

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Xu, Yinong. *The Chinese City in Space and Time. The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. Pp. xi, 359. Maps, black-and-white illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$47.00 (cloth)

Jennifer W. Jay

Volume 29, Number 1, October 2000

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016428ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016428ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Jay, J. W. (2000). Review of [Xu, Yinong. *The Chinese City in Space and Time. The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. Pp. xi, 359. Maps, black-and-white illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$47.00 (cloth)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 29(1), 65–66. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016428ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 2000

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

McCuaig, Katherine, *The Weariness, the Fever, and the Fret: The Campaign against Tuberculosis in Canada 1900–1950*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 384. Illustrations. Can\$24.95 paper, \$55 hard.

Those of us who remember our parents' admonitions to sleep with the bedroom windows open, carry a clean hanky, refrain from spitting, and wash our hands, are perhaps unaware that their concerns stemmed from the grim experiences of their own lives, growing up as they did in the shadow of a terrible killer. Nor are most of us aware of the legacy that the struggle against tuberculosis has left upon our society, even to this day. Katherine McCuaig's profile of this disease and Canada's struggle to cope with it is the latest in the series of excellent publications produced by the Hannah Institute, McGill-Queen's Associated Medical Services, Studies in the History of Medicine. In her book, McCuaig presents a great deal of new scientific and social material and revisits existing sources to enrich our understanding of the struggle against TB, first studied comprehensively years ago in George Wherrett's landmark study, *The Miracle of the Empty Beds* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977). Her insightful study of the battle against tuberculosis in Canada from 1900 to 1950 draws together the complex threads of the medical, religious, social, and cultural tapestry woven by this slippery assassin. As a physician with a master's in Canadian history, McCuaig is uniquely qualified to take her readers on this half-century odyssey.

McCuaig opens with a snapshot of the disease at the beginning of the century, describes the emerging scientific basis for the medical profession's future assault on the disease, and society's confused understanding of the causes and possible cures. The First World War brought the struggle against TB to a crisis, as diseased recruits and sick veterans forced governments to acknowledge the inroads that TB made into Canadian society and to accept a level of responsibility that they had until then avoided.

The inter-war years brought new challenges. Many of the volunteer agencies that we know today either came into existence during the inter-war years, or were substantially reformed—even professionalized—by their experiences during these crucial two decades. Tuberculosis was a driving force behind the birth and refinement of medical statistics, the development of new building materials, improved hospital and school design, new medical procedures, and new standards of public comportment. TB challenged cherished myths, such as the notion that rural life was healthier than urban, or that disease was a punishment for dissolute behaviour. The disease had long-lasting impact upon ordinary lives, personal and public cleanliness, standards of human and animal sanitation, and the growing expectation that good health was a right that our governments had a responsibility to nurture.

McCuaig notes that the Second World War had as much an impact upon the struggle against TB as the First, but her

coverage of its effect is relatively thin. She hits her stride again in her analysis of the post-war achievements made by the arrival of antibiotics and more precise diagnosis. Dr. McCuaig analyzes the impact that the TB campaign had upon the assault against other diseases, such as the understanding of the role of lifestyle choices in heart disease and cancer. While the campaign against TB was the driving force behind many scientific and social advances, McCuaig also sounds a cautionary note here, that we have come to rely too heavily upon scientific advances, and upon government and technocrats. Her conclusion tends to wander off into areas less strictly related to the theme, as if she can't bear to let the subject go.

This book has broad scope and detailed focus. The author nicely balances the national picture with the individual situations of the provinces and municipalities; she speaks of society in general and of the particularities of certain groups such as the history of tuberculosis among native and Jewish Canadians. The author generally does a good job of explaining medical and scientific aspects of tuberculosis in layman's language (with a judicious use of statistics), although she did lose me a bit in her description of surgical procedures. Her writing style, while scientific and academic in its anchoring, is fundamentally humane and empathetic to her subject, having the lightest touch of irony and indignation. This book sits comfortably with the growing body of scientific literature aimed at enabling the reading public to understand technical and medical developments that impinge upon our lives.

Historians believe that society would be improved if people knew their history better and were prepared to learn the lessons that the past longs to teach us. On no subject is this more true than the subject of health care. Are we going to undercut public health care, offload responsibility to other jurisdictions, hide behind scientific discovery, and let our public services degrade so that we no longer live in healthy environments? McCuaig's unpreachy yet compelling book, well-grounded as it is in solid research, raises these questions in the mind of any thoughtful reader.

Leslie Maitland
National Historic Sites Directorate
Parks Canada

Xu, Yinong. *The Chinese City in Space and Time. The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. Pp. xi, 359. Maps, black-and-white illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$47.00 (cloth).

