

# Culture of Ancient Peking/Beijing Hutong

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## Abstract

*Ancient Beijing/Peking Hutong is one of the unique special Cultures in ancient China which last about 800 years. In this doc, it presents vivid picture and comprehensive description about this tradition treasure*

## Revision History

<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Modifications</u>
1.0	Aug 23, 2007	Initial version
1.5	Dec 15, 2007	Update version
2.0	Feb 3, 2008	Update version
2.5	Apr 20, 2008	Update version
3.0	Jun 30, 2008	Release

**ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS**

<b><u>Term</u></b>	<b><u>Explanation</u></b>
Hutong	Bystreet, lanes or alleys
Siheyuan	Traditional Chinese home with at least 4 rooms

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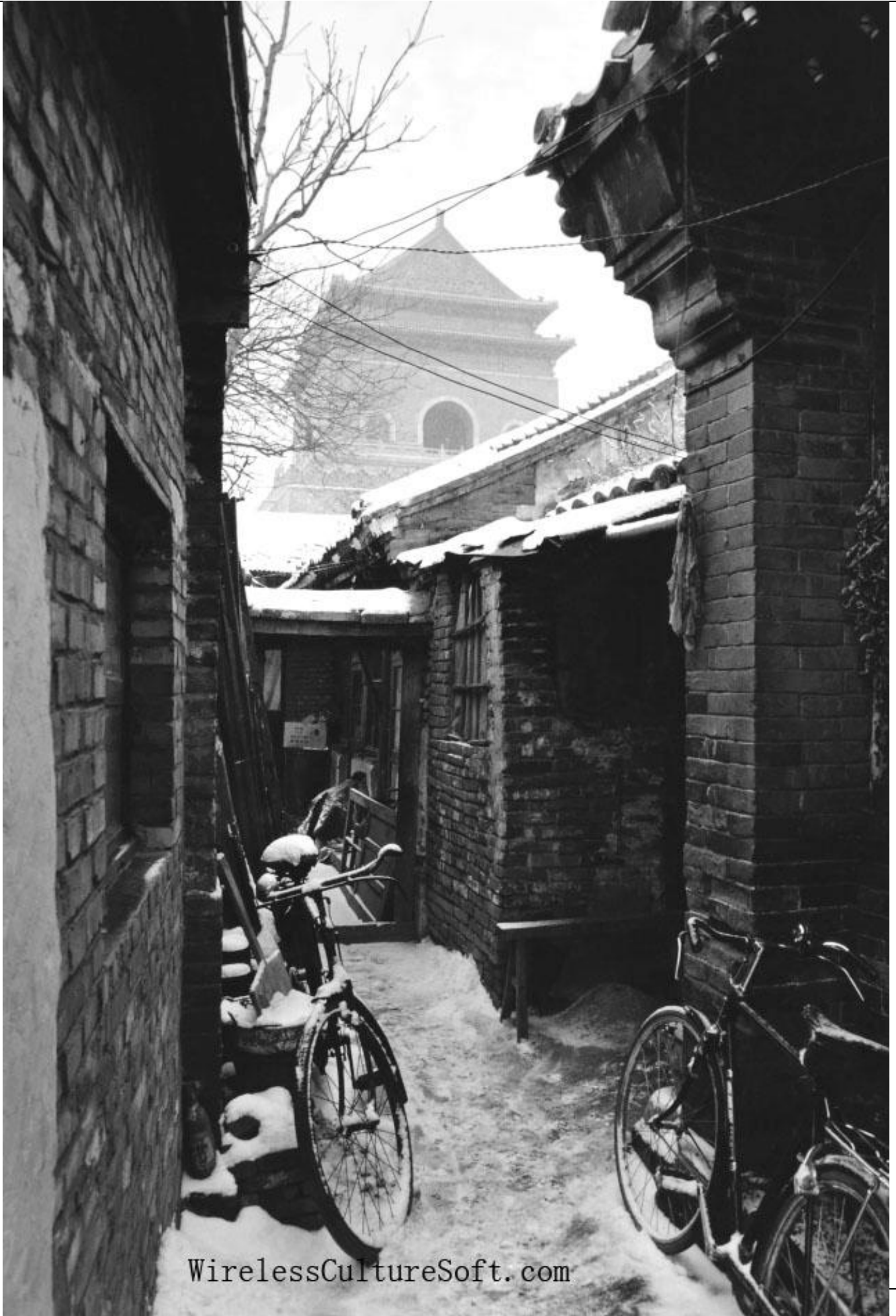
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## **1.0 Introduction**

