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### **Jun Fang, China's Second Capital — Nanjing under the Ming, 1368–1644 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014)**

**Citation for published version:**

McDowall, S 2016, 'Jun Fang, China's Second Capital — Nanjing under the Ming, 1368–1644 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014)' *Ming Studies*, no. 74, pp. 94-97. DOI: 10.1080/0147037X.2016.1229792

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/0147037X.2016.1229792](https://doi.org/10.1080/0147037X.2016.1229792)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

*Ming Studies*

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Ming Studies* on 12 October 2016, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0147037X.2016.1229792>.

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JUN FANG, *China's Second Capital – Nanjing under the Ming, 1368-1644*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2014. xv + 217 pp. £95 / \$160 (hbk). ISBN: 978-0-415-85525-9.

By any standard, the city of Nanjing is enjoying something of a renaissance as the subject of English-language scholarly attention, with Si-yen Fei, Charles Musgrove, and Chuck Wooldridge having each made significant new interventions over the past few years.<sup>1</sup> To these studies we can now add the present volume: *China's Second Capital – Nanjing under the Ming, 1368-1644*, by Jun Fang, the culmination of many years' research, and a small part of which has already been published in the pages of this journal.<sup>2</sup> Although the basic story of Nanjing's life under the early Ming – from the founding of the dynasty in 1368 through the usurpation of 1402 and eventual loss of status in 1421 – is well known, this book focuses on the administrative workings of the city as secondary capital *after* 1421, its relationship with the Northern Capital (Beijing), and the rationale for its retention throughout the course of the Ming. In addition to the usual sources (*Ming shi* 明史, *Ming shilu* 明實錄, etc.), Fang's study is based on extensive use of departmental gazetteers (*bumen zhi* 部門志), an unusually Nanjing-centric collection of sources that has been relatively neglected by historians to date (p. 12). This is a slim but important work, which makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the workings of the Ming state beyond Beijing.

Chapter One provides a brief discussion of the origins of the secondary capital system and its operation throughout late imperial Chinese history. Although the emergence of the system (within which Fang distinguishes between auxiliary and nominal capitals) is difficult to date, the practice had become “widely accepted” by the end of the tenth century (p. 24). In this context, Fang argues, the dual capital system of the Ming should not be regarded as merely an accident of the Yongle usurpation, for although the choice of these two cities might have been a response to specific political circumstances, the practice of using an auxiliary capital to govern “was deep-rooted in the minds of traditional Chinese rulers” (p. 32). Yet as he shows in Chapter Two, the Ming secondary capital system was the most elaborate in Chinese history. With the exception of the Grand Secretariat, the Secondary Capital at Nanjing housed an identical set of civil, military and eunuch administrative apparatuses to those in place in Beijing, even if staffing numbers were considerably lower in the south. Importantly for Fang, official ranks and emoluments were in theory identical

across departments in the two capitals, although he concedes that in practice, Nanjing officials tended to be treated less favorably (p. 45).

That the official duties in the Southern Capital were less onerous than those in the north is a standard view of the dual capital system, but Fang wants us to view Southern Capital administration as a useful rung on the official career ladder; “a place for accumulating reputation and seniority” 養望地 according to Huang Bingshi 黃秉石 (p. 66; Fang’s translation). Although transfer to Nanjing was sometimes used as “a relatively mild punitive measure” for those who had offended the emperor or his senior officials (p. 77), Fang argues in Chapter Three that such cases were very much the exception. Similarly, while the Southern Capital could serve as a retreat for ageing or physically infirm officials under the Ming, the majority of officials in Nanjing assumed their posts in the normal fashion, and were there simply to enrich their bureaucratic service record (p. 82).

