



City profile

Nanjing—an ancient city rising in transitional China

Feng Yuan^a, Jinlong Gao^{a,b,*}, Jiawei Wu^{a,b}^a Key Laboratory of Watershed Geographic Sciences, Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 73 East Beijing Road, Nanjing 210008, Jiangsu Province, China^b University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, 19 Yuquan Road, Beijing 100049, China

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ABSTRACT

Nanjing, the capital city of six different dynasties in history, is the provincial capital of Jiangsu Province, China. Historic, political and locational endowments have already propelled Nanjing into becoming one of the sub-centers of the Yangtze River Delta (YRD), China's emerging global city region. This City Profile summarizes the historical development of Nanjing from the Wu Kingdom in the Three Kingdoms Period to 1978, as well as the contemporary development in the last three decades. Striving to become a stronger regional center, Nanjing is undergoing a profound restructuring of its economic and, more importantly, its physical form and appearance. To face the challenges, Nanjing has undergone spatial planning to enhance its competitive strength. We outline the historical development (including the ancient, old, and modern periods), current urban and economic development, spatial planning, regional cooperation, and future development.

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1. Introduction

Nanjing's literal meaning is “Southern (南, Nan) Capital (京, Jing)” in Chinese, while Beijing, the capital of China, is “Northern (北, Bei) Capital (京, Jing)” (Yang, Cai, Ottens, & Sliuzas, 2013). Situated in the Yangtze River Delta (YRD), China's emerging global city region, Nanjing is adjacent to the border of Jiangsu and Anhui Province. Nanjing is one of the pre-industrial world's great cities with 6000 years of civilization, and an urban history of 2500 years. Having been the capital city of six different dynasties, Nanjing is now recognized as one of the four great ancient capitals of China (alongside Beijing, Luoyang, and Xi'an), and has long been a national center of education, research, transportation and tourism. Such a long history of civilization has created plentiful cultural and architectural heritage (Fig. 1), for example the Temple of Confucius, the Forbidden City of the Ming Dynasty, Sun. Yat-sen Mausoleum, various gates of the city wall, buildings and universities of the Republic of China recognized as *Minguo* (1912–1949).

However, the city is not just rich in history and culture. It also ranks in the first tier of Chinese cities in terms of economic development and urban construction. As one of the sub-centers of the YRD region, Nanjing also serves as a political, industrial, cultural, logistical and technological center in Jiangsu Province (Luo & Wei, 2009; Qian, 2013). With a total

population of 8.18 million and an urban population of 6.55 million in 2013, Nanjing is the second largest commercial center in the YRD region, after Shanghai (Dijst, Feng, Prillwitz, & Wissink, 2014). It has been ranked sixth in the evaluation of “Cities with the Strongest Comprehensive Strength” issued by the National Statistics Bureau, and second in the evaluation of cities with most sustainable development potential in the YRD region. It has also been awarded the title of 2008 Habitat Scroll of Honor of China, Special UN Habitat Scroll of Honor Award and National Civilized City.

Given its historical importance, cultural richness and economic strength, Nanjing was officially granted sub-provincial administrative status by the Central Government of China together with other 15 cities in 1994. Thereafter, Nanjing did not need to share its finances with Jiangsu Province, which is different from other municipalities like Suzhou. After several rounds of administrative boundary adjustment, it had a land area of 6597 km² in 2013, including eleven districts (Fig. 2 and Table 1), and became the only municipality without any counties or county level cities in Jiangsu Province.

These special features and its important status provide the rationale for profiling Nanjing. Even a cursory glance at other Profiles shows that cities in the YRD have received far less attention from scholars than their status warrants. The Chinese cities documented in the series cover virtually the whole country, including coastal Beijing (Yang et al., 2013), Shanghai (Wu, 1999), Guangzhou (Jiang & Yeh, 2003), Shenzhen (Ng, 2003), Qingdao (Zhang, & Rasiah, 2013), Suzhou (Wang, Shen, & Chung, 2015), Ningbo (Tang, Chan, & Griffiths, 2015), Western Chongqing (Han & Wang, 2001), Chengdu (Qin, 2015), Lanzhou (Tong & Shi, 2015), Urumqi (Dong & Zhang, 2011), Wuhan (Han & Wu, 2004), and even Shouguang (Wang, Zhang, & Kee, 2014). Among

* Corresponding author at: Key Laboratory of Watershed Geographic Sciences, Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 73 East Beijing Road, Nanjing 210008, Jiangsu Province, China.

