

Comments on: “Location Fundamental and
Institutional Settings: Type of Routes and
Location of Cities in Past Two Millenniums
China”

Matthew A. Turner

Brown University

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Summary I

- ▶ Davis and Weinstein (AER 2002) shows that the distribution of population across locations in Japan has been stable over centuries. This suggests that path dependence *or* first nature is important for determining city location and persistence.
- ▶ Bleakly and Lin (QJE 2012) show that cities are more likely to occur near first nature geographical features that have not been important for more than a century. This suggests path dependence.
- ▶ These papers are part of an agenda investigating the birth, location and persistence of cities. They are not obviously consistent with each other.
- ▶ The current paper assembles a centuries long panel to examine the role of first nature in city survival. It argues that the importance of first nature attributes varies over time.

Proposal

Your data is important. I think you can use them better.

- ▶ Tackle the Davis and Weinstein agenda directly.
- ▶ Unit of observation is a city. Outcomes are (1) birth (2) location (3) Death/hazard rate.
- ▶ Questions:
 - ▶ Does distribution of births and deaths change across locations and time?
 - ▶ Does the survival probability vary with time or location?
 - ▶ Are the quantities above related to first nature attributes of places? Do these relationships change over time?
- ▶ Much of this is descriptive, e.g., What is the rate of city birth/death over time? What is the pdf of city duration by birth cohort?
- ▶ Some of it is an event study, i.e., does the relationship between survival probability and first nature change with dynasty. Framing it as an event study allows for a transparent model of causation (TWFE).