe and the United States. Although it is true that monumentality has changed considerably over time and differs dramatically in different places, one cannot simply say that in imperial-era China monumentality was less visually oriented than it was in the West. The West had its own forbidden spaces that gained symbolic power from exclusion of the eyes of the masses (such as the interiors of many monarchical palaces and grounds), and Chinese emperors and elites erected monumental steles and memorial arches that were designed for broad public viewing. Nevertheless, perhaps future investigations will find that trends elsewhere in Republican China paralleled the transformation of Purple Mountain, which indeed saw the construction of what, for Nanjing, was a new kind of monument, one whose power was primarily conveyed through visual means.

At the same time, however, there is still a sense of the older form of conveying power through movement, as well. Visitors climb the steps of Sun's mausoleum; they move through the Sacrificial Hall and walk around his casket. They also perform distinct rituals, from outright offerings to doffing hats, that have also added to the sacred air of the place. The movements and interactions that have taken place at the mausoleum have also had the ability to change the meanings of the site, as protests and other non-prescribed uses have created alternative sources of memory. In visiting, visitors have not just seen what the GMD has wanted them to see, for on reaching the summit of the stairs, visitors' minds might have involuntarily been drawn to the story of the selfless general who cut his own torso to inspire resistance to GMD policies. And so, inevitably, the nature of the monuments changed at Purple Mountain, just as the nature of countless other monuments has changed—though we, of course, are not always conscious of such changes as they occur.



**FIGURE 2** General layout of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum grounds. The Sacrificial Hall and tomb are conjoined at the top of the figure. Commonly noted was that the shape resembled a bell, symbolizing the awakening of the Chinese people through Sun Yat-sen's leadership. Source: *Zhongshan ling shiji tuji* 中山陵史迹图集 [Photo collection of historical traces of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum], ed. Nanjing shi dang'an ju 南京市档案局 [Nanjing Municipal Archives] and Zhongshan lingyuan guanli ju 中山陵园管理局 [Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park Management Office] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1996), 54.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Nelson Goodman, "How Buildings Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (1985): 642–53.

<sup>2</sup>Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin," trans. Kurt W. Foster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions* 25 (1982): 20–51; and Wu Hung,

*Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup>Charles Musgrove, "The Nation's Concrete Heart: Architecture, Planning, and Ritual in Nanjing, 1927–1937" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>For more on the international competition to improve capitals and ceremonies, see David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition,'" in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 101–64; and Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992). For relationships among tombs, monuments, and nation-building, see George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); and Edwin Heathcote, *Monument Builders: Modern Architecture and Death* (West Sussex, England: Academy Editions, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>"Sun Zhongshan yu Wang Jingwei tanhua" 孫中山與汪精衛談話 [Sun Yat-sen's conversation with Wang Jingwei], *Minguo Ribao* (Kaifeng), March 16, 1925. See also Wang Liping, "Creating a National Symbol: The Sun Yatsen Memorial in Nanjing," *Republican China* 21, no. 2 (1996): 26.

<sup>6</sup>For more on Zhu Yuanzhang's efforts to build Nanjing as the capital, see F. W. Mote, "The Transformation of Nanking, 1350–1400," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977), 101–53. For Sun Yat-sen's career, see Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup>For more on Chinese imperial tombs, see Lawrence G. Liu, *Chinese Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), chap. 7. On Zhu Yuanzhang's tomb, in particular, see *Zhu Yuanzhang yu Ming Xiaoling* 朱元璋與明孝陵 [Zhu Yuanzhang and the Ming Xiaoling tomb], ed. Zhongshan lingyuan guanli chu wenwu guanli bangongshi 中山陵園管理处办公室 [The Cultural Artifacts Management Office of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Management Office] (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 1996); Ye Zhaoyan 叶兆言, *Lao Nanjing* 老南京 [Old Nanjing] (Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 1998), 215–20; Pan Guxi 潘谷西, ed., *Nanjing de jianzhu* 南京的建筑 [Nanjing architecture] (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 1995), 18–20; and Barry Till, *In Search of Old Nanking* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1984), 134–45. For a description of the architectural features of Ming-era imperial tombs in Beijing (which were modeled on Zhu's tomb), see Ann Paludan, *The Ming Tombs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup>Ceremonial vessels located outside the sacrificial hall and in the gate tower served as a symbolic reminder of ancient times when rituals were held in the open air, but otherwise they were not used in the actual rites. Paludan, *Ming Tombs*, 10, 38.

<sup>9</sup>*Zhu Yuanzhang yu Ming Xiaoling*, 59–64.

<sup>10</sup>See Andrew Boyd, *Chinese Architecture and Town Planning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 144.

<sup>11</sup>*Zhu Yuanzhang yu Ming Xiaoling*, 102–3; and Till, *Old Nanking*, 143–44.

<sup>12</sup>Ye, *Lao Nanjing*, 215.

<sup>13</sup>*Zhu Yuanzhang yu Ming Xiaoling*, 147–48.

<sup>14</sup>For a brief description of the ceremony, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41–42.

<sup>15</sup>This translation is provided by Till, *Old Nanking*, 144–45. See also *Sun Zhongshan quanji* 孫中山全集 [Collected works of Sun Yat-sen] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 2:94–97.

<sup>16</sup>For more on the imperial rituals to the ancestors and how such rituals legitimized the state, see Angela Zito, *Of Body and Brush* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1997). See also Evelyn Rawski, "The Imperial Way of Death: Ming and Ch'ing Emperors and Death Ritual," in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, ed. James Watson and Evelyn Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 228–53.

