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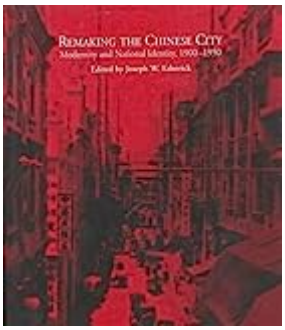
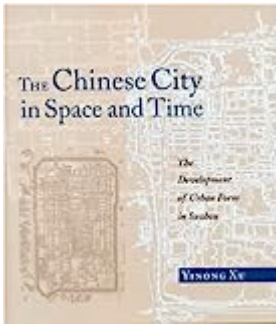


Joseph W. Esherick, ed. *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. x + 278 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-2148-7.



Yinong Xu. *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. xi + 361 pp. $47.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-2076-3.

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Paradigms of Chinese Urbanism Traditional and Modern

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Xu Yinong's rich and solidly researched study of the political and cultural import of imperial Suzhou's urban morphology and Joseph Esherick's edited volume of 13 lively essays on cities as the discursive and material site for the coalescence of modernist regimes in twentieth century China both contribute boldly to the current fluorescence of scholarship on Chinese urbanism. Considered together, these two works highlight the diversification of thematic and geographic foci within Chinese urban history scholarship, which has, to cite the title of the 1996 conference that initiated the latter book, moved "beyond Shanghai". These two valuable volumes reappraise urbanism a key component of traditional and modern political, economic, and social ideology.

In light of the dearth of recent English-language work on ancient, medieval, and early modern city planning and development, Xu Yinong's meticulous book on Suzhou is particularly significant: it joins the select body of core

English-language "technical" works on traditional cities. [1] Celebrated since the Song period (960-1279 CE) as an embodiment of economic plenty and cultural richness and possessing a history of two and a half millennia, Suzhou was arguably the traditional city par excellence. (Recent transformations have fundamentally altered the city's surviving classical structure and neighborhoods of picturesque, though woefully unhygienic and inconvenient, late imperial dwellings; nonetheless, the city still enjoys the reputation as a classic "traditional" city.) Suzhou was never a typical city, but an anomaly that represented the leading tendencies of urban development. In many ways, however, Suzhou, as a non-imperial though highly eminent regional center, is arguably more representative of urban development patterns than well-studied imperial capitals such as Beijing, Nanjing, and Chang'an, whose roles as "cosmological centers" has long provided the basic template for our understanding of traditional city planning. Despite the indisputable influence of ritual texts on basic notions of urban design, the layout and function of non-capital cities were guided by another related but distinct logic, the demonstration of the state's ordering power. As such, Xu establishes Suzhou as an exemplary case study with the dual virtue of chronicling the pattern development common to most Chinese cities while also showcasing fascinating, unique aspects of the city's singular development.

Through enviable command of a wide variety of primary materials, Xu's seven chapters and brief introduction and conclusion offer a critical, if sometimes overly schematic, overview of Suzhou's two and a half millennia development. The book also provides an excellent examination of scholarly approaches to pre-modern urban morphology. The author helpfully underscores the uses and limits of comparisons with European models by providing a nuanced reappraisal of several classic characterizations of Chinese cities: 1) Unlike their European counterparts, Chinese cities were not integrated corporate political entities but centers of imperial administrative power, a situation partly responsible for the relative dearth of civic identity and consciousness, the parochial nature of urban social institutions, and the striking absence of large open public spaces within the city. (These questions remain much more contentious than the author acknowledges; more detailed case studies would help support his interpretations.) 2) Socially and culturally, Chinese cities were "open institutions", attesting to the essential continuum, as opposed to a strict dichotomy, between city and countryside. 3) The elimination of the walled urban ward system during the Tang/Song "transition" period led to a reorganization of the cityscape and social and commercial life, a fundamental albeit protracted "medieval urban revolution".

