



Beautiful Su: A Social and Cultural History of Suzhou, China

Stephen L. Koss

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For most of the last millennium, Suzhou, China was widely regarded as a "paradise on Earth" by the citizens of imperial China. Replete with natural beauty, magnificent gardens, and a rich history to match, Suzhou has captivated the attention of poets, scholars, statesmen, and travelers from afar since the earliest days of Chinese history. For a dozen centuries, Suzhou was a center of wealth, beauty, intellectual achievement, culture, fashion, and commerce. It was the imperial empire's Paris, with a touch of Florence's artistic flourish, Venice's canal-laced charm, Heidelberg's academic achievement, and Amsterdam's commercial dynamism.

In this monumental new book, author Stephen L. Koss paints a vivid picture of just how important Suzhou is to the Chinese nation, its people, and its collective ethos. From its rise as a major cultural and trading center, Koss guides the reader on a journey through more than 2,500 years of Chinese history. He traces the city's fascinating story from its founding in 514 BCE to its present-day rebirth as a center of hi-tech, pharmaceutical, and textile manufacturing characterized by explosive urban expansion, a fast-growing middle class, and modernization tempered by historical and cultural preservation. The book is rich in local historical and cultural content, thoughtfully framed by national historical context and filled with anecdotes and mini-biographies chosen to engage the interest of a general readership audience. *Beautiful Su* will stand for decades as one of the definitive statements on one of the world's greatest cities.

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