



Cityscapes in Europe and Asia (13th to 20th Centuries). Chair of Early Modern History, University of Zurich; Graduate Institute of Art History at the National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, 10.10.2014—11.10.2014.

Reviewed by Stephan Karl Sander

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (December, 2014)

Cityscapes in Europe and Asia (13th to 20th Centuries)

The conference *Cityscapes in Europe and Asia (13th to 20th Centuries)* took place on 10 and 11 October 2014 at the University of Zurich. Organised as part of a long-standing cooperative effort by the Chair of Early Modern History and the Graduate Institute of Art History at the National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, it provided an interdisciplinary forum for art historians, historians, geographers, architects, and language scholars.

In his initial remarks, BERND ROECK (Zurich), gave a short overview of the past decades of comparative research on city views that originated in the late 1980s before pointing to the recent publication of an exhausting treatment of Swiss city views in the modern era. Bernd Roeck et al., (ed.), *Schweizer Stadttebilder. Urbane Ikonographien, 15.-20. Jahrhundert*, Zurich 2013. The conference served to critically assess the plethora of autonomous city views in (Latin) Europe, especially apparent if compared to other cultures, and addressed the following questions: Who commissioned these city views? What were their specific cultural contexts? And what about the contextual and paratextual evidence connected to the rise of the *veduta*?

The first panel was opened by THOMAS MANETSCH (Zurich) who looked for the *European-ness* of the city view in Renaissance art theory. Exemplarily showing two versions of Martin Martini's depiction of Fribourg (1606, 1608), he tested the boundaries of early modern art theory in discussing and subsequently eliminating landscape painting and architecture as useful categories.

Manetsch concluded that the city view should be considered a portrait. As Agostino Veneziano and Cipriano Piccolpasso acknowledged as early as the 16th century, nature is imperfect and thus the artist is all but *forced* to imitate and *perfect* its visual representations.

BERND ROECK (Zurich) followed up on these considerations emphasising the uniqueness of Europe's autonomous city view and its connections to the contemporaneous emergence of a particular civic culture. This linked the rise of urban autonomy to its late medieval panegyric representations. Yet early modern Europe's illustrative boom, by being tied to increasing urbanisation rates, yields also another aspect: while many city views continue to allude to Celestial Jerusalem until the 18th century, landscape paintings (and the urban settings they show) depict not holy but also secular subjects.

CANDIDA SYNDIKUS (Taipei) paper focused on that dream destination of many learned travellers since the 18th century, Venice. Upon reaching the lagoon they were able to call upon a large pictorial canon and allusions of continuities going back to the Renaissance. Venice, that human-made masterpiece of stone and water, elicited emotional writings from Goethe or Lord Byron. By juxtaposing Jakob Alt's peeping book series (*Guckkastenserie*, c. 1835) with photographs, Syndikus demonstrated what Alt showed *and* what he deliberately left out.

The first panel was concluded by KATHARINA STEINER (Zurich), substituting for Sergiusz Michalski,

who presented her current research on German zoologist Wilhelm Giesbrecht's photographs of Fin de siècle Naples. Giesbrecht worked at the Zoological Station and his images, shot between 1889-93, break from the established pictorial canon established by Duclère and Joli in the 18th or Giorgio Sommer's photographs in the 19th century. To the contrary, the zoologist's tours of Naples show more differentiated views of the southern Italian city as his pictures were taken from an amateur-ish, individual point of view embedded within the social context of late 19th-century Naples.

STEPHAN SANDER-FAES (Zurich), who focused on Venetian cartography and iconography in the eastern Mediterranean, opened the second panel. The acknowledgement of multiple period eyes, he argued, was mirrored by the many nautical charts that serve as the manifestation of a shared Mediterranean until the 19th century. This is equally illustrated by the revolutionary impacts of Ortelius's work and the *Civitates orbis terrarum*. During the 17th century the convergence of mapmaking and city views became even more visible in Dutch maps encompassing cartouches showing Hogenberg's city views, which by their sheer number of publications changed the ways people conceived of their world.

This was further explored by JOSE CÁCERES MARDONES (Zurich) in his discussion of Guaman Poma's city views of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Written at the beginning of the 17th century, the chronicle was richly illustrated. While there were certain European traditions in Poma's writing, the main thesis of the paper was a discussion of the author's agency traceable in the deliberate rearrangement of certain key buildings at the centre of his view of Cusco. The location of the Temple of the Sun and the Sacred Gate could be interpreted as an attempt to represent the City of the Inca in a more symbolically accurate way. Guaman Poma, though a cultural mestizo with inflexible Catholic perceptions, tried to present Cusco as an Andean city.

