

INTRODUCTION

City and Region in the Lower Yangzi

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Since the publication in the mid-1970s of the pioneering conference volumes edited by G. William Skinner and Mark Elvin, our knowledge of and appreciation for the Chinese urban experience of the past millennium has grown enormously.¹ Simple, undifferentiated models of “the Chinese city” have become increasingly untenable; the perceived disjunction between Western inspired treaty ports and indigenous urban centers has narrowed (or at least blurred); once popular views of urban and rural in Chinese society as either unmediated opposites or, conversely, as mutually indistinguishable, have gradually given way to more contextually sensitive portrayals of urban metropolis and regional hinterland. Most importantly, we have become much more aware of a pattern, or patterns, of Chinese urban change over time.

Unquestionably the most productive instrument in advancing our knowledge of Chinese cities in the post-Skinner years has been case studies, either monographic “urban biographies” or more specialized studies of politics, women, labor, businessmen, and so on, in the context of individual cities.² There have, however, been at least two biases apparent in the work that has appeared so far in English, both of them resulting from the reasonable desire of working historians to concentrate on the highly visible, the seemingly important for the understanding of our own day, and, not least, the well-documented. One is that we now know far more about *big* cities than we do about the second, third, and even lower-rank central places where probably the bulk of late imperial urbanites spent their lives. Rectification of this scholarly imbalance may not lie too far in the future, but for the moment we

must live with it. Second, the work of the past decade has concentrated heavily on cities of China's industrial era (the twentieth century) or, at most, the last century of imperial rule. It is this deficiency which the present volume attempts to redress, by maintaining an awareness of the common concerns pointed up by writers on later era cities, yet moving the inquiry back in time another seven hundred years.

Each of our contributors devotes significant attention to the question of the use of space in their particular cities—Suzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, and Shanghai—and the way land use patterns changed over time. In doing so they draw upon the stimulating theses advanced some years ago by F. W. Mote in a series of articles on Suzhou and Nanjing, in which he identified as a distinguishing feature of Chinese urbanism a truly remarkable long-term stability of city form.³ In his own study of Suzhou in this volume, Michael Marmé invokes Mote's ingenious overlay of outline maps of that city dating from 1229 and 1945, explicitly endorsing Mote's conclusion that little had changed, and Antonia Finnane argues that this same observation "could just as well be applied to Yangzhou."

Yet in the descriptions they offer of the pattern of growth of these cities, our authors are remarkably consistent, and the common processes they depict seem in tension with the morphological stagnation posited by Mote. In all these cities, periods of economic prosperity led to great spatial expansion, an expansion clearly seen by our authors as driven by the market. This meant a movement beyond the city walls (though in at least some cases walls were *re-created* to reflect the new realities of urban growth), the development of extramural commercial suburbs at the termini of major trade routes, and the incorporation of outlying market towns into a greatly enlarged metropolitan area (what Marmé terms "the urban penumbra"). Accompanying this was a long-term decline of the planned aspects of the Tang-style city: a collapse of the system of formally segregated official markets, an increasingly "haphazard" street plan, greater multicenteredness, increasingly complex residence patterns, and a tendency toward more functionally integrated land use. At the same time, all of our cities to some extent witnessed a continuing or even heightened spatial separation of the official and the commercial sectors, corresponding in general to the intramural-extramural division, though by no means very neatly so.

What then are we left with: a morphological stagnation imposed by political authority, or a dynamic fluidity driven by private enterprise and market determined land values? Is Marmé simply incorrect in emphasizing the strength of "the state's impact on the organization of

urban space,” and Finnane in arguing that “the basic spatial organization of the city had been set by . . . precedent . . . and by a political and cultural tradition which supported the gentry-official stratum”? Mote’s celebrated maps suggest that they are not. And yet the evidence presented in this volume, as well as other recent work, cautions against the acceptance of easy or one-sided conclusions on this issue.

