

RESEARCH TRENDS OF URBAN HISTORY IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION

In terms of the age under investigation, the specific content, and the applied method, research into urban history in China can be divided into three different but associated fields: urban archaeology, urban historical geography, and city history. There are some similarities between these three academic fields to some extent. However, if detailed down to their research content, methods, and dedicated scholars, each area has its own respective characteristics. Generally, research about when cities originated and when early cities were established during old Chinese dynasties can be seen as urban archaeological work done by archaeologists, with a focus on the origin of cities, and forming and function of city sites. Research on the history of cities for the middle and late phases of old Chinese dynasties is mainly carried out by urban historical geographers, who emphasize the geographical conditions of city-site selection, moving of city-sites, forming and evolution of urban morphology and functional structures, rules of the rise and fall of cities, and the relationship between urban and regional development. On the other hand, research into the history of cities for the final phase of the old dynasties and the twentieth century is a huge project, whose content and perspec-

tives covers a wide range of urban and social issues with numerous scholars from almost every area of social science making their contributions. The evolution of research into urban history is specified as follows in terms of the progress of Chinese history.

I. RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY FOR THE PRE-QIN PERIOD

With the focus on the origin and symbolism of cities, research into urban history for the Pre-Qin period is inseparably connected with urban archaeology. With an increasing number of Pre-Qin cities discovered through archaeological excavation, scholars began to try to make summary analyses of the development progress, forming, and institutions of Pre-Qin cities as well as carrying out case-by-case archaeological studies on the discovered city sites. Representative works include:

“Zhou dai dushi de fazhan yu shangye de fada” (Development of cities in the Zhou dynasty and prosperity of business) by Xu Zhuoyun [1977]. In this work, the author points out that, although the feudal states in the Western Zhou dynasty were not first-order political units, they actually held full jurisdiction over certain territories at the administrative, economic, and social levels. Therefore, the feudal states can be classified as “cities.” But the fiefs belonging to imperial ministers did not have the same kind of jurisdiction over the land and people, so fiefs can only be seen as small-sized manors, rather than cities.

Zhongguo gudai chengshi yu chengshi kaogu (Chinese ancient cities and urban archaeology) by Xu Pingfang [1998]. According to the author, the urban center in the geographic civilized society is a building built with a basis of compact soil. This urban layout is fundamentally different from that of spelaean or semi-splaean clans tied by blood relationships, so there is no direct successive connection between these two social forms. Thus, he thinks it is not scientific to study the site selection and forms of early Chinese cities without regard to the historical transformation of the social nature in the Pre-Qin period.

Gudai shehui yu guojia (Ancient society and countries) by Du Zhengsheng [1982]. By consulting historical and archaeological materials, this work analyzes forms of city-states in the Zhou dynasty and puts forward the viewpoint that the economic development and social changes resulted in the “second urban revolution” that occurred between the Zhou dynasty and the Qin dynasty.

Zhongguo shiqian gucheng (Pre-history cities in China) by Ma Shizhi

[2003]. The author pays attention to the relationship between Pre-historic cities and the origin of civilization, as well as early countries. Further, he also makes a comparative analysis with foreign counterparts. In the work, the author points out seven characteristics of Pre-historic cities, out of which two relationships between city sites and their corresponding ancient ruins deserve our attention: i) sites where the city walls were just a part of the whole ruin; ii) sites where the city walls embraced the entire ruin. These two layouts may represent different social structures. The author further explains that the city sites with walls were the central part of the ruins, reflecting how countries originated.

Xianqin doucheng fuyuan yanjiu (Research on the recovery of Pre-Qin cities) by Qu Yingjie [1991]. Based on the results of archaeological excavation in combination with textual research into historical materials, the author recovers forms and institutions of many Pre-Qin cities. The work is a relatively early publication with a comprehensive description of the history of Pre-Qin cities and a focus on the recovery of their forms and institutions. However, it does not give us an overall understanding of the urban layout during that period.

