

The final chapter presents Yu's overall assessment of Chinese city and regional planning. Here he argues Chinese planning has not kept pace with the rapid changes in the economy and that "the primary values of planning, e.g. sustainability, public interests, equal opportunities, have often been ignored. Chinese planning fails to achieve its basic function of [providing] equal opportunity to all and democracy in terms of an open and transparent planning process" (p. 273). Yu points to issues in the devolution of planning systems as a particular challenge to improving planning outcomes and the ability of local government to address local changes in their planning activities at the same as reigning in undue discretion in the planning process. He concludes these challenges are part and parcel of the overall governance structure.

*Chinese City and Regional Planning Systems* provides a great overview of how urban planning in China has evolved under the existing governance structure and shift toward a market-oriented economy. It highlights some unique features of the current system and provides a sharp critique of planning processes. While the presentation of the material was clear and persuasive further proof reading and copyediting was required. The addition of Chinese characters in the references and for the main organisations and plans/programmes identified would have significantly aided researchers to employ the work in their own research. More case studies and analysis of public input into the planning process and acquisition of land for public or commercial use would strengthen the conclusions reached.

The final chapter put forth a great summary of the major themes in Chinese planning today. It would have been useful if these themes had been used to organise how the central material was presented and to introduce the study of Chinese planning at the beginning of the work, including a review of the major works and the theories of planning drawn on to analyse and critique Chinese planning systems. The book will be indispensable to students, researchers, policymakers and investors looking for a detailed understanding of the institutions, actors and processes that define urban planning in China today.

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Jinghong Zhang, *Puer Tea: Ancient Caravans and Urban Chic*, University of Washington Press, 2014, xi + 249 pp. ISBN: 978-0-295-99322-5 (hbk); 978-0-295-99323-2 (pbk)

*Puer* has become something of a phenomenon in the world of Chinese teas over the past couple of decades. Though all tea varieties have unique aspects in terms of their histories, methods of processing, fragrance, etc., *puer*, one of the few true fermented teas, is particularly notable, with its large, dark leaves, pressed into unusual shapes – melon ball, circular, brick –, and its distinctive taste (described, for good *puer*, as "earthy" or "mushroomy", and for bad, "mouldy"). Tracing its lineage back to the "old tea horse road" (*cha ma gudao*), *puer* tea was for centuries carried from the southwestern province of Yunnan by horse or mule across the rest of China and to Southeast Asia.

On the Tibetan Plateau, it became the preferred drink of the local inhabitants, and an integral part of the local economy. Throughout much of the twentieth century, *puer* production was in relative decline, but the tea was then “re-discovered” in the 1990s by Taiwanese and Hong Kong visitors. As “*puer* fever” reached the mainland, the tea underwent a period of phenomenal (and largely unanticipated) popularity, hype and price-rise, followed by large-scale counterfeiting, before the market plummeted dramatically in 2007, leaving many buyers and growers financially broke and bewildered. The government was forced to intervene, in order to stabilise the market, and to restore consumer confidence. New regulations, which now define authentic *puer* tea as originating exclusively in Yunnan province, indicate the government’s aim to protect and enhance Yunnan’s cultural heritage, and to transform *puer* into an international brand, similar to that of Champagne or Roquefort cheese.

Given the recent tumultuous events surrounding *puer*, and its contemporary branding as one of China’s most iconic teas, Jinghong Zhang’s book is a timely, and well-written, addition to the burgeoning body of research examining food commodities within a particular cultural context. Zhang, a sociocultural anthropologist and herself a Yunnanese, does a splendid job exploring the ways in which the meanings surrounding the “ordinary” tea she grew up with have been radically altered through a variety of political, economic, social and cultural forces, and the tea itself transformed into something with almost mythical status. Zhang utilises Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “cultural biography” to delineate how *puer*, as a sought-after commodity, shapes networks of social relations, through the production and consumption processes that define the life-cycle of this humble tea plant. She also draws on Lévi-Strauss’s binary notions of “raw” and “cooked”, and the role of human agency in transforming food from something natural to something cultural, in order to elucidate the various symbolic values ascribed to teas such as *puer*, and how these values have changed over time.

In addition to drawing on these and other western sources for inspiration, Zhang also weaves into her theoretical framework the quintessentially Chinese idea of *jianghu*, as a vehicle for re-imagining the chaotic, unpredictable, and ever-shifting world of *puer* tea - the search for authenticity in a space where fakes abound; subtle resistance to authority; the challenges of negotiating complex networks of (often obscure) social relationships, involving growers, processors, buyers and consumers; and the existence of different codes of conduct which function as mediators of those social relationships. Whilst the idea of representing the world of *puer* in terms of the notion of *jianghu* does not seem to have actually originated with the author (a 2007 Mainland China magazine with the title *Puer Jianghu* may have been her main inspiration), and the link between the two is not always convincingly argued in her text, Zhang does follow the idea along a number of interesting pathways, and her analysis ultimately enriches our understanding of the topic.

English monographs on Chinese tea have tended to focus either on the historical narrative of how tea developed as a global commodity or on tea aesthetics, including tea varieties, tea-drinking paraphernalia, etc. This is one of the very few works to adopt an ethnographic approach, involving extensive fieldwork, in South China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and dozens of interviews. It is by no means, however, a dry,

academic study, suitable only for researchers. Instead, what unfolds across the “four seasons” that the book encompasses is an utterly human story; we are drawn into the lives and little dramas of “ordinary” people, as they struggle to make sense of forces (official regulations, market price fluctuations, etc.) over which they have little or no control. They are obliged to adapt their physical environment, social relationships and cultural understandings, using whatever limited resources they have, in order to satisfy the demands of bureaucrats and consumers in distant places. In the end, as Zhang admirably reveals, the fascinating story of *puer* tea is at its heart the story of the many individuals who harness the raw materials of tea-making, and creatively invent and re-invent them, in order to inspire and satisfy the imaginations (and taste buds) of consumers.

I would highly recommend this book to tea enthusiasts and connoisseurs alike, as well as to those looking for a niche perspective on some of the vagaries of China’s modernisation process, and the kinds of local strategies that are adopted to try and cope with them.

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