Hutong is one of the unique special features in Beijing; in a degree, it could be simply defined as the old city alley that tend towards from east to west. There are thousands of Hutong here surrounded the Forbidden City, most of which were came into being in the dynasties Yuan, Ming, Qing. Old local residents have a saying: "There are 360 large hutongs and as many small hutongs as there are hairs on an ox." And with the development of the economy and city constructions, there are mainly 4000 Hutongs in Beijing at present.

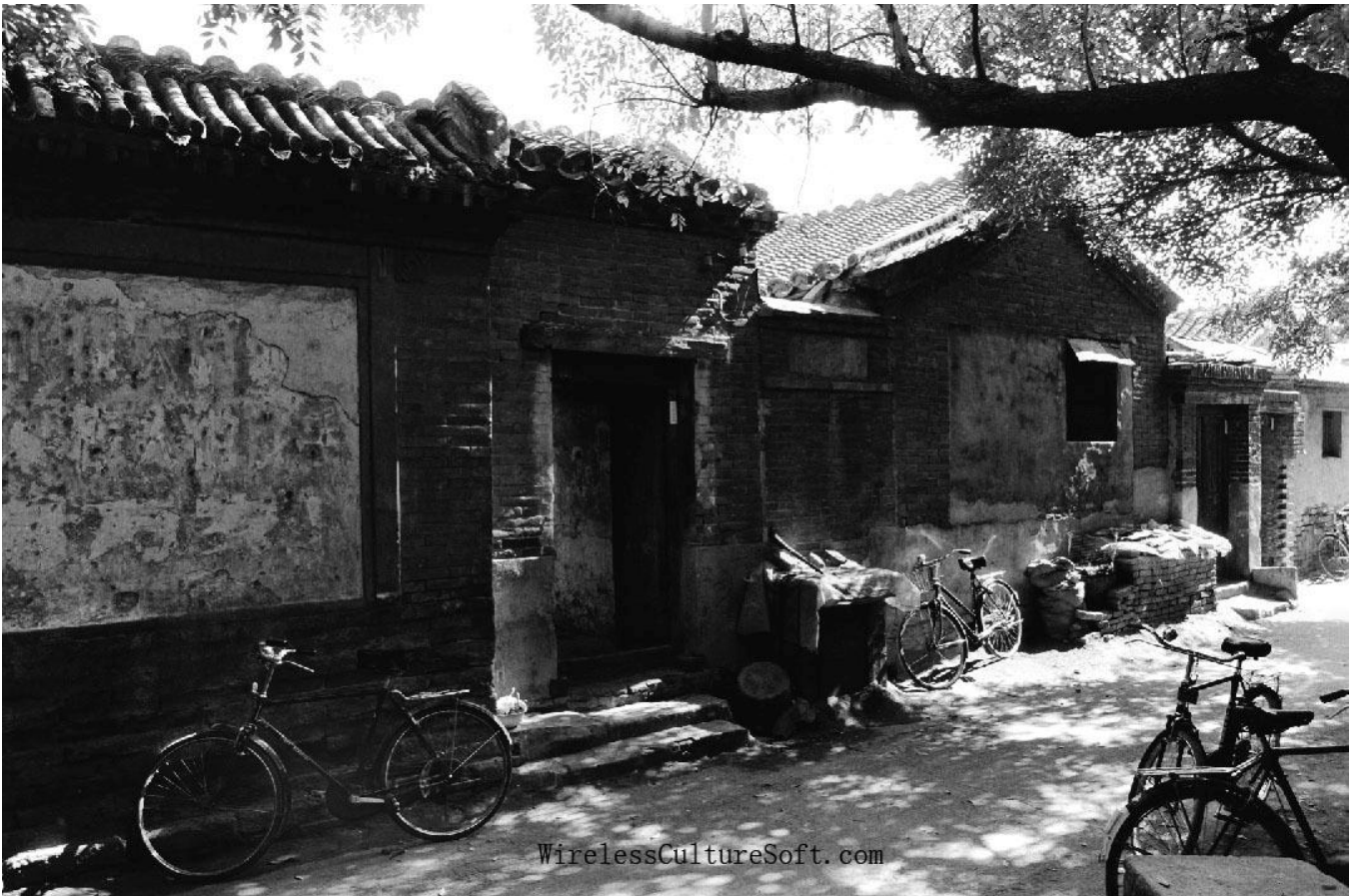
Ancient Hutong Culture at Peking/Beijing



