

China's Contested Capital: Architecture, Ritual, and Response in Nanjing. By Charles D. Musgrove. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 316. \$49.00.

Although he did not live to see Nanjing become the capital of the Republic of China in 1927, Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Nationalist Party, looms large in this book. After Sun's protégé Chiang Kai-shek unified eastern China via the Northern Expedition, Chiang honoured his late mentor's desire to locate the Nationalist-formed central government in Nanjing and, with much ceremony, relocated Sun's body to a mausoleum outside its eastern gate, near the tomb of the first Ming emperor. For ten years, between 1927 and 1937, Musgrove argues, Nanjing developed as the key site for what he judges to be a fairly successful process of "ritual centering." Nanjing's emergent new cityscape and public rituals called into being citizens willing to rally around Chiang and the Nationalist government—as well as to protest against them. Nanjing, the capital, became a key symbol of the nation.

This book, which analyses the process of nation building through construction of the capital, is organized into six thematic chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion that provides an excellent succinct summary. It is based upon extensive reading of government documents, newspaper articles from the 1920s and 1930s, travel accounts, and some archival material. The introduction sets out the book's goals and briefly discusses the symbolism of Chinese capitals before the twentieth century. Following are chapters on (1) the choice of Nanjing as Nationalist capital in 1927, (2) the goals of the capital planners (many of which were not achieved before the capital had to be abandoned in the face of the Japanese advance in 1937), (3) architectural styles adopted in the construction of public and commercial buildings in the new capital, (4) the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum built on a mountainside east of the walled city, (5) state-sponsored public rituals, and (6) the use of public spaces by people (primarily student groups) protesting the state.

Sun Yat-sen's influence is a connecting thread throughout the book. Musgrove shows that many were dubious about Nanjing's fitness to serve as the national capital; Sun's clearly expressed support for the idea carried the day. As the Nationalists attempted to turn his "Three Principles of the People" into a unifying ideology for the party and the republic as a whole, Nanjing's public spaces and events were designed to honour him and carry out his vision of economic growth and social mobilization. The urban planners who began work on the capital in the late 1920s laid out a grand street, originally to be named "Welcoming the Coffin Avenue" 迎柩大道. It cut a diagonal from the Yangzi port at Xiaguan 下關 southeast to the heart of the city and then turned due east past the old Ming imperial city and out the east gate toward the tomb of the first Ming emperor. The cortege transporting Sun's body to its final

resting place travelled that avenue, named Zhongshan 中山 after Sun's courtesy name, in a grand ceremony in the summer of 1929. The headquarters of the Nationalist Party was originally planned to occupy a site near the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, the most sacred territory in the Republic. After meeting with conciliatory government representatives, student protestors in the mid-1930s often were brought to the Mausoleum to take part in rituals that would allow them to express their commitment to Sun's revolutionary movement.

But the regime that built Nanjing into a national capital was not particularly revolutionary in the early 1930s. In Chapter Two, Musgrove argues that class segregation was built into the city's plan—sections of the city were zoned for different types of housing, including spacious plots near the commercial and civic centres for government workers and professionals. Industrial workers were intended to inhabit densely packed districts on the outskirts of town. The many poor who arrived in large numbers in the wake of natural disasters and warfare set up their own shantytowns, which the government attempted, often in vain, to regulate or demolish. On this topic, Musgrove cites Zvia Lipkin's *Useless to the State: "Social Problems" and Social Engineering in Nationalist Nanjing, 1927–1937*,¹ which goes into much greater detail about how Nanjing's administrators managed the messy problem of running the city, with in-depth analysis of their treatment of refugees, shantytowns, rickshaw pullers, prostitutes, and beggars.

Musgrove's main interest is in how the Nationalists conceptualized their regime and designed Nanjing to help promote the images they wanted to associate with it. Chapter Three, on Nanjing's public and commercial architecture, offers a close reading of several major building projects, arguing that different types of institutions chose different styles to emphasize the nature of their connection to China's past and to the world. Cultural centres, such as universities and museums, tended to adopt a "modified Chinese" style featuring large sloped roofs, whereas government offices displayed a "Chinese modernist" style with rectangular profiles complemented by decorative brackets and other Chinese-influenced ornamentation. Banks and other commercial buildings resembled American and Western European structures, built in the Neo-classical and International styles. An earlier version of this chapter, which is well illustrated with photographs of the buildings discussed, was published in Joseph W. Esherick's edited volume *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950*.²

Design competitions were held both for the Capital Plan and for the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. American-trained architect Lü Yanzhi 呂彥直 was involved in both

¹ Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.

² Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

projects. Unfortunately, as with the rest of the many designers of Nanjing mentioned in the book, Musgrove is not able to offer much personal detail to help us understand Lü and his relationship to the Nationalists. His death at a very young age right after the Mausoleum was completed doubtless has contributed to the paucity of material about his life.

In Chapter Five, borrowing a term from religious studies scholar Lindsay Jones, Musgrove analyses the Nationalists' staging of "ritual-architectural events": public activities held in spaces that, like the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, are sacred (in this case to the nation). A calendar of national rituals was devised, parades regularly made their way along Zhongshan Road 中山路, public military reviews were held at the Capital Airport, and political rallies periodically filled the public stadium and sports fields. Musgrove argues that the regime's attempts to stamp out old customs that it saw as superstitious and wasteful, such as elaborate Spring Festival celebrations, were met with considerable opposition. On the other hand, however, new state-centred rituals such as Double Ten parades to commemorate the outbreak of the 1911 revolution gradually came to be accepted as part of life in the capital and influenced public life in other Chinese cities, as well. Surprisingly, the New Life Movement launched in 1934 only receives a brief mention in this chapter, and only because it required Chiang Kai-shek to leave Nanjing frequently—Musgrove seems not to think that the movement had a significant impact on public life in the capital.