This same tension or ambiguity underlies a second critical question addressed in these studies, that is, why do cities (in this instance *Chinese* cities) rise and decline? Not surprisingly, the answer our authors offer begins with the balance struck, successfully or unsuccessfully, between ecology and technology. Under a given level of technology, topographic or other ecological features favor the centrality and prosperity of some cities over others; with a shift either in ecology or technological level, relative advantages also change, promoting new central places and sending others into decline. Countless examples of this might be cited from China itself (the promotion of Changsha over Xiangtan due to the introduction of the steamship) or from elsewhere in the world (the promotion of Baltimore over Charleston, or Chicago over St. Louis, due to the introduction of railroads).

In the Lower Yangzi, the construction of the Yangzi-Huai section of the Grand Canal in Han times offered stimulus to the rise of Yangzhou, whereas the subsequent shift of the Yellow River to a southern route diminished that city’s potential centrality. Suzhou, for its part, was favored over Hangzhou by the *re*-construction of the Canal in the Ming Yongle reign. Shanghai owed its earliest ascendance to a shift in the course of the Wusong river in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a shift that sent the once prosperous Qinglong into permanent obscurity. Its growth was further stimulated by the *collapse* of the Grand Canal route in the early nineteenth century, which prompted the shift to the coastal route for shipments of northbound tribute grain.

In each of these instances, it was the technology of transport that was decisive, but other technological innovations could play major roles as well. For example, Suzhou could not become an important city based on its extraction and redistribution function within its hinterland until the problem of waterlogging in that fertile but low-lying territory was solved by massive construction of waterworks, first in the Song and again in the early Ming. Shanghai’s rise was likewise aided by successive waves of innovation, beginning in the thirteenth century, in the technology of cotton cultivation, the staple of its own delta hinterland. Yangzhou’s prosperity, needless to say, was conditioned by technological developments in salt production, which offered the Liang Huai

product competitive advantages or disadvantages over salt produced in other regions (despite its state monopolistic aspects, the actual command of markets by various salt production areas was often in large part a function of consumer choice).

Beyond the factors of ecology and technology, however, our authors present strikingly insistent evidence to argue for the pivotal role of administrative decisions in the relative rise and fall of cities. This is not wholly unexpected. The model of "the Chinese city" bequeathed by Max Weber would of course predict as much, and even the *doyen* of the historical study of Chinese urbanism in this country, G. William Skinner, in his model of regional cycles driven first and foremost by market factors, was careful to point out the potential of political acts such as relocation of an imperial capital or the institution or abolition of bans and monopolies on foreign trade on the relative fortunes of metropolises and their regions.⁴ The evidence is so strong in the studies included here, however, to lead one to suspect whether, Skinner's marketing model notwithstanding, the political factor might indeed have been *unusually* important in a centralized bureaucratic state of vast territorial scale such as China, in determining relative status within the hierarchy of central places.

Among lower Yangzi cities, Nanjing, with its history of dramatic shifts in administrative rank, would of course be expected to have its fortunes profoundly affected by such decisions (much like the Kaifeng of Hartwell's classic study).⁵ But Marmé argues that Suzhou, too, found its prosperity affected rather directly by political decisions, in the area of Grain Tribute policy. Most surprising is the case of Shanghai, the economic city *par excellence*. Linda Cooke Johnson's chapter here repeatedly points out the impact of administrative actions on the city's fortunes, even in the pre-treaty port era. Shanghai's initial rise was precipitated by the establishment of an Office of Overseas Trade in 1277; the Ming relocation of the capital to Beijing and institution of the sea ban drove it into temporary decline; and the early Qing reopening of foreign trade and establishment of the Jianghai Customs in 1730 made it once again a major conduit for interregional and international commerce. Indeed, when Johnson argues that "nearly all of the growth of Shanghai, both inside and outside the walls of the city, can be attributed to mercantile and commercial interests," it would be well to remember that it was in large part political decisions which put the merchants there in the first place.