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## Ancient Hutong Culture at Peking/Beijing

Beijing Hutong has various kinds of names and even each of them may possess its own features. Most of them are named according to the feudal institution, bridges, rivers, trade market, merchandise and people's names etc. Still we could find another features that all the hutong together with buildings inside were arranged by the past dynasty emperors in accordance to the formality manners of Zhou Dynasty to consolidate their supreme power.



Beijing 's hutongs, lanes or alleys formed by lines of siheyuan (a compound with houses around a courtyard) where old beijing residents live, witness the vicissitude of the city.

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## 2.0 History

As the above said that Hutong was originally set up in Jin Dynasty, in other words, there was no hutong before, but just roads and city districts. At the beginning of the 13th century, a Mongolian tribe from the west led by Genghis khan occupied Beijing. And after several years' warfare, Beijing city had been destroyed and Genghis khan's grandson, in 1260 decided to rebuild it. It is well known that the feudal emperors all along obey the principle of symmetrical structures in architecture. So they had to fix a central axis and lay all the buildings and houses in a well balance strictly. And the construction process had formed the hutong spontaneously.

## Ancient Hutong Culture at Peking/Beijing



As history goes, the name “Hutong” is such a kind of transliteration from the Mongolian word “huto”, which means water wells. Since nomadic tribes used to live and stay near water wells, they called the small alleys “huto”. Gradually, with the development of the town and human life, people changed the name into hutong as today. It was just applied for the small street after the period of “Nuzhen” People came to the north China. They are exactly the people who established Jin Dynasty and captured the city in 1127 and make it their capital. Because the Mongolian and “Nuzhen” People were both nomadic tribes, their languages are somewhat familiar with each other. So they still adapt the name “hutong”.