The center of Ming population was south of the Yangtze, and Fang demonstrates convincingly in Chapter Four that the Southern Capital administration was an indispensable part of tax revenue generation and other financial functions. Nanjing played a crucial role in the licensing and regulation of tribute grain, salt and tea, and was responsible for the storage and verification of the Yellow Registers (*huangce* 黃冊), an important part of the Ming state’s system of tax collection and the levying of labor service. In 1421, with the official transfer of the capital north, all artisans involved in the production of salt certificates were transplanted to Beijing, only to be relocated back to Nanjing just six years later, when the issuing of salt certificates was placed back under the jurisdiction of the Southern Capital for the remainder of the dynasty. That this decision was made during the Xuande reign (1425-1435), during which the decision to return the court to Nanjing permanently was reversed, supports Fang’s sense that the Southern Capital was administratively more important to the Ming state than perhaps we have hitherto allowed (pp. 102-4). The carefully compiled figures in Fang’s final chapter suggest that the military strength of Nanjing guard units in the post-1421 Ming was seriously depleted (pp. 124-25), but although he is careful not to overstate its importance in relation to those in the north, he argues that the Southern Capital military still played “indispensable” secondary roles in the maintenance of stability across the empire (p. 137). These roles included the suppression of aboriginal rebellions in the south, and the provision of “a place of retreat for the government in Beijing at times of crisis” (p. 136).

Fang's study is well grounded in a meticulous examination of his sources. This is welcome and important work, to be sure, but it does not always translate into a red hot page-turner, and I sometimes wished for a slightly more anecdotal or biographical approach to the topic. The potentially fascinating career of Wang Shu 王恕 (1416-1508), for example, is introduced at the beginning of Chapter Three (pp. 64-6), but he soon disappears, and I wonder whether more such life stories might have been introduced to help make sense of the bewildering array of offices and regulations Fang discusses. Most of all, I longed for more discussion of the cultural aspects of the Southern Capital administration. The emergence of a distinct, morally suspect and potentially subversive southern culture towards the end of the dynasty has long been a subject of interest among historians, and some speculation as to the contributory role played by the particular culture of the Nanjing offices that Fang describes here might have made for fascinating reading.

The overall argument of the book is perhaps best captured by Xie Bin 謝彬, a Jiajing-period official who once cautioned against regarding the Nanjing administration as merely "superfluous offices" (p. 142). For Fang, the continued existence of the southern administrative offices was no accident of 1402, but an important "auxiliary instrument of state control" (p. 142). What the book does well is to challenge the view that Nanjing offices barely functioned, and therefore that the Southern Ming "reconversion of Nanjing into the hub of Ming government" in 1644 was "wrenchingly fast" in Lynn Struve's terms (p. 126).<sup>3</sup> In fact, as Fang demonstrates, the Hongguang government was "merely a slightly reshuffled version of the pre-existing Nanjing administration," and with the exception of the emperor and the Grand Secretariat, all Beijing governmental departments already had their counterparts in the Southern Capital (p. 127).

Clearly, then, the Nanjing administration was considered important enough to be retained throughout the dynasty, but I might have been inclined to read evidence from Fang's Nanjing-centric departmental gazetteers (which, as he notes, tended "to glorify the office holders in the Nanjing departments"; p. 13) a little more critically when evaluating just how important it was. While the officials serving their time in Nanjing as punishment might have been few, it certainly tells us something about the status of those offices in the eyes of the court; indeed, the Chongzhen emperor himself seems to have understood that "there is not much to do in Nanjing" (p. 81). While it is too easy to use the eventual fate of Jiangnan in 1645 to call into question whether the Southern Capital really "provided Ming rulers with a viable alternative" (p. 126) or "a safe retreat for the court in case of emergency" (p. 144), the fact that Nanjing's

military forces had been allowed to wane to such an extent long before the end of the dynasty must challenge this view to some degree at least. But these are highly subjective complaints. Sadly, at its current price, it seems unlikely that many scholars will ever actually own this book, but I certainly learned much from it, and would have no hesitation in recommending it as an important addition to any Chinese studies library collection.

Stephen McDowall  
*University of Edinburgh*

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<sup>1</sup> Si-yen Fei, *Negotiating Urban Space: Urbanization and Late Ming Nanjing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Charles Musgrove, *China's Contested Capital: Architecture, Ritual, and Response in Nanjing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013); Chuck Wooldridge, *City of Virtues: Nanjing in an Age of Utopian Visions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Jun Fang, "The Political Functions of the Southern Capital in Ming China," *Ming Studies* 54 (2006): 71-106.

<sup>3</sup> Lynn A. Struve trans., *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in Tigers' Jaws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 55.