The case of Yangzhou, as presented here by Finnane, demonstrates the critical role of the political factor in the most striking terms. Though Yangzhou is usually conceived of as a center of "commercial

capitalism,"⁶ a characterization Finnane would perhaps not refute, she argues that the true basis of its regional primacy was always political: Yangzhou usually enjoyed high rank in the administrative hierarchy of central places, and its rising or falling commercial fortunes followed directly upon its administrative status. Presumably, Finnane's argument implies, another central place in the Jiangbei area might equally well, or even better, have served the regional city function which Yangzhou enjoyed by virtue of bureaucratic favor.

Assuming, then, that the prominence of these great cities was determined by some complex interplay of ecological, technological, and political factors, the question posed by the contributors to this volume might be stated in terms of whether or not the political decisions involved were made out of economic rationality, so as deliberately to capitalize on the advantages of centrality offered by the other factors. In general, Marmé and Johnson argue that they *were*—Marmé speaks of a pattern of "ad hoc decisions taken to exploit existing opportunities for imperial advantage." Finnane's work suggests, on the contrary, that in her case they were *not*, that administrative decisions were made *à priori* of any serious consideration of economic geography (or of the interests of the area's population), and that Yangzhou was "imposed on the landscape, rather than growing out of it," with all of Jiangbei suffering as a result.

To get at this question more effectively, we need for a moment to shift our scale of analysis up a bit from the city to the region. What, first of all, is a "region"? As I use the term here, and as I see it used most often in the field of China studies since the work of Skinner, a "region" is not a *zone* within which some key factor—say, language or religion or staple economic product—is held constant and uniform, but rather it is a *system* of localities of varying degrees of centrality, held together by a relatively strong pattern of interdependent exchange relationships. A region, then, is characterized not so much by internal homogeneity (though sharing of certain secondary factors such as dialect is likely to occur) as it is by a functional heterogeneity.⁷

A region so defined is not a finite or closed system, but rather fits into nested hierarchies of various magnitudes and scales. Thus, the region which this volume announces as its subject, Jiangnan, was also a component of a larger system, the Lower Yangzi "macroregion," which itself fit into the still larger system which was the Chinese Empire. (This is so notwithstanding Skinner's persuasive argument that, *in general*, it was the intermediary "macroregional" units which in China's late imperial era had greater functional integrity than either the empire as a whole or "sub-regions" such as Jiangnan.) Nor do indi-

vidual central places necessarily participate in but a single regional system. Certainly they belong simultaneously to systems of differing magnitudes; Suzhou and Shanghai, for example, were important components of both the Jiangnan subregion and the Lower Yangzi macroregion. In certain cases, however, a given central place may also fit into two adjacent regional systems of comparable scale. This seems to have been the case with Yangzhou, a fact which has complicated life for most analysts of its economy and society. Looked at from one perspective, Yangzhou is clearly the regional city for the Jiangbei subregion; looked at from others, it is just as clearly a component of the adjacent subregion of Jiangnan. The boundaries of regional systems, in other words, are soft, and vary not only over time but also with differing functional perspectives.

The period under consideration in this volume, that from the early twelfth to the early nineteenth centuries, was one in which the Lower Yangzi macroregion became ever more prosperous and ever more clearly the metropolitan region within China as a whole. This fact, perhaps first formally articulated by Chi Ch'ao-ting in 1936 and demonstrated in detail in the work of Shiba Yoshinobu, Fu Yiling, and many others, is further reinforced in the research presented here.⁸ Each of the cities studied in this volume participated in and benefited from this process. There were short-term reverses and epicycles, to be sure, but the long-term trend was very positive. Of course, not all subregions or localities shared equally in this increasing prosperity and influence. We have already seen how urban decline for certain cities like Qinglong was an inherent byproduct of the streamlining of the macroregional system as a whole. More interestingly, Yangzhou's Jiangbei hinterland did consistently (and notoriously) less well than did the southern portion of the lower Yangzi macroregion. Clearly a basic cause of this was the relative poverty of its resource endowments, but, as Professor Finnane argues, there were other, human factors at work as well.

