

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

D. M. Palliser, ed. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. I: 600–1540*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xxvi, 841. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US\$140 (cloth)

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Volume 30, Number 1, October 2001

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015946ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015946ar>

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Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

McSheffrey, S. (2001). Review of [D. M. Palliser, ed. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. I: 600–1540*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xxvi, 841. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US\$140 (cloth)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 30(1), 69–70.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1015946ar>

de l'espace urbain, membres de la classe d'affaires, instances gouvernementales et consommateurs ont tous pris part au développement du réseau téléphonique à Montréal. Leurs interactions ont façonné, en quelque sorte, la forme spécifique qu'il a prise dès le premier tiers du XXe siècle. C'est cette dynamique qu'analyse l'auteur du livre *La Cité au bout du fil*.

Dans les trois premiers chapitres, Poitras campe les grands mouvements de métropolisation, les idéaux qu'ils véhiculaient et l'état des communications avant l'arrivée du téléphone. Ce contexte d'émergence prépare la lecture des chapitres 4, 5 et 6 qui relatent les grands étapes de l'organisation du réseau téléphonique montréalais. On y dévoile les stratégies monopolistiques et commerciales de la compagnie Bell, calquées sur celles de l'American Telegraph & Telephone aux États-Unis. Il n'empêche que le marché particulier de Montréal oblige l'entreprise canadienne à revoir certaines de ses pratiques. Les changements techniques sont également analysés pour montrer comment ils ont rendu possible l'extension du réseau aux zones périphériques.

Les chapitres 7, 8, 9 et 10 renvoient surtout aux stratégies de planification privilégiées par Bell. On y analyse également les réactions des consommateurs et autres acteurs touchés par la mise réseau téléphonique. L'érection de poteaux dans les rues de la ville et l'unilinguisme des téléphonistes anglophones ont, par exemple, suscité plaintes et récriminations. Par ailleurs, Poitras met en lumière les moyens utilisés par Bell pour vanter les mérites de ce nouveau moyen de communication qu'est le téléphone. Les usages sociaux de la téléphonie sont également étudiés. On y voit d'ailleurs comment la compagnie Bell les a, elle-même, mis en évidence pour mieux convaincre les consommateurs potentiels.

Les chapitres 11 et 12 s'attachent aux représentations créées dans la foulée de la mise en place du système téléphonique. En feuilletant les journaux pour y traquer les annonces publicitaires de la compagnie, Poitras met à nu les valeurs qui ont forgé la représentation du téléphone dans l'imaginaire urbain. Finalement, les chapitres 13 et 14 s'attardent aux questions juridiques des droits de passage et de l'encombrement des rues tout comme celles de la tarification et de la municipalisation.

En résumé, Claire Poitras nous présente un livre qui a, tout d'abord, le mérite de tracer la voie aux historiens qui voudraient étudier « la construction sociale » d'infrastructures techniques les plus structurantes de l'environnement urbain. Comme on le voit, il ne s'agit pas ici d'une histoire technique d'un système de réseau, mais d'une analyse socio-historique qui intéressera tous les spécialistes de l'histoire urbaine. Basée sur des archives peu exploitées, cette étude a aussi le mérite de nous faire connaître un volet de l'histoire de Montréal qui n'avait pas encore été étudié.

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D. M. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. I: 600–1540*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xxvi, 841. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US.\$140 (cloth)

This is an immensely useful book. As editor D. M. Palliser states, the purpose of the volume is “to provide an authoritative and up-to-date account of British towns” (13) from the early Anglo-Saxon period to the Reformation. He and the contributors succeed admirably in this task.

The first of a three-volume series from Cambridge University Press (the early-modern and modern volumes are edited by Peter Clark and Martin Daunton, respectively), this book approaches its study of early urban life on the island of Britain from a number of perspectives. After an introductory section, Parts II and III examine the subject chronologically, Part II examining the (re-)birth and development of urban life from 600 to 1300, and Part III tracing later medieval developments from 1300 to 1540. Both of these parts are divided into nine more-or-less parallel thematic chapters: in each there is first a general survey, then chapters on government, power and authority; the economy of towns; urban culture and the church; the built environment; London; the larger towns; and the small towns. Part II also includes a separate chapter on society and population, and Part III a chapter on port towns. Part IV looks at urban development in a different way: a series of regional surveys examines the growth of urban life over the whole period in the regions of England (the south-east, the south-west, the midlands, East Anglia, and the north), in Wales and the Marches, and in Scotland. An appendix compiles a series of ranking lists of English medieval towns. Although the same basic material is examined from different vantage points by a large number of scholars (twenty-six altogether), the extent of repetition and overlap is surprisingly small (the ill-organized essay on large towns in the early Middle Ages by David A. Hinton being a rare exception); instead, the reader is presented with a well-rounded picture of the current state of research on towns over almost a millennium of British life.

The contributors to the volume are a who's who of scholars engaged in medieval British urban history—most teach at British universities where research on these questions has been most vital, with a few American, Canadian, and European additions. Their chapters (masterfully presented, in most cases, by a major scholar on the subject) synthesize and evaluate scholarship over the last century. In some cases, the authors offer original research as well. While some subjects have received summary treatment before, a number of chapters fill serious lacunae in the existing literature, most notably the chapters on London by Derek Keene and Caroline M. Barron; the survey of small towns in the later Middle Ages by Christopher Dyer; and the chapters on ports by Maryanne Kowaleski and David Ditchburn.