<sup>17</sup>Though Sun clearly viewed the Manchus as foreigners and used such views to stir up pro-revolutionary sentiment, after the Qing were overthrown, he struggled to avoid so narrowly defining the Chinese nation, recognizing that to consider the Manchus as foreigners would imply the loss of northeastern provinces which had served as the Manchu homeland. He quickly espoused a view of Chinese nationhood as the cooperation of the "five races": Han (ethnic Chinese), Mongol, Manchu, Hui, and Tibetan.

<sup>18</sup>During the first imperial dynasty, the Qin (221–206 B.C.E.), the emperor had a small hill in the city flattened in the hopes of eliminating the power referred to in this saying. He reportedly feared that a rival capital established in the city would threaten his dominance. Chen Qiaoyi 陈桥驿, *Zhongguo qi da gudu* 中国七大古都 [China's seven great ancient capitals] (Beijing: Beijing qingnian chubanshe, 1991), 249–54.

<sup>19</sup>Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen*, 378–81.

<sup>20</sup>After his death in 1925, Sun's remains were temporarily interred at a temple in the Western Hills. After the GMD established its nominal authority over Beijing in 1928, preparations were begun to remove Sun's remains to their permanent resting place at Purple Mountain. For an account of the construction of the mausoleum and the rituals to inter him there, see Musgrove, "Nation's Concrete Heart," 227–55. See also Wang, "Creating a National Symbol"; Harrison, *Making of the Republican Citizen*, chap. 6; documents in Xu Youchun 徐友春 and Wu Zhiming 吴志明, eds., *Sun Zhongshan Feng'an dadian* 孙中山奉安大典 [The great burial ceremony for Sun Yat-sen] (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1989); and *Zhongshan ling dang'an shiliao xuanbian* 中山陵档案史料选编 [Selections of archival historical materials on the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986).

<sup>21</sup>Ye Chucang 叶楚傖 and Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵, eds., *Shoudu zhi* 首都志 [Capital gazetteer] (Nanjing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1935), 261.

<sup>22</sup>*Zhongshan ling shiji tuji* 中山陵史迹图集 [Photo collection of historical traces of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum], ed. Nanjing shi dang'an ju 南京市档案局 [Nanjing Municipal Archives] and Zhongshan lingyuan guanli ju 中山陵园管理局 [Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park Management Office] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1996), 16–17.

<sup>23</sup>The Party also incorporated this emblem into the Republic of China's national flag, which still flies in Taiwan.

<sup>24</sup>For more on imperial rituals, see James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). For the "orthodox" version of the rituals performed in households, see *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, trans. Patricia Ebrey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>25</sup>For more on nationalist rituals performed at the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum during the Nanjing Decade, see Musgrove, "Nation's Concrete Heart," 301–5. See also Harrison, *Making of the Republican Citizen*, for Republican-era rituals up through the interment of Sun Yat-sen.

<sup>26</sup>See Cannadine, "Context, Performance and Meaning." For the development of new state rituals in Japan, see Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>27</sup>For interesting analyses of the interplay of imperial-era state ritual and local practices, see chapters by Joseph McDermott and David Faure in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). In particular, McDermott's chapter, "Emperor, Elites, and Commoners: The Community Pact" (pp. 299–351), describes the expansion of particular ritual practices—previously

the exclusive domain of officials—to public ceremonies performed by local communities to honor the emperor during the Ming; but the material focus of the ritual was on a tablet of imperial instructions, not on an actual spirit tablet, as would have been the case in ancestral rites. As such, a fundamental distinction was maintained between the imperial family and individual families, even as the state was clearly incorporating wider popular participation in “state ritual,” at least for as long as these community pacts were maintained.

<sup>28</sup>These masses were organized into groups that participated in the parade that brought Sun's remains to the tomb, in addition to having the opportunity to eulogize him during the official lying-in-state ceremonies that preceded the interment. See Musgrove, “Nation's Concrete Heart,” 240–48.

<sup>29</sup>“Zongli lingguan hui chengli tonggao” 总理陵管会成立通告 [Announcement on the establishment of the Party Leader Memorial Park management committee], July 3, 1929, *Zhongshan ling dang'an*, 403. See also Ye and Liu, *Shoudu zhi*, 258–59.

<sup>30</sup>Ye and Liu, *Shoudu zhi*, 297.

<sup>31</sup>“Rebuilding Nanking as a Capital II,” *North China Herald* (Shanghai), May 25, 1929.

<sup>32</sup>“Rebuilding Nanking as a Capital V,” *North China Herald* (Shanghai), June 15, 1929. Interestingly, mausoleum designer Lu Yanzhi received his architectural training at Cornell University between 1914 and 1918.

<sup>33</sup>Zhu Wei 诸伟, “Xu Fanting pofu mingzhi” 续范亭剖腹明志 [Xu Fanting slices stomach to reveal his strong will], in Lao Nanjing xiezhao 老南京写照 [Descriptions of old Nanjing], ed. Zhang Yu 张遇 and Wang Juan 王娟 (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1999), 178–80.

<sup>34</sup>For example, in February 1953, Mao visited the mausoleum, where he bowed and sat silently for a few minutes. Shi Ping, “Mao Zedong ji du dao Jinling” 毛泽东几度到金陵 [Mao Zedong's several trips to Nanjing], *Nanjing shi zhi* 30 (1988), 3.

<sup>35</sup>Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).