What factors determine the fortunes of a region's or subregion's economic development? The trigger, according to American economic historian Douglass North,⁹ is most often provided by the discovery of an export staple which is able to find a steady, cost-effective, and lucrative extraregional market (North offers the example of timber in the American Pacific northwest). In Jiangnan such a role seems to have been assumed in turn by rice, silk, and cotton. Almost invariably this export staple forms one half of a reciprocal two-way interregional trade, and frequently the cost effectiveness of this staple's export will

be enhanced by a prior demand for a regional *import* (or imports); merchants, bringing a needed item into the region, will seek return freights (if only as ballast) at often very depressed rates. In Johnson's Shanghai, for example, high value-per-bulk cotton textile exports found markets in North China as return cargo on vessels bringing in the needed soy-cake fertilizer, along the southeast coast as return freights for imports of lumber and sugar, and in the Middle Yangzi in exchange for imports of grain. In Marmé's Suzhou, imports of coarse grain facilitated exports of the higher value rice, and, somewhat ironically, the seemingly onerous political requirement to ship tribute grain north after the Ming Yongle reign facilitated imports from North China of raw cotton (despite legal prohibitions), hence further stimulating the region's export cotton textile trade.

Obviously, however, the successful development of an export staple does not in itself guarantee rising regional prosperity, in either absolute or relative terms. If it did, Jiangbei's fortunes would have been much different, for its most distinctive product, salt, had extraordinary advantages as an export staple: guaranteed and steady extra-regional demand, weak outside competition, high value-per-bulk, fairly low production costs, and inexhaustible supply. Yet Jiangbei apparently failed to capitalize upon this and follow the further pattern of successful regional development. This pattern would call for development of a regional market structure which conformed to a balanced and symmetrical central-place model, favoring redistributive as much as extractive commodity flows, rather than a dendritic layout oriented exclusively towards exports. Its regional product structure would gradually diversify, rather than remaining concentrated on a monoculture dictated by external, metropolitan demand. Its internal consumer market would develop accordingly. Regional industry, too, would develop and diversify, rather than remaining at a low level and highly specialized, serving merely the instrumental needs of the metropolitan market.

Late imperial Jiangnan is clearly the very model of a successfully developing regional economy. Its metropolis during most of this era, Suzhou, initially developed its silk textile industry under imperial monopoly control. Yet, as Paolo Santangelo shows us, this industry was gradually taken over by the private sector (seemingly unlike the salt industry in Yangzhou), and technologies developed for silk production were eventually adapted to the even greater scale cotton trade. In the wider region, Marmé and Johnson demonstrate the development of a balanced marketing hierarchy. Jiangnan progressively diver-

sified its export base to include tea, paper, and other commodities beyond the proliferating variety of cotton and silk textiles. It saw a gradual diffusion of handicraft technology and production throughout the region (into less as well as more urbanized localities), accompanied by an increasingly sophisticated functional specialization of handicraft labor: spinners, weavers, dyers, calendarers, and tailors, as well as transport and commercial workers. All of this contributed to the rise of popular buying power and a broadly based indigenous market not only for extraregional imports (obtained at favorable terms of trade in exchange for more highly processed exports) but for local products as well. The results were very positive. As Marmé argues, with perhaps but slight exaggeration, "The system centered on Suzhou probably did provide better for more people than any previous [regional] system in world history."

In each of these regards Jiangbei did notably less well. If Yangzhou was not, as Finnane argues, a "colonial city," it was almost certainly a company town. Its region saw nearly no diversification of export base beyond salt (except, significantly, increasing exports of manual labor unable to find work at home). Despite the fact that much of the region was potentially suited to cotton cultivation, it remained essentially a monocultural rice producer (Finnane's suggestion that political authorities may have had some role in preventing product diversification, so as better to concentrate Jiangbei's energies on rice and salt, is most telling). Some minor residentiary industry did develop, notably rush mat weaving, but its level remained low and its profits lower still. Jiangbei did so poorly, in fact, that at least by the mid-nineteenth century its natives had developed a reputation outside the region for cultural inferiority (a stigma which clearly in some fashion further contributed to subregional immiseration).¹⁰ A major cause of Jiangbei's woes, again, was the area's ecological fragility. However, as Professor Finnane contends, a large portion of the blame may in fact have lain with Yangzhou itself, and with its peculiarly adversarial relationship with its hinterland.