The premodern history of Suzhou, a city famous for its scenic beauty and canal network and located at the rice-growing centre of the Yangzi delta, Jiangsu province, is the subject of this substantive monograph that combines the author's training in architecture and city-planning with historical inquiry. In fulfilling the stated objective of examining the "formation and transformation of the urban form and space of Suzhou,"

Xu Yinong builds upon the scholarship of G. William Skinner, P. Wheatley, and F. W. Mote while walking us through primary sources and eyewitness accounts from official histories, gazetteers, poetry, prose, and fiction.

The author argues that Suzhou's history as a cultural and economic region is distinct from that of imperial capital cities such as Beijing but is representative of regional cities. As such it provides a framework for broadening our knowledge of China's "complex urban history." Founded in 514 B.C as the capital of Wu state during Eastern Zhou's multi-state conflicts, Suzhou became an important economic centre and administrative city only in the ninth century. The medieval urban revolution that began then and continued into the thirteenth century witnessed the breakdown of the official marketing organization, the decentralization of trade and commerce, and the emergence of many small and intermediate towns with economic functions. With rice becoming more dominant in food crop production, and with the adoption of water conservation and new techniques and tools, Suzhou's agriculture became more commercialized, and inter-regional trade flourished along the extensive network of canals, streets, and bridges. The tremendous growth of the silk industry and the extensive use of the Grand Canal were matched by cultural and political success, as seen in the high numbers of degree-holders from Suzhou. The city survived a serious setback caused by the exile of elites and higher taxes in the fourteenth century. Two centuries later, Suzhou's population of a million was living in "China's richest, most urbanized and advanced region." But in the eighteenth century, demographic pressure and rapid economic growth weakened the canal and transportation system, and in the 1860s, when the Taiping Rebellion devastated the city and destroyed more than half its population, Suzhou's leading economic role was overtaken by Shanghai.

Xu Yinong indicates that despite political and economic upheavals, Suzhou's form has generally remained stable over time, with the most notable change being the removal of the inner city walls in modern times. The main streets, bridges, and canals have the same names and the walls enclosing the site have been there since the seventh century. The heavy sense of authority of the past and the weight of tradition dictated the frequent rebuilding of these urban structures. Although Suzhou, like other Chinese cities, was multifunctional, its foundation was administration. Thus the city's construction, cosmological layout, bridges, canal system, and city walls symbolized central authority and the state's presence in the social and political order as represented and upheld by the government offices and officials. Xu observes that while geomancy (*feng shui*) influenced the siting of capital cities, villages, gardens, tombs, and homes, the administrative staff did not use it as a guiding principle in the construction of form and space in the city because the city was not a private property but the extension of the central administration.

Citing the data on Suzhou as a representative administrative

unit, Xu Yinong argues that Chinese urban history is important in its distinctiveness from Western urban history, where "corporate identity" and an "urban-rural dichotomy" prevailed. Defining corporate identity as the influential political power of merchants or the private sector, consciousness and identity with the city, along with ideas of emancipation and liberty, Xu asserts that no premodern Chinese city demonstrated the presence of corporate identity. Europe's concept of free citizenry and the civic square had no equivalents in premodern Chinese cities, which were characterized instead by "extreme diversity and high integration," devoid of the urban-rural dichotomy of Western cities. Instead, the "urban-rural continuum" prevailed in Chinese cities, as indicated the cultural and economic activities involving both cities and the countryside, the absence of strictly urban or rural festivals, the lack of contrast between rural and urban architecture, and social division based more on class and occupation than between city and countryside.

In sum, Xu Yinong's reconstruction of the historical development of Suzhou is a welcome contribution to both Chinese and Western urban history. The volume's attractive presentation and numerous illustrations and maps provide additional documentation and a visual feast of historical geography.

Jennifer W. Jay
Department of History and Classics
University of Alberta

Gordon, Linda. *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. Pp. xii, 416. Maps, black-and-white illustrations, index. US\$29.95 (cloth)

This account of child adoption and "child stealing" in Arizona in 1903 is a story of borders crossed and strictly maintained on the American mining frontier. Exploring this incident as it unfolded, Gordon's book details the ways in which gender, class, race, culture, nation, and religion interacted in complex ways, as a group of orphans brought to the Southwest to be adopted were quickly abducted into new families, with the aid of the law, and later, the blessing of the state. This immensely detailed and rich account of the orphan abduction is a fascinating read, all the more dramatic to us because its final sanctification by the United States Supreme Court seems outrageous to our twenty-first-century sensibilities.

The orphans were the sons and daughters of poor New Yorkers, sometimes single or unmarried mothers, often Irish immigrants, who were placed in a foundling hospital run by the Sisters of Charity. Accompanied by a male agent and nurses, three Sisters transported fifty-seven charges across the country to the southwest, to what was supposed to be a better life for children barely considered "white" because of their Irish origins. They were to be adopted by Catholic families in the growing twin copper towns of Clifton/Morenci. Because the adopting families were Mexican, a group of local white (largely Anglo) townspeople