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### **3.0 Hutong Culture**

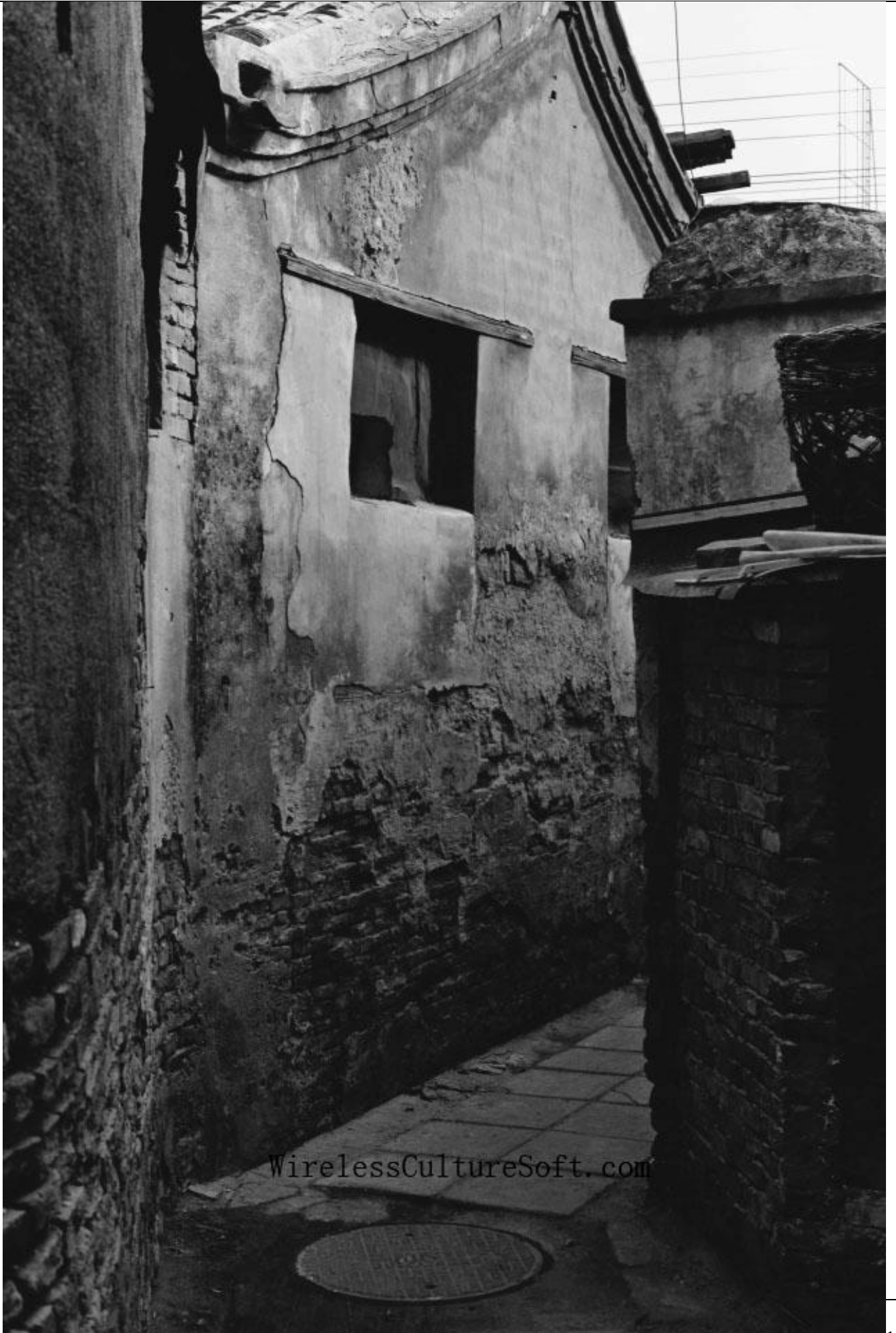
Beijing's hutong culture is a unique Gem of the Chinese culture. About the Beijing hutong culture, there are a lot to say, either from the historical side or the personal experiences. Chinese history, right in the world-famous also seldom-noticed hutong, has gone through its three-time ethnical fusion with the same progress of the assimilation of the Western Culture and architectural styles. Each of which are small alley civilians Paradise, you will see the elderly and laverock dialogue, the innocent playing children. Beijingers rush busy all the time to present great and extraordinary means of living style. Time and again, some calls from the lanes still permeated a kind of long and silvery flavors. To say something in details, there you can enjoy a lot of the ordinary human life and also some special way of talking, eating are appealing. People, especially the old generations, like to sitting together around hutong talking, or playing chess. In the early morning and evenings, it is easily to see that the Chinese traditional way of exercise Taijiquan as well as folkway dancing and songs or Peking Opera arias. All of which, in a sense, are kinds of Chinese culture soul. Beijing civilian foods could also be found here.

## Ancient Hutong Culture at Peking/Beijing



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Not only as a kind of folk culture, but also connected a lot to the formal literature



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### **4.0 Overview of Hutong**

The huge Beijing City has formed its construction style almost after Qing Dynasty. Its city building overall arrangement obeys the pattern style that south and north in rectangular. Influenced by the whole settings, hutongs as well followed such ways. They were surrounded by the traditional Chinese constructions Siheyuan, in other words, it is the Siheyuan that make the Hutong came into being. Maybe the total Beijing City could be called a big palace with royal palace and civilian palace. The civilian place here lot its original meaning as a real palace with delicate decorations. They are much more smaller with low walls and small gates. There is no rules to forbidden anyone from entering, it is convenient for all. In all, hutong is several passageways of the surrounded houses and big streets.



#### Different Types of Hutong

As there are numerous hutongs in Beijing, certainly they will appear differences from each other. In ancient China, there are strictly define to hutong to distinguish from street. A 9-metre-wide lane was called a Hutong. But today we may find that a lot of smaller hutongs have been formed inside bigger hutongs, which shows the development of our minds and society.