Zhongguo gudai doucheng zhidushi yanjiu (Research into the history of Chinese ancient urban institutions) by Yang Kuan [1993a]. From the angle of the history of institutions, the author tries to draw conclusions on urban layout in ancient times. According to what he points out, since the Zhou dynasty's establishment, the pattern of "city in west, walls in east" became a main feature of the layout of Pre-Qin cities, continuing down to the East Han dynasty. Because the author ignores the constraints imposed on cities by landforms, his views did not become mainstream in this field [Yang Kuan 1984, 1989, 1993b; Liu Qingzhu 1987, 1992].

"Zhongguo gudai doucheng guihua de fazhan jieduanxing" (Development stages of the layout of ancient Chinese cities) by Yu Weichao [1985]. The author considers the decentralization of functional areas as the main characteristic of the layout of cities during the Shang and the Western Zhou dynasties in such an earlier stage, whereas a sealed type was the main characteristic of cities during the Eastern Zhou and the Han dynasties.

Xianqin chengshi kaoguxue yanjiu (Archaeological research into Pre-Qin cities) by Xu Hong [2000]. The book is an outstanding work incorporating significant archaeological results on Pre-Qin cities. Through collecting and studying a large amount of archaeological materials on Pre-Qin city sites, it provided us with a comprehensive description of

the features of urban layout in accordance with various stages and areas in the Pre-Qin period. It is also a work of reference significance to future research into Pre-Qin cities.

Since there are insufficient historical materials and archaeological excavations in China, further comparative research into early city sites all over the world needs to be reinforced to find out the underlying rules of origin and forms of early cities.

II. RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY FOR THE QIN AND HAN PERIODS

In *Xianyang didou ji* (A record of Xian Yang: The former imperial capital), Wang Xueli [1999], discusses the layout and buildings of Xian Yang by analyzing archaeological and historical materials. *Qin doucheng yanjiu* (Research into Qin's capital) by Xu Weimin [2000], makes a systematic treatment of the structure and evolution of cities in Qin State and Xian Yang—the capital of the Qin empire during the Warring States period. Furthermore, the author does comparative research with capitals of other states during the Warring States period, coming up with the conclusion that the layout of Xian Yang was generally a universal one with its own special traits on a detailed level. This method with comparative analysis is not a common one in research into Xian Yang.

Let us turn to research into the capitals of the Qin and Han empires. In Xu Pingfang's opinion, the most representative characteristic of cities since the Shang and the Zhou dynasties, the association of palaces and temples, changed in the Qin and Han periods to the separation of them: Palaces were foremost, temples were second, and emperors' mausoleums were moved out of the city. After the enthronement of Emperor Wen of Han, temples and mausoleums were combined: the imperial temples were established beside mausoleums and arranged according to the *zhao mu* system, an imperial system set up for temples. After the establishment of Eastern Han, temples were once again moved back to the city. After the arrangement of "ancestral temple on the left, god temple on the right" reemerged in Luoyang, the capital of the Northern Wei dynasty, a model for capital layout was finally set up for later dynasties [Xu Pingfang 1997]. In "Research into the history of ancient Chinese urban institutions," Yang Kuan [1993a] remarked that the transformation from the urban layout of "city in west, walls in east" of Chang'an with the positive direction of east during the West Han period to that of "city inside, walls outside" of Luoyang with the positive

direction of south during the East Han period resulted from the change in the ceremonial system. But his point is still under debate. A few scholars believe that the winding layout of the walls of Chang'an was in imitation of astronomical phenomena, but this is only based on some descriptions in later documents [Wu Qingzhou 1995; Li Xiaobo 2000]. Because this viewpoint overlooks both the constraints imposed by rivers and landform on the city site and the fact that the walls were built after the establishment of palaces, it is not accepted by the majority [Dong Jianhong 1989; Ma Zhenglin 1992]. Compared to the rich academic results on Chang'an, those on Luoyang are much fewer, so research in this respect should be reinforced in the future.

As to comprehensive research into regional cities during the Han period, *Han dai chengshi yanjiu* (Research into cities in the Han period) by Zhou Changshan [2001] conducted an analysis on city walls, LI, markets, and other factors in that period, but did not achieve sufficient breakthrough results. *Han dai chengshi shehui* (Urban society in the Han period) by Zhang Jihai [2006] conducted specific research into some issues of Han cities by referring to historical and archaeological materials. However, as the book's title states, the author focused his attention on "society" instead of the "city." Thus, it is a book with a deep analysis of social life related to urban markets, rather than of material aspects of regional cities.