Starting with a detailed analysis of the original city purportedly built in 514 BCE by the ambitious Wu king Helu, for whom the majesty of the city was a testament to his ambition and power, Xu shows how cities exemplified China's singularly humanist cosmology. Chinese cosmogony denied an original creator but posited that humans and the physical world were both constituent components of a spontaneously self-generating cosmos. The paradigm of city building thus was not divine creation of the universe, but imitation of the form of the universe. Given human society's essential involvement in universal processes, cosmic patterns formed the basis for ideals of city and greater state order. Xu underscores this relation with a close and provocatively original interpretation of the function and symbolism of discrete structural elements such as gates, walls, canals, and bridges. Walls, Xu argues, were functional and conceptual markers of state power. Walls delineated Suzhou as a city, *chengshi*, that is *cheng*, wall, and *shi*, market. More importantly, they declared the state's capacity to order society within and without their span. Furthermore, the remarkable stability of the city's walls, which were repeatedly rebuilt on old foundations in the face of great flux in the size and distribution of the population and commercial activity, attests to a predilection among conservative literati to view the wall integument as a seminatural element of the environment and permanent testimony to the power of the state. The striking continuity of Suzhou's macro-urban form over a longue duree does support these conclusions. Nonetheless, Xu could more fully consider the novel social meanings and uses that urban space acquired through social practice within the integument of the city wall. For instance, Craig Clunas has demonstrated how the social uses and meanings of urban gardens in Suzhou were transformed during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries even as their makers endeavored to "recreate" ancient forms.[2 Xu notes that continuity of form did not hinder the development of suburbs (indeed, it probably encouraged it), or the reorganization of the population and commerce into three distinct areas during the Ming and Qing dynasties. What meanings did people assign to these novel areas, how did they view their relation to the "ancient" city? Given Xu's mastery of sources and analytic strengths, I hope he may consider some of these social geographic questions in the future.

The structural and symbolic importance of walls is also key to Xu's analysis of public space. The ubiquity of walled courtyards and relative lack of broad, open squares used for commercial and social purposes in European cities was not a sign that public spaces were any less needed. Rather, the conception and ordering of public space was different. Citing urban memoir literature, Xu suggestively argues that unenclosed spaces were viewed as unordered and therefore inappropriate for social intercourse and commerce. Rather, he argues that temple courtyards, such as that of the massive Xuanmiao Guan (Daoist temple) complex at the center of the city, served as sites of worship, association, business, entertainment, and other aspects of social life. They were at the center of social life. As such, these enclosed, hence ordered, spaces, provided suitable venues for public life and could be seen as analogous to city squares in Europe. Though enlightening and suggestive, this discussion would be enriched with more detailed examination of the various social uses of temples and their implications for the shape and functions of "public" space in imperial Suzhou.[3] Xu tantalizingly remarks that the city's streets may have held more variety in the types of activities which took place there, but that temples were nonetheless the locus for organized social activities. This begs the largely unexplored question, what were the contours of the street as an organized or ostensibly anarchic social site? How did the street and temple differ as public spaces in traditional cities?

Xu also explores the significance of cultural constructions of space by examining fengshui ("wind and water"), or geomancy, on urban planning. Fengshui focuses on the relationship between land, water, human built structures, and energies animating the earth in order manipulate their interaction to forestall potential negative effects or foster positive consequences on humans. Though now enjoying a vogue among urban American glitterati concerned that the placement of their furniture may foster harmful energies, fengshui has more traditionally been applied to the siting of buildings, graves, and other structures. Despite its connection to certain fundamental conceptions of city planning and ostensibly universal use in the construction of buildings, the actual influence of fengshui on urban growth remains unclear. Xu argues that fengshui, on the macro level at least, probably exercised minimal influence on the city's physical development. As support, he cites the surprising infrequency with which it is mentioned in the voluminous extant writings of Suzhou elites. This is in stark contrast to the south, where the use of fengshui in the building of individual structures and arrangement of cities as a whole is well-documented. Xu notes that this reticence on the importance of geomancy among Suzhou elites may stem from the close supervision of classically educated peers, which may have enforced more orthodox intellectual strictures, if not actual practice and belief. He also stresses that at the very least elites were reluctant to carry out large scale alterations to the city's essential layout lest their actions have unforeseen negative consequences on Suzhou's fortunes. Thus, while perhaps not a cardinal principle driving urban planning and development, fengshui played a role in the astonishing continuity of the city's morphology.

By navigating such a broad swath of critical issues, Xu effectively demonstrates how urbanism was implicated in core political, social, and cultural processes in traditional China. His book should therefore be welcomed by all interested in imperial China, regardless of their academic field. His rich research and consideration of broad historiographic issues should also attract the attention of non-area specialists interested in comparative ancient, medieval, and early modern urban studies.

While Xu's monograph explores the classical urban paradigm par excellence, the 13 varied essays that constitute *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950* provide an expansively complex survey of various ways in which the city, as individual places and a genus, has been central to the conception and practice of modernity and nationalism. As Joseph Esherick notes in his introduction, the core concepts and technics of modernist urbanism were appropriated and developed in startlingly different fashions, giving rise to a series of different modern urban types: 1) treaty port, 2) capital city, 3) interior city, 4) tourist city, 5) railway city, 6) industrial city, and 7) frontier city. While not discrete analytic categories, this typology provides a stimulating introduction to the essays, which explore various facets of the first six, by highlighting how exigencies of local geography, economy, and politics produced distinctive formations of modernist development. Given the diversity of ways that urban communities made themselves modern and related to the nation, this volume nicely surveys the different valences between local and national modernity.