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## **5.0 Hutong Today**

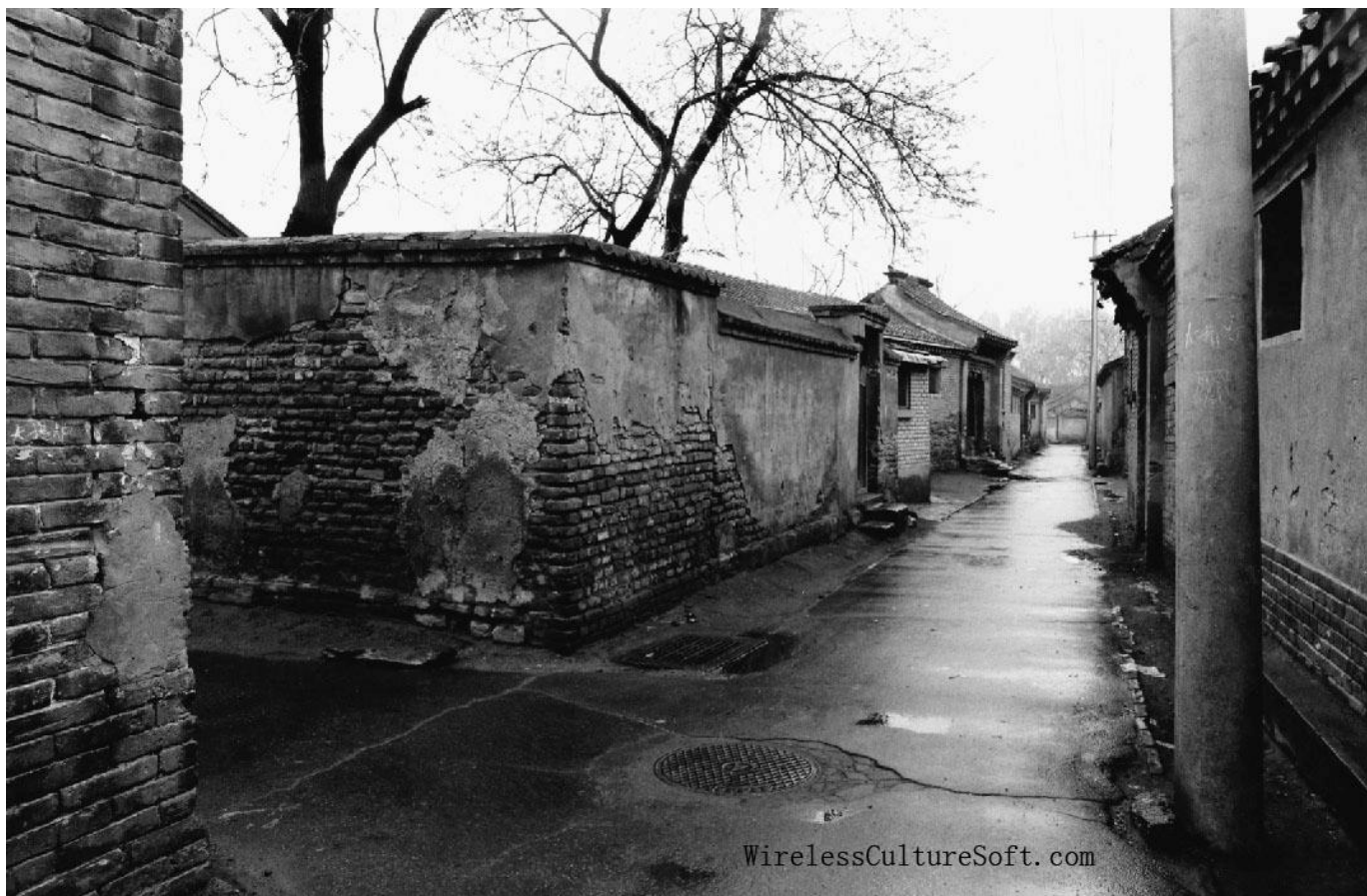
Today, as the Beijing city develops into an international metropolis, its lanes and alleyways, occupying one third of the city proper, still serve as dwellings for half the total urban population.



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## Ancient Hutong Culture at Peking/Beijing

If Beijing sightseeing at the Imperial Palace, Ming Tombs and the Summer Palace is helpful in learning about the lives of China's emperors, the Hutongs of Beijing reflect in turn the lives of ordinary Beijing people as a whole.



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### **6.0 How to get the formal release...**

There are lots of other words and pictures for China hutong and other culture. If you want the formal release, please visit our website at [www.wirelessculturesoft.com](http://www.wirelessculturesoft.com), answer the following 5 simple question:

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