Another important issue in research into regional cities during the Han period is on "subcities." Xu Pingfang [1993] analyzed seven maps of cities from the early Western Han period throughout the early South and North period and remarked that: "The most important part of regional cities of the Han was the government offices, which were enclosed by walls, forming a small inner "city" which can be called a "subcity"." Zhou Changshan [2001] also makes the same point as Xu. Because all "subcities" were located in border cities according to discovered ruins or maps, they think "subcity" is a unique trait for Han border cities. But there was not a single word like "subcity (子城)" appearing in the Han dynasty's documents, so we can confirm that there was no such specific concept or definition as "subcity" then. In addition, all these border cities were quite small and the "subcities" were even smaller, so they did not have much use in military defense. In summary, the proof that the division walls in these border cities were used for separating "subcities" or just "ordinary walls" still needs further evidence.

In general, the capital layout in this period was relatively loose and not spatially-ordered, so we will likely need to adjust our understanding of it as new findings are made and the debate will continue. Restricted

by a limitation of historical documents and archaeological results, currently research into regional cities in the Qin and Han periods can only be carried out on an individual- case basis, and overall research has just begun. If no breakthroughs are made in research methods or angles, the chances of seeing a remarkable masterpiece with initiative significance within a short time will be minimal.

III. RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY FOR THE WEI, JIN, SOUTH AND NORTH, SUI, AND TANG PERIODS

Research into these periods is mainly focused on the effects imposed by the *fang-shi* system on cities in China. According to the present mainstream viewpoint, the imperial and eastern capitals of the Sui and Tang dynasties adopted a sealed-type layout, which looked like a chessboard. Some scholars believe that, Ye City of the Cao Wei dynasty was the first city to adopt a formal *li-fang* system for urban layout. However, this point of view lacks adequate archaeological support. It is accepted by the majority that a relatively clear *li-fang* system had been instituted since Luoyang in the North Wei dynasty. But some scholars think it was Ping City of the same dynasty. At any rate, this kind of urban layout was inherited by Ye South City of Northern Qi, then by Chang'an and Luoyang of the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Along with new archaeological findings and collation of historical materials, research into the volume, locations, and structure of Fang-Shi in Chang'an and Luoyang has become clearer and clearer [Su Bai 1978; Xin Deyong 1991; Yang Hongnian 2005]. Currently, it focuses on the study of urban and social operation on a spatial level. An example of this is "Tang dai changan shehuishi yanjiu: Cong shehui liudong de jiaodu lai guan cha" (Research into social history of Chang'an in the Tang dynasty: From an angle of social flow) by Wang Jing [2004]. The author tries to comprehend the change in spatial layout from the angle of social change. In other words, the work focused on analyzing the social causes behind the apparent spatial change. Such a deep study represents new trends in research into urban history.

Compared to capitals, research into regional cities in the Wei, Jin, South and North, Sui, and Tang periods is relatively lacking. *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* (Cities and society in the Six-Dynasties period) by Liu Shufen [1992] is an important work in this area. In her opinion, there was a large-sized city building movement in the Wei, Jin and North dynasties. But it seems that she didn't take into consideration the fact

that some newly established regional cities did not have city walls. “Sui Tang chengzhi leixing chutan (tigang)” (Initial research into types of city sites in the Sui and Tang periods (Outline)) by Su Bai [1990], is the most influential work in this area. According to Su, the scales of state capitals and counties in the Tang dynasty had a corresponding relationship with the number of *fang*. Besides, since the *fang* walls were arranged in an orderly fashion, the overall layout of blocks and streets in Tang cities were also arranged in an orderly manner. Furthermore, he explains why governmental residences were set up in the northwest corner of the regional cities according to the overall landform and climate conditions in China. Of course this point makes some sense. But it is not totally correct in light of the available materials. Subjects investigated are mainly concentrated on a certain number of large state capitals in the Tang dynasty, while other smaller or county-level cities are simply neglected. Furthermore, restricted by the prevailing conclusions—“collapse of the *fang-shi* system” and “urban revolution in the Middle Ages,”—many scholars subjectively believe that regional cities had the same *fang-shi* structure as capitals, but this may be not true. According to historical documents and inscriptions discovered within tombs, some state capitals had a much bigger number of *fang* than the number estimated by scholars according to the city’s administrative level. On the other hand, in some regional cities the orderly layout of *fang* and streets were very hard to construct due to the natural landform.