I have suggested that a "region," as used these days in Western studies of China, refers not to a zone of continuity but to a system of interdependent exchange relationships, and is therefore characterized more by internal heterogeneity than homogeneity. This implies internal *inequality* as well. Within a regional system of central places, the regional metropolis will almost always do better than any other participant in the system. At the very least, it will enjoy the considerable advantages of centrality: greater multifunctionality, greater economic

diversification, greater leverage in exchange relations, and so on. Therefore, that the regional metropolis is by far the most prosperous locality within a region is not in itself a necessary indication either of an unusual degree of exploitation, or of systemic dysfunction.

Still, under differing conditions the prosperity of a regional metropolis may be good for that of the region as a whole, or else a negative factor, being achieved at the region's general expense. The literature on early modern European urban development provides neatly contrasting models of these "generative" and "parasitic" cities, in the work of E. A. Wrigley on London and David Ringrose on Madrid.¹¹ The key questions posed in these models are: (1) Is consumption in the regional metropolis primarily of goods produced within the region (as in the case of London), or does it constitute an expenditure of regional capital on luxury goods from without (Madrid)? (2) Is extraction from the countryside primarily through processes of reciprocal market exchange, or is it commandeered in the form of rents, tithes, and taxes? (3) If via exchange, how fair—free from political or other extraeconomic manipulation—are the terms of trade? The answers to these questions in turn hinge on the function of the city within the region, and the character of the city's elite.

We see in this volume several examples of the potentially generative role of regional metropolises. The original rise both of Suzhou and its hinterland in the Southern Song is attributed by Marmé, at least in part, to the consumer demand of the region's major city of that era, Hangzhou. (One is reminded again of the corresponding role of Kaifeng during the Northern Song, as presented by Hartwell.) The increasing regional importance of sericulture and, later, cotton culture in the Ming and Qing seems to have enhanced the generative aspects of both Suzhou's and Shanghai's relations with their hinterlands. Both activities were mediated by a complex web of reciprocal market relationships, and a proliferation of small-scale shippers, brokers, processors, and handlers which served to disperse the profits of the trade from metropolis to surrounding region. The salt enterprise, with its ambiguous status somewhere between the state and private market sectors, seems not to have provided Yangzhou with the same generative possibilities relative to Jiangbei.

But there are more troubling questions here as well, which at least in part confound the attempt to interpret our case studies according to clear and simple models. Suzhou and other areas around Zhu Yuanzhang's capital at Nanjing, for example, were subjected to effectively confiscatory tax rates for centuries after the Ming founding, and yet

Marmé argues that these had no clear negative effect on balanced regional development. Suzhou was also notorious for the number and wealth of its absentee landlords, yet this, too, we are told, did not impede regional progress (at least not until the cataclysmic class warfare of the late Ming). Yangzhou, which from an outsider's perspective would seem to have been dominated by an elite, not of tax-farmers and rentier landlords like Suzhou or Hangzhou, but of merchants and entrepreneurs, apparently proved more "parasitic" than either of those two cities.