Musgrove rejects a view common in other histories of the Nationalist period—including, to some extent, in Frederic Wakeman, Jr.'s *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937*³ and Henrietta Harrison's *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911–1929*⁴—that Nationalist civic ceremonies can be characterized more as exercises in top-down mobilization and control than popular celebrations of national identity. He contends in Chapter Six that even those who protested Nationalist policies by demonstrating in Nanjing's streets and raiding party headquarters contributed to the creation of a sense of national belonging with Nanjing at its centre. "Despite the inherent unreality of the party's idealistic self-image, the party-state was nevertheless more adept than usually recognized at maintaining its position as the country's *most* legitimate leader. Protests in Nanjing confirmed the city's status as the national capital and the potency of its ritual sites" (p. 232). The success that the Nationalists had achieved in their efforts at "ritual centering" is clearly demonstrated, Musgrove argues, by the public outpouring of joy that met Chiang Kai-shek when he returned from Nanjing after the Xi'an kidnapping in late 1936. Scholars have overlooked this impressive record of the production of

³ Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

⁴ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

citizens, he suggests, due to subsequent events—eight years of all-out war with Japan and the loss to the Communists in the civil war.

Musgrove is aware of the extent to which his argument about public enthusiasm for Chiang Kai-shek echoes the claims of Nationalist propagandists of the 1930s, who wanted the world to believe that they were on track to build a modern strong nation unified by Sun's Three Principles of the People. In taking seriously the achievements of the Nationalists during the Nanjing decade, Musgrove joins a growing cohort of historians—among them William Kirby, Christian Henriot, Frank Dikötter, and Jay Taylor—who have shifted the discourse on the Nationalist period and given Chiang Kai-shek's regime credit for relatively good governance under trying circumstances. Unlike the work of Nationalist propagandists, though, most of the new sympathetic histories do not ignore the weaknesses and ugly aspects of the regime.

Musgrove certainly does not. As noted above, he shows in Chapter Two how little of the ambitious Capital Plan was achieved and how the Nationalists' revolutionary rhetoric was belied by their planned economic segregation of neighbourhoods. In Chapter Six, he points out that, after the December 1935 anti-Japanese protests in Beijing, many radical youths began to treat Nanjing as irrelevant in their fight against imperialist encroachments on Chinese sovereignty. Nevertheless, over the decade from 1927 to 1937, the Nationalists created a set of national rituals and myths with which many Chinese identified. In his conclusion, Musgrove traces the legacy of the Nanjing capital-building project as it played out after 1949 in Taipei and in Beijing, arguing that, on the mainland, "the myths surrounding the GMD unraveled quickly, allowing the CCP to present itself as more authentic inheritors of roughly *the same mythical framework*" (p. 260, emphasis in the original).

Although I found Musgrove's argument generally convincing and well made, I also found myself wondering about the temporal framework of the analysis. Most obviously in regard to Nanjing's history, the December 1937 destruction of the city by the Japanese military is ignored. Of course, one might say that the Rape of Nanjing is not relevant to an argument about how civic culture was built in the city before that terrible event. Nevertheless, the history of the Rape might offer a different perspective on the successes and failures of the Nationalist capital-building project in Nanjing. And it would have been interesting to learn whether the tragedy had an impact on the thinking of planners who designed subsequent Chinese capitals.

A more serious complaint is that the book privileges the Chiang Kai-shek regime too much. Nanjing was not the only Chinese city that was redesigned to serve as an important cultural (even national) capital in the first half of the twentieth century. Many of the activities of the Nanjing planners had been anticipated in other cities before the late 1920s, beginning, perhaps, with Zhang Jian's 張謇 transformation of Nantong 南通, analysed by Qin Shao in *Culturing Modernity: The Nantong Model*,

1890–1930.⁵ Sun Yat-sen's son Sun Ke 孫科, the holder of an advanced degree in planning, had helped redesign parts of Guangzhou in the early 1920s as an earlier Nationalist capital—temporary but still important symbolically. As Shi Mingzheng 史明正 has shown in his *Zou xiang jindaihua de Beijing cheng* 走向近代化的北京城,⁶ Yuan Shikai and his successors in the Beiyang government oversaw the physical and cultural transformation of Beijing into a new political capital in the years after 1911. The Great Shanghai Plan being implemented in that city in the 1920s and 1930s rivalled—and many would argue surpassed—Nanjing's Capital Plan as an expression of a longed-for civic community. This book's tight focus on Nanjing itself and lack of a broader perspective on the state of Chinese urban planning in the 1920s and 1930s may mislead its readers into thinking that the Nationalist capital was unprecedented and unique in ways that it was not.

Despite the lack of comparative analysis, though, the book is valuable for its detailed and informed discussion of the symbolism and rituals associated with public space and buildings in Nanjing. Photographs and maps in Chapters Three through Six provide visual evidence of the changing shape of the city. Musgrove's arguments about how Chinese civic culture and nationalism were shaped by architecture and public space are interesting and provocative.

KRISTIN STAPLETON
University at Buffalo, SUNY

⁵ Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

⁶ *Zou xiang jindaihua de Beijing cheng: Chengshi jianshe yu shehui biange* 走向近代化的北京城：城市建設與社會變革 (Beijing on the road to modernization: Urban construction and social change) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1995).