UWE FLECKNER (Hamburg) discussed the Brazilian *vedutas* by 17th-century Dutch painter Frans Post who went on a sojourn to Southern America in the late 1630s and early 1640s. In the company of governor John Maurice of Nassau-Siegen, Post's sketchbooks offer a number of drawings of Paraíba/Frederikstadt and Mauritsstadt/Recife, while pointing to his later evolution after the return to the Netherlands. The sketches oscillate between urban views and the artistically more refined later landscape paintings for which Post's Brazilian experience formed the basis. This becomes particularly

obvious by juxtaposing his later landscape oil paintings with the contents of his Brazilian sketchbooks.

The transplantation of the Renaissance ideal city to Taiwan by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was the subject of SHAI-SHU TZENG's (Taipei) keynote lecture. While Dutch rule lasted only for a few decades, its immaterial legacy may be traced by looking at pictorial sources from both Europe and China. Ft. Zeelandia, built around 1630, was pivotal in controlling the Taiwan Strait. Unlike its European contemporaries, the Dutch fortification was built based on Renaissance ideals and incorporated a quadratic shape with idealistic approaches to planning, including utopian allusions of it as unassailable fortress. The plans of the bastions thus resemble designs by Pietro Cataneo, Albrecht Dürer or Heinrich Schickhard, leading to questions as to why the Dutch favoured quadratic designs overseas. This may have been due to the availability of certain building materials or the temporary tasks for which these forts were built. When the Dutch left in the early 1660s, Ft. Zeelandia lost its *raison d'être*: its remnants were soon overtaken by the elements and the political centre of Taiwan moved inland as well. While the Dutch episode was of little consequence for Chinese architecture, the use of Renaissance military architecture and utopian ideas was transplanted into the consciousness of the people of Taiwan.

ROLAND ALTENBURGER (Würzburg) discussed the Chinese city and its representations in late imperial narrative literature, geographically focusing on the lower Yangtze region. After a short assessment of the Weberian impact on Chinese studies, Altenburger sketched the changes from 12th-century city memoirs to 19th-century city novels: Meng Yuanlao's *A Record of Dreaming of Past Splendor in the Eastern Capitals* (1187) includes not only descriptions of walls and gates but also the author's mental maps. In a second development, exemplified by *The Quelling of the Demons* (1620), one of the first novels to describe Kaifeng, the urban setting serves mostly as a background. The third aspect, exemplified by the city novel *A Dream of Romance* (1848) depicts Yangzhou and the author's life of pleasures.

CHENG-HUA WANG (Taipei) focused on a relatively short period of time of mid-18th century Suzhou. By comparing six versions of the same print (*The Bridge of 10,000 Years*, 1740-44), urban landmarks, local pride, and consumption patterns were discussed. At the heart of the paper was a newly constructed bridge, shown from a slightly elevated perspective, a sight quite unusual in the Chinese illustrative tradition. Over the course

of subsequent editions, the settings around the bridge changed from official processions shortly after its construction (1741) to depictions showing happy people on and around the bridge (1744), revealing the artist's commentary on the many faces of the city.

VALENTIN NUSSBAUM (Taipei) comparatively assessed the cityscapes shown in the TV show *The Wire* (2002-08) and the French movie *38 tmoins* (2012). The former is set in Baltimore and depicts a mostly decrepit cityscape, avoids stereotypical places but instead focuses on the *other* areas of the city. By building on his own experience, its creator reconstructed Baltimore's cityscape as a composition of a multitude of recollections, eventually resulting in a fragmented on-screen representation. In the second example, the French city of Le Havre is used as background *à stage* of a crime, emphasising the theatricality of the urban scenery. Thus, both instances share the ambition to depict the cityscape as a locus of recollection.

TATSUHIKO SEO (Tokyo) discussed the implications of environmental circumstances on the development of capitals in East Asia in the 7th and 8th centuries. This had consequences on a variety of levels, in particular on the structure of north-south trade (bulk goods) and east-west commerce (luxury goods). As the Chinese capitals moved from *inner* to coastal regions, their spatial arrangements and geographical settings changed as well: From Chang'an to Luoyang under the Tang dynasty to Kaifeng to, finally, Beijing and Nanjing, the *moved* capital cities were then found in fluvial settings before finally *arriving* in the coastal areas.

TSUTOMU IYORI (Kyoto) and his paper on the iconography of Ryukyu (Okinawa) port cities in the 18th and 19th centuries opened the fourth session. In the early modern period, the islands were part of the Shuri kingdom whose city views were within the traditional Chinese representative norms and their Japanese *translations*. From the 17th century onwards Ryukyu was the focal point of a receptive triangulation, incorporating Chinese, Japanese, and European influences and closely tied to the import of new measurement techniques. From thence European methods enabled Japanese artists to overcome the traditional approaches to urban visualisations.