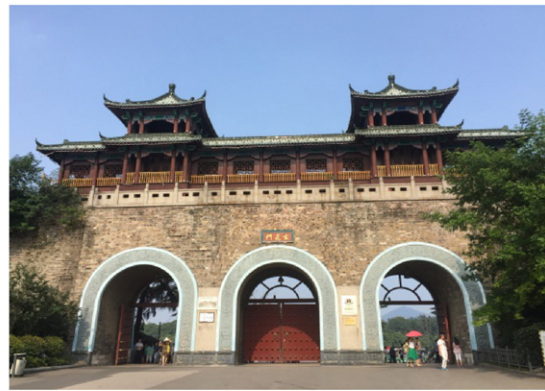
E-mail addresses: fyuan@niglas.ac.cn (F. Yuan), jlgao@niglas.ac.cn (J. Gao),

jwwu@niglas.ac.cn (J. Wu).

¹ Tel.: +86 025 8688 2073.



Temple of Confucius



Xuanwu Gate



Minguo Building (Presidential Palace)



*Campus of National Central University
(Southeast University)*

Fig. 1. Nanjing: historical and cultural richness.
Source: <http://image.baidu.com/>(Baidu pictures).

them only Shanghai, Ningbo and Suzhou are in the YRD, despite the fact that the YRD has been the most populous area in China, and one of the most densely populated areas of the world, since the 9th century.

This profile aims to: (1) provide a brief account of the urban development history in Nanjing as one of the most historic cities in China, (2) analyze the economic growth, the population increase and the land expansion of Nanjing as a major city in the YRD, (3) investigate the evolution of its spatial planning, and (4) discuss the challenges facing the city.

2. Historic development

2.1. Capital of Ancient China

Nanjing was one of the earliest established cities in China, which can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty (1300 B.C.), and first became a capital in the Three Kingdoms Period (A.D. 220–280). During the Wu Kingdom, Nanjing was cultivated and developed into one of the country's commercial, cultural and political centers, and in the most prosperous years, the population reached 300,000. After the unification of the three kingdoms by the Jin dynasty, Nanjing though lost its capital status. The rule of Jin in the north was destroyed by *Xiongnu* and other nomadic peoples, and many nobles and wealthy families fled from the north and re-established the capital in Nanjing (A.D. 317–420). With the increase in refugee migration from the Yellow River Basin, the population of Nanjing soared to 1.35 million and the area expanded to about 25 km² (Editorial Committee, 2008).

During the period of the North–South Division (A.D. 420–589), Nanjing remained the capital of the South Division for more than two

and a half centuries, namely four Kingdoms of Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen respectively. During this time, Nanjing was the international hub of East Asia and one of the largest cities in the world with 280,000 registered households and 1.4 million residents (Liu, 2001). In 589, the Chen Kingdom was conquered by the Sui dynasty (A.D. 589–618), and Nanjing was razed. Thereafter, the emperor relocated the capital to Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) and annexed Nanjing to Guangling, one of the urban districts of present Yangzhou. During the Sui dynasty and Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–907), Nanjing was an industrial center for textiles and minting, owing to its strategic geographical location and convenient transportation links.

During the South Tang (A.D. 937–976), Nanjing was reconstructed as the capital although the total civilian and military population was only 400,000 within a 17 km² land area. During the Song dynasty (A.D. 960–1279), the urban center of Nanjing was the Palace surrounded by barracks and government offices. The schools (e.g. Confucius Temple) were mainly located to the southeast of the Palace, and the residential and commercial areas were located in the south and South West, close to *Qinhuai* River.

Because of its burgeoning textile industry, Nanjing was consolidated as a hub of textiles under what became known in China as the Yuan dynasty (A.D. 1206–1368). About 97 years later, *Zhu Yuanzhang* overthrew the Yuan dynasty and rebuilt Nanjing as the dynastic capital of the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368–1644). The capital had a total of 473,200 residents in 1391 and most of them were artisans, who occupied 47% of the whole area. The capital had four heavy castles with the city wall as the second one (Fig. 3). The area inside the city walls and the outermost boundary were 41 km² and 222.78 km² respectively (Editorial Committee, 2008). Nanjing remained the capital of the Ming dynasty for 53 years, and thereafter the third emperor *Zhu Di* relocated the

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