The *fang-shi* system has always been an important subject of research into ancient Chinese cities. Many works have been published on it, most of which have centered on discussions of viewpoints put forth by Katō Shigeshi [1981], the famous Japanese scholar. Recently, arguments about this system have mainly concentrated on two areas:

- i) The origin of the *fang* system. Basically, there are three different viewpoints: a) this system originated in the Wei, Jin, and South and North periods. Most scholars supporting this point believe that its birthplace was Ye City of Cao Wei, and the others think it was Ping City (Northern Wei) [Liu Shufen 1982]; b) Yang Kuan, a scholar representative of this view, thinks that the *fang* system had a close connection with the *li* system in the Qin and Han periods [1993a]; c) According to Meng Fanren [1994], the orderly *fen-shi* system in Luoyang (Northern Wei) resulted from cities in Central Asia. This viewpoint is novel, but holds little sway in academic circles.
- ii) The relationship between *fang* and *li*. “Wei Jin Sui Tang chengshi

li-fang zhidu: Kaoguxue de yinzheng” (The *li-fang* system in cities in the Wei, Jin, Sui, and Tang periods: Verification from archaeology) by Qi Dongfang [2003], made an organized analysis of the development of *li* and *fang*. In his view, “*fang*” was just a section or block assigned by urban planning while “*li*” was a unit with administrative meaning, especially in relation to population administration, so these two units have different natures. Undoubtedly, this point is quite creative.

On the other hand, various scholars have lodged their own different viewpoints and questions about this system. For instance, whether the commercial activities under the *fang-shi* system were to be restricted within the sealed “*fang*,” [Li Xiaocong 2003; Cheng Yinong 2003] or whether the layout of “*fang*” in regional cities was arranged in an orderly manner or not [Cheng Yinong 2003], etc. At any rate, it is of vital importance to reconsider some definitions and concepts in future research into this system, including: the forms of “*fang*” and “*fang* walls” in regional cities, restriction of commercial activities under this system, comparison between “*shi*” in cities in the Tang dynasty and in the Song dynasty, curfews in cities subsequent to the Song dynasty, the evolution of “inner *fang*” from the Tang dynasty to the Ming dynasty, and so on. Based on the objective analysis of these issues, the two subjects—“collapse of the *fang-shi* system” and “urban revolution in the Middle Ages”—should also be reconsidered from a new angle.

Yangzhou has been the city given the most attention by scholars of regional cities of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Since the 1970s, a large amount of archaeological material on Yangzhou has been disclosed and published so that our understanding of this city has gradually deepened. The most representative paper is “Sui Tang Song Ming Yangzhoucheng de fuyuan yu yanjiu” (Recovery of and research into Yangzhou in the Sui, Tang, Song, and Ming periods) by Jiang Zhongyi [1993]. Beginning with Yangzhou in the Ming dynasty, the author brought the city of Yangzhou in the Song, Tang, and Sui dynasties to us by consulting archaeological and historical materials. With an analysis of the history, site changes, and traits of layout of Yangzhou in the Sui and Tang dynasties, he came up with the conclusion that Yangzhou had the same sealed-type layout of “*li* and *fang*” as Chang’an and Luoyang. In contrast to Jiang, Li Yuqun [2003], in “Sui Tang shidai de Yangzhou cheng” (Yangzhou in the Sui and Tang periods) raised the point that the layout of “*li* and *fang*” in Yangzhou was not exactly in compliance with that of the capital. According to the author, this difference was because

Yangzhou, as a commercial city, achieved a breakthrough in the *li-fang* system, and the open-type layout of streets and lanes in the Song dynasty can be dated back to Yangzhou of the Tang dynasty. Li has broken the traditional concept that all regional cities in the Tang dynasty adopted the orderly *fang-shi* system, but still restricted by this, he just thinks of the case of Yangzhou as special.