Tokyo between xylography and photography was the topic of EVELYN SCHULZ's (Munich) talk in which she described the merging of western technology and traditional East Asian visual cultures. By building on Japanese illustrated guidebooks, the Meiji Restoration fo-

cused on Edo, renamed to Tokyo, and the embodiment of Japan's break from tradition and advance into *modernity*. When the introduction of photography allowed new ways of self-representation, Neoclassical Edo-Tokyo was presented announcing the successful westernisation. As such, representations of Tokyo represent a fusion of traditional Japanese city views and *western* influences.

YUE ZHUANG (Exeter) concluded the panel with her paper on William Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772). Despite being one of the most widely known western texts on Chinese architecture, Zhuang argued that Chambers's thesis was in fact a critique and reception of Burke's *Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Thus Chambers was never quite able to overcome Burke's uneasiness with contemporary developments, which Zhuang connected to the latter's restrictive views on political liberty. In the end, Chambers's main argument was that the Chinese ways of gardening should be applied to urban planning. If conceived of like this, the city would become the sight of reconciliation of human spirituality and industrial activity.

CESARE DE SETA (Naples) concluded the conference with a lecture on urban iconography in early modern Italy. By tracing the development of Europe's autonomous city view back to late medieval Siena, he argued that their point of reference was the ideal city. He further explored the discrepancies of Renaissance art and its idealistic aspirations, e.g., the *Tavola Strozzi* (1472) or the renowned *View of Florence with the Chain* (1480s). By the end of the 15th century, the first *skyline* appeared in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493). After the turn of the century, the number and quality of European city views exploded and continued to thrive until the advent of *modern* mapmaking over the course of the 18th century, which started the process of separating the traditional European city view from cartographic evidence and geography.

The conference demonstrated the potential benefits from positioning the European city view within a broader, global framework of reference. The lively debates among scholars from three continents underlined the necessity of furthering the collaborative efforts. The European experience, gaining momentum from the 15th century onwards, should be considered in broad, comparative settings to better understand the continuities and differences between the various regions of the world. As the comparative perspective of the conference proved its worth, the next step may well be to even more critically

assess the relevant processes of cultural exchanges.

Conference Overview:

Bern Roeck (Zurich), Introductory remarks

Panel 1: (Latin) Europe

Thomas Manetsch (Zurich), Pictures beyond Norm? Looking for the European City View in Renaissance Art Theory

Bernd Roeck (Zurich), The Invention of 'The Beautiful City': *Laus urbium*, the *Veduta*, and the Emergence of the European Bourgeoisie

Candida Syndikus (Taipei), Shaping a Myth: The Cityscape of Venice from the Perspective of German 19th-Century Painters

Katharina Steiner (Zurich), Wilhelm Giesbrecht's City Views: A Blind Spot in the Neapolitan Canon of Images

Panel 2: Spheres of Transitions: Iberian, Orthodox, and Islamic Worlds

Stephan Sander-Faes (Zurich), Mapping the Frontier: The Cartography and Iconography of Venice vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire

Jose Calceres Mardones (Zurich), Guaman Poma's Cityscapes: Narratives, Hybridity and Resistance

Uwe Fleckner (Hamburg), The Brazilian Vedutas by Frans Post

Keynote Lecture

Shai-Shu Tzeng (Taipei), Images of Zeelandia: Transplantation of the Model of the Ideal City to Taiwan by the VOC

Panel 3: Eastern Promises I: The Far East

Roland Altenburger (Würzburg), The City in Late Imperial Chinese Narrative Literature

Cheng-hua Wang (Taipei), Urban Landmarks, Local Pride, and Popular Consumption: Cityscapes of 18th Century Suzhou

Valentin Nussbaum (Taipei), Theatres of Memories: Cityscapes as Spaces of Recollection in Film

Tatsuhiko Seo (Tokyo), The Historical Context of Capitals of the 7th and 8th Centuries in East Asia

Panel 4: Eastern Promises II: The Far East

Tsutomu Iyori (Kyoto), The Formation of Veduta Types concerning the Ryukyu Capital and its Port Town in the 18th and 19th Centuries

Evelyn Schulz (Munich), The Many Faces of the City: Tokyo between Xylography and Photography

Yue Zhuang (Exeter), Liberty, Fear and the City of Sensations: Sir William Chambers's 'Dissertation on Oriental Gardening' (1772) and Burke's 'Sublime-Effect'

Concluding lecture

Cesare de Seta (Naples), 'Ritratti di città' - Urban Iconography in Italy from the Renaissance to the 18th Century

Bernd Roeck (Zurich), Concluding remarks

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Stephan Karl Sander. Review of , *Cityscapes in Europe and Asia (13th to 20th Centuries)*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. December, 2014.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=43003>

Copyright © 2014 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.