The five diverse and intriguing chapters in Part I, "The Modernist City", critically survey the influence of modernist city planning and economic technologies on remaking cities throughout China. Were it not for Brett Sheehan's informative study of Tianjin banking net-

works as an example of novel cosmopolitan identity and entrepreneurship, the section could be retitled "Planning the Modernity City," as the four other essays gloss different aspects of city planning.

In their respective chapters, Michael Tsin and Kristin Stapleton explore attempts by radically different Chinese nationalist regimes, the Guomindang in Canton (Guangzhou) and the violent yet quirkily progressive warlord Yang Sen in Chengdu, to remake their cities as national exemplars of modernity. Tsin nicely characterizes the Guomindang's ambition to reorder Canton as part of an epistemic "rise of the social", which viewed human and material resources as an interconnected totality. In Canton (and several other cities), planners trained in Western urbanism found the city's classical layout overly restrictive and deleterious to the development of modern industry and commerce. They aimed to invigorate the urban body by increasing circulation of commodities, people, and air throughout the city. Tsin shows how road-building and the demolition of the city wall were viewed as both essential practical means and symbols of progressive governmentality. He also discusses the establishment of Canton's municipal government, one of China's first and a key institutional moment in the reconceptualization of urban space. 1920s Sichuan was viewed as immiserated in backwardness and conflict, some of which Stapleton ascribes to Yang Sen's ambitious, hence contentious, attempt to remake Chengdu during his brief yet effective 1924-25 municipal regime. Stapleton provides a complex sketch of a Chengdu animated by different reform currents: progressives commemorated the death of Lenin with a mass meeting in a public park (interestingly presided over by the warlord's chief of police) while many elites worked to secure the government's promise to preserve the city's Confucian temple. In addition to the disruptive and universally fraught project of road-building, Yang Sen's city administration sponsored a broad set of popular reform initiatives, e.g., holding fairs and exhibitions in conjunction with long-established festivals, forcing women to undertake the painful process of unbinding their feet, and exhorting the adoption of "modern" short clothing in contrast to long, voluminous "traditional" dress. Unlike other cities, Chengdu did not have a strong organized business community to negotiate changes in Yang's plan. Thus, Stapleton provides an interesting case study of the ambition and potential achievement of an inspired (if potentially cruel and violent) municipal regime.

In contrast, David Buck's chapter on Changchun (a.k.a. Xinjing or "New Capital", the city's name after the Japanese military officially occupied Manchuria in 1931 and established the puppet state of Manchukuo) examines a Japanese imperialist vision of modernity. The Japanese saw Changchun as a showplace that would allow them to display their benevolent tutelage to the rest of China and Asia. As in other colonial situations, Changchun provided a space for experiments in urban planning and design not possible in the metropole. Thus, Japanese architects and planners remade the city in a grand style reminiscent of earlier twentieth century planned capitals such as New Delhi and Canberra. Despite the survival of much Japanese modernist architecture, including the "developing Asia" style later criticized as militarist, this Japanese experiment in colonial planning has largely been erased from Chinese historical and architectural works due to nationalist sensibilities. However, as Buck points out, Japanese Changchun provides a fascinating comparison to contemporary Chinese city planning.

Ruth Rogaski focuses on another aspect of city planning in her essay, which explores the signal emphasis on sanitation in Tianjin. In the early twentieth century, Tianjin was a hypercolony, with the populace and territory under the rule (sometimes simultaneously) of several different foreign powers, all of which competed to demonstrate their administrative prowess to the Chinese and to one another. Yet disease, especially cholera, permeated administrative barriers, sparking a crisis of "hygienic modernity" that highlighted the incommensurability between advanced disciplined systems of sanitation and the Chinese, whose ostensibly backward nature made them a source of constant danger to foreigners and to modernity itself. This anxious condescension combined with concerns for political autonomy and public health led local Chinese elites to promote sanitation as key to their own administration. Although open to many foreign medical practices, Chinese doctors and officials occasionally criticized what they saw as excessive reliance on germ theory to the neglect of pathogenic factors in the spread of illness. Others viewed quarantine epidemic controls as an attack on the Chinese race. Given the coexistence of analogous Chinese and Western concepts of pathogenesis as a source of contagion, the creation of modern public health administration was not a simple case of Western practice displacing Chinese science. Rather, she argues that hygienic modernity saw the commingling and contestation between Chinese and foreign conceptions and practices of sanitation.