In *Tang dai chengshi shi yanjiu chupian* (First piece of research into history of cities in the Tang dynasty), Cheng Cunjie [2002] conducted an investigation into the construction, reasons for construction, distribution, and urban layout of border cities in terms of regional division as well as of Luoyang. This work must be the first masterpiece committed to comprehensive research into Tang cities so far. “Lun Tang dai houqi huabei san ge quyu zhouxin chengshi de xingcheng” (On forming of the three regional central cities in North China in the late Tang dynasty) by Li Xiaocong [1992a] analyzes the forming of the three central cities in North China—Dingzhou, Zhenzhou, and Weizhou—from the angles of political factors, natural environment, and traffic locations. He also analyzed the evolution rules of central cities and urban systems in this region since the Tang dynasty by applying systematic theories used for modern cities. This approach is not typical of this field.

In general, with more and more detailed research in the recovery of capitals in the Wei, Jin, Sui, and Tang periods, the focus will be transferred away from this area. Research into urban and social history in the Tang dynasty integrated with both social and material analyses will represent a new trend. Breaking free from the restrictions of the concept of the *fang-shi* system in capitals and deep investigation into the practical situation in regional cities should be conducted with the focus on the regional cities’ own characteristics. For example, what position did the *fang-shi* system and the *li*-wall system hold in urban life? Did they really ever come into effect in line with the descriptions in historical materials, institutional rules, or demonstrations put forward by later scholars? To what extent was this system implemented in regional cities? Were all regional cities in the same form? Were there ever complete *fang-shi* systems and *li*-wall systems established? Did the so-called “urban revolution” really happen between the Tang dynasty and the Song dynasty? Did breaking down *fang* walls really have revolutionary significance? All these questions deserve our further and deeper discussion.

IV. RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY OF THE SONG, YUAN, MING, AND QING PERIODS

In research for cities of early modern China, in contrast to research for ancient times, the recovery of urban life in the Ming and Qing period is possible to a considerable degree, thanks to the large amount of existing historical materials describing urban institutions and social life as well as regional documents such as fiction, novels, or writings by folk litterateurs. Especially with the help of urban maps, researchers have the chance of totally understanding the relationship among urban layout and functional structure, geographic conditions, and political systems through leveraging writing and image data. Based on a comprehension of this relationship, we are able to study the conceptual mode of urban layout and conduct investigations into the urban ecological structure, urban functions, relationship between cities and villages, administrative system, commerce and handcrafts, regular operations, and other aspects.

With regard to research into Kaifeng, the capital of the Song dynasty, *Bei Song dongjing cheng yanjiu* (Research into Dongjing (Kaifeng) in the Song dynasty) by Liu Chunying [2004], fully reveals the urban layout of Kaifeng in the North Song dynasty by consulting historical and archaeological materials representing the latest results of academic research on this city in that period.

Hou Renzhi and Xu Pingfang are the most innovative and pioneering representatives of research into the urban history of Beijing. Through a study of the evolution of water sources and systems in or near Beijing, Hou [1984, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c] reveals the urban appearances and spatial structures of Beijing in different historical phases. His study and work have become a classic achievement in the field of urban historical geography. Combining historical materials with archaeological findings, Xu Pingfang [1988, 2002] draws step-by-step inferences from the historical traces left behind Dadu (capital of the Yuan dynasty) and made drawings recovering the appearance of Beijing in the Ming and Qing periods. Further, after historical and geographical investigations into cities including Beijing, Chengde, Wuhu, Zibo, Handan, and others, Hou [1979, 1994] confirmed the nature, mission, and content of urban historical geography on a theoretical level. He pointed out that the content of research thereof should include the origin and evolution of city sites, the forming and evolution of urban functions, the forming and traits of urban appearances, moving of city locations and the relevant underlying rules, geographic factors of regional development, and the rise and fall of cities, etc. The research into urban history by Hou and

Xu is concentrated on the recovery of urban layout, urban planning, and the protection of old cities, so its academic and guiding significance is quite remarkable.