One way in which our contributors seek to address questions of the quality of city-hinterland relations is through focus on the level of "embeddedness" in the regional society. One way to assess this issue might be to ask to what degree the city's elite was comprised of natives to the region, and to what extent of (presumably rapacious) extra-regional sojourners. I am less than satisfied with this methodology. Indeed, I would propose as very general rules that, in *any* city of late imperial China, (a) a direct correlation would pertain between the socioeconomic status of any individual and the distance from that city of the individual's native place; and (2) socioeconomic dominance by nonlocals would be greater the higher one rose in the hierarchy of central places, because of a greater orientation of the city to trade (or administration) of broader geographic scale. We also see in this volume a number of other hints that the percentage of extra-regional sojourners cannot be used as an index of a given city's "parasitism." Yangzhou, portrayed here as a drain on its hinterland, was certainly dominated by outsiders; but no less so was Shanghai, depicted by Johnson as a force for regional growth, dominated by Ningboese, Fujianese, and Cantonese. Suzhou, too, as Santangelo reminds us, numbered Huizhou and Ningbo merchants among its commercial elite. Moreover, the available evidence by no means supports a simple conclusion of extraction of capital by sojourning merchants as a crippling blow to regional fortunes. We know that Huizhou salt merchants active at Yangzhou did put a large percentage of their profits into landholding in their home prefecture (arguably, this hurt Huizhou more than it did Jiangbei),¹² but Finnane's evidence on the luxurious gardens they constructed, as well as the celebrated aesthetic pleasures of Yangzhou generally, suggest a pattern of significant investment in their host locality as well. Nor is there any reason to believe that sojourning merchants at Shanghai or Suzhou were any less eager to withdraw resources from the host community and its regional system. The fact was that local identities in late imperial China were complex and multi-

stranded, and under these circumstances ethnic analysis of urban elites as a means of assessing the quality of city-hinterland relations is problematic at best.

Another way to approach the question of embeddedness would be via analysis of a city's trading partners. In my own work on Hankou I argued, perhaps too offhandedly, that the greater importance within the city's economy of *entrepôt*, or interregional transshipment functions, relative to direct extraction, supply, or redistribution functions for its own regional hinterland, suggested a fairly low degree of embeddedness. In this volume, Professor Finnane notes something similar for Yangzhou, invoking the work of Paul Hohenberg and Lynn Lees on European cities to argue that a "network" model describes cities oriented primarily to interregional trade more closely than does the familiar central place model, which situates the city more firmly within a regional urban hierarchy. The same point has been made by the geographer James Vance, who in his analysis of "gateway" cities such as Chicago points out that the central place model itself was derived essentially to describe the territorial implications of *retail* trade, and that accounting for wholesale trade may necessitate a basically different type of analytical conceit.¹³ My own view is that the two models are by no means mutually invalidating, and that higher magnitude central places, including all the cities studied in this volume, are part both of interregional networks and regional systems. But evidence presented here may cast in doubt the wisdom of drawing hasty conclusions about a given city's embeddedness based on analysis of trade flows, since the interregional *entrepôt* function seems to have been relatively *less* central in Yangzhou than in either Suzhou or Shanghai, and yet Finnane argues, plausibly, that Yangzhou's level of embeddedness was lower than that of the other two.

How then is "embeddedness" to be measured? The best way might be through detailed analysis of lower-level marketing hierarchies and of functional relationships of central places within their regions. Our contributors offer us some information on this score, though none treat the issue systematically. Abundant research, however, has been done on precisely this topic in China during the past decade, and to lesser extent in Taiwan and Japan as well.¹⁴ The conclusions of this new corpus of scholarship basically accord with those of our contributors here. Jiangnan, the regional hinterland of first Suzhou, then Shanghai, was endowed from Ming times on with a balanced hierarchy of small cities and towns, which steadily increased in number and density of deployment over the landscape. As most of these markets continued to grow

in size, some, those at the lower end of the scale, graduating from periodicity to permanency, became more functionally complex while others tended to specialize in a given commodity or process. Ever greater numbers of them were no longer merely collection and distribution centers but hubs of organization for handicraft activity. Thus, they assumed a greater variety of roles with respect to their surrounding rural-dwellers: they were no longer simply receptacles for marketing occasional surplus grain and sources of a few necessary consumer goods, but sources of employment, capital, marketing services, technological diffusion, and the raw materials of rural handicrafts. In this fashion, Suzhou and Shanghai, at least through the end of the pre-industrial era, became increasingly embedded in their regional hinterland, with whose fortunes their own prosperity tended to move in tandem. By mid-Qing times, indeed, it might be better to conceive of Jiangnan not as two or three major cities in a surrounding rural hinterland, but rather as an "urban region," an area of widely diffused urbanness not unlike northern Italy or the Low Countries in Europe of the same period.¹⁵

Jiangbei was a different story. As Finnane's chapter reminds us, Yangzhou's hinterland was far from desolate of markets, but it does appear that these were largely of a different order from those of Jiangnan. Although he was only able to trace comparatively recent historical developments, the great sociologist Fei Xiaotong in a 1984 field survey may have captured this essential difference when he noted that, whereas the Jiangnan countryside was profusely covered with fairly populous market towns (*zhen*), in Jiangbei the comparable central place was no more than a "fair" (*ji*), with but a marginal claim to permanent settlement. He added:

I am convinced that a real town could only come into existence when rural commodity production has attained quite a high level of development, which cannot easily be achieved by expanding agricultural production alone. Industry must be established on the village-township level. The fact that there are towns but no fairs in southern Jiangsu is probably due to the fact that commodities were produced there by rural handicraft industries in very early times. . . . In northern Jiangsu, where traditional rural industries are backward, fairs alone can handle commodity circulation in localities that produce only farm produce. As a result, towns cannot be established there easily.¹⁶

The picture presented by Fei is of a classic dual economy, with the metropolis of Yangzhou, relating perhaps more closely to Jiangnan than Jiangbei, of marginal significance for good *or* ill in the fortunes of its subsistence-oriented agricultural hinterland. This may be accurate as far as it goes, but of course there was more to the story than this. Through its direction of the regional salt industry, its administrative and fiscal role, its demand for labor and food supply, and perhaps above all its financing and direction of regional water conservancy works,¹⁷ Yangzhou was in fact of critical significance to the prosperity of Jiangbei, just as Suzhou and Shanghai were to Jiangnan. In late imperial China, *all* major cities were embedded in their hinterland to a very considerable degree.

This by no means denies the possibility of conflicts between urban and rural interests. Both Paolo Santangelo's study of Suzhou and Susumu Fuma's of Hangzhou show how these two cities had come to experience tensions between urban insiders (in Fuma's term, "citizens") and an ever-growing number of newly arriving outsiders. In Fuma's study, we see as well how systematic had become the pattern of urban-rural contention over distribution of tax assessments by the late Ming period. Keep in mind that these tensions arose, not in "colonial" cities like Yangzhou nor in allegedly "foreign implants" like Shanghai, but rather in provincial capitals, to all appearances fully integrated into their local and regional hinterlands.

All five of our studies, it seems to me, demonstrate the evolution by the late imperial period of an autonomous urban culture, one characterized (in Santangelo's words) "by frenetic activity, daily habits and customs, impulses and conflicting emotions." This runs counter to the argument of Max Weber, updated by Mote, that Chinese cities were relatively less distinctive from the countryside, in cultural terms, than were their Western counterparts. Most striking in the studies of Fuma and Santangelo is the specific preoccupation of both urban elites and urban administrators with *urban* problems, both groups being completely accustomed to assuming the discreteness of the municipal unit as a locus of managerial responsibility. A remarkable demonstration of this came in the 1720 Suzhou public security reform, described by Professor Santangelo. The result of this reform was a style of urban societal self-policing, fully "recognized" by the imperial state but managed by urban economic elites, that was highly systematic and hierarchical, and completely discrete to the municipality.

In Professor Fuma's paper on Hangzhou we see an even more striking early attempt at creation of an urban public security force.

Though this grew out of a hoary tradition of *corvée* assessment for street patrolling duty, what emerged in the 1560s and 1570s was in fact a remarkably bold experiment in a rather fully bureaucratized municipal police force, built upon a fiscal base of specifically urban property tax assessments. Fuma's study essentially analyzes why this precocious system, proposed by popular initiative "for the sake of the city," could not take hold. The chief impediment, it appears, was the internal conflict it generated within an increasingly stratified urban society. The major struggle was not that between capital and labor, but rather between an upper elite and an emerging urban middle class, capable of being rallied to self-awareness by a quasi-professional political activist, Ding Shiqing.

Based on Fuma's study one is led to reconsider the broader processes of urban socioeconomic change of the mid and late Ming. Specifically, one wonders whether the "sprouts of capitalism" debate, with its Marxist presumptions of the primacy of the mode of production in generating structures of conflict, has led us to miss the point of what was really going on in late imperial Jiangnan cities.¹⁸ It seems from the evidence presented here that the "sprouts of capitalism" were probably very real, in Hangzhou and elsewhere, but that they were only ancillary to many of the major social conflicts of the era. We see in sixteenth-century Hangzhou a process of embourgeoisement, which was fairly independent of any early capitalist transition. There is little in the lines of cleavage presented here that necessarily presupposes major changes in work organization of the sort associated with the rise of capitalism. Rather, although the social configurations, which Fuma describes, appear to be new to his era, and rooted in the rapid mid-Ming urbanization of Jiangnan, the key factors in structuring conflict seem to be the emergence of an intense urban consciousness, based on residence rather than occupation or production relations, and catalyzed by issues of rents and taxes on urban residential property.

One of the most satisfying contributions of the case studies which follow, at least to this reader, is their collective effect of discrediting the "anomalous case" approach to Chinese urban history. It was all too easy in the past to discuss Shanghai as an implanted cancerous growth (or outpost of progress, depending on your perspective), extraneous to the "normal" path of Chinese urban development, just as it was convenient to treat Yangzhou as an isolated, state-sponsored "special economic zone" of commercial capitalism, and Hankou as an inexplicably overgrown commercial suburb, and Jingdezhen as an oddly-misplaced Chinese Birmingham (or, more accurately, Stoke-on-Trent),

all of them too widely deviant from the norm to require more than a passing aside in general treatments of "the Chinese city."

What emerges from these studies, more clearly than from other recent work, which has edged in this direction, is a view of even the most distinctive of late imperial cities not as anomalies, but rather as points within a wide spectrum of possible Chinese urban types. This is most striking in Professor Johnson's contribution, where, building on the work of Mark Elvin, she effectively demolishes the "sleepy fishing town" notion of pre-treaty port Shanghai. Obviously, the city that the foreigners built at Shanghai was something quite new to China, as were many of the techniques of trade, transport, and manufacture they introduced along the way. But Shanghai had been an important and growing commercial center for centuries before 1842, and indeed had come to assume paramouncy in precisely the role for which it has been celebrated in its later history, as interlocutor between the trade of its own and adjacent regions, on the one hand, and the emerging international market on the other. Treaty-port Shanghai thus fitted into an endogenous trend of rather long duration, however much the foreigner might have provided in the way of new direction.

Michael Marmé takes this refreshing approach still further, when he asks whether we might trace to Suzhou and other cities of the early Ming, or even the Southern Song, Marie-Claire Bergère's "attempt to find indigenous roots for twentieth-century Shanghai," a cosmopolitan urban tradition which she has dubbed "the other China." Marmé, probably wisely, refrains from answering decisively in the affirmative the question he has posed, but the weight of his evidence suggests that not only the late nineteenth-century treaty-port phenomenon but also the late Ming "sprouts of capitalism," built upon, rather than creating *ex nihilo*, an ongoing and flexible Chinese urban tradition. This tradition may, in fact, have represented less an "other" China than an integral part of a highly complex, almost infinitely malleable, and yet cohesive and distinctive, experience of Chinese urbanism. It was an experience which offered, as Antonia Finnane points out, "a diversity of models."



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Fig. 1 The Jiangnan area in the Yuan dynasty