In Part II, "Tradition and Modernity", the focus shifts to the role of architectural and historical heritage in

the distillation of urban and national identity. In their respective chapters on the attempt to redefine Beiping ("Northern Peace", as Beijing, "Northern Capital", was renamed when Nanjing ("Southern Capital") became the Republican capital in 1927) as a national cultural metropolis attractive to tourists in the wake of the national capital's move to Nanjing, and the development of Hangzhou and its scenic West Lake as a mass tourist destination, Madeline Dong and Wang Liping examine how in light of rapid social transformation, which made the imperial era seem ever more distant, historic sites and literati culture acquired the authority of "tradition". Furthermore, as urban economic planners recognized, tradition commodified could provide an economic basis for modern commercial growth and city administration. Enabled by advances in transportation, the growth in "leisure" resulting from the adoption of a Western-style calendar and work week and the spread of mass modern entertainment media, historic tourism proved that the medium was also the message. In addition to explaining the relevance of the hoary imperial past for self-consciously modern urban dwellers, historic tourism in Beiping and Hangzhou also inculcated normatively modern consumption and lifestyle habits that augmented the creation of novel Republican popular and political culture. Concluding with Charles Musgrove's chapter on the Guomindang state's attempts to create a modern yet distinctively Chinese synthetic architecture in order to reconstruct Nanjing in a manner befitting its status as the capital of a nascent republic/ancient nation, these essays elaborate the various ways that historicity became prime political and economic currency in the transaction of modern national identity.

The essays of Part III, "City and Nation", consider the unique place that cities such as Wuhan, Chongqing, and Shanghai have occupied in constructions of the Chinese nation. Stephen MacKinnon analyzes the multi-valence of Wuhan's identity as a dual industrial and political center, which he inscribes in part to the discrete nature of the tri-city's disparate parts, Hankou, Wucheng, and Hanyang. He contrasts this to the unified, heroic image that the city gained as a center of resistance to Japan in 1938 and how this played an important role in attracting the attention of anti-fascist sympathizers, already mobilized the civil war in Spain, to see the burgeoning war in China as part of a global struggle. Lee McIsaac effectively extends MacKinnon's piece by examining a later moment in the War of Resistance after the fall of Wuhan and establishment of Chongqing as the "alternate" wartime capital. (Unwilling to cede the permanent loss of Nanjing and confident of the eventual defeat of the Japanese after the U.S. entry into the war, the GMD government did not make the city a permanent capital.) McIsaac discusses the dilemma facing the GMD as its new capital was widely seen as filthy, lacking majesty, and backward. Nonetheless, the state was able to parlay the city's ostensible insufficiencies into an inspirational symbol of the nation at war. In contrast, Jeffrey Wasserstrom elegantly surveys the ways in which Shanghai's cosmopolitan modernity has been interpreted as variously making the city a foreign excrescence with little to do with "China" or a crucible of Chinese modernity, among other readings. David Strand, in his closing summary commentary, muses on the diversity of meanings urban experience and the roles that cities have played in inspiring nationalist passions among generations of modern Chinese.

Readers with any interest in twentieth century China or comparative work on nationalism, urban studies, and modernity will find this book intensely rewarding. In addition to the immediate pleasures of surveying the historiographic terrain and gaining an array of insights, collections such as this, which highlight work by recent or soon to be Ph.D.s along with established scholars, hold the promise of several forthcoming book-length studies. Happily, two of these have already appeared. Michael Tsin, *Nation, governance, and modernity in China: Canton, 1900-1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) and Kristin Stapleton, *Civilizing Chengdu: Chinese urban reform, 1895-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, Harvard University Press, 2000), both important books, elaborate themes surveyed in their chapters to this volume. I look forward to additional titles, as well. As a long-term project, this volume and its corollary works promise to transform our appreciation of cities as the dual creation cum substance of modernist nationalism in late Qing and Republican China.

Notes:

[1]. E.g., Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977); and classic essays by Frederick Mote and Arthur Wright with which Xu engages. Given the technical nature of Xu's book, non-specialists may wish to first consult some of the above works, especially the elegant, brief essays by Mote and Wright.

[2]. Craig Clunas, *-Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

[3]. Temples and their importance as a constitutive space for urban social life is explored in depth in Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

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