Based on the recovery of old cities, a very meaningful achievement in the research into urban history has come into practical use in publishing—historical atlases of cities. Now Volumes 1 and 2 of *Beijing lishi dituji* (Historical atlas of Beijing) [Hou Renzhi 1988, 1997] have been published and Volume 3 is currently being compiled. Further, *Xi'an lishi dituji* (Historical atlas of Xi'an) [Shi Nianhai 1996], *Shanghai lishi dituji* (Historical atlas of Shanghai) [Zhou Zhenhe 1999], *Tianjin chengshi lishi dituji* (Historical atlas of Tianjin) [Tianjin Shigui Huahe Guotu Ziyuanju 2004], and *Wuhan lishi dituji* (Historical atlas of Wuhan) [Wuhan Lishi Dituji Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1998] have also been published. Historical atlases for Luoyang, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Nanjing are still being compiled.

The recovery of the forms and structures of old cities provides us with a chance to carry out research into the relationship between urban life and geographic space. Relevant works include: “Ming Qing Beijing chengshi shehui kongjian jiegou gaishuo” (An outline of the spatial structure of Beijing urban society in the Ming and Qing periods) by Zhao Shiyu and Zhou Shangyi [2001]; “Ming Qing chengshi de fangxiang yu shequ: Jian lun chuantong wenhua zai chengshi kongjian de zheshe” (Lanes and blocks of cities in the Ming and Qing periods: Concurrent reflection on traditional culture in urban space) by Liu Fengyun [2001], and so forth. However, both the number of investigated cities in these works and the research depth in this field are inadequate. But owing to the richness of the relevant material, we can expect valuable achievements in this field for the foreseeable future.

In regard to research into cities in or after the Song dynasty, most scholars tend to select a single city as the research subject, so comprehensive research about a whole region is not common. “Tang Song yunhe chengshi xuanzhi yu chengshi xingtai de yanjiu” (Research into site selection and forms of cities along canals in the Tang and Song periods) by Li Xiaocong [1993] is an innovative work from the point of view of its content and applied study methods. Based on historical and archaeological material, it reveals the former forms of over ten cities beside canals in the Tang and Song periods by applying methods of historical geography, and draws a conclusion on the underlying rules of site selection and form evolution of cities near canals since the Tang and Song dynasties. Uninhibited by the assumptions of “collapse of the *fang-shi* system,” the author objectively and carefully analyzes the progress of

urban forms and manages to generalize the rules. His work is an exceptional achievement in research into the forms of ancient Chinese cities. *Ming dai yunnan zhengqu zhisuo yanjiu* (Research into seats of regional governments of the political region of Yunnan in the Ming dynasty) by Chen Qingjiang [2002] carefully analyzes the distribution, rise and fall, moves, forms, and functions of cities or counties where regional governments of Yunnan at all levels were located, filling the gap in research on ancient southwestern cities. *Qing dai huangtu gaoyuan diqu chengzhen dili yanjiu* (Geographic research into cities in the Loess Plateau in the Qing dynasty) by Liu Jingchun [2005] applies quantitative methods to analyze the distances between cities or towns in the Loess Plateau, and the sizes of population and cities, considering the variation among regions. This kind of research method, which adopts statistical methods with adequate investigation samples, is a better way to reveal the true features of regional cities than using only descriptive historical materials. As the available urban data for the Ming and Qing periods is quite rich, quantitative methods should be encouraged. Furthermore, how to not only sum up several city types but also leverage unique traits of regional cities to compare their natures on a nationwide level is an important issue needing our deeper research into urban history. For now it may be also a common subject in the research into regional cities in China.

Since the 1980s, research into Ming and Qing cities has been primarily focused on the history of urban society and urban economy with research into the history of social economy as the main direction, while also absorbing and leveraging much knowledge from western sociology and economics. For example, research into the history of the social economy of cities south of the Yangtze River in the Ming and Qing periods by Li Bozhong [2002a, 2002b, 2004] and research into cities and towns south of the Yangtze River of the same time by Fan Shuzhi [1990], Liu Shiji [1987, 1988], Wu Renshu [1993, 1997]. are both representative academic achievements, following the direction mentioned above.

