Preface

This book includes two innovative aspects:

1. Exploration of urban planning and city changes from a geographical perspective;

   Geographic factors have persistently influenced landscape changes, from prehistoric villages and settlements, the origin of towns, and capital founding by the emperors, to the development, prosperity, and even decline (in some historical periods) of the city. In the past, studies have focused on cultural, economic, or political factors. Geographical studies are rarely seen and sometimes placed in a very secondary position.

   As for planning considerations, existing norms and regulations regarding urban planning and the planning of preserving historical cities have focused on architectural space. This book examines geographic research and corresponding planning. In that regard, this book is only a preliminary effort. Many aspects need to be perfected. I have another book coming out that will present a more comprehensive and in-depth study of this area.

2. Discussion of Nanjing as a famous ancient capital in Chinese history

   As one of the four great ancient capitals in China, Nanjing is very different from Beijing, Xi’an, and Luoyang in terms of its historical status. Throughout its history, Nanjing witnessed no grand unification but turmoil, disruption, and massacres: Wu State-Chu State stalemate during the Spring and Autumn Period, the war of the Three Kingdoms Period, the moving of imperial clans to the Southeast in the Western Jin Dynasty, Six Dynasties, the tragedy of the Southern Tang emperor, the Jingnan Campaign of the Ming Dynasty, the besiegement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, capital founding during the Republic of China, the city-wide massacre of the Japanese army, etc. However, Nanjing has a very important cultural position in China’s cultural history. During the 300 years of the Five Nomadic Northern Tribes Uprising, relying on the natural barrier of the Yangtze River, Nanjing preserved the Chinese “Han” culture and became the source of the spread of culture for the later Sui and Tang Dynasties.
Nanjing is poetic in terms of its city history. This place once created landscape poems, landscape paintings and landscape gardens during the most troubled times of Wei Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties. Like a crouching tiger and a curling dragon in its geographical form, Nanjing was recognized to be located in a strategic place along the Yangtze River. The city features famous scenic spots, gardens, and numerous historical sites: Plum Blossom Hill, Terrace of the Raining Flowers, Peach Blossom Ferry, Confucius Temple, etc. Verses like “Mist over icy water and moon over sands” and “The three-peak’d mountain is half lost in azure sky; The two-fork’d stream by Egret Isle is kept apart” give us a glimpse of the romantic works that many poets and painters made and by the inspiration of Nanjing’s landscape.

This book does not look into emperors or dynasties, but the urban transition in Nanjing’s geographical setup. By analyzing China’s historical changes with Nanjing as a case study, a unique perspective and a broad vision can be developed. From urban transitions one can see some other changes of culture, economics, politics, and so on.

There are many things to say about both topics of geographical perspective and Nanjing. My research is not finished, here it just begins with a brief discussion.

Nanjing

Yifeng Yao

April 2016
Nanjing: Historical Landscape and Its Planning from Geographical Perspective
Yao, Y.
2016, XV, 212 p. 121 illus., 55 illus. in color., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-981-10-1635-6