

Urbanization in Early and Medieval China: Gazetteers for the City of Suzhou. Translated and introduced by OLIVIA MILBURN. Seattle: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS, 2015. Pp. xx + 360. \$50 (cloth); \$30 (paper).

In *Urbanization in Early and Medieval China*, Olivia Milburn provides a scholarly translation of three local gazetteers, each of which describes the city of Suzhou and its surrounding areas during the Warring States, Tang, and Song periods, respectively. The translation of these often-overlooked local texts makes accessible “the full range of information offered by these ancient resources” to students and scholars alike (p. xiv). Besides the translations, Milburn also presents some limited analysis and comparisons of these texts. Her primary historiographic intervention is that past scholarship on the city-planning of Suzhou has been far too speculative, unduly focusing on elements that aligned with canonical standards of Chinese urban planning. To the contrary, Milburn argues that the little available textual and archaeological evidence suggests that the original city displayed a blending of Zhou and local Gouwu traditions.

This work is a natural outgrowth of Milburn’s previous translation of the *Yue jue shu* in *The Glory of Yue*, published in 2010 (Brill). She extracts the geographical chapter from the *Yue jue shu* on the kingdom of Wu, and then combines it with two later gazetteers on the same region. Therefore, where *The Glory of Yue* presents a broad array of information on the Warring States kingdoms of Wu and Yue, *Urbanization in Early and Medieval China* presents information on a more narrowly defined scope (geography, archeology, urban planning), but then traces the historical developments of these across one and a half millennia.

Urbanization in Early and Medieval China is organized into three parts. The first is an introduction that begins by tracing the development of gazetteer writing, and then concisely explains in three separate narratives the political, administrative, and social history of Suzhou from the Warring States to Song period. While this organization builds in redundancies in the information, it is hard to imagine how the unique details of each narrative could have been fit into a single narrative. The most interesting of these three narratives, for this reviewer, is on the social development of Suzhou, which explores the “difficulties of governing a large, ethnically diverse, and restive population” (p. 30). The second part presents the translations of three gazetteers: “Tales of the Lands of Wu” (Ji Wudi zhuan 記吳地傳) from the *Yue jue shu* 越絕書 composed in the early Eastern Han, *Record of the Lands of Wu* (Wudi ji 吳地記) compiled by Lu Guangwei 陸廣微 (dates unknown) from the Tang, and *Supplementary Records to the “Illustrated Guide to Wu Commandery”* (Wujun tujing xuji 吳郡圖經續記) by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098) from the Northern Song. Each of these translations is prefaced with a thorough explanation of the text, its authorship, dating, and interpretation. Milburn’s translations of these important sources are smooth, precise, and well annotated. The third part provides analyses and comparisons of the three translated texts. Most of this section is spent on the issue of early Suzhou’s resemblance to the “norms of Chinese urban planning,” wherein Milburn concludes that early Suzhou differed significantly in its internal structure (such as shape, gates, grids, canals, and wards) and organs (such as ancestral temples and markets). Milburn also uses the three gazetteers to chart the historical development of the natural landscape, preservation of sites, religious edifices, criminality, and war. Importantly, Milburn includes archaeological evidence in this analysis. While several of these are intriguing topics, Milburn repeatedly stresses the limited information available, and hence the circumspect conclusions that one is able to draw. Her work on these topics is therefore mostly descriptive of the change over time, and suggestive of potential avenues of future research for others to pursue.

The most important contribution of this book by far is the excellent translation of these three gazetteers. Far too much of Chinese history is written from the perspective of the imperial court, which presented a centralizing, homogenizing imperial narrative that exaggerated the cultural, ethnic, and political unity across the imperial realm. Gazetteers such as these provide an alternative vision of the empire, describing instead a patchwork of regional variation wherein locals took pan-imperial elite culture and blended it, each in their own way, with unique local customs, local cults, and multiethnic demographics. The writing of local gazetteers became common during the Six Dynasties, and were once numerous, but today only a handful of pre-Song dynasty gazetteers survive. While the translation of any of these gazetteers would be of considerable value in challenging the imperial narrative,

the combined value of these three particular gazetteers is greatly augmented by the fact that they collectively describe the same city at three different points in time, traversing a millennium and a half of history. This allows the three gazetteers the further weight of tracing historical developments in the city, and in its relationship to pan-imperial elite culture. This alleviates the primary weaknesses of using geographical texts as historical sources; geographies structure their accounts according to space, and in so doing compress time. But by juxtaposing three geographical texts from three distinct historical periods, one is able to analyze the interrelationships of time and space.

Milburn's translation and analysis is a valuable complement to Yinong Xu's *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, published in 2000 (Univ. of Hawai'i Press), which is also about the urban development of Suzhou. Xu's work is more analytical, presenting an intellectual framework for interpreting the historical developments of Suzhou, which he traces all the way to the twentieth century. Milburn's work, instead, focuses on the early and medieval developments of the city, and her analysis is more circumspect. In a few cases, she provides alternative interpretations of the evidence, such as when she argues that the early Suzhou's turtle-shell-like design should not be understood as a "forced extra-canonical" *fengshui* design as Xu argues, but as a residual layout from the original Gouwu "snail city" design, with its concentric rings defending the innermost area (p. 229). More generally, she merely tries to rein in Xu's conclusions about the early urban development of Suzhou that she argues go beyond the textual and archaeological evidence. But the two works have rather different goals; Milburn wants to make accessible English translations of the primary sources on which Xu's analysis of the early period relies.

There are a few comparatively minor weaknesses that detract somewhat from this otherwise excellent work of scholarship. One persistent problem is the author's lack of clarity about the relationship between the Wu region and the Central Plains. From her analysis of these three gazetteers she argues that the early urban planning of Suzhou did not align with "traditional Chinese city planning" (p. 209), but she is inconsistent about her use of "China" as either a cultural sphere (as in p. 209) or a political entity (as in p. 226). Within this ambiguity, she tends to overstate in her historical narratives the Chinese-ness of the Yangzi region. For example, she states that from the Qin unification onward "the lands of the ancient southern kingdom of Wu came to be regarded as part of the heartland of the empire" (p. 13), and describes the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties as "ethnically Chinese states" (p. 15), even though a few pages later in her narrative of social developments she emphasizes the multiethnic character of the city of Suzhou (and the rest of the Jiangnan region) (pp. 27–30). She notes the debate over the degree to which the Wu region was influenced by fourth-century immigrants from the Central Plains (pp. 31–32), but does not stake out a position herself, even though the gazetteers she is working with could potentially contribute greatly to this debate. Finally, University of Washington Press has published the book without any Chinese characters. For the most part, this was merely an annoyance, but there were a few times when it impeded understanding. For example, on page 229 the reader is told that the appendix to *Records of the Land of Wu* states that the city was "designed by Wu Zixu in the form of the character *ya*," but the reader is left assuming which *ya* character that is.

But these fairly minor shortcomings do not overturn the considerable contribution that this book makes to the field of early and medieval Chinese studies. Milburn's fine translations and circumspect analysis of these three gazetteers open the door for these otherwise neglected primary sources to be incorporated into broader historical analyses on urban development, architecture, Buddhist monasteries, and regionalism in early and medieval China.

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From Warhorses to Ploughshares: The Later Tang Reign of Emperor Mingzong. By RICHARD L. DAVIS. Hong Kong: HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. Pp. xvi + 219. \$60.

This book is Richard Davis's latest contribution to the study of China's Five Dynasties period (907–59). Its focus is the reign of one emperor during this period of political division. Specifically, Davis