In regard to research areas, research into Ming and Qing cities is mainly focused on the Southeastern Coastal Area and the Yangtze River Valley, which were economically developed at that time. Meanwhile, it tends to be combined with regional research and urban system research. Besides the “South-of-the-Yangtze River mode” committed to research into cities and towns in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, urban research into the middle and upper reaches also have their own respective characteristics. Research into urban history into the upper reaches follows the direction of urban society and research on Chengdu and

other cities by Wang Di [2001] and represents the primary achievement in this area. The urban research for the Han River Valley by Lu Xiqi [2006a, 2006b] was the most significant result for that of the middle reaches.

We must admit that Chinese scholars pay too much attention to the history of urban economic and social life while overlooking research into urban forms and administrative systems. As for areas of research, it is mainly focused on the southeastern coastal area and the Yangtze River Valley where the economy was more developed, resulting in weaknesses of research on inland cities and a lack of comparative research among cities in different regions or of different types.

In general, thanks to relatively rich historical material and the introduction of quantitative methods, recovery research for this period is more oriented to actual and living urban history than to the plain material space of cities. The study of urban life history and social history related to spatial structure gradually increases; or in other words, the integration of research about human society and about urban materials begins to attract more attention from scholars. Descriptions of individual cases will be gradually replaced by regional urban research with a number of statistical samples, or by nationwide research into one single urban factor.

V. RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY FOR MODERN TIMES

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, China has witnessed great social change. Chinese scholars in this field focus their greatest efforts on new factors emerging in traditional cities and conduct deep analyses of the effects imposed by them on the transformation of cities, and the transformation process. Research objects include new factors such as foreign settlements, foreign firms, parks and railway stations, and public space in open cities. Thus, the researched cities are mainly concentrated in coastal port cities and open cities along the Yangtze River [Mao Jiaqi 2001; Zhang Zhongli and Xiong Yuezhi 2002]. With a focus on modern cities, the Program of Historical Research of Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences has begun the compilation of *Chengshishi yanjiu* (Research into urban history), of which over 20 volumes have been published. Both domestic and foreign counterparts have paid much attention to the modernization progress of cities in China and completed a number of monographs [He Yimin 1994; Zhang Zhongli 1996; Dai Angang 1998; Wei Yingtao 1998; Cao Hongtao and Liu Jinsheng 1998;

Li Jun 2005], four of which were respectively committed to Shanghai, Tianjin, Wuhan, and Chongqing, these four open cities. They are: *Jindai Shanghai chengshi yanjiu* (Urban research into modern Shanghai) by Zhang Zhongli [1990]; *Jindai Chongqing chengshishi* (Urban history of modern Chongqing) by Wei Yingtao [1995]; *Jindai Wuhan chengshishi* (Urban history of modern Wuhan) by Pi Mingxiu [1993]; and *Jindai Tianjin chengshishi* (Urban history of modern Tianjin) by Luo Shuwei [1993]. These four works contain the most important thoughts in this field, and fully and deeply analyze the causes for why these four typical cities realized commercial prosperity, progress, and other features of their modernization. All of them finally came up with three conditions for the remarkable development of modern cities in China: a) growth arising from commercial prosperity; b) a stable internal environment; and c) opening to the outside world. Further, some relevant theories and methods were also mentioned in these books.

Although the number of works on modern cities in China has recently continued to increase, most of them have just remained on a level of plain historical statements, whereas deep theoretical analyses and conclusions are not commonly seen at this time. Meanwhile, researchers have attached too much importance to newly rising cities in coastal regions while overlooking the modernization of inland objects. As the level of economic development in middle and western areas lags behind the average level of China, the academic focus has not been transferred to them. Furthermore, the inherent and traditional forms and structural features in Chinese cities are usually not taken into consideration, because new factors and “transformation” attract too much attention while functions of urban development of traditional features and their changes are almost completely ignored. In future research, we should conduct careful analyses of how traditional and new factors interact with each other to change cities in China and of how urban transformation and change happen.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH INTO URBAN HISTORY

A spectrum of data on ancient capitals has been formed within the frame of Chinese traditional sciences. Thus, many scholars focus their attention on the status and evolution rules of ancient capitals during the old Chinese dynasties, and the Academy of Chinese Ancient Capitals has been established upon the proposal of Shi Nianhai. According to the research fields, which include history, geography, archaeology, econom-

ics, culture, art, architecture, and communication, the study of ancient capitals can be considered a comprehensive discipline under the head of urban historical science. Basically, research into urban history in the study of ancient capitals has inherited and further developed the traditional Chinese science of “evolution of capitals,” with ancient capitals as the principal research objects. Despite the introduction of approaches applied in research into the history of social economics and the history of regional space, its fundamental direction and methods are still derived from the historical science of “institution-culture,” which is part of traditional Chinese historiography.

