

Introduction

The purpose of the volume is to treat the progress of history, civilization and urban development of China together in order to demonstrate the unique qualities of Chinese civilization.

The author used historical dynasties as the vertical dimension, starting from the pre-urban origin of round-moat village settlements of the Yangshao Period, until the most recent transitional city under the present “socialist market system”. There are a total of 13 chapters, covering a time-span of roughly 6,000 years.

In the long process of historic evolution, China’s civilization had been strengthened and enriched to become a system of values and behavior generally known as Confucianism. The system is based on the primary goals of striving to maintain harmonious man-land, or man-heaven as well as man to man relationships, with a pragmatic inclination on application through administrative means, the rule of law, and widespread education. The system had been extended to a large territory from its core in central China, even reaching Korea, Japan, central Asia and Southeast Asia, in addition to the nomadic peoples in China’s periphery. The Chinese city had served as the container and service platform of the system and an incubator for its new additions and modifications in later dynasties. Thus, the nature, function and structure of the city and the entire city-hierarchy in China and these spatial arrangements, were, in reality, a material reflection of the progression of Chinese civilization and its territorial extension.

The volume also discusses the theoretical context of the uniqueness of the Chinese urban evolution and compared it with experiences in the West. It treated major events, economic development, territorial changes, and developments in technology, art and culture,

military as well as administrative system in the dynasties as urban change dynamics. It therefore has succinctly put together in this volume 6,000 years of Chinese cultural history.

Besides using a large amount of Chinese literature, including materials on recent archeological finds, the volume has explored substantial Western literature on relevant issues with the purpose of putting the Chinese experience in a global context.

The author has included in the volume over 100 maps and line drawings selected from his collection accumulated over 30 years as a university teacher and researcher of urban geography and the Chinese city. They provide vivid and readily apprehensible illustrations for illuminating key points on the structure of the Chinese city and the geopolitical situation of China in major historical periods. They too add details through graphic techniques to the text treatment of the subject matters, and are themselves visually valuable, forming another unique feature of the volume.

The volume targets at a wide spectrum of readers, including all who are interested in culture and civilization, cities, urban planning and economic, philosophic, political and historical developments of China.