A variety of different approaches underlies the contributions. A particular strength is the integration of archaeological research with more familiar document-based historical analyses. Major discoveries of recent years using non-written evidence significantly change our understanding of urban history, both in the early period (as presented especially in the essay on the topog-

raphy of early towns by Palliser, T.R. Slater and E. Patricia Dennison) and in the later Middle Ages (as in John Schofield's and Geoffrey Stell's fascinating chapter on the built environment between 1300 and 1540). As has become standard in urban history, much of the volume focuses on economic questions. Nonetheless, both traditional political questions about the role of towns in lordship and in the governance of the realms (in essays by James Campbell and Barrie Dobson) and contemporary concerns about cultural expression (especially in Gervase Rosser's stimulating essay on late medieval urban culture) are represented. Also successful is the integration of Welsh and Scottish material with the better-known English scholarship. There was, of course, no "Britain" in the period under consideration in this volume, and a number of chapters (especially those by E. Patricia Dennison and Grant G. Simpson on Scotland, Ralph A. Griffiths on Wales, and Jennifer Kermode on the North of England) elucidate real and significant differences in town development among England, Wales, and Scotland, and among England's regions.

If there is an argument or theme running through the contributions, it is that the urban aspect of medieval British life has been underestimated. Contributors emphasize the early growth of urban life in England, especially from the tenth to the late-eleventh centuries; by Domesday perhaps ten percent of the English population lived in some sort of urban settlement (Wales and Scotland being much less urbanized at this period). The subsequent growth of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is better known, but the extent of urbanization by 1300 now accepted by scholars in the field (fifteen to twenty percent of the population) may surprise some readers. Both historical consensus and matters of continuing debate are acknowledged and outlined: the debate over the nature and extent of conflict within late medieval towns, for instance, is laid out in all its complexity. At the same time as the volume offers the "state of the question" on research on medieval British towns, it provides a clear sense of where the lacunae are: Ph.D. theses for years to come should emanate from the various discussions of issues requiring further research.

There are, inevitably, criticisms that arise in a volume of this size and scope. I will focus here on one in particular—the volume's (and series') start date of 600 and the consequent summary treatment of urban life in Roman Britain. It is notable that the only chapter written by a non-specialist is the introductory "Origins of British Towns," which covers the Roman period and is written by the editor D.M. Palliser (a late medieval and Tudor expert). Although Palliser himself says that "the significance of Roman rule for town life in later Britain should not be underestimated, for it left an ideology and infrastructure which have had lasting influence" (p. 541), nonetheless he chose to begin in the seventh century because "that was when permanent town life, on our definition, began in southern Britain (7)." Even accepting the (still controversial) point that there was a period of 150 to 200 years after the abandonment of Britannia by the Romans when there was no meaningful urban life, this does not convincingly preclude the usefulness of a more serious integration and examination of scholarship on Roman towns in this volume.

If the decision to begin at the year 600 must be placed at Palliser's door, so must also the overall success of the volume, the strengths of which greatly outweigh its weaknesses. Although the prohibitive cost of the volume (U.S. \$140) will prevent many scholars from putting it on their own shelves, it should be purchased by all university and research libraries. Its usefulness as a work of reference and as a collection of stimulating and magisterial essays recalls the classic Cambridge histories of the first half of the twentieth century.

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Joseph W. Esherick, ed. *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. Pp. x, 278. Maps, black and white illustrations, bibliography, index. US\$65.00 (cloth)

With a large format and many intriguing maps and photographs depicting cities in China during the early twentieth century, this book will be attractive to armchair travellers. Its detailed treatments of particular urban settings will also recommend it to leaders of history-conscious visits to the People's Republic of China (PRC). To readers with serious purposes, it presents with well-deserved polish the results of a decade or so of new opportunities for local archival research in the PRC. For urban studies comparativists, this book is certainly the best available source of information in English on the history of Chinese cities.

Remaking the Chinese City is the outcome of a conference on Chinese cities "Beyond Shanghai," hosted by the University of California at San Diego in 1996. Nonetheless, it highlights the cultural dominance of China's most cosmopolitan metropolis. As several of the individual contributions make clear, it has been difficult to move far from Shanghai conceptually, either in cities themselves during renovations of the 1930s that emulated Shanghai's glamour, or in current discussions of what Chinese modernity has meant to those creating and experiencing it. Considering the importance of state-building projects during the period of Shanghai's pre-eminence, it is noteworthy that, unlike seven of the other nine cities treated in the volume, Shanghai has never been a national or dynastic capital.

In ten contributions visiting nine cities "beyond Shanghai" (Tianjin is the city receiving extra attention), a group of United States-based academics whose research has been based in particular localities in the PRC present samples of their findings. Each researcher has acquired a thorough familiarity with the history of a particular city, and has made use of this understanding for his or her own intellectual purposes. In his contribution in Part One, "The Modernist City," Michael Tsin focuses on Guangzhou (Canton) to discuss the connections between urban renewal and official claims both to represent and to impose order on citizens, while in the next chapter Ruth Rogaski explores early twentieth-century associations between civilization and sanitation in a chapter entitled "Hygienic Modernity in Tianjin." Brett Sheehan sees, in the next chapter, Tianjin's bankers as creators of im-