

Awe and Admiration at Nixons At the Royal Palaces

Peking's Ancient Forbidden City

PEKING — (UPI) — President Nixon took a break today in his wearying 20th century diplomacy to marvel at the Forbidden City, where almost five centuries of emperors shaped Old China's history from thrones of gold.

Escorted by Yeh Chien-ying, China's leading military figure, Nixon and his wife spent 90 minutes touring the Imperial Palace's living quarters and three throne rooms. The palace, in the heart of Peking, now is a museum.

The Nixons, bareheaded and smiling despite heavy snow and temperatures in the 20s, walked and drove through about 40 of the 250 acres in the palace grounds.

Several hundred Chinese tourists — families with small children, teenage girls and off-duty soldiers — looked on curiously but quietly.

Main Throne

Nixon broke into a broad smile when he saw the main throne in the Hall of Supreme Harmony, elaborately fashioned atop a six-foot dais and backed by an elaborately carved screen.

In the third throne room, only a few yards away, Mrs. Nixon showed special interest in a collection of art works and imperial treasures dating thousands of years into China's history.

The palace has stood in its present general form since



THE NIXONS VIEW JADE SUIT SEWN WITH GOLDEN WIRE DURING PEKING TOUR

The body of a Han dynasty princess was buried in the suit on display in the Forbidden City.

—AP Photo

1407, when it was constructed by the third Ming emperor, Yong Le.

Surrounding the palace itself was a walled area, into which the Chinese people were forbidden to go, called the Purple Forbidden City.

Fee Less Than 5 Cents

The color purple was associated with the North Star

and was used to show that the imperial residence was the center of the cosmos.

Buildings inside the Forbidden City were gradually opened to the public after the Manchu Dynasty fell in 1911 and now can be seen for an admission charge of less than 5 cents.

The imperial living quar-

ters continued to house royalty until 1924 when the final emperor, Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, left China.

Nixon entered the Forbidden City through the massive red brick Gate of Heavenly Peace, one of the

few remaining parts of the old city wall.

Four inches of snow blanketed the white marble terraces and steps, the gray brick courtyards and the pagoda-style, gold-painted tile roofs of the palace.

The solemnity of all the ancient grandeur was broken at one point when Nixon was shown how the Empress sat on a throne placed behind her husband.

"It's the same way today," Nixon remarked. "The woman is always the backseat driver. They run

the cars, the house and many countries."

Asked if it was true, Mrs. Nixon replied:

"Well, almost."

Nixon wore a gray topcoat and his wife a beige mink.

The President paused longest before a glass case containing two mummies in all-jade "death suits" which

were excavated after being buried 1000 years.

They also saw and were photographed with some bronze horses, dating to 600 B.C., that had never before been shown to the public.

"We don't want to see it all today," Nixon said. "We want to leave something to come back to."