There are also some comprehensive works which were not compiled according to certain specific times and are now used as teaching materials in the fields of urban planning or urban historical geography. *Zhongguo gudai chengshi guihuashi* (History of ancient urban planning in China) by He Yeju [1996], and *Zhongguo chengshi jiansheshi* (History of urban construction in China) by Dong Jianhong [2004] are the most representative works for the former, and as for the latter, *Zhongguo chengshi lishi dili* (Chinese urban historical geography) by Ma Zhenglin [1998] is the most influential book. In regard to content, these books contain many individual cases of cities emphasizing urban layout; considering research methods, Ma Zhenglin focuses on elements forming the city, including the origin, site selection, city walls, type, shape, size, plane layout, water sources, gardens and parks, planning ideas, and so on. But it is a problem whether this individual-case method is able to help mirror the typicality of certain cities in certain historical phases. Although there are not too many creative ideas in these books, they can provide readers with an overall and relatively complete perspective on urban development in China. For primers in colleges, these teaching books are surely of great usefulness.

Recently, there have been more and more scholars tending to study the forms of ancient cities in China from the angle of geomantic omens [Wang Dehua 1994; Qi Heng and Fan Wei 1998; Kang Liang and Kang Yu 1999], which indeed played an important role in site selection and layout planning in ancient times. However, if the research is conducted only on the basis of the concept of geomantic omens, it will be very inadequate. First, their demonstration is usually based on concepts of geomantic omens, with which scholars pick up accordant examples to prove their conclusions. With this kind of methodology, only necessary conditions affecting forms of ancient cities are demonstrated, instead of sufficient conditions. In other words, the geomantic omen concept may impose constraints on the forms of ancient cities, but it has not been

proved to be a decisive factor. Second, it was after the Eastern Han dynasty that thought on geomantic omens became a systematic theory which was introduced in subsequent capital design, so site selection and forms of earlier cities in China were not affected by geomantic theory at all. Furthermore, it might not be applicable to all regional cities, especially northern ones. Scholars addicted to geomantic theory usually use capitals as examples to explain their viewpoints, and this just proves its limitations. But we must admit that it is a truth that geomantic thought really did influence the formation of ancient cities. So our focus should be transferred to answering these questions: how did this theory take effect on urban design and operation? Which social stratum imposed influence on urban design and administration by geomantic omen? To explain the formation and development of ancient cities from just the single angle of geomantic omen is not a good option.

VII. COMBINATION OF CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC THEORIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

With the perfection of technologies like aerial remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), more and more contemporary geographic theories and analytical technical means are being introduced into research on urban history. A typical example is the utilization of color infrared aerial photographs to analyze the relationship between the evolution of cities along the Yangtze River and changes in river channels [Li Xiacong 1992b]. This research not only reveals the developmental rules of cities along the river, but also introduces advanced geographic interpretation technology into the field of historical geography, providing valuable practical experience for the investigation of ancient cities. Cheng Yinong made an analysis of the regional variation of city building activities in different periods by leveraging GIS. With a statistical basis, he respectively adopted a method of trend analysis or regional variation in terms of amounts of urban historical materials, uncovering things that remain hidden using the traditional scenario method [Cheng Yinong 2005]. According to his findings, city walls were not a necessary part of cities in China from the early Tang dynasty to the middle Ming dynasty, as was clear from the presence of regional variation. This kind of quantitative analysis that focuses on one single urban factor could be a better way to help us recognize clearly the essentials of ancient cities rather than a comprehensive description. The introduction of contemporary analytical means will lead us in a new direction of comprehensive

urban research in the future.